



Participating Faculty

Robert Bauer, Alan Whittington, Miriam Barquero-Molina, Mian Liu, Eric Sandvol, Peter Nabelek
Information Contact: Robert Bauer (bauerr@missouri.edu)

Background

Since 1987, MU's Campus Writing Program (CWP) has promoted improved undergraduate "writing across the curriculum" by requiring two writing intensive (WI) courses following completion of MU's first-year composition course – English 1000. WI courses are not designed as writing courses, but they include writing assignments that are integrated into the instruction and learning of course material in the discipline of the course. As such, writing assignments provide opportunities for students to learn through writing, to improve their writing through revision, and to learn approaches to writing that may be specific to the discipline of the course. One of the two WI courses may be taken in any discipline; however, the other course must be an upper division course (3000 or 4000 level) in the student's major.

Criteria for WI Course Designation

All WI courses must meet criteria that are established by the Campus Writing Board. Courses are reviewed for approval by a discipline-specific subcommittees of the board.

Criteria for WI course approval include:

1. Courses should be designed and taught by faculty at ≤ a 20:1 student-to-faculty ratio
2. Courses should include multiple assignments that involve substantive revision
3. Course writing, including revisions, should total at least 6600 words (20 pages)
4. Each course should include at least one assignment involving multiple interpretations
5. Writing assignments for the course should be distributed throughout the semester
6. Written assignments should typically constitute at least 30% of the course grade
7. Faculty may use teaching assistants to maintain ≤ a 20:1 student-to-faculty ratio, but
8. Professors should remain in control of assignments, grading, and marking of papers

Rationale for Changing our Upper Division WI Course Requirement

Potentially Available Upper Division WI Core Courses

All Bachelor of Science majors in the Geological Sciences are required to complete four upper division, WI course candidates :

- Sedimentology (3800) – 4-credits, including a weekly 2-hour lab
- Structural Geology (4150) – 4 credits, including a weekly 2-hour lab
- Igneous & Metamorphic Petrology (4900) – 4 credits, with a 2-hour lab
- Plate Tectonics (4950) – 3 credit hours

Structural Geology served as our upper division WI course

Typical enrollment of 10-15 students. Course assignments included numerous problem sets in addition to the weekly 2-hour lab sessions and associated reports

- **Writing components included:**
 - Three writing assignments with graduated complexity/depth throughout the semester that were revised by the students
 - Professor, Lab TA, and student peer reviews – leading to assignment revisions
 - Laboratory synthesis report – not revised
- All WI course criteria were accommodated

Our Concerns and Problems that had to be Addressed

- Making writing components at least 30% of the course grade significantly reduced grade% associated with the lab, problem sets, and lecture exams
- Student workload far exceeded that in other upper division courses
- The extra faculty workload made it hard to find faculty teaching other core courses who were willing to participate in the WI program

Our Solution

In 2004, we proposed to the Campus Writing Board that we be allowed to distribute our upper division B.S. writing intensive instruction among our four upper division core courses

Our Basic Premises

- Students would benefit from broader exposure to writing in multiple courses with multiple professors
- More faculty involvement in the WI program would promote the importance of student writing

Changes We Made

- Spread our upper division WI requirement for the B.S. over four core courses (10-20 students/course)

Year	Fall Semester	Winter Semester
Jr	Sedimentary Env (Lab)	Structure (Lab)/Petrology (Lab)
Sr	Plate Tectonics (Sed Env)	(Petrology)

- The four courses are taught by six different professors who all complete the CWP faculty workshop
- There are fewer writing assignments/course, but more total writing assignments (and pages written)
- Department-funded teaching assistants help faculty during the review process
- One responsible faculty member coordinates the program

Things that Remained the Same

- There is a progression in assignment complexity from the early, Jr. year, courses to the Sr. year courses
- All CWP writing intensive criteria are met or exceeded over the four-course sequence

Advantages of this Approach

- Students receive greater breadth of writing experiences from more faculty members
- More faculty members are involved in improving student's writing skills, & committed to WI program
- Distributes the workload of faculty members involved in teaching writing skills within our curriculum
- Allows for 10-15% grading from writing in each course, not detracting from other course material