West Chester University of Pennsylvania

University Writing Council Assessment Report AY18-19

Prepared by

The University Writing Council and Advisory Board

March 2019

Casey Bohrman

Michelle Bratina

Michael Burns

Ginger DaCosta

Patricia Davidson

Tim Dougherty

Margaret Ervin

Erin Hill

Lisa Calvano and Shayna Frawley

Lisa Lucas

Lisa Marano

Jea Oh

Rachel McMullin and Amy Pajewski

Justin Rademaekers

Alessandra Sarcona

Juanita Wooten

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT'S WORKING

>66% STUDENTS FIND WRITING CURRICULUM USEFUL

>70% STUDENTS FIND WRITING CURRICULUM SATISFYING

>85% SEEM THEMSELVES AS BETTER COMMUNICATORS

THE SKILLS STUDENTS FEEL MOST IMPROVED:

RESEARCH ABILITIES   **CRITICAL THINKING**   **IDEA ORGANIZATION**

>80% FACULTY SEE STUDENT CRITICAL THINKING AS ACCEPTABLE

>85% FACULTY SEE GRADUATING STUDENTS AS ADEQUATE WRITERS

70% FACULTY SEE GRADUATING STUDENTS AS ADEQUATE CRITICAL THINKERS OR BETTER

ROOM TO IMPROVE

50% OF FACULTY DON'T UTILIZE BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING INSTRUCTION

66% FACULTY DON'T FEEL WELL SUPPORTED BY WCU IN EFFORTS TO TEACH WRITING

STUDENTS FELT SKILLS LEAST IMPROVED IN:

CREATIVITY   **SELF-AWARENESS**   **GRAMMAR**

AREAS WHERE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT IS NEEDED:

1 WRITING TO LEARN

2 ASSIGNMENT DESIGN

3 DISCIPLINARY WRITING INSTRUCTION

AREAS WHERE STUDENT AND CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED:

1 READING

2 GRAMMAR

3 CREATIVITY

NEW QUESTIONS TO ASK

Given our diverse student body, how can we design learning experiences in the writing curriculum that challenge students of varying abilities?

How can we provide students with earlier and more frequent experiences with writing in their disciplines?

How can we help faculty think about and discuss <u>writing in the disciplines</u> in place of a generalized view of writing?

What features of our curriculum could better facilitate student knowledge and skill transfer as students progress from first-year writing through senior writing capstones?

How can we make reading part of the student culture on campus?

Are our students' grammatical performances comparative to students' performances nationally?

How can our writing curriculum better develop students' creativity?

How can our writing curriculum better develop students' self-awareness?

How can our writing curiculum better develop students' problem-solving skills?

How can we help faculty better utilize best practices in writing instruction?

How can we ensure our writing classrooms have 25 students or fewer at all levels of the curriculum?

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

West Chester University has distinguished itself as a university that takes seriously the value of writing and critical thinking instruction at all levels of the undergraduate curriculum. Our undergraduate curriculum features a range of opportunities for students to improve their effectiveness as writers and thinkers, including: courses for developing writers, a two-course foundational sequence in composition and rhetoric; and, a three-course writing-emphasis requirement across the curriculum. The university has also invested in support resources for students and faculty through a university writing center, an annual writing and critical thinking conference (WACT) for faculty, the formation of a university writing council, and through alternative work assignments for a first-year writing director, writing center director, and writing across the curriculum director. The design of our curriculum is approaching the levels of writing instruction provided at some of the best universities nationally and regionally as indicated by data collected in the National Census of Writing (2014)—a database of writing curriculum design and administration at 680 four-year institutions, though our administrative support and teaching loads required of writing program administrators lags behind most four-year institutions[1]. What follows is a report on the results of assessment efforts developed by the aforementioned University Writing Council and Advisory Board from 2017-2019. This report is the outcome of an inaugural year for many of these new resource commitments. These assessment efforts entailed the development and distribution of surveys to both faculty and students with attention to their satisfaction with the writing curriculum at WCU. The report also includes a discussion of opportunities to improve faculty and student experiences with writing instruction at WCU, and details some actionable steps that can be taken toward improvement of our curriculum.

A summary of key findings are as follows:

Our Students and Writing
- A majority of our writing curriculum is useful in their studies, and these feelings of usefulness increase incrementally as students advance through the curriculum:
    - About 66% of students surveyed indicated that their taking of WRT120 was "Useful" or "Very Useful."
    - About 68% of students surveyed indicated that their taking of WRT200 was "Useful" or "Very Useful."
    - About 79% of students surveyed indicated that their taking of writing-emphasis courses was "Useful" or "Very Useful."
- Students generally feel satisfied with our writing curriculum:
    - 60% of students surveyed were "Satisfied" with writing instruction during their time at WCU, and 10% expressed that they were "Very Satisfied."

---

[1] According to the national census survey of 4-year institutions, the requirement of the two-course first-year composition sequence that we have at WCU is also in place at 54% of other four-year institutions across the country, and our requirement that students take three writing-emphasis courses later in their studies is better than the 68% of institutions that require only one or two writing-emphasis courses. From an administrative standpoint, WCU's appointment of a first-year writing director to oversee our composition sequence is a practice that takes place at 51% of four-year institutions; however, only about 11% of first-year writing directors nationally teach a 3-3 course load while serving as director as we have here at WCU and 73% of first-year composition directors at four-year intuitions nationally are teaching *fewer* courses while serving as director than we ask of our director at WCU. Our Writing Center Director's teaching expectations resemble about 19% of four-year universities nationally, though about 50% of writing center directors nationally have fewer teaching expectations. Our decision in 2017 to have a faculty member oversee writing across the curriculum at WCU places us about the 86% of four-year institutions nationally that also have such oversight, and our creation of a Writing Across the Curriculum Director in particular is the most common way (25%) that universities around the nation oversee writing-emphasis programs. Only about 5% of first-year writing directors nationally, however, teach a 3-3 course load while serving as WAC director as we have here at WCU and 74% of WAC directors at four-year intuitions nationally are teaching *fewer* courses while serving as director than we ask of our WAC director at WCU.

- - Only 3% of students surveyed were "Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied" with writing instruction (27% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).
  - Students feel that our writing curriculum improved some skills more than others.
    - Students felt that their "Research abilities," "Critical thinking," and "Organization of ideas" were most improved through our writing curriculum.
    - Students felt that their "Creativity," "Self-awareness," and "Grammar" were least improved through our writing curriculum.
    - A vast majority of students felt that all skills listed (see p. 6) improved as a result of our writing curriculum.
  - A vast majority of students (85%) see themselves as better communicators leaving WCU than they were upon entering.

