Lehman College
Writing Across the Curriculum
Elaine Avidon, Cindy Lobel, Tyler T. Schmidt, Marcie Wolfe, Coordinators
Program Update: 2012-2013

WAC Goals
1. Support and improve faculty’s teaching of writing as well their uses of writing to support student learning in both upper and lower division courses across all disciplines;
2. Develop a cross-departmental culture of reflection about teaching and learning among Lehman faculty;
3. Forge links among the various initiatives at Lehman tasked with supporting the academic literacy and English-language development of Lehman undergraduates.

Writing-in-the-Majors Initiative 2010-2013
The WAC program is completing its third year of working with faculty to develop writing-intensive guidelines for upper-division courses. The objectives for this writing-in-the-majors work include:

1. Create course-specific, and eventually department-specific, WI guidelines for 300-level courses for majors;
2. Train and support departmental faculty leaders with expertise in WI guidelines and approaches to writing in the majors;
3. Develop assessment rubrics and student writing exemplars in the majors; and
4. Develop faculty resources to support writing-intensive courses in the majors.

Activities and Accomplishments 2012-2013

Spring 2012
1. Completed year-long faculty-development seminar.
3. Guided the development of faculty e-portfolios containing their guidelines as well as assignments, rubrics, sample student writing, and faculty reflections on the use of writing in their upper-division courses.

4. Held our second WIM Guidelines Review Day on May 25, 2012:
   a. All 10 WIM faculty participated, bringing with them at least one departmental colleague. Total participation = 45 faculty and administrators.
   b. Departmental colleagues reviewed draft guidelines and provided feedback on WIM faculty’s expectations for students, faculty, and disciplinary writing.
   c. Departmental colleagues also reviewed a sampling of student writing from participating faculty’s WIM courses to consider how that writing reached, exceeded, or missed the expectations laid out in the WI guidelines prepared by the faculty.
   d. Initiated departmental discussions about the types of writing, expectations of students, and expectations of faculty in upper-division writing-intensive courses.

Fall 2012
1. Developed resources for use in workshops and by faculty visiting the WAC website. We worked with writing fellows to compile materials in four areas: exemplary assignments, critical reading, revision, scaffolding. We conducted a website audit. We reviewed evaluation data from 2011-2012. We edited and uploaded to the website WIM course guidelines from 21 faculty representing 15 departments.

2. Led a new faculty workshop, September 24, 2012. In this workshop 12 faculty new to Lehman learned about the WAC program, wrote about their students as writers, responded to definitions of academic writing, and reviewed the resources on the WAC website.

3. Developed draft WIM guidelines in consultation with the Lehman Writing Council. To create these guidelines, we studied the course guidelines produced by participating faculty in 2010-2012, and identified commonalities in purposes, expectations, and assessment criteria.

4. Planned, recruited, and prepared for departmental work in the spring semester: met with chairs and representative faculty from the history and social work departments, developed materials, identified readings to share with faculty.

Spring 2013
1. Departmental workshops/resource development (20 hours of meeting time per group)
   History working group: Developing faculty resources to support history students in a few specific areas: developing assignments, helping students as readers and researchers, and guiding students through the revision process. Working group members are creating a “toolkit” of these resources to be made available digitally for history department faculty (five faculty, both full-time and adjunct). Facilitated by Tyler T. Schmidt and Cindy Lobel.

   Social Work working group: Focusing on academic literacy for social work majors, specifically the ways students learn and use the language and genres of the profession. They are assembling a chart that aligns assignment types used in their courses with targeted social work competencies and writing practices, and developing a portfolio of “model” assignments that tie into that chart. These resources will be made available digitally for social work faculty (six faculty, both full-time and adjunct). Facilitated by Elaine Avidon and Marcie Wolfe.
2. Combined WAC/QR Workshop, February 8, 2013. In the workshop, 11 faculty participants (from 10 departments and the Adult Learning Center) explored approaches to scaffolding assignments; examined exemplary scaffolded assignments and units, including those that require quantitative reasoning; and began to design or refine their own scaffolded assignments. Facilitated by Tyler T. Schmidt and Elin Waring.

3. Will recruit for and lead a two-day WAC faculty-development institute on May 28-29, 2013 for interested faculty and new Writing Fellows.

4. Additional ongoing activities:
   - Training and support of Writing Fellows
   - Monthly CUNY-wide WAC meetings/events
   - Curating relevant documents from WAC programs nationally
   - Completing CUNY surveys, reports, evaluations
   - Recruiting new Writing Fellows

**National Dissemination**


Appendix
WAC Writing in the Majors
End-of-Year Survey Results

Surveys of the 10 faculty who participated in our 2011-2012 year-long project to develop writing-intensive guidelines for majors courses revealed that:

- All ten participating faculty: a) found the process of articulating guidelines/expectations beneficial for their teaching; b) made changes in the ways they understand and teach writing; c) plan to bring the approaches they encountered while participating in WIM to their future teaching; and d) changed the way they design assignments.
- Seven out of 10 faculty commented that their participation in the WIM Initiative helped them to clarify expectations for writing in the major for themselves and for students, in particular around disciplinary genres, audiences, and purposes for writing.
- Five participating faculty see a need for more conversation within their departments about implementation of writing-intensive guidelines, reflecting on the need for more consistent communication in their departments and the efficacy of the guidelines in more interdisciplinary departments.

We collected survey data from guest faculty and administrators who attended our end-of-year Guidelines Review Day. Surveys revealed that participating in this day:

- provided faculty with new ways to use writing in their courses and/or reinforced the value of ways they are already using writing. Some ways of using writing they plan to develop include...
  - Scaffolding big assignments through low-stakes writing and shorter assignments throughout the semester
  - Using double-entry logs to support student engagement with course material
  - Revising their syllabi to make disciplinary writing expectations clearer
  - Including more opportunities for revision
  - Making submission of drafts mandatory instead of optional
  - Including peer review to support revision
  - Further thinking about how to encourage student engagement
- encouraged faculty to think more about the importance of making their expectations clear to students. Some thoughts about this from guest faculty members:
  - “I intend to develop my own ‘guidelines’ using these as a model. I think writing out my thoughts on each of these categories (i.e. role of writing, expectation of faculty) will help me clarify my expectations and articulate them more clearly to my students.”
  - “[I might] Include in my syllabus (explicitly) a section about writing for Political Science. Describe with clarity and precision in the syllabus the many ‘types’ of academic Pol. Sci. texts (i.e. historical, chronological, analytical, etc.).”
  - “I like the idea of incorporating faculty expectations into course guidelines and curriculum development. Clear expectations for how writing forwards/helps achieve course goals.”
- stimulated discussion about the need for further work on disciplinary guidelines on the departmental level and/or the need for more Lehman faculty in general to be involved in discussions about writing.