**Writing Across Curriculum Committee meeting   
Friday, October 27, 2017 2:00 – 3:45 p.m.**

**Present:** Dan Murtaugh, Julia Mason, Carol Tessel, Wairmu Njambi, Jamie Granger, Gail Horton, Jeff Galin, Julianne Zvolensky

**Absent:** Allen Smith, Fred Bloetscher, Deborah d’Avolio, Jerry Haky

**Central question for meeting:** Do our Mission & Goals meet represent the work we are actually doing?

**1. WEC update**

Watching the WEC process has helped **Jeff Galin (JG)** get a new perspective of what a WAC program does in a university.

School of Urban and Regional Planning will begin this process as soon as possible.  
**Update since meeting: Julianne Zvolensky (JZ)** helped prepare affiliate, faculty, undergraduate, and graduate surveys with the SURP faculty liaison, Jesse Saginor. She sent him the sharable links to the Google Form surveys and proposed the two-week response deadline of Wednesday, November 22 (the day before Thanksgiving). The “Meeting 1/M1” is planned for Wednesday, November 29 at 11:00.

**2. WAC Assessment**

We need to make a very concerted effort to get usable data from some of the departments.

Regarding the Assessment process, **JG** has asked CTL directors about how to get better participation from students. This is useful info and may factor into our goals. Suggestions included:

1. Faculty need to be more adamant about students participating. Perhaps a representative could visit a class to explain it? This may not be possible given our resources.
2. We could ask faculty to either have students complete the assessment during class or give their students a class deadline for completion (separate from the assessment deadline). WAC cold then follow up after this faculty-set deadline.
3. Faculty could decide to incentivize participation by making the assessment tied to an assignment, like a participation to grade.

If WAC decided to tell faculty they could do this, it would have to remove the IRB study from the assessment. **JG** thinks this would be a good idea to do so. Originally, **JG** thought he or the WAC committee would want to write/publish about it, and so obtained an IRB. When **JG** first designed the assessment and proposed research study, he wanted to do a study of what revision looked like across university using something like “merge documents” in MS Word. So, the assessment asked students to submit first and second drafts of the same paper. But the assessment rating only looks at the final drafts and we have never attempted the comparison study of first and revised drafts. However, because the data is aggregated, he can get permission to use it after the fact rather than before. One of the complications that WAC has run into over the past several years is that students did not see a difference between the required participation in the assessment and the optional participation in the research study. The first thing that the students encounter on the assessment website is an IRB study consent form for the research study, so they would either say they wanted to “opt out” of the assessment or ignore it all together because they thought it was optional. If we remove the layer of complexity of the IRB/consent form, maybe it could help. If we remove the consent, then faculty can do penalties/incentives.

1. We could try sending students notices via Starfish. Students may pay more attention to Starfish notifications since they can be tied to advising. However, it is unclear as to whether Starfish is geared exclusively to lower-division students or not.

**Dan Murtaugh (DM)** could we make the WAC assessment as one of the class’s assignments? Faculty could use the option of making it an assignment.

**Gail Horton (GH)** Perhaps a problem with having students submit both the first and second drafts is that some faculty write drafts in “chunks.” Meaning, the students build the final draft incrementally, so there is not a single “first draft” that students can submit.

**JG** at this point, we aren’t using the first drafts. We could jettison the first drafts since we only look at revised drafts. But I don’t want to make that decision now.

**3. WAC program review & Mission Statement**

**The committee reviewed the current FAU WAC mission statement and an example from University of Missouri. The committee discussed what kinds of things should be the focus of our mission statement.**

**Current mission statement:**

*The University’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions. The WAC program’s primary focus is to strengthen the teaching and learning of writing in undergraduate education.*

*WAC also assists colleges, departments, and individual faculty members with all aspects of the teaching of writing and reading in their disciplines, including designing writing and reading assignments, responding to student writing, designing writing assessment, and using writing to improve critical thinking. WAC collaborates with other faculty development and support programs on campus and provides outreach to high schools and community colleges.*

**Discussion:** Currently our existing statement is based more in faculty to faculty or course-course based. Representation of WEC needs to be included. Definitely the systematic analysis and implementation of a writing plan is not represented and this is important to add. Also, the assessment process has grown and changed since this was written. For example, now departments will be able to set benchmarks and goals. There are now new ways to represent the data and show change and growth. It is the first time we’ve really been able to start closing the loop.