Our Faculty and Writing
- Faculty overwhelmingly want to see the amount of writing instruction students receive to either stay the same (51%) or increase (44%).
- About 50% of our faculty are not utilizing best practices for instruction in writing-emphasis courses, such as requiring multiple drafts of a project, providing written feedback on an early iteration of a student draft, providing opportunities for student revision of a draft based on instructor commentary, meeting with students one-on-one to discuss their development of a work of writing, providing written explanation of an assigned letter grade, peer-review of drafts, and/or use of informal in-class writing to activate student learning.
  - Likewise, about 35% of surveyed students reported having three or fewer courses in their major require a revision of written work during their time at WCU.
- Most faculty find writing courses to be "Somewhat" (50%) or "Very Much" (42%) satisfying and enjoyable to teach, with only 8% finding such courses to be "Not at All" satisfying or enjoyable.
- Faculty only feel "Somewhat" (60%) supported by the university in their efforts to teach writing with 17% expressing that they feel "Not at all" supported in this work.
- Faculty see improving students' "effective communication" and "critical and analytical thinking" skills as the two most important goals of writing-emphasis courses. This aligns with the goals of our general education requirements.
- Faculty see the use of informal writings to help students learn, and helping students see the big picture of how their disciplines make knowledge as two of the least important goals of writing-emphasis courses. This contradicts best practices in Writing Across the Curriculum pedagogy, which articulates these goals as central to writing-emphasis courses. This also indicates a potential disharmony between writing-emphasis courses and first year writing courses where students are taught to "Produce writing" but also to "Think with writing" (write to learn); "Think about writing" (metacognition).
- Faculty tended to feel their students are better at effective communication of class conceptsthan their students are at critical thinking about class concepts.
- Most faculty see student grammar use in writing courses as "Acceptable" (64%) while 36% find student grammar "Unacceptable". No faculty saw student grammar use as "Exceptional."
- A vast majority of faculty (83%) see their students' abilities to effectively communicate class concepts as "Acceptable."

- Most faculty see their students as "Acceptable" critical thinkers (62%), while 8% see their students as "Exceptional" critical thinkers, and 30% find their students' critical thinking abilities to be "Unacceptable."
- Faculty find transfer student writing to be generally on par with other students' writing (59%), though 32% of faculty find transfer students to be worse writers than non-transfer students.
- About half of faculty believe there should be more grammatical instruction in first-year composition, while 26% believe there should be more writing in the majors, and 17% believe there should be stricter admission requirements.
- A vast majority (86%) of faculty believe that students about to graduate are either "Adequate" (69%) or "Very Good" (17%) writers.
- A vast majority (89%) of faculty "Always" (43%) or "Sometimes" (46%) direct students to the Writing Center as a resource and nearly half of graduating seniors (42%) report having used the Writing Center during their time at WCU.

Opportunities for Improvement
- Improvement of faculty felt-support in their efforts to teach writing should be addressed. Many faculty are overwhelmed by the size of their writing classes and feel they can't adequately provide feedback, other faculty feel that students aren't transferring or retaining the writing skills they learned earlier in the curriculum to upper-division courses.
- Faculty need more support in achieving the following writing-emphasis goals:
  - informal writings to help students learn
  - helping students see the big picture of how their disciplines make knowledge
  - teaching, lecturing, and/or demonstrating the specific disciplinary moves that writers make and which students should be making rather than promoting a generalized view of writing
- More faculty need to be held accountable for utilizing best practices in writing instruction including:
  - Clearly explaining writing assignments and grading criteria for those assignments
  - Requiring multiple drafts of a project,
  - Providing written feedback on an early iteration of a student draft,
  - Providing opportunities for student revision of a draft based on instructor commentary,
  - Meeting with students one-on-one to discuss their development of a work of writing,
  - Providing written explanation of an assigned letter grade,
  - Peer-review of drafts, and/or
  - Use of informal in-class writing to activate student learning.
- The writing curriculum should find ways to emphasize more than communicative effectiveness, and should also begin to touch on "creativity" "problem-solving" and student "self-awareness" as outcomes of writing instruction.
- Further research (direct assessments) on student grammatical performance is warranted, perhaps through a random sampling and assessment of student writing. >3 errors per 100 words in a 5+ page essay would indicate our students' grammatical performance is outside of average student performance (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008).

A Note on Study Design and Limitations
The intent of this study was to measure faculty and students' self-reported *experiences* with the writing curriculum at WCU. As this report later indicates, other studies ought to be done to assess the curriculum in other ways, such as assessment of direct measures like those already handled by Middles States assessment (for example of GE Goal 1: "Effective Communication"). The idea of self-reported data has significant limitations. Dunning, Heath, and Suls' oft cited article "Flawed Self-Assessment" (2004) makes clear that when there is an interest in measuring behavior and performance, self-views are only "tenuous to modest" accounts of the truth (p. 69). The limitations of self-reported information should be kept in mind while reading this report, especially the few behavior and performance related question (faculty practices in teaching and student reports of their writing ability). While these self-reported experiences of faculty and students don't give us a complete picture of how our curriculum is working, these sentiments are nonetheless very important and very valuable to record.

The University Writing Council (UWC) is interested in student and faculty *experiences* because we want to find ways to improve experiences in our writing curriculum. The UWC spent much time choosing the adjectives that we want to know about the most, and we settled on the importance of feelings that courses in the curriculum are "useful" and whether looking back upon their curriculum they felt "satisfaction" with the courses they took as they learned to be better writers. Since we can't know what makes students feel satisfied or useful, a limitation of this study is that satisfaction and usefulness can be interpreted different by different students, and yet we believe those many different feelings taken as a while are important to notate.

For faculty, the UWC primarily wanted to know whether faculty felt prepared and supported as writing teachers, what their impressions were of student writing in the upper-division, and what kinds of practices they used in their writing pedagogy. As the faculty demographic information indicates, only about 6% of the responses in this study come from faculty who regularly teach first-year writing, which means that the faculty views of student writing espoused here are largely the views of faculty outside of the English Department.

The population of senior students (those with >100 credits) that we studied were chosen because we wanted to look at the effectiveness of the curriculum as a whole: from first year writing all the way toward graduation. We wanted to hear about student experiences and feelings on the curriculum as close to the finality of that experience as possible. Thus, a further limitation of this study is that we are only measuring the experiences of those students who "survived" the college experience or made it almost all the way through their degree, and therefore we are not learning about the experiences of students who never earned more than 100 credits at WCU. Lastly, there's evidence that the students who participated in this study are either high performing or over-confident about their abilities as writers because 11.5% saw themselves entering as "excellent writers" and 42.5% of students saw themselves entering WCU as "above average writers."

Demographic Information: Who participated in this survey?

The survey was distributed to 1,637 WCU students via email based on those students who had earned >100 credits by the fall semester of 2017. A total of 172 students completed the survey fully (10.5% response). **In a population of 1,637 graduating undergraduates, 172 respondents with a confidence level of 95% indicates a confidence interval for this survey of +/- 7%.**

- Students who transferred to WCU accounted for 31% of survey participants, while 69% of participants indicated that they started their higher education at WCU.
- Among survey participants, 96% primarily at WCU's Main Campus, while 3% primarily study at our Exton Campus, and 1% study at our Philadelphia Campus.
- By design of only distributing to students with >100 credits, 99.5% of all participants indicated that they are senior year undergraduate students.

Survey Participants by Major

Nutrition: 13	Social Work: 3
Psychology: 13	Sociology: 3
Marketing: 12	Theatre: 3
Business: 11	Computer Science: 2
Education: 11	Graphic Design: 2
Accounting: 9	Health & Physical Education: 2
Communications: 9	Mathematics: 2
English: 8	Actuarial Science: 1
Exercise Science: 7	Anthropology: 1
Nursing: 7	Chemistry: 1
Biology: 6	Criminal Justice: 1
Communication Sciences and Disorders: 5	Environmental Health: 1
Economics and Finance: 5	Forensics: 1
Professional Studies: 5	Geology: 1
Public Health: 5	Musical Theatre: 1
Athletic Training: 4	Pharm. Development: 1
Political Science: 4	Spanish: 1
Geography, Env. And Urban Planning: 3	Women's and Gender Studies: 1
History: 3	Respiratory Therapy: 1
Liberal Studies: 3	

Are students satisfied with the writing curriculum?

