



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CAMPUS WRITING PROGRAM

E-WAC

FALL 2011

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Greetings from Campus Writing Program

by Amy Lannin

Serving the University of Missouri (MU) in the capacity of Campus Writing Program (CWP) Director is an honor. As a WI instructor for several years, I have been supported by the Campus Writing Program for syllabus and assignment guidance, workshops, resources on the website, and more. Being around the MU campus for ten years, I was aware of the long-standing reputation of this program as one of the strongest in the country. For almost 30 years, faculty at MU have seen the need to make writing an *intentional* part of their courses through supporting a WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) program and WI (Writing Intensive) requirements. Faculty realize the effectiveness of writing as a tool for learning and the need to guide students in learning to write in the various disciplines.

Writing is critical to our students' thinking, learning, and success. Stepping from my own classroom teaching to the broader campus view, I am impressed by the assignments and approaches faculty have developed to infuse writing into their courses. I appreciate the successes of the writing intensive requirements and WAC Program at MU, and as Director of CWP I can affirm that we enthusiastically look for

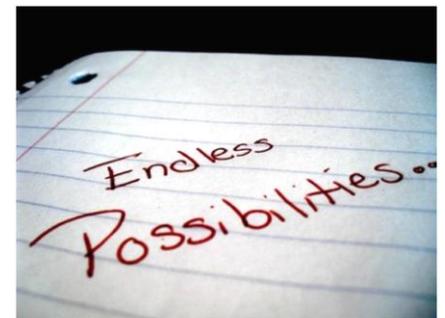
faculty feedback regarding changes and new directions we could pursue.

Stop by the Conley House

When I began as CWP Director in June, one of the aspects of this position that intrigued me was the location of the Campus Writing Program. Housed in the old Conley home is a welcoming place, a piece of history for both MU and Columbia. The original owners, Sanford and Kate Conley, were leaders in the community. Many of their descendants became part of MU, including their son Dudley S. Conley, who served as Dean of the School of Medicine, 1933-1948.

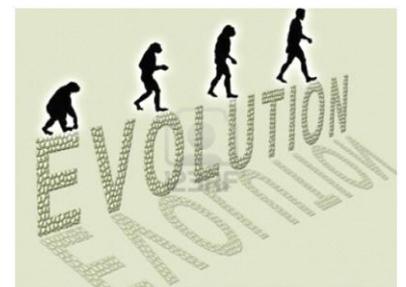
Because of this history and legacy, we at The Conley House encourage campus and community members to stop by for a tour, or for faculty who want a quiet place to write (a get-away that is easy to get to), sign up for one of our monthly writing retreats!

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Writing Program Administrators Conference

Baton Rouge was the site for the annual Writing Program Administrators (WPA) conference. Bonnie, Catherine, and I joined Donna Strickland (MU's Director of Composition) to represent MU at this national gathering of writing program leaders. Participants included those working with first year composition as well as writing across the curriculum in institutions that ranged from community colleges to large universities. Some of the facilitators represented Arizona State, Purdue, University of Minnesota, and Illinois State University.

The week-long event included in-depth workshops on writing program issues, including mission statements, outcomes, job descriptions, budgets, program plans, assessment, program evaluation, and outreach. We left the conference with many ideas for *Writing* at MU.

Building "relationships" and a "culture" for writing were two resonating concepts. We were building relationships as a team of Campus Writing Program staff, and with other leaders from across several states and Canada. We discussed the need for relationships to be built with faculty, other institutions, and other programs within our local and university contexts, all of which will allow us to know and build on the work of others. For instance, many writing programs

see a need to align more with K-12 educators for research, programs, and understanding. We also see the need to connect with others at our universities who are involved with writing (first year writing, writing center, etc.).

WPA attendees communicated a desire to step beyond writing-intensive as a course label to a broadly infused culture of writing. A culture of writing would include an understanding of and living with the aspects of writing, the messiness of the process, the glories of publication, the full aspect of using writing to learn and learning to write within disciplines. As conference participants continued to share the need for a culture of writing, I kept asking myself how a culture of writing is formed. How is such a culture created? Time. People. Sharing. Experiencing. Relationships.



