

UNIVERSITY SENATE
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Introduced by: UAC

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**PROPOSAL TO MODIFY THE UALBANY UNDERGRADUATE GENERAL EDUCATION
WRITING REQUIREMENT BY CREATING A UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM,
INCLUDING A FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINAR**

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT:

1. Current General Education policies be revised to establish a required first-year writing seminar, Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI), that will replace the current lower-division WI requirement for students matriculating in Fall 2013 and thereafter, as described in the attached proposal.
2. A University Director of Undergraduate Writing be appointed to oversee the implementation and development of Writing and Critical Inquiry and the staff hired to teach the course.
3. This Director and staff support departments in meeting the advanced writing competency in their majors, mandated in the new General Education Program.
4. The policy changes described in this proposal take effect according to the timetable described herein.
5. This proposal be forwarded to the President for approval.

Introduction

The University at Albany's current program of undergraduate writing instruction does not provide adequate support for students' development as writers, readers, and critical thinkers during their undergraduate careers. The Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction, charged in August, 2006 by then-Provost Susan Herbst with reviewing the state of writing instruction at UAlbany, identified three main areas of concern with the current writing-intensive (WI) program: (1) the current program is inconsistent with available research on writing development and effective writing instruction; (2) undergraduate students at UAlbany receive too little direct instruction in writing, too little sustained practice in writing in a variety of forms and contexts, and inconsistent support for their development as writers over time; and (3) UAlbany faculty feel underprepared and insufficiently supported to teach writing effectively. In addition, the task force emphasized the lack of oversight of the current WI program to ensure consistency across WI courses, to coordinate appropriate resources to support faculty who teach WI courses, and to promote effective instruction in all WI courses. As the task force noted in its report, "for the average UAlbany student, effective instruction in writing is a matter of chance, depending upon which instructors they encounter and which WI or writing courses they may decide (or are advised) to take. Few UAlbany faculty find this situation acceptable, and indeed many find it embarrassing and even unconscionable" (p. 4). (See http://www.albany.edu/ir/UAlb_Writing_Task_Force_Final_Report_2007.pdf)

Since the Task Force issued its report in 2007, UAlbany has developed a new strategic plan with six key goals, one of which is to "enhance the quality of undergraduate education at UAlbany and attract and serve a highly qualified and diverse group of students." That key goal includes as one of its objectives enhancing the availability and quality of undergraduate writing instruction at UAlbany (see www.albany.edu/strategicplan/files/Strategic_Plan_Implementation_year1_2_priorities.pdf) This proposal is intended to enable the university to meet that objective.

This proposal is also submitted in the context of the ongoing revisions to the General Education curriculum at UAlbany. In addition to developing a Strategic Plan, UAlbany has been engaged in an effort to improve the General Education curriculum. In 2010 the General Education Task Force was convened. In its final report (issued on November 22, 2010), the General Education Task Force proposed changes to the existing undergraduate WI requirements that were consistent with the recommendations made by the Writing Task Force in 2007. Specifically, the General Education Task Force proposed that "the Lower-Division Writing Intensive requirement would be amended so that it can be satisfied only by Writing and Critical Inquiry; the First-Year Seminar; or an approved first-year writing course that provides direct instruction in argumentative academic writing" (*Report of the General Education Task Force Fall 2010*, p. 4). Although the present proposal differs in some respects from the recommendations of the General Education Task Force, this proposal is consistent with the major points of the General Education Task Force recommendations, especially the establishment of a required first-year writing seminar to replace the current lower-division WI requirement.

Rationale

Writing is a complex and multi-faceted cognitive, intellectual, and social activity that is essential to students' development as critically aware, literate persons. Much more than a set of basic communication skills and knowledge of the conventions of written language, writing should be understood in three ways:

- First, writing is fundamentally a form of inquiry and knowledge-making and therefore an essential component of academic achievement and participation in society.
- Second, writing is a means by which students gain access to the academic discourses that characterize intellectual inquiry in postsecondary institutions.
- Third, writing is a cognitive and social process by which students come to know themselves and the world around them better; managing this process is one of the most important components of writing competence.