When asked: What has been your satisfaction with writing instruction during your time at WCU? (n=171):

- 70% of students indicated satisfaction with 60% indicating that they were "satisfied" with the writing curriculum and 10% indicating that they were "very satisfied" with the writing curriculum
- 26% indicated that they were "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" with the writing curriculum
- 4% indicated dissatisfaction with 2% indicating that they were "dissatisfied" with the writing curriculum and 2% indicating that they were "very dissatisfied" with the writing curriculum

Do students' writing abilities change during their time at WCU?
In response to the question: Overall, how would you rate yourself as a writer prior to entering WCU (n=172):

- 11.5% saw themselves entering as an "excellent writer"
- 42.5% of students saw themselves as entering WCU as an "above average writer";
- 39.5% saw themselves entering as an "average writer"
- 6% saw themselves entering as a "poor writer"
- 0.5% saw themselves entering as a "very poor writer"

In response to the question: Overall, do you see yourself as a more effective writer and communicator today than you were when you first enrolled at WCU? (n=172):

- 30% of students see themselves as a "very much" more effective writer and communicator
- 33% of students see themselves today as a "moderately" more effective writer and communicator
- 22% of students see themselves as a "somewhat" more effective writer and communicator
- 10% of students see themselves as a "slightly" more effective writer and communicator
- 5% of students see themselves as "not at all" a more effective writer and communicator

Do students find the various requirements of our writing curriculum to be helpful in their development?
In response to the question: To what extent did you perceive WRT120 to be helpful in improving and developing your writing as a citizen, scholar, and/or future professional?, 32% of respondents indicated that they did not have to take WRT120. Of those who indicated that they did take WRT120 (n=170):

- 32.5% felt the course was positively helpful with 22.5% indicating a helpfulness of 4 on a scale of 1-5 and 10% rating helpfulness 5 on a scale of 1-5
- 34% felt neutral about the course being helpful, rating helpfulness 3 on a scale of 1-5
- 33.5% felt the course was not helpful with 21.5% indicating a helpfulness of 2 on a scale of 1-5 and 12% rating helpfulness 1 on a scale of 1-5

In response to the question: To what extent did you perceive your WRT200-level course to be useful in improving and developing your writing as a citizen, scholar, and/or future professional?, 15.7% of respondents indicated that they did not have to take WRT200. Of those who indicated that they did take WRT200 (n=171):

- 40% felt the course was positively helpful with 29% indicating a helpfulness of 4 on a scale of 1-5 and 11% rating helpfulness 5 on a scale of 1-5
- 28% felt neutral about the course being helpful, rating helpfulness 3 on a scale of 1-5
- 32% felt the course was not helpful with 19.5% indicating a helpfulness of 2 on a scale of 1-5 and 12.5% rating helpfulness 1 on a scale of 1-5

In response to the question: To what extent did you find the writing-emphasis or "W" courses useful in improving and developing your writing? (n=170)

- 45.5% felt these courses were positively helpful with 27.5% indicating a helpfulness of 4 on a scale of 1-5 and 18% rating helpfulness 5 on a scale of 1-5
- 33% felt neutral about these courses being helpful, rating helpfulness 3 on a scale of 1-5

- 21.5% felt these courses were not helpful with 12.5% indicating a helpfulness of 2 on a scale of 1-5 and 9% rating helpfulness 1 on a scale of 1-5

A fundamental practice for improving writing ability: How often are students having the opportunity to revise written work they produce in upper-division courses in their majors?
In response to the question: In your estimation, how many courses within your major field (not general education classes) required you to revise a written paper, project, or assignment? (n=160)
- 7.5% of students indicated that no classes in their major required revision of a work
- 28% of students indicated that they had three or fewer courses in their major that required revision of work
- 12.5% of students indicated that they had four or five courses in their major that required revision of work
- 42% of students indicated that they had six or more courses in their major that required revision of work

What do students feel is improving as a result of the writing curriculum?
In this question students were provided with a list of nine skills that a writing program ought to develop, and they were asked to rate each goal in terms of whether that skill "Very Much Improved," "Much Improved," "a little bit improved" or "not at all improved. The percentage of students rating the improvement of skill in each category is as follows (n=157):

What students say has "Very Much Improved" as a result of the writing curriculum:
1. Research abilities (46.5%)
2. Ability to organize ideas (38%)
3. Critical thinking (37%)
4. Confidence in writing (32.5%)
5. Capability to argue a position (29.5%)
6. Grammar (25%)
7. Self-awareness (23%)
8. Problem-solving abilities (22.5%)
9. Creativity (17.2%)

What students say has "Much Improved" as a result of the writing curriculum:
1. Problem-solving abilities (41%)
2. Critical thinking (37.5%)
3. Self-awareness (37%)
4. Capability to argue a position (36.5%)
5. Research abilities (31%)
6. Confidence in writing (31%)
7. Creativity (30%)
8. Ability to organize ideas (30%)
9. Grammar (29%)

What students say has only "a little bit improved" as a result of the writing curriculum:
1. Creativity (39.5%)
2. Self-awareness (29%)
3. Grammar (28%)
4. Confidence in writing (27%)

5. Ability to organize ideas (25.5%)
6. Capability to argue a position (24%)
7. Problem-solving abilities (24%)
8. Critical thinking (19%)
9. Research abilities (17%)

What students feel has "not at all improved" as a result of the writing curriculum:
1. Grammar (18.5%)
2. Creativity (13%)
3. Problem-solving abilities (13%)
4. Self-awareness (11%)
5. Capability to argue a position (10%)
6. Confidence in writing (9.5%)
7. Ability to organize ideas (6%)
8. Critical thinking (6%)
9. Research abilities (5%)

Student Skills Ratings Represented as Table

#	Field	Not at all improved	A little bit improved	Much improved	Very much improved	Total
1	Creativity	13.38% 21	39.49% 62	29.94% 47	17.20% 27	157
2	Critical thinking	6.37% 10	19.11% 30	37.58% 59	36.94% 58	157
3	Ability to organize ideas	6.37% 10	25.48% 40	29.94% 47	38.22% 60	157
4	Self-awareness	10.90% 17	28.85% 45	37.18% 58	23.08% 36	156
5	Problem-solving abilities	12.90% 20	23.87% 37	40.65% 63	22.58% 35	155
6	Research abilities	5.10% 8	17.20% 27	31.21% 49	46.50% 73	157
7	Capability to argue a position	10.19% 16	24.20% 38	36.31% 57	29.30% 46	157
8	Confidence in writing	9.62% 15	26.92% 42	30.77% 48	32.69% 51	156
9	Grammar	18.47% 29	28.03% 44	28.66% 45	24.84% 39	157

What resources are students utilizing to improve writing outside of their classrooms?
(n=159)
Writing Center: 59% of students surveyed indicated that they had never visited the writing while 41% had. Among those who had attended:
- 51% visited more than once and 49% visited only once during their time at WCU
- 38% visited 2-4 times
- 10% visited 5-7 times
- 3% visited 8 times or more

When asked: If you did visit the Writing Center during your time at WCU, to what extent did you perceive the visits to be useful for developing your writing? (1 being NOT AT ALL useful and 5 being VERY useful):
- 61% found their visit to be useful in developing their writing with 45% rating usefulness 4 on a scale of 1-5 and 16% rating usefulness 5 on a scale of 1-5
- 22% were neutral about their visit rating usefulness 3 on a scale of 1-5
- 17% did not find their visit to be useful in developing their writing with 10% rating usefulness 2 on a scale of 1-5 and 7% rating usefulness 1 on a scale of 1-5

When asked about representatives from the writing center visiting their classes 39% had experienced such a visit while 61% had not. Among those who had experienced such a visit:

- 41% found the representative's visit to be useful in developing their writing with 27% rating usefulness 4 on a scale of 1-5 and 14% rating usefulness 5 on a scale of 1-5
- 32% were neutral about the representative's visit rating usefulness 3 on a scale of 1-5
- 27% did not find the representative's visit to be useful in developing their writing with 17% rating usefulness 2 on a scale of 1-5 and 10% rating usefulness 1 on a scale of 1-5

Some students indicated that they had utilized additional resources outside the Writing Center toward the development of their writing.