As we plan for 2011-2012 events, we hope to continue building these relationships and creating a culture for writing that enhances the learning and accomplishments of our Mizzou community!



Spring 2012 Events and Workshops

For Registration and More Information about CWP Events:

<https://etapps.missouri.edu/cwp/event>

January 5/6, 2012 – Faculty Writing Retreat

January 9/10, 2012 – Faculty Writing Intensive Workshop

January 13, 2012 – TA Writing Intensive Workshop

February 3, 2012 - Faculty Writing Retreat

February 15, 2012 – CWP Seminar: Writing Assessment

March 9, 2012 – Faculty Writing Retreat

March 14, 2012- CWP Seminar: Online Course Design & Instruction

April 13, 2012 – Faculty Writing Retreat

Campus Writing Program: Possibilities for the Future

by Bonnie Selting

“Telling the future by looking at the past assumes that conditions remain constant. This is like driving a car by looking in the rearview mirror”

If I were to write that we are in a transitional moment at the University of Missouri's (MU) Campus Writing Program (CWP), I would be making the *understatement* of the year. CWP has a new director, and when a program has a new director, it's likely that new ideas will emerge, and when new ideas happen, such programs as CWP often start heading in new directions, and when these types of programs start heading in new directions, everyone connected with them may see new places to put their energies. So, as we head into and out of what is always a short summer, it seems that CWP will be undertaking a revitalization that has its staff excited and focused. This is not to imply that the program has been idle. We've redesigned our faculty workshops more than once; we go to all the conferences and present papers; we offer seminars and workshops and one-on-one training for faculty across the entire campus, and working with the Campus Writing Board, we remain responsible for both quality management of all Writing Intensive (WI) courses and accurate record keeping. No, it is simply a time during which “change” will be prompting new ideas and energy. Change can do that.

As we know, a campus writing program has two bottom-lines—a financial one and an academic one. We must attend to the financial one in order to survive and to the academic one in order to fulfill our main mission: *fostering institutional knowledge and understanding of writing's importance for real learning to promote students' thinking and learning skills*. Thus, any change in CWP will connect in some way to these bottom lines. Importantly, some possibilities are just that, possible

but perhaps not probable for a while. Some are probabilities and quite doable. The presentation of the following projects is driven by possibilities and probabilities. Even though some of these projects are highly probable and doable in the very near future, some will have to wait awhile to be put into place. The point is to encourage all stakeholders (faculty, graduate students, administrators, community members, etc.) to become interested and engaged in CWP projects and both the practical and theoretical sides of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiatives. We mean to make *exceptionally transparent* the possible and probable projects that we feel can engage students in the kind of learning that writing provides. Research shows repeatedly that this “kind of learning” will enrich their lives by increasing their abilities to “make meaning” of what they learn—the fundamental feature of using writing as a teaching tool. So, even though all of the following plans are not yet “on our calendar,” we at CWP consider the information essential to our readers and would greatly appreciate any reactions: comments and/or questions, demonstrations of interest of any kind. We are at Conley House, 602 Sanford Street and our central phone number is 882-4881.

Creative Efforts Toward Faculty Engagement: Faculty involvement and support are the main reasons MU's CWP has gained national recognition. Such support remains the *most vital part* of any successful interdisciplinary writing program. MU's CWP has a host of dedicated, resolute WI faculty who champion writing as an essential tool for students to make “meaning,” develop critical thinking skills, and learn disciplinary content. Through research and many discussions with faculty, however, CWP has learned that the engagement and enthusiasm upon which this writing program was founded



would benefit from a well designed revitalization program. This issue could be addressed in many ways: a) by establishing a consistent pattern of meeting with departmental faculty on their own ground, querying them on specific needs, and designing workshops *within* their own departmental areas to deal with those needs b) by the CWP staff re-establishing more direct and consistent contact with Department Chairs and College Deans c) by being creative in outreach projects that include, but go beyond, our regular workshops. As implied above, this Program was built on faculty enthusiasm, and one way to sustain it is for CWP to get creative in enhancing intra-department, collegial interaction *and* our effectiveness as a resource.

