Welcome to the second issue of the Campus Writing Program's newsletter, e-WAC, a digital newsletter of activities at the CWP. E-WAC updates our previous newsletter, The Writery, with new content and resources for WI instruction.

Please visit the CWP website for updates, teaching resources, new media resources, videos, and other information.

http://cwp.missouri.edu

Instructors interested in incorporating new media into their teaching can also use our wiki at:

http://cwp.missouri.edu/wiki
Director Statement

As we head into the new year, the Campus Writing Program, along with the rest of the University, faces tough challenges in the coming years. While we will continue to provide excellent services to the campus, we know that we will have fewer resources to do so.

Our objectives, despite the budget crisis, remain the same. We intend to further develop and extend our core mission for faculty development, undergraduate teaching, research, and administration.

Our biggest challenge, however, will involve how we transfer funds for WI courses. The budget crisis will put immense pressure on our current formula for providing assistance to WI courses, and we will have to consider new models, new approaches, and new understandings regarding the relationship between writing and content instruction in the disciplines.

I don’t write this in order to surprise or shock, but rather to request your understanding as we think through how we can continue to maintain a high level of support for WI. We ask for your patience, but also your ideas as well. Our intent is not to impose new formulas for funding, but to collectively think through the crisis.

In the meantime, we are planning many exciting events for this semester. We will be holding roundtables on TA training, following up with new WI instructors, and honoring those who have devoted much time and energy to the CWP over the last 25 years. In addition, we intend to begin a major assessment of writing in the disciplines at MU.

And don’t forget to come out for Brown Bags! The schedule is on page 5.
Campus Writing Program and Sinclair School of Nursing: A Unique Collaboration

By Bonnie Selting

One of the most difficult things to teach about writing is that all good written communication relates to “rhetorical” principles. Mentioning “rhetoric” seems immediately to send warning signals for many people, as if they will now be required to discuss either bad political ads or over-the-top theories that no one really wants to know anyway. But learning rhetorical principles in an interdisciplinary academic context means learning how a writer handles “audience, purpose, and context” in each different writing situation. The faculty at MU’s Sinclair School of Nursing who teach the Writing Intensive (WI) course, Community Health Nursing 4970, have been eager and interested in these concepts as they teach senior nursing students how to write successful research papers.

In Fall Semester, 2007, nursing instructor Liz Clark asked the Campus Writing Program (CWP) for assistance with Writing Intensive strategies in this rigorous, content-heavy Capstone course. The research paper for Community Health Nursing 4970 is assigned in stages: an

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annotated bibliography, a prospectus, and at least two revision opportunities. We all found ourselves in an unusually advantageous cross-disciplinary position. I, as one of the CWP Coordinators, hold a Ph.D. in Composition and Rhetoric while also having worked for many years as a professional nurse. In this context, nursing instructors Lynelle Phillips, Glenda Kelly, Liz Clark, and I have concentrated on strengthening the Writing Intensive component of the course along with Dr. Kay Libbus, Coordinator, and Tina Bloom, Assistant Professor of Nursing who joined the team in Fall Semester, 2008. We are all working to give nursing students an edge in developing the communication skills crucial for both academic and professional success by improving the “rhetorical” context of the paper’s assignment, its assessment procedures, and overall student engagement.

**Making Assignments Rhetorical**

Using Rhetorical theories when teaching writing means helping students realize that what they write is important. And when writers know their writing is important, they become engaged and write more skillfully, especially if they are making their point to real-life readers (“audiences”). So, the first issue I brought before this faculty team was designing the assignment as an “argument” paper. Argument means there is a problem somewhere that needs to be thought through and solved—a much more engaging situation than merely imparting information or regurgitating facts and figures from a source. Since we found that the word “argument” is loaded with connotations (fighting, disliking, frustration, etc.), we changed it to “persuasion” in the second semester and stressed that a “Thesis Statement” be referred to as a “Position Statement.”