- 39% of students met with faculty to improve their writing
- 38% used peers as resources for improvement
- 16% utilized the Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC)
- 6% used "other" resources (search engines, OSSD, Career Center, etc.)
- 1.5% utilized the Smarthinking service

Student Qualitative Data

In the student survey, five questions allowed for written reply. Student replies to all five questions were analyzed using quantitative content analysis, which resulted in the following categorizations for student response:

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment	Generally Positive Comment
Negative Comment-Didn't Feel Challenged	Positive Comment-Good Faculty Feedback
Negative Comment-Too Many Courses	Positive Comment-Helped Prepare for Future
Negative Comment-Not Enough Courses	Positive Comment-Writing in Major (WE)
Negative Comment-Poor Faculty Instruction	Positive Comment-Research Skills Developed
	Positive Comment-Thinking, Creativity Developed

Please comment on your experience with WRT120 and the WRT200-level courses: Did they improve your overall writing ability? (n=85)

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment: 21	Generally Positive Comment: 47
Negative Comment-Didn't Feel Challenged: 10	N/a: 7 (8%)
Total Negative Comments: 31 (36.5%)	Total Positive Comments: 54 (55.5%)

Please comment on your experience with WRT120 and the WRT200-level courses: Did they help you think about your writing and research processes, such as think through ideas with writing, and construct different writing genres? (n=83)

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment: 14	Generally Positive Comment: 31
Negative Comment-Didn't Feel Challenged: 17	Positive Comment-Helped Prepare for Future: 1
Negative Comment-Not Enough Courses: 1	Positive Comment-Writing in Major (WE): 3
N/a: 8 (9.5%)	Positive Comment-Research Skills Developed: 8
Total Negative Comments: 32 (38.5%)	Total Positive Comments: 43 (52%)

Please comment on your experience with "W" courses: Did the writing you did in these courses improve your ability to write in a particular major, field, or profession? (n=80)

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment: 17	Generally Positive Comment: 31
Negative Comment-Didn't Feel Challenged: 2	Positive Comment-Helped Prepare for Future: 2
Negative Comment-Poor Faculty Instruction: 3	Positive Comment-Writing in Major (WE): 16
N/a: 6 (7.5%)	Positive Comment-Research Skills Developed: 2
	Positive Comment-Thinking, Creativity Developed: 1
Total Negative Comments: 22 (27.5%)	Total Positive Comments: 52 (65%)

Please comment on your experience with "W" courses: Did the writing you did in these courses help you better learn course content? (n=82)

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment: 12	Generally Positive Comment: 55
Negative Comment-Too Many Courses: 3	Positive Comment-Writing in Major (WE): 1
Negative Comment-Poor Faculty Instruction: 9	N/a: 2 (2.5%)
Total Negative Comments: 24 (29.5%)	Total Positive Comments: 56 (68%)

Please include any additional comments about your writing experiences and writing development during your time at West Chester University (e.g. Would you have wanted to take more writing courses? Fewer writing courses? More courses focused on writing in your discipline? More courses focused on interdisciplinary writing?). (n=64)

Negative Comment Categories	Positive Comment Categories
Generally Negative Comment: 4	Generally Positive Comment: 11
Negative Comment-Didn't Feel Challenged: 1	Positive Comment-Thinking, Creativity Developed: 1
Negative Comment-Too Many Courses: 5	N/a: 10 (15.5%)
Negative Comment-Not Enough Courses: 4	Curriculum or Writing Center Suggestions (detailed below): 24 (37.5%)
Negative Comment-Poor Faculty Instruction: 4	
Total Negative Comments: 18 (28%)	Total Positive Comments: 12 (19%)

Student Curriculum/Resource Suggestions

In addition to the comment categories listed above, two suggestion categories emerged in student comments: writing center suggestions and curriculum suggestions. Of these suggestions 24 were provided in response to the "additional comments" opportunity on the survey, and two suggestions were provided in written responses elsewhere in the survey.

Total Writing Center Suggestions: 4
Total Curriculum Suggestions: 22

Summary of Writing Center Comments
- More tutors specializing in scientific writing (1)

- Create opportunities for longer tutoring sessions (>50 minutes) (1)
- Generally Positive View of Writing Center (1)
- Generally Negative View of Writing Center (1)

Summary of Curriculum Suggestions
- More courses focusing on writing in the majors (8)
- More proposal writing courses or "real world" professional writing course (3)
- More creative writing courses as Arts distributive (1) or as WE (1)
- More critical-thinking and intellectually focused writing, not test or page quota (2)
- Opportunity for non-WE courses that have much writing to count as WE (2)
- More research-focused writing in the majors (1)
- More writing course business electives (1)
- More Greco-Roman Myth Courses in English B.A. (1)
- More consistent writing assessment rubrics among faculty (1)
- Test-in process for WRT courses as we have for MAT (1)

FACULTY SURVEY

Demographic Information: Who participated in this survey?

The survey was distributed to all WCU faculty via an email from Academic Affairs as well as by the Writing Across the Curriculum Director's contact list of writing-emphasis instructors. The Writing Across the Curriculum Director estimates that ~250 WCU faculty are regularly engaged in writing and writing-related courses in our curriculum. A total of 101 faculty completed the survey fully (~10.5% of all WCU 976 WCU faculty). Additionally, 63% of respondents (n=63) indicated that they teach writing-emphasis courses, which would indicate a response rate of ~25% of all faculty who teach writing. In a population of 250 faculty teaching writing, 63 respondents with a confidence level of 95% indicates a confidence interval for this survey of +/- 10.5%. In a population of 600 faculty, 101 respondents with a confidence level of 95% indicates a confidence interval for this survey of +/- 8.9%.