Faculty Seminar Series: CWP plans to offer invited seminars, which will pay stipends to participating faculty and be guided by the following goals:

- ✓ To help faculty develop a richer and more robust way to talk about specific writing issues
- ✓ To encourage faculty participants to learn new techniques for teaching content through writing.
- ✓ To dispel assumptions that participants may have developed about student writing: “my students can't write.”
- ✓ To help participating faculty revisit theories and strategies for success in WI classrooms by having them examine their own issues and contribute their own ideas for seminar discussion and activities.

Several WI faculty have been interviewed on this idea and demonstrated a high level of interest. There will be eight meetings in the series and each participant will be responsible

for listing at least three issues s/he is especially concerned about at the first meeting. In this collegial milieu, participants will focus their issues and lead a future seminar meeting on one of them. These issues can cover the whole realm of writing pedagogy, from grammar/mechanical problems to the more complex critical thinking/inquiry-problem based assignments. To correlate the discussions with pertinent literature/ resources, CWP will offer a comprehensive list of resources such as Rich Haswell's *Gaining Ground*, Lee Ann Carroll *Rehearsing New Roles*, Anne Beaufort's ethnographies, Chris Anson's case studies, and Terry Zawacki's *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines*, and others. Faculty participants will also present a Brown Bag or Workshop based on their seminar presentation, and CWP will host the event as we continue to work toward that more "robust" conversation.

FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE FACULTY SEMINAR SERIES

Any faculty interested in participating should call either Dr. Bonnie Selting at 884-6221; email: seltingb@missouri.edu or Dr. Amy Lannin, 882-4881; email: Lannina@missouri.edu.

Work More Closely with MU

Advantage: As we can see from MU Advantage's internet Home Page (www.missouri.edu/mizzou-advantage), this initiative identifies "competitive assets that set MU apart from other universities." CWP could be integral in helping faculty strengthen students' chances to "set MU apart" if we pay attention to the unique way Advantage has designed its learning "areas." For example, the notion of teaching students to work on the "cutting edge of research on the convergence of human animal health" means that the faculty involved with projects in this area will be teaching proposal and research paper writing. It would be the same with preparing students "to assess and respond to the cultural, economic, and political consequences unleashed by

major technological change," another Advantage area. CWP has given workshops to Veterinary students on how the elements of rhetoric can be seminal to successful documents in their field and received much positive response from both students and the faculty who attended. That kind of activity is one way we can contribute, along with using our expertise to teach assignment design and revision techniques for specific Advantage faculty working on specific Advantage projects. The idea here is that if CWP is to meet its goals, it must embed itself more into campus systems and policies in ways that will heighten cross-campus awareness of its existence and value.

Expand WI Designations: Exciting new work in WAC involves moving away from labeled or flagged courses and moving toward infusing writing throughout a whole curriculum and across a student's entire degree program. In terms of criteria, CWP and the Campus Writing Board already have, for several semesters, been moving away from a single baseline standard for writing in a course, and approved WI courses that differ significantly from one another in terms of how "writing" is defined. For instance, technologically produced genres such as Power Points, Videos/movies, and Prezi are scrutinized for ways they meet Writing Intensive Guidelines and promote intellectual growth. CWP will be an important part of these discussions in terms of conferring with writing faculty, researching the issue, and being knowledgeable in the use of rhetorical principles.

For instance, many believe that when a course is "labeled" Writing Intensive it automatically excuses other courses from using this most important teaching tool. Others, especially students and faculty who use writing anyway, see the word "intensive" as off-putting and

intimidating. Thus, it would seem that CWP, the Administration, and MU's WI Writing Faculty could start a conversation on expanding terms and criteria with the goal of designating more ways to credit students with courses (writing enhanced? Infused?) and more ways to define how that credit would be applied toward students' advancement. This would involve some groundbreaking research and set MU apart in its ability to forge new territory in WAC theory and pedagogy.