Available research indicates that students' writing abilities develop unevenly over time and within specific contexts (see Appendix B for select references to this research). The main challenge facing students at the postsecondary level is to negotiate the complexities of written discourse across various disciplinary contexts and to learn appropriate rhetorical strategies to negotiate varied writing and reading tasks in those different contexts. To support students' development as writers and critical thinkers, institutions must provide opportunities for sustained, guided practice in a variety of writing tasks over time that enable students to develop an appropriate understanding of the discourse of their chosen major so that they can effectively negotiate typical writing tasks within that major. Only through such practice, research suggests, do students overcome the most common difficulties associated with academic writing, including lack of depth, insufficient development of ideas, and the inability to sustain an argument or analysis as well as surface errors, syntax problems, and similar difficulties.

Significantly, in order to provide effective support for students' development as writers, postsecondary institutions must also provide an appropriately trained faculty that is adequately supported by ongoing professional development. Data collected by the Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction underscore the lack of such support at UAlbany and the faculty's desire for more effective support for the current writing-intensive program.

UAlbany is unusual among four-year colleges and universities in its minimal programmatic attention to undergraduate writing instruction, and it is alone among its identified peer institutions and among the four SUNY university centers in the absence of required writing courses in its undergraduate curriculum. Effective postsecondary writing programs usually include a combination of required courses devoted explicitly to writing and writing-intensive courses and/or equivalent experiences in which students learn to write within specific academic disciplines. The curricular changes described in this proposal will provide students with such a combination of courses/experiences by establishing a required lower-division writing seminar that will provide a foundational writing experience for the advanced writing requirement that is part of the General Education curriculum adopted by the University in 2012.

A writing program like the one proposed here will not only enhance the quality of education at the university, but will also improve the overall student experience and chances for success. Small-class experiences early in a student's career can help boost retention and increase student satisfaction (see Appendix B for references to research supporting this statement). Currently, UAlbany does not have a required first-year course for all new students, and so Writing and Critical Inquiry will provide a bonding experience across campus, helping to build cohorts of students sharing a common academic experience. To these broader benefits, students will add increased experience, skills, and confidence in university-level thinking and writing, all of which will help them achieve more in their other courses and in their majors.

Proposed Changes to the Existing Writing-Intensive Requirements

This proposal would result in the following changes to UAlbany's undergraduate general education writing-intensive requirement:

- (1) **The existing lower-division writing-intensive requirement would be replaced with a required first-year seminar, Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI),** that would introduce students to intellectual inquiry at the university with a focus on the practice of academic writing. The seminar would be devoted specifically to rigorous guided practice in writing as a discipline itself and as an essential form of inquiry in postsecondary education. In this regard, the writing seminar must be distinguished from a traditional "composition" course in which writing is defined essentially as a basic skill rather than a discipline and mode of inquiry. WCI is not designed as a "remedial" course to correct deficiencies in students' previous educational experiences. Nevertheless, WCI will address the mastery of fundamental skills of writing in the context of the practice of writing as a discipline and a form of inquiry. In other words, the course will include instruction in the grammatical, orthographical, and syntactical rules writers must master to communicate effectively and with precision. In this seminar, teaching of the mechanics of writing will be embedded within a larger project of acculturating new students to the higher-level modes of thinking and expression they will need to master to succeed in their academic work at the university. (See description of Writing and Critical Inquiry below.)
- (2) **Writing and Critical Inquiry would provide the foundation for the more advanced writing instruction and practice that students will undertake in their majors as a result of the General Education program adopted in 2012.** Revisions to the General Education program adopted in the spring of 2012 (Bill No. 1112-15, "Revisions to General Education Program," approved by the University Senate 4/5/12, and approved by President George Philip 6/13/12) require departments to "specify how their students become proficient in oral communication and advanced writing in ways appropriate and specific to major disciplines." For the writing component of this SUNY-mandated competency, each department or program will establish specific requirements for students enrolled in its major(s) such that students receive instruction enabling them to develop competence as

writers and readers within that academic discipline. These requirements might include specific writing or writing-intensive courses offered by the department or other departments, as determined by the department or program and approved by the Undergraduate Academic Council; they might also include specific experiences that would be equivalent to courses in terms of the practice and guidance in writing that students would receive, as determined by the department or program and approved by the Undergraduate Academic Council. For example, a department might require its majors to take a 200- or 300-level writing intensive course that it offers for its majors in addition to the submission of a senior thesis that demonstrates writing competency in that discipline. A department might also require its majors to take a series of designated courses designed to provide students with sustained instruction and practice in writing in a specific discipline over several semesters. It is proposed that UAC create a temporary subcommittee of existing UAC members to review department plans for advanced competency, which are to be submitted by 2014, according to Bill NO. 1112-15.