Survey Participants by Department/Program

Business, Management, Pub. Policy: 13	Social Work: 3
Health & Physical Education: 10	Accounting: 2
Criminal Justice: 9	Computer Science: 2
Biology: 6	Counselor Education: 2
Education: 6	Nursing: 2
English: 6	Political Science: 2
Geography, Env. And Urban Planning: 5	Respiratory Care: 2
Nutrition: 5	Chemistry: 1
Philosophy: 4	Environmental Health: 1
Women's & Gender Studies: 4	Kinesiology: 1
Anthropology/Sociology: 3	Physics: 1
Economics and Finance: 3	Psychology: 1
History: 3	Public Health: 1

Are faculty satisfied with the writing curriculum?
When asked to reply to the statement "I find my program's writing-emphasis courses to be satisfying and enjoyable": (n=111)
- 92.5% of faculty indicated satisfaction with 50.5% indicating that they were "somewhat satisfied" with the writing-emphasis courses and 42% indicating that they were "very much satisfied" with writing-emphasis courses
- 7.4% of faculty indicated dissatisfaction marking that they were "not at all satisfied" with their program's writing-emphasis courses.
- 20% of respondents did not address this question

Do faculty feel supported by the university in their efforts to teach writing across the curriculum?
When asked to reply to this statement "I feel supported by the university in my attempts to teach students to write in my discipline or field through writing-emphasis courses" (n=119):
- 23% indicated that they felt "very much" supported in their attempts to teach writing
- 60% indicating that they felt "somewhat" supported in their attempts to teach writing
- 17% of faculty indicated that they felt "not at all" supported in their attempts to teach writing

What do faculty perceive to be the goals of writing emphasis courses in our curriculum?
In this question faculty were provided with a list of six goals that a writing emphasis course might have for students, and faculty were asked to "rank the following goals of writing-emphasis courses beginning with what you see as the "primary goal" (1st) of writing emphasis courses to what you see as the least important (6th) goal of writing emphasis courses" (n=83).

What faculty say is the "primary" (#1) goal of a writing emphasis course:
1. Help students communicate effectively (40%)
2. Help students think more critically and analytically (31.5%)
3. Improve student grammar (9.5%)
4. Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing (9.5%)
5. Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge (8.5%)
6. Use informal writings to help students learn course content (1%)

What faculty say is the "least important" (#6) goal of a writing emphasis course:
1. Improve student grammar (30%)
2. Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge (26.5%)
3. Use informal writings to help students learn course content (26.5%)
4. Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing (15.5.5%)
5. Help students communicate effectively (1%)
6. Help students think more critically and analytically (0%)

Ranked 2ⁿᵈ to Primary (#2):
1. Help students communicate effectively (35%)
2. Help students think more critically and analytically (32.5%)

3. Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing (11%)
4. Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge (9.5%)
5. Improve student grammar (8.5%)
6. Use informal writings to help students learn course content (3.5%)

Ranked 2nd Least Important (#5):
1. Use informal writings to help students learn course content (32.5%)
2. Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing (29%)
3. Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge (20.5%)
4. Improve student grammar (14.5%)
5. Help students communicate effectively (3.5%)
6. Help students think more critically and analytically (0%)

Faculty Goal Rankings Represented as Table

| #	Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
1	Improve student grammar	9.64% 8	8.43% 7	24.10% 20	13.25% 11	14.46% 12	30.12% 25	83
2	Help students communicate more effectively	39.76% 33	34.94% 29	15.66% 13	4.82% 4	3.61% 3	1.20% 1	83
3	Help students think more critically and analytically	31.33% 26	32.53% 27	21.69% 18	14.46% 12	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	83
4	Use informal writings to help students learn course content	1.20% 1	3.61% 3	12.05% 10	24.10% 20	32.53% 27	26.51% 22	83
5	Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing	9.64% 8	10.84% 9	14.46% 12	20.48% 17	28.92% 24	15.66% 13	83
6	Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge	8.43% 7	9.64% 8	12.05% 10	22.89% 19	20.48% 17	26.51% 22	83

Means, SD, and Variance for Each Goal Ranked

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean ▼	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
2	Help students communicate more effectively	1.00	6.00	2.01	1.12	1.26	83
3	Help students think more critically and analytically	1.00	4.00	2.19	1.04	1.07	83
5	Teach students how to participate as members of a professional or disciplinary community through writing	1.00	6.00	3.95	1.54	2.36	83
1	Improve student grammar	1.00	6.00	4.05	1.67	2.79	83
6	Help students understand the "big picture" of how our field or discipline makes knowledge	1.00	6.00	4.17	1.58	2.50	83
4	Use informal writings to help students learn course content	1.00	6.00	4.63	1.17	1.37	83

What assignments are our faculty assigning to students?
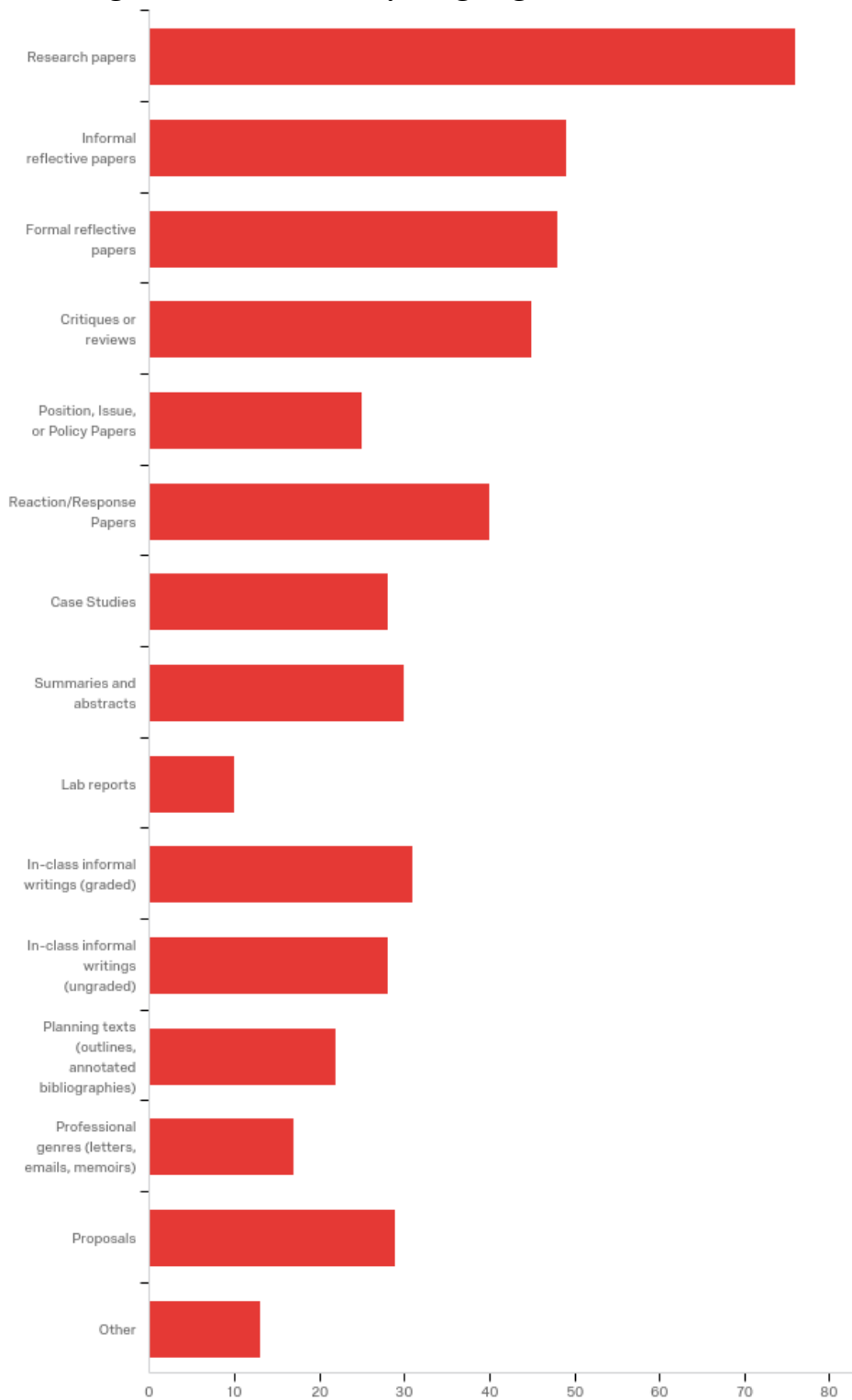
What is the typical page length of writing assignments students are asked to complete by our faculty?
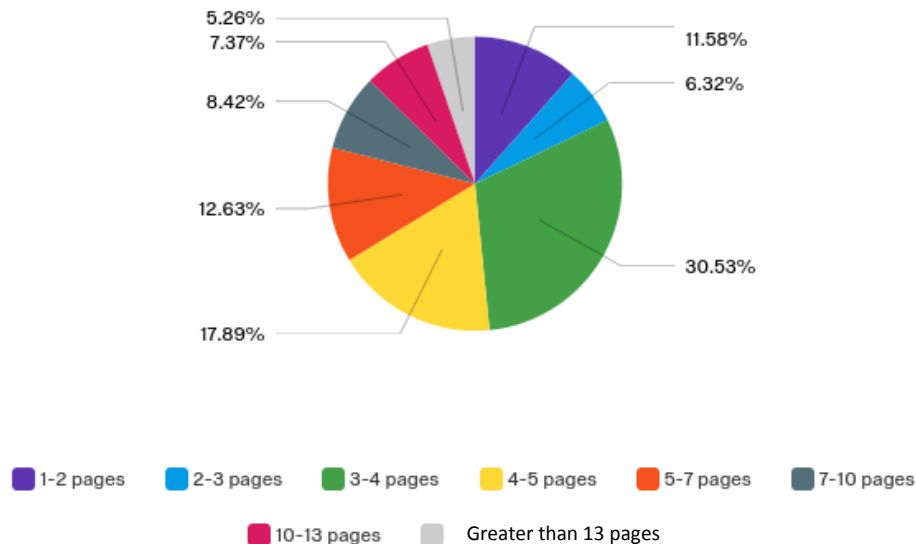
How do faculty view the grammar ability of students in their writing-emphasis courses? (n=94)
- 64% of faculty find student grammar to be "acceptable"
- 36% of faculty find student grammar to be "unacceptable
- No faculty find student grammar to be "exceptional"