Faculty Compensation: Compensation for faculty who infuse writing-to-learn principles and strategies into their courses is generally non-existent at most post-secondary academic institutions. It has been an issue since the beginning of WAC in the 1970's and is generally based on the "publish or perish" conundrum wherein faculty working toward tenure or any sort of job security must often negotiate their time between researching/ writing/ publishing, and the extra work of designing effective writing assignments and reading papers. Often out of necessity and survival, research and publishing wins. There are, however, several possible ways to deal with this tension, *if* campus consciousness can be raised on this topic. The MU CWP could conduct its own research studies with the help of campus faculty by asking and finding answers to questions such as:

- "What methods are utilized by other institutions to award faculty who take the extra time, thought, and effort to incorporate writing into courses across disciplines?"
- What can we do to institute *well-attended* seminars to encourage collaboration with Administration, Faculty Council and other pertinent academic entities?

Research has already shown that there are no definitive answers to these kinds of questions. But studies also show that, although often put on the "back burner," teacher compensation issues always play a part in WAC discussions. It is a compelling issue, well worth looking into. CWP would like to do so in an attempt to come up with viable, useful



ideas and once again contribute to the national scene.

Faculty Writing Fellows Program: As far as research shows, no other large university has a Faculty Writing Fellows Program in place. It involves experienced writing faculty mentoring those just starting to follow WI tenets. It would involve regularly scheduled meetings at CWP's Conley House at which faculty mentors and their mentees would develop plans and discuss the many issues of teaching according to WAC procedures. The criteria necessary to make this idea work are: experienced writing faculty volunteers who agree to do it, willing and enthusiastic inexperienced WI instructors, and everyone taking the time to make it happen. This sort of collegial activity would benefit more people than just those taking part, because collegiality so often brings about the best in scholarly, academic work.

As stated, these activities will work to heighten awareness of the value that writing-to-learn and learning-to-write theories and practices can have on university campuses. We invite any and all faculty to join the conversation about what this nationally recognized Campus Writing Program can do to continue its contribution to faculty development and student learning.

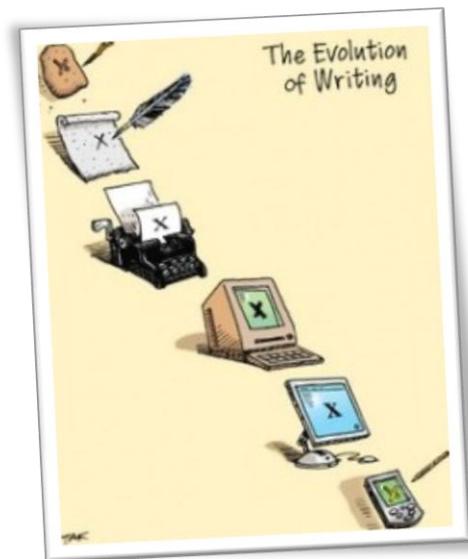


Environmental pressures and 'species' stability in local WI evolution

by Catherine Chmidling

The 2011 Corps of Discovery Speaker, Dr. Carol Ward, gave a fantastic talk on the study of human evolution and its interdisciplinary connections. She spoke on how small skeletal features, such as the exact shape and curve of one bone in the foot, can indicate critical traits such as bipedalism, and how slight differences in the position of vertebral facets down the human spine can provide great insight into spondylolysis – a common cause of back and leg pain which can limit an individual's activity.

With the appointment of the Campus Writing Program's new director, Dr. Amy Lannin, the CWP staff have been reflecting on the program's evolution from its founding in the late 1980s, the varying 'selective pressures' the program has encountered as it and the MU student body have both grown over the past 20+ years, and CWP's interdisciplinary relationships both on-campus and beyond MU. In 2009 CWP honored 12 MU faculty who have taught WI courses for twenty years and twenty semesters, and in Spring 2012 we will honor 7 more. CWP has an incredible wealth of information on the WI courses offered at MU since the program began through today. For this semester's newsletter, I've chosen to focus on CWP's evolution as represented by 3 courses which have all been offered for over 20 years by the same instructors: HDFS 3420: Early & Middle Childhood by Jean Ispa, Political Science 2200: Judicial Process by Greg Casey, and TAM 3510: History of Western Dress by Laurel Wilson.



I examined the syllabus, Writing Intensive (WI) description, and enrollment figures for each course at four points in their respective 20+ year histories – the first time the course was proposed as WI, the most recent time the course was offered as WI, and two equidistant points in-between. For each sample point I looked specifically at class structure, learning objectives, number and types of assignments, source(s) of feedback on student work, critical thinking emphasis, class size, and percentage of the total course grade derived from written work. I expected to find some consistent degree of gradual or punctuated evolution, with adaptations in multiple areas for each course. I found instead a surprising level of constancy across all three courses, with one notable trend – size.

Across the three courses and 20+ year span, class structures (generally mixed lecture and discussion), feedback mechanisms (instructor and sometimes peer feedback), and critical thinking components all remained constant. Stated learning objectives in two of the three were expanded over time to address technology and/or cross-cultural influence, but these also remained largely constant.

Writing assignments varied slightly across the time span for two of the three courses – with one reducing the number of micro-theme or observational assignments in favor of more formal papers, and another increasing the number of formal papers without a change in other assignments; the third remained constant. Likewise, the courses each exhibited slight variations in the percentage of final course grade derived from out-of-class writing: one reduced the percentage from 50% to 33%, one increased from 55% to 78%, and the third remained constant at 48-50%. For both the number of assignments and percentages of total grade, I'd consider these changes to be normal fluctuations in course fine-tuning, rather than indicative of any trends in either the individual course or the program, particularly as the changes aren't in a consistent direction across the three courses. The fluctuations don't indicate a consistent pressure experienced by all three courses.

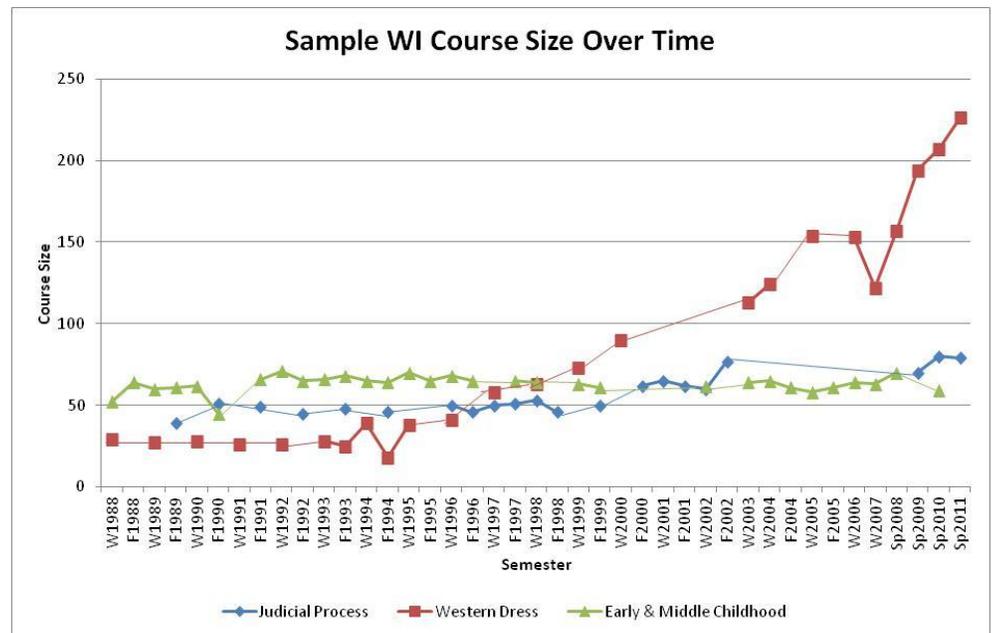
The criteria for which I saw the most consistent change was class size (see graph below). Judicial Process was first offered as WI with 40 students, and now regularly has 70-80 students, doubling in size over 20 years. History of Western Dress exhibits the most dramatic change in size, first being offered as WI with an enrollment of 29 students and most recently with an enrollment of 226 students – an almost 8-fold increase. Early and Middle Childhood was first offered as WI with 52 students, peaked at 70-71 students during a couple of semesters over the past years, and has been averaging approximately 62 students in the last 10 years. These increases might be driven by a number of pressures: perhaps the number of students in those majors are increasing, or the number of available courses (or faculty in the department to teach courses) in those majors have decreased, funneling more students into the remaining courses. It's also possible that students from other majors are enrolling in these WI courses.

Overall, the WI courses I surveyed

showed a remarkable degree of stability over 20+ years, with course size as the only apparent 'selective' pressure. I would suggest that this indicates that the WI courses, at least those like the sample courses offered by faculty with extensive experience teaching WI, are very well adapted to the teaching environment at MU. I would argue that the stable learning objectives indicate that the courses are well-established in

replaced entirely.

Given the record-breaking freshman classes MU has been experiencing for the past few years, I expect that the pressure for increased course size on these and other WI courses (as well as non-WI courses) will only continue. Rather than hope that these long-tested courses, no matter how well designed,



their individual curricula, and that the class structure, assignments, feedback, and percent of overall grade indicate that these course designs have withstood the test of time as sustainable formats. The size increases in two of the three courses might suggest growth in the individual programs, or growing appeal of the sampled courses beyond their own departments.

While there are many small ways in which the Campus Writing Program is working to refine WI offerings and support to meet current and future needs, I would argue that the constancy of these three long-time WI courses suggests that the WI courses are well-planned and effectively delivered, as evidenced by their longevity. If they weren't working well for the faculty offering them and the departments relying on them, they would have been extensively modified over the years or

can continue to enlarge indefinitely, I think it is important to protect the teaching commitment and course designs of these long-time WI faculty by keeping the pressure on their course sizes manageable. CWP's Mission is to support faculty, and part of that support is helping to keep the demand for their WI courses reasonable. My preliminary studies of WI course seating availability (Fall 2010 e-WAC) indicate that WI courses aren't uniformly filled to capacity, but I suspect that issue needs further study. The growth trends in these 3 sample courses suggest that departments and CWP might consider increasing WI course offerings which meet the same requirements or carry similar features as long-time WI courses that have experienced significant growth over time.

CONTACT US

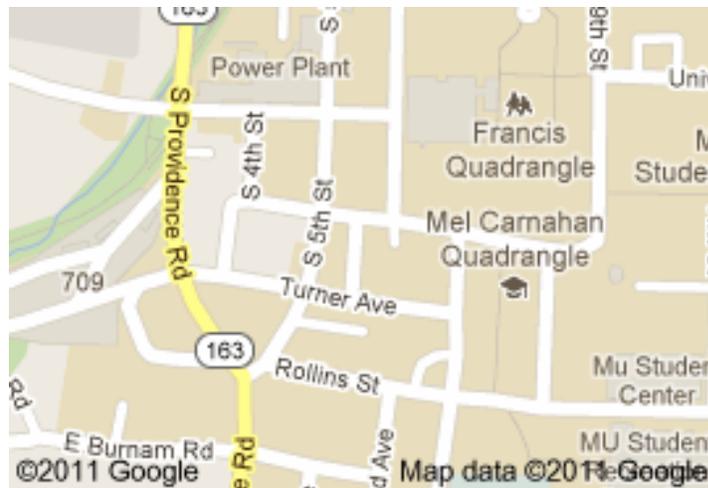
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Need to Finish Some of Your Own Writing?

Join the Campus Writing Program for Faculty Writing Retreats held in the Historic Conley House. We will provide you with a light breakfast and lunch and a quiet space to work on your project.



Scheduled Writing Retreats For Spring Semester 2012:

January 5/6, 2012

February 3, 2012

March 9, 2012

April 13, 2012

May 4, 2012

To register:

<https://etapps.missouri.edu/cwp/event>