We also worked with topic selection. Routinely, students are assigned 90 clinical placement hours during which they work in some aspect of community health (schools, state or local health departments, worksite wellness programs, etc.) with a “preceptor” chosen by the faculty. During the first two semesters, students were required to choose a research topic related to the area in which they were fulfilling these clinical hours. For instance, if students worked their clinical placement hours in a diabetic unit, their research topic would have to concentrate on something related to diabetes—perhaps obesity, or prevention, or home treatment. This semester, however, under the directorship of Dr. Libbus, students are allowed to choose a topic in any area of great interest, as long as it relates to community
health, such as immunizations (writing to resistant parents who are not educated on the value of early inoculations), or connections between asthma and obesity, or teaching third world populations the importance of certain hygienic practices (a topic from a student who has spent much time in Guatemala and plans to return).

Throughout this collaboration, our goal has been to help students become aware that professional nurses do, indeed, have responsibilities as writers. Even though choosing their own topic and making the writing task as interesting as possible helped put forth writing intensive strategies, we found some specific student resistances to this assignment for understandable reasons:

- Professional nursing students, anxious to graduate and be out in the “real world,” do not always see a connection between bedside care and the importance of skillful writing.
- Some students resist the fact that they must concentrate on Community Health when upon graduation they plan to work in other, seemingly unrelated, nursing fields such as “acute care.”
- Some do not understand why they are required to write a major research paper at this stage in their academic lives.

We dealt with these and other issues by implementing two kinds of workshops. First, I brought ideas of rhetorical imperatives to the faculty, and then the faculty and I transferred these elements to students in whole course workshops and smaller labs.

Regarding the first issue: “Professional nursing students, anxious to graduate and be out in the ‘real world,’ do not always see a connection between bedside care and the importance of skillful writing,” I present to students some concrete evidence of how, what, and why they will become concerned with writing well in their careers. I begin with a powerful truism quoted from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth College of Nursing:

You may think, in company with many others, that writing is outside the scope of nursing, or at least the kind of nursing you want to practice. Maybe, you say, “there is a place for researchers and professors to write, but I don’t want to do that - I just want to take care of people.” Think again. When you enter the community of professional nurses, you take on great responsibilities. Your patient population expands greatly, and includes, in a broader sense than you may have thought, your fellow citizens, on the local, state and national level. (http://www.umassd.edu/nursing/pages/writing.cfm)
In the workshops, this quote leads to discussion of just what kind of writing can be so important. Students learn that they cannot take for granted their responsibilities when writing policies and procedures, proposals for changes of policies and procedures, patient educational materials, research papers, white papers, grant funding proposals, letters, and other categories of documents that could have all sorts of ramifications if not done well. These students realize that their writing can have legal consequences, be used by insurance companies—perhaps involving work-compensation issues - cause physical or mental damage to patients, and even bring about sweeping changes in a community. Clearly, writing these documents relates to rhetoric because nurses must pay attention to the methods they use to give information and/or “appeal” to different audiences for different purposes. A policy for training personnel in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU), for example, must be thought through in terms of what the readers/users of that document know, what they do not know, what their attitude may be, what their duties may be, what their reading level is, why the policy is being written in the first place (purpose), and what the mission is of that particular ICU in relation to that particular hospital (context). Approaching writing this way appeared to heighten students’ consciousness of the connection between bedside care and writing, which in turn, lowered their resistance toward the research paper project.

The second issue: “Some students resist the fact that they must concentrate on Community Health when upon graduation they plan to work in other, seemingly unrelated, nursing fields such as “acute care,” necessitates bridging Community Health care with other

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**Spring 2009 Brown Bag Schedule**

Brown Bags are held from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm at Conley House. They offer an excellent opportunity for faculty and students to hear about issues important to writing across the disciplines. Bring a lunch, and join us!