How do faculty view students' abilities to communicate effectively about class concepts? (n=127)
- 2% of faculty find students' abilities to communicate class concepts effectively to be "exceptional"
- 82.5% of faculty find students' abilities to communicate class concepts effectively to be "acceptable"
- 13.5% of faculty find students' abilities to communicate class concepts effectively to be "unacceptable"

How do faculty view students' critical and analytical thinking abilities in courses that involve writing? (n=125)
- 61.5% of faculty find students' critical and analytical thinking to be "acceptable"
- 30% of faculty find students' critical and analytical thinking to be "unacceptable"
- 8.5% of faculty find students' critical and analytical thinking to be "exceptional"

How do faculty feel about the general education curriculum's current writing requirements? (n=127)

- 51% of faculty say the writing requirements at WCU are "just right" for helping students improve their writing
- 44% of faculty say the requirements are too little; students need much more writing instruction
- 5% of faculty are "too much" and that students don't need this much writing instruction

How do faculty rate the overall writing ability of students about to graduate? (n=125)

- 69% of faculty see our students' writing as "adequate" by graduation time
- 17% see our students' writing as "very good" by graduation time
- 11% see our students' writing as "poor" by graduation time
- 3% don't know

How do faculty see transfer students performing as writers in comparison to non-transfer students? (n=118)

- 59% of faculty see these students as performing the same as writers
- 32% of faculty see transfer students as performing worse than non-transfer students
- 9% of faculty see transfer students as performing better than non-transfer students

What changes do faculty believe would most improve the writing abilities of their students? Among four choices (n=127)**:**

- 51.5% believe more grammatical instruction in first-year writing would improve student writing abilities
- 26.5% believe more writing in the majors would improve student writing abilities
- 17% believe stricter admission requirements would improve student writing abilities
- 5% believe stricter transfer admission requirements would improve student writing abilities

Do faculty implement the best practices for writing instruction? (n=118)

Research in composition pedagogy and writing across the curriculum has charted and theorized a wide array of pedagogical approaches to writing instruction, such as current-traditional approaches, expressive approaches, and social-process approaches. Among all of these competing approaches to composition and writing, some common best practices for writing instruction cut across each and every domain as has been published by organizations such as the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). These best practices include:

- An ideal class size of 15-20 students or less
- Completion of multiple drafts of an assignment with feedback before submission of the final assignment
- Opportunity for student revision of work based on instructor feedback
- Faculty or peer intercession in student drafting processes through conferencing or peer-review of work
- Time spent in-class reading and discussing strong examples or models of the genre a student is writing in the course.
- Use of short and informal writings to build student knowledge of course content and develop skills that may be applied to a lengthier draft.

- Encouragement of student use of campus resources like the Writing Center
- Clear explanation of grading criteria for written assignments
- Classroom instruction and lecture in the criteria upon which students are being graded
- Attention to deliberate moves students are expected to make in the writing they are doing
- Utilization of support services, such as the University Writing Center

Faculty Reported Size of Writing Classes
- 50% of faculty reported that they typically have more than 25 students in their writing classes
- 28.75% of faculty reported that they typically have 20-25 students in their writing classes
- 6.25% of faculty reported that they typically have 15-20 students in their writing classes
- 15% of faculty reported that they typically have fewer than 15 students in their writing classes

Faculty Providing Opportunity for Students to Write Multiple Drafts
- 24% of faculty "Always" provide opportunity for multiple drafts
- 57% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide opportunity for multiple drafts
- 19% of faculty "Never" provide opportunity for multiple drafts

Faculty Providing Opportunities for Intercession/Feedback During the Student Drafting Process
- 55% of faculty "Always" provide **feedback on an early draft** of student writing
- 37% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide **feedback on an early draft** of student writing
- 8% of faculty "Never" provide **feedback on an early draft** of student writing

- 21% of faculty "Always" **conference with students** during the drafting process
- 59% of faculty only "Sometimes" **conference with students** during the drafting process
- 18% of faculty "Never" **conference with students** during the drafting process

- 22% of faculty "Always" provide **opportunity for peer review** of writing
- 38% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide **opportunity for peer review** of writing
- 39% of faculty "Never" provide **opportunity for peer review** of writing

Faculty Providing Opportunity for Student Revision of Writing
- 35% of faculty "Always" provide an opportunity for students to revise graded writing
- 44% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide an opportunity for students to revise graded writing
- 20% of faculty "Never" provide an opportunity for students to revise graded writing

Faculty Using Class Time to Provide Models of Strong Writing in the Discipline
- 41% of faculty "Always" provide models of "excellent writing" for students
- 47% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide models of "excellent writing" for students
- 11% of faculty "Never" provide models of "excellent writing" for students

Faculty Providing Detailed Assignment Sheets for Written Assignments
- 67% of faculty "Always" provide a detailed assignment sheet for written assignments

- 31% of faculty only "Sometimes" a detailed assignment sheet for written assignments
- 1% of faculty "Never" a detailed assignment sheet for written assignments

Faculty Explanation of Writing Assessment: What Makes an "A" vs. "B" vs. "C" Paper? And Rubric Use
- 50.5% of faculty "Always" provide a **written explanation of how papers are graded**
- 28.5% of faculty only "Sometimes" provide a **written explanation of how papers are graded**
- 18.5% of faculty "Never" provide a **written explanation of how papers are graded**

- 66% of faculty "Always" **provide rubrics** with writing assignments
- 20% of faculty only "Sometimes" **provide rubrics** with writing assignments
- 14% of faculty "Never" **provide rubrics** with writing assignments

Faculty Use of Informal In-Class Writing
- 31% of faculty "Always" use informal in-class writing assignments in their courses
- 43% of faculty only "Sometimes" use informal in-class writing assignments in their courses
- 25% of faculty "Never" use informal in-class writing assignments in their courses

Faculty Instruction on Deliberate Writing Moves Students should make in their Writing
- 25% of faculty "Always" show or discuss distinct writing moves that students should be making
- 32.5% of faculty "Sometimes" show or discuss distinct writing moves that students should be making
- 38% of faculty "Never" show or discuss distinct writing moves that students should be making

Faculty Directing Students to the Writing Center
- 43.5% of faculty "Always" direct students to seek support at the writing center
- 45.5% of faculty "Sometimes" direct students to seek support at the writing center
- 11% of faculty "Never" direct students to seek support at the writing center

Qualitative Data
In the faculty survey, two questions allowed for written reply. The first question was about the types of workshops and resources faculty would like to see from the university in support of their writing instruction. The second question was open for general commentary wherein faculty could provide "any additional comments about writing experiences and writing development."

- **What kind of workshops, conferences, support would you like to see from the university in support of faculty teaching writing courses?** (n=35)
    - 14% of faculty provided comments that they'd like to see development workshops that discuss new innovative approaches to teaching writing-emphasis courses since many of them are teaching old courses they inherited or that aren't up to date with new standards for writing instruction.
    - 14% of faculty would like to see free resources from the university that can help them deal with issues of grammar and correctness in student writing.

- o 11% of faculty would like to see easier or more opportunities for student access to existing support services like the Writing Center.
- o 9% of faculty comments about support focused on the desire to see smaller class sizes and/or support for teaching writing to many students, such as alternative graders.
- o 9% of faculty would like to see more opportunities for field-specific or writing in the disciplines preparation, such as science writing or business writing focused courses.
- o 9% of faculty would like to see free writing assignment grading rubrics be provided.
- o 6% of faculty would like to see more workshops on providing feedback on student writing.
- o 6% of faculty would like to see students better prepared as writers by the time they get to writing-emphasis classes.
- o Other feedback provided by individual faculty:
  - ▪ More support for second language writers
  - ▪ Supports in place for graduate student writers
  - ▪ Professional feedback on assignment sheets for writing projects
  - ▪ More reading emphasis throughout the curriculum
- o 11% of commentary on this question were miscellaneous

- **Additional comments about writing experiences and writing development that were provided**: (n=33)
  - o 21% of faculty use the open comment option to comment that they would like to see smaller class sizes, this is in addition to the 9% of faculty comments about class size in open comments about "support"
  - o 12% of faculty commented that they would like to see students held to higher writing standards in prior courses
  - o 12% of faculty commented that they would like to see student writing embedded in disciplinary content courses sooner or more often
  - o 9% of faculty commented that they would like to see more support, such as in the Writing Center, for non-traditional students and on issues like citation style.
  - o 6% of faculty commented that they would like to see a new approach to writing courses
  - o 6% of faculty commented that they are concerned about student grammar
  - o 27% of the comments on this question were miscellaneous (gripes about workplace, etc.)

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

The evidence presented in this assessment of faculty and student satisfaction with our writing curriculum indicates that faculty and students *feel* the writing curriculum is working to make students effective writers and communicators, but it also indicates that there are clear opportunities for growth both in how we support faculty and in the curricular offerings to our students. We know that faculty and students feel the curriculum is working because over 80% of our students see themselves as more effective writers and communicators at the time of graduation with nearly one-third say they are "very much" more effective at writing. Meanwhile, 86% of our faculty see their graduating undergraduate students as "adequate" or "very good" writers. These high ratings of writing ability from students and faculty should be kept in mind amid the perennial overstatement that students "can't even form sentences" as one faculty member anonymously responded—a statement espoused nationally in popular press articles like Jeffrey Selingo's (2017) editorial "Why can't College Graduates Write Coherent Prose?" Yet this clear evidence from faculty and students that they feel

our curriculum <u>does indeed improve student writing</u> and communication skills doesn't mean that our writing curriculum has reached its full potential; rather, it means <u>our full potential is within reach</u> should we use these self-reported feelings to take action on areas of our curriculum that show clear opportunities for growth.

Student Support and Curriculum Initiatives
There is clear evidence in this report that students seek earlier and more frequent opportunities to learn to write in their disciplines and future professions. Among the 22 students who choose to provide written suggestions about ways to improve the WCU writing curriculum, 36% of those comments pertained to more writing in the disciplines and 13.5% of those comments pertained to more "professional" and "real world" writing.

Without direct assessment of student writing, it remains unclear how WCU writers are performing grammatically and mechanically in comparison to other university students in America. Studies of error in college writing reveal that student error per 100 words has changed little over a span of 100 years (1917 to 2008) where it rose from an average error per 100-words of 2.11 in 1917 to 2.24 in 1930 to 2.26 in 1986 and most recently 2.45 in 2006 (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008). Yet, 36% of our faculty responded that they found student grammar to be "unacceptable" and nearly half of our students (46.5%) responded that our writing curriculum "not at all" or only "a little bit" improved their grammatical and mechanical skill as writers. It's a common mistake to consider grammatical performance in writing as remedial in educational contexts. Contrary to the attitude that students should already enter college with perfect grammar, we know that grammar and mechanical difficulty increases when writers are grappling with new or complex material. As students engage with new and difficult content, sophisticated terms and theories, complex problems, and new styles of writing or genres= in their majors and disciplines, we can and should expect student presentations of their knowledge and ideas to mirror the writers' understanding of those ideas. Faculty at all levels of our curriculum ought to expect student writing performance to waiver as they engage with new and complex ideas, rather than presuming a poor writing performance is rooted in student ignorance to grammatical rules. A direct assessment of student writing across the curriculum with attention to grammatical performance should take this into account.

There is also clear evidence that our writing curriculum could better address four domains of student development: reading abilities, creativity, problem-solving, and self-awareness. Faculty responding to open suggestions indicated a concern for student reading ability in particular, as well as on issues of problem-solving. 37% of our students responded that our writing curriculum "not at all" or only "a little bit" improved their problem-solving abilities, and more than half of our students (52.5%) responded that our writing curriculum "not at all" or only "a little bit" improved their creativity. In fact several students volunteered open responses in the survey indicating a desire for more creative writing, critical thinking, and problem solving opportunities. This may indicate that there is a gulf between faculty perception of what's needed and student perception of what's needed. We ought to listen to students about their needs and desires in higher education while also expecting instruction in some of the skills and thinking we ask our students to develop, even if it's not a skill or way of thinking they yet value.

Lastly, some students have indicated that they do not feel challenged enough by the writing curriculum. In written feedback in the survey, 11.5% of all students' written comments (see qualitative data) indicated feelings that they weren't challenged enough as writers and 20% of students' written comments about our first-year writing curriculum indicated feelings of not being challenged. As a formidable state university, WCU has both the privilege and challenge of a study body with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. We are enrolling many highly prepared and academically talented students, and we are also enrolling students who are non-traditional and/or still developing their academic skills—work that is integral to our PASSHE mission. The effect of this range of abilities on the writing classroom may be that faculty struggle to deliver writing instruction that can be challenging to all rather than challenging for many, just right for some, and not challenging enough for others. Developing writers clearly benefit from being in the same classroom as more advanced writers, which means that efforts to better group students into writing courses by talent-level may have a negative impact on our developing writers. Instead, the university might develop writing assessment

and grading guidelines that can be used with consistency across the curriculum and which faculty agree sets the agreed upon standards for writing rigor.

Possible Action Items

- Infuse the curriculum with short or informal writings that provide opportunities to solve problems, reflect on oneself, and be creative. This could be incentivized by a campus wide publication or contest that would make problem-solving and creativity part of our campus culture.
- Create critical research writing courses (WRT200) with meta-disciplinary themes such as "Writing in the Social Sciences"; "Writing in the Natural Sciences"; "Writing in the Humanities"; "Writing in the Health Sciences" etc. Such courses would be taught by first-year writing faculty and maintain the same learning goals and outcomes, but would take meta-disciplinary content as the object of inquiry in the courses.
- An abbreviated (8 week) one credit online course that students still struggling with copyediting, grammar, and mechanical issues can be referred into by faculty teaching writing-emphasis courses that identify correctness issues that are beyond their ability to address.
- More support staff at the Writing Center to further innovations like the portable writing center, and the training of specialized disciplinary writing tutors.
- A "Reading Across the Campus" initiative that requires students in a WRT200 or other course taken by all WCU students to read a common book or series of articles as part of course content.
- Develop opportunities to individualize instruction for students ready to be challenged in their writing development.

Faculty Development and Support

There is clear evidence in this report that faculty are not implementing the best practices for writing instruction. Most faculty (over 70%) are not frequently utilizing class time to teach and discuss the distinct disciplinary moves of their disciplines; rather, many faculty in writing-emphasis courses appear to be simply assigning writing and grading it. But of course assigning and grading writing is not teaching writing; and in the case of grading writing only 50% of our faculty report that they are regularly providing students with written explanations of the letter grades they are providing. Helping faculty develop writing assignment sheets that are clear about the assignments and the grading criteria for those assignments may improve both faculty and student satisfaction with writing instruction. Ensuring that all faculty are teaching writing using best practices may require further development, such as formal training and certification.

A much broader dilemma we face in our curriculum is the pervasiveness of the myth that writing is a singular, monolithic, and generalized skill that transfers easily into every disciplinary domain. The myth goes that students learn to write in grade secondary school and all future instruction is somehow remedial. Contrary to this myth, we know that collegiate writing is very different than writing in secondary education; we know that success in academic writing is about awareness of and attentiveness to one's disciplinary discourse community, which students will by and large not grasp until very late in their studies, or perhaps not even until graduate study or in work as a professional. We also know that what constitutes "good effective writing" varies widely from discipline to discipline, assignment to assignment, and among different reader tastes among individual faculty. Some faculty bemoan split infinitives, others have very particular ideas about what constitutes a strong source summary. Such preferences are a fact of life, but student performance of faculty preferences in language and writing is not the means by which we should measure our writing curriculum. Many faculty members seem to forget that the writing-emphasis courses are precisely where students ought to learn these contextual particularities rather than to expect students to enter a writing-emphasis course already knowing and ready to be tested upon their knowledge of specialized writing discourses. When faculty adopt this myth of monolithic writing and assign-to-test writing ability rather than teaching writing and assign-to-learn, we inadvertently miss out on an opportunity to teach students the very best of what we expect from them. Application of disciplinary terms and concepts, critical thinking, clarity and conciseness, participation in a scholarly community, and problem-solving skills are some of the best that we can provide for our students; and when designed well, these are all skills that are embedded into writing performances. By teaching our

students these skills and then providing them with written assignments that ask them to perform these skills as writers we are teaching both disciplinary writing and disciplinary thinking. Thus, we ought to work toward a writing across the curriculum program at WCU that ensures faculty are connecting thinking with writing, that provides students with direct instruction in disciplinary thinking and associated disciplinary writing moves, and that challenges students with writing assignments that ask them to perform as thinkers and writers in their disciplines.

Lastly, class size in writing-emphasis and writing-related courses remains an ongoing challenge. From an administrative standpoint, it's clear that financial and enrollment constraints are an influence on class size, and such constraints are beyond the purview of this report. From a pedagogical standpoint, however, it's clear that best practices for writing instruction (opportunity for revision, instructor feedback on writing, completion of multiple drafts, opportunities for one-on-one conferencing with students, etc.) become increasingly difficult if not impossible within a three credit hour course. It's for this reason that the National Council of Teachers of Education (NCTE) recommends 15 or fewer students in writing courses. Building on this recommendation, WCU's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) established a recommendation of no more than 25 students in writing-emphasis and first-year writing courses. Yet, a full half of our faculty report typically having more than 25 students enrolled in their writing-emphasis or writing-related courses and a regular audit of course offerings reveals that roughly 25% of writing-emphasis courses offered each semester exceed this 25 student recommendation, with many writing-emphasis courses exceeding 30 students. In some cases it might be better to remove a writing-emphasis designation from a course that departments want highly enrolled than to continue running those writing-emphasis courses above the recommended class size of 25 or fewer.

Possible Action Items
- Establish a writing-emphasis instructor certification process to ensure faculty knowledge of best practices in writing-emphasis instruction.
- Create better opportunities for student knowledge transfer by familiarizing and encouraging faculty to build upon the student learning objectives in the first-year writing program: "Think with writing" (writing to learn), "This about writing" (metacognition), and "Produce writing."
- Fund and create mechanism through which faculty can submit their writing-related assignment sheets, rubrics, and syllabi for feedback and review from writing pedagogy specialists on campus.
- Provide more digital resources for faculty to use as they develop a writing pedagogy, such as model assignments.
- Continue to host workshops and events that emphasize to faculty the importance of *teaching writing* by discussing writing as part of course content, rather than only *assigning and grading writing*.
- Highlight effect writing pedagogy through the establishment of a faculty award.
- Host workshops and events highlighting best practices in writing instruction, especially the importance of allowing multiple drafts of a work and providing students an opportunity to revise after a grade has been given on a work of writing.
- Work with faculty to identify and name what's specific about writing in their discipline or field, and to devise ways to teach students those specific disciplinary writing moves, such as through a faculty fellows program or the creation of disciplinary writing guides. This may also include more specific naming of assignments and genres being assignment beyond the ubiquitous "research paper."
- Better enforce caps on writing-emphasis class sizes across all colleges. Continue to find ways to limit writing-focused classes to 25 students or less and avoid as much as possible assigning faculty at every level (adjunct, full-time, tenured, non-tenured) multiple sections of writing-focused classes in a single semester.

Works Consulted

CCCC Executive Committee. "Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." Conference on College Composition & Communication, 2015.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." Revised March 2015. http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting

Dunning, D., Heath, C., & Suls, J. M. (2004). Flawed self-assessment: Implications for health, education, and the workplace. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(3), 69-106.

Gladstein, J. M. (2013). The National Census of Writing. Retrieved from:
https://writingcensus.swarthmore.edu/

Horning, Alice. 2007. The definitive article on class size. *Journal of Writing Program Administration* 31.1-2. Kuh, George D., Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, Elizabeth Whitt and Associates. 2005. Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Lunsford, A. A., & Lunsford, K. J. (2008). " Mistakes are a fact of life": A national comparative study. *College Composition and Communication*, 781-806.