- (3) **A University Director of Undergraduate Writing would be appointed** who would report to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. The Writing Director would be responsible for overseeing the implementation and development of Writing and Critical Inquiry as well as the staff hired to teach it (see Appendix B); consulting with departments and programs as they develop and implement plans to meet the new advanced writing requirement (#2 above); and , in collaboration with the Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership, providing appropriate support for individual faculty and departments as they implement the new writing requirements. The Writing Director (or designee) would serve as an *ex officio* member of the General Education Advisory Board, the Undergraduate Academic Council, and the Council on Academic Assessment.
- (4) **An ongoing assessment and evaluation program would be developed and implemented** to provide a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of undergraduate writing instruction and identify the possible need for appropriate curricular changes. This program would be overseen by the Writing Director and undertaken in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE).

These proposed changes would ensure that students have a substantive introduction to postsecondary writing in their first year and would also provide support for students' development as writers through the completion of discipline-specific advanced writing requirements set by each department or program. With the implementation of a required first-year writing seminar in conjunction with the advanced writing required of the General Education program, UAlbany would provide a sequence of courses or equivalent experiences that support students' development as writers and help move students from a rigorous general experience with writing and academic inquiry to increasingly discipline-specific experiences that will enable them to strengthen their understanding of writing and gain competence as writers, readers, and thinkers.

Description of Proposed Changes to Existing Undergraduate Writing Requirements

1. Establish Writing and Critical Inquiry to be required of all entering first-year students and to be taken in the freshman year (transfer students who have not already completed an equivalent course elsewhere will also take WCI during their first year at UAlbany). Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) emphasizes intensive practice in academic writing as well as writing in other rhetorical contexts as an integral part of the kind of critical inquiry that characterizes postsecondary education (see Appendix G for course proposal form and sample syllabus). The course will be based on established principles of rhetorical theory and will introduce students to the connection between critical inquiry and written discourse. It is important to distinguish WCI from traditional first-year composition courses that present writing as a basic skill and emphasize the technical aspects of writing. By contrast, Writing and Critical Inquiry will focus on writing as both the subject of study and the vehicle for academic inquiry at the postsecondary level. Students will be given sustained practice in various rhetorical tasks for the purpose of deepening their understanding of writing as a mode of inquiry and enhancing their ability to negotiate varied writing and reading tasks in different academic and non-academic contexts.

In addition to the statement about the requirement that all students take Writing and Critical Inquiry (see above), the following language will be added to the description of the course in the Undergraduate Bulletin:

Any appropriate lower-division undergraduate course, including Honors College courses, may qualify as the equivalent of Writing and Critical Inquiry, provided that the course is approved as such by the General Education Committee and the Undergraduate Academic Council. Such courses must be similar in intent to Writing and Critical Inquiry and therefore must emphasize writing as an essential part of academic inquiry and provide students with opportunities for regular and sustained practice in writing a variety of appropriate forms in different media, for appropriate purposes and audiences.

Writing and Critical Inquiry will be a UNI course and part of the General Education Curriculum. It will be administered through the Office of Undergraduate Studies and supervised by the Director of Undergraduate Writing, who will report to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.

(*Note: the legislation adopted by the University Senate in 1986--Bill No. 8586-10--included a provision that “a representative of Academic Affairs will be responsible for administering the writing-intensive curriculum.” At one time, such a representative did administer the WI program as part of the General Education curriculum, but that responsibility eventually disappeared. Under the changes to the undergraduate writing program described in this proposal, a director, ideally a full-time faculty member with appropriate expertise and experience, would be identified to administer the program under the auspices of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, which would effectively reinstate oversight that existed as a result of Bill 8586-10. In other words, the Writing Director would not be a new position but the re-establishment of a position that once effectively existed.*)

2. *Revise Current Writing-Intensive Policies.* Current policies regarding the writing-intensive requirement are included in the definition of “Writing Intensive” under the General Education Program in the Undergraduate Bulletin:

Students must satisfactorily complete with a grade of *C* or higher or *S* a Writing Intensive course which is expected to be completed within the freshman or sophomore year. Writing Intensive courses use writing as an important tool in the discipline studied and are not designed primarily to teach the technical aspects of writing. The emphasis is on using writing as a means of sharpening critical thinking in and increasing understanding of the subject of the course.