Once we’ve established program goals and sustainability indicators (SI), we can look at specific projects.

The WAC process that we had since the beginning of the program has shifted. The majority of WAC courses now are at the lower division; the upper division is only a smattering of a representation among courses. Many departments have gotten rid of WAC courses because they were too hard for the departments to sustain.

We have seen this problem with sustainability coming, but this is why we started the WEC program. **JG** and **JZ** will develop new part of the WAC website to showcase WEC initiative where we will post writing plans.

About a quarter of departments in the university are interested in pursuing a WEC initiative. The end result of this entire review process should be a fairly substantial report of all our discussions about revision of mission statement, goals, and sustainability indicators. **JG** described visual representation of a program’s sustainability on a radar graph. A radar graph has an inner band representing the minimum operating threshold and an outer bad that represents the maximum operating threshold. These are the bands of equilibrium that represent an area of sustainability. If projects migrate out of either band, the program is not sustainable. A radar graph will show a snapshot of the program; a program could decide to take such a snapshots maybe twice a year. We will do one for the program overall and for each of the projects. The final report will show all the things that we do, but the report will put the focus on WEC since it has the most potential for impact in the university.

**DM** If the WAC courses are predominately in the lower division, then we are missing many students. i.e. transfers and non-traditional students. **JG** there are many reasons why this happens. This is another thing to go in the reports. We may even develop a survey for faculty to get a data stream for these reports.

**JG** showed how Coggle mind map program worked and started to map the WAC program. This information summarizes the kinds of things we do.

**The committee continued discussion of the mission statement about what might need to be revised and/or added. (Some limited notes of the discussion are below on next page.) JG created a Google Doc to facilitate the conversation, which will be shared with the committee to make further comments and adjustments after the meeting. The committee will review progress at the next meeting.**

The University’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions. The WAC program’s primary focus is to strengthen the teaching and learning of writing in undergraduate education.

WAC also assists colleges, departments, and individual faculty members with all aspects of the teaching of writing and reading in their disciplines, including designing writing and reading assignments, responding to student writing, designing writing assessment, and using writing to improve critical thinking. WAC collaborates with other faculty development and support programs on campus and provides outreach to high schools and community colleges.

Building writing competencies in their disciplines

Enhancing writing within the individual curriculum. Beyond the courses, it is the department itself. Systemic planning throughout the curriculum. Systemic reflection and revision

Including support for individual courses and for the enhancement of writing

As well as department-wide self-study and self reflection about curriculum.

JM suggestion to restructure

Goals to reflect in mission – department wide and individual courses.

Including department-wide and individual courses

Establighing a culture of writing enhancement within departments.

DM: for WEC the word “sequential” should somehow be there. Like, there is a central course that you start at for writing in that discipline, then 2nd and 3rd arrays of course. Start with a course or a kind of course. The dept has achieved a certain basis.

TERMS WE WANT TO INCLUDE

Promoting teaching of writing across all levels

Promoting writing and the teaching of writing

Writing to learn activities.

Start with “Because the writing to learn activiieties prove X, we do WAC. WAC will do/help these things. Help teachers teach so that students can learn to write in order to think.

Abilty to write is essential to being able to think clearly.

Start with:

The WAC program strengthens the teaching and learning of reading and writing in undergraduate education.

Teaching not only learning to write, but writing to learn.

JM might that put writing as a service rather than a discipline?

The reason for writing is to identify the primary moments in a course that merits slowing down thinking.

Original: Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions.

We are not just teaching students to write coherently/correctly, but to use the process of writing itself to aide in learning the subject matter.

Maybe second paragraph belongs in the goals? Everyone thinks it sounds like process.

GH feels strongly that we should start with a justification.

Looked at University of Missouri’s mission statement.

What we may want to do, is when thinking of objectives we can look back to this example.

Vision statement?

It is essential that students learn to communicate clearly and effectively both within and among and between disciplines.

Critical thinking has to come before that; you have to have a knowledge base before you can be clear and effective.

Abiliites to think critically and engage In complex problems facilitate effective clear and effectively.

JG wants to challenge the notion of writing sentences using writing-to-learn.

There is a relationship between writing to learn and problem solving and critical thinking and then ultimately to clearly and effectively communicate.

Why is this important? This is not really present in current statement.