For Spring 2009, the CWP will host the following Brown Bags:

**Jan 28 Ed Brent, Professor and Associate Chair Department of Sociology:** “Using an Essay Grading Program to Enhance Learning in WI Courses”

**Feb 4 Haskell Taub:** Professor of Physics

“Writing about Writing to Learn”

**Feb 18 Evan Smith, General Studies:** “A WI Course Offered Through Independent Study: Pedagogical and Technological Concerns”

**March 4 Jim Groves Associate Professor Hotel & Restaurant Mgmt:** “Teaching a WI course with the use of iMovie”

**April 1 Marty Patton, Assistant Professor of English:** “Bridging Freshman English and WI Classes in Civil Engineering”

**April 15 Danna Vessel, Director ET@MO:**

“Facilitating Writing with Mizzou Tools”

**April 29 Catherine Chmidling, Coordinator, Campus Writing Program:** “Structured Writing, Structured Thought”
health care areas by helping student writers realize a Community Health research topic can affect any audience. Perhaps a student chooses to explore a problem with an Emergency Room (ER) procedure. She or he researches the problem, finds solid information for a solution, and writes to persuade hospital policy makers to change that procedure. If the paper succeeds in persuading the audience who can make changes, then all ER personnel and patients would benefit. These beneficiaries constitute an entire “community.” Or perhaps a student is especially interested in working with a hospital Burn Unit. Burn Unit health professionals deal with the public in many ways, from healing victims and giving support to families, to working with public officials on fire safety. This student finds a problem in some aspect of burn-care, researches it, and successfully persuades the appropriate audience to take action for change. The secondary audiences who could be affected by this change once again constitute “community.” Helping students see that all nursing deals with “community” at some level is a rhetorical project, because they begin realizing the many instances where “audience, purpose, and context” are intertwined and varied. Thus, their responsibilities as professional health care communicators do not end in one specialty.

The point here is that through interdisciplinary collaboration, the nursing faculty and CWP were able to show professional nursing students that good writing is a complex, rhetorical matter and consequences can be great if students take for granted their responsibilities to learn to write well.

This collaboration has been extended to the following activities: presenting a Round Table on “Writing in Professional Nursing” at a National Nursing Education conference in Kansas City; presenting a workshop for all nursing faculty in which I shared information on assignment design, assessment rubrics, and responding to student writing; presenting another workshop strictly on lower order issues in writing such as sentencing, punctuation, and the use of transitions; and establishing both professional and personal respect on all sides. It would seem, then, that here we have an example of how disciplines can work together to bring out the best in students when they write-to-learn and learn-to-write.
Campus Writing Program Growth

To-Date and Room for More

By Catherine Chmidling

The CWP is well on the way to its 25th anniversary (Fall 2010), and in light of ongoing concerns about Mizzou’s large freshmen enrollments, I thought it would be useful to look at the program’s growth over time, particularly regarding whether the CWP is growing at a comparable pace with freshmen enrollment, and whether our current WI courses have sufficient unoccupied seats to meet future higher enrollments. I have confined my investigations to CWP’s annual reports for Fall 1995 to Spring 2008 and available MU enrollment data for Fall 1997 to Fall 2006.

Since Fall 1995, the Campus Writing Program has grown from 73 WI courses with a total WI enrollment of 3,748 students to 175 WI courses and 5,456 enrolled students in Spring 2008 alone. Over the past 13 years, the number of Writing Intensive courses at MU has increased by 240%, or approximately 2.5 classes per semester (see Figure 1, below), while WI enrollment has increased by 145%, or approximately 52 students per semester (see Figure 2, below). During this period, total OTS (Other Teaching Staff) funding allocations increased by 175% (see Figure 3, below), though most of that increase occurred from Fall 1995 to Fall 2000, and has leveled off from Winter 2001 to Spring 2008.

Figure 1:

![Figure 1: Number of WI Courses](image1)

Figure 2:

![Figure 2: WI Enrollment](image2)

Figure 3:

![Figure 3: OTS ($)](image3)
From Fall 1999 to Spring 2008 (the years for which I have seating-capacity data), post-Census Day available seating in the WI courses has remained a relatively constant 800-1000 seats (see Figure 4, below). I calculated post-Census Day available seating by subtracting course enrollment from course capacity. In cases where capacity was not stated, I assumed enrollment equaled capacity. Due to difficulties in collecting data after-the-fact, I have not researched whether those seats were available in courses unrestricted to majors or without prerequisites beyond English 1000.

Figure 4:

While the total number of WI courses has risen consistently, the average enrollment per WI course (including any thesis or independent study courses) has declined slightly over the past 9 years (see Figure 5, below). From Fall 1999 to Spring 2008, average WI class size has successfully been reduced from 41.6 students per course to 31.2 students per course. Smaller WI class sizes can be attributed to a gradual increase in the percentage of upper-division WI courses within the total WI offerings as well as efforts to move WI class sizes closer to the WI Guidelines ideal of a 20:1 student:teacher ratio.

Figure 5:

Even though the CWP has experienced a steady growth in number of WI courses and total WI enrollment, MU’s total freshmen class size has grown even more rapidly, with an average increase of 139 students per year (see Figure 6, below). If WI course and seating capacity and MU freshmen class size continue to grow at their current respective paces (see Figure 7, below), students will eventually experience increased difficulty in meeting their WI requirements. An informal survey of departmental academic advisors indicates that WI availability is not currently a significant problem for students except in rare cases (such as General Studies majors who may not have access to major-restricted upper level WI courses). The Campus Writing Program
staff are currently working closely with CDIS and MU Direct personnel to facilitate increased WI-availability to students in those programs.

The Campus Writing Program is committed to maintaining and improving students’ access to and experience in WI courses. We work consistently with WI instructors to ensure that courses continue to meet the Campus Writing Board’s WI Guidelines while also keeping instructors’ workloads reasonable. We are also investigating whether individual departments currently offer non-WI courses which may be readily converted to WI (with a minimum of alteration), to increase WI accessibility within departments.

The current budgetary concerns, including the potential budget reductions, are as important to the Campus Writing Program as to every other program on campus. CWP’s OTS funding formula was changed in Fall 2003 to the current $110-per-head-over-20-students calculation, from the previous FTE-based allocation format. This change reduced the fluctuation between Fall and Winter OTS transfers (see Figure 3, above), but does not appear to have affected the growth in number of WI courses or total WI enrollment thus far (see Figures 1 and 2, above). However, an actual decrease in OTS funds available for allocation could quickly hinder CWP’s ability to maintain our current funding formula, particularly if enrollments in WI courses increase as expected in the next few years. If CWP’s OTS funds decrease, departments which rely on those funds to pay WI TAs might be forced to reduce WI class sizes at the very time demand for WI seating is expected to grow, to hire fewer WI TAs, and perhaps even to admit fewer new graduate students.

At present, the number, capacity, and variety of WI appear to be largely meeting student needs (except in rare cases), as reflected by the excess seats available. The WI courses have grown steadily over the last 13 years, with minimal change in OTS expenditures over the
last 8 years. However, freshmen class sizes have been increasing more rapidly than available WI seating, so a WI availability concern may develop in the future unless the WI program begins to grow more rapidly than it did from 1997 to 2006. As a follow-up to my findings above, I will begin researching whether the average 800-1000 WI seats that go unoccupied in any given semester are subject to prerequisite or major-specific restrictions. I also hope to collaborate with WI instructors to investigate whether WI seating-availability has led to any class-rank inflation in unrestricted-enrollment WI courses, such that lower-division courses may have a preponderance of upper-division students who fill seats before lower-division students can enroll.

Encourage your students to submit their writing to Artifacts, a journal of Undergraduate Writing:

http://comp.missouri.edu/artifacts/

Do you want to share your teaching experiences, ideas about teaching writing, thoughts about writing and MU, or other related topics with the rest of the WI community at MU? Please contribute to e-WAC. We welcome your short pieces and would be interested in including your work in this space.