Under this proposal, this existing Undergraduate Bulletin statement would be replaced with the following statement:

Students are expected to complete satisfactorily, with a grade of *C* or higher, Writing and Critical Inquiry by the end of their second semester at the University at Albany. In addition, students must meet advanced writing requirements as established by the department or program within which they are enrolled as a major.

In addition, the existing four criteria for approved WI courses will be eliminated. The current criteria appear in the Undergraduate Bulletin as follows:

Approved courses must meet each of the following four criteria:

A Substantial Body of Finished Work: This is generally expected to be a total of 20+ double-spaced pages in at least two, preferably more, submissions. It may be in a variety of forms-journal, reports, essays, research papers, etc.-not all of which need to be graded.

Opportunity for Students to Receive Assistance in Progress: Such assistance may take several forms, from visits to the Writing Center (HU-140) to conferences with the instructor.

Opportunity to Revise Some Pieces: As revision is an essential characteristic of good writing, students should be able to revise some portion of their work.

Response to Student Writing: Such response may take several forms-from extended comments from the instructor to peer evaluation in student groups. It is expected, however, that the instructor will respond in detail to some extended work of the student.

These criteria would be replaced by the following description of Writing and Critical Inquiry (This course description will remain tentative until a Writing Director is hired. The Director will then craft a final description and submit it to the General Education Committee and the Undergraduate Academic Council for review and approval):

UUNI 1XX Writing and Critical Inquiry (3)

In this course, students will engage in sustained practice in writing and critical thinking, deepening their understanding of writing as a mode of inquiry and enhancing their ability to negotiate varied writing and reading tasks. Intensive academic and non-academic writing

assignments will equip students to understand and engage in writing as an integral part of critical inquiry in college-level study, while improving their command of the mechanics of prose composition. Writing and Critical Inquiry will focus on writing as both the subject of study and the vehicle for academic inquiry at the university.

Learning objectives for this course will be, first of all, consistent with the learning outcomes for the Basic Communication category of the SUNY General Education Requirement:

Students will:

- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;

The Director of the new writing program (see below), working with the Undergraduate Academic Council, the General Education Committee, and the General Education Advisory Board, will develop further specific learning objectives and aspects of WCI that suit the particular needs and culture of the University at Albany.

3. Appoint a Director of Undergraduate Writing. The Writing Director will provide ongoing oversight and development of the proposed first-year seminar in Writing and Critical Inquiry, manage the new staff hired to teach WCI (see Appendix B), consult with departments and programs as they develop and implement plans to meet the new the advanced writing requirements, and support writing-related faculty development initiatives in collaboration with ITLAL. In addition, the Writing Director will collaborate with IRPE in developing and carrying out an ongoing assessment plan for the undergraduate writing program. The Director will serve as an *ex officio* member of the General Education Advisory Board and the Council on Academic Assessment. As noted above, the Writing Director will report to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. It would be a 12-month administrative position.

4. Develop and implement an assessment and evaluation program that is integral to the UWP. The curricular changes proposed here would in effect establish a more coherent undergraduate writing experience. In order to monitor the effectiveness of these changes, a carefully designed program of ongoing assessment and evaluation would be established (see Appendix D). This assessment program should include various data sets and data analysis procedures and will be developed and conducted in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE), as determined by the Writing Director, the writing staff, and IRPE. It is expected that some components of the proposed seminar in Writing and Critical Inquiry will evolve in response to the analysis of data collected during this period. Thus, the assessment and evaluation of WCI and the advanced writing requirement of the General Education curriculum is a formative process that will not only influence the design and implementation of components of undergraduate writing instruction but also provide insight into the nature of student writing and instruction at UAlbany.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

1. A Director of Undergraduate Writing should be appointed during the spring semester, 2013, and begin working with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to develop Writing and Critical Inquiry, hire staff for WCI, and help departments develop plans to meet the new advanced writing requirement.
2. The Writing Director should collaborate with the Director of the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership to develop a program of professional development and support for faculty who teach writing-intensive courses and to work with departments and programs as they develop and implement plans to meet the new advanced writing requirements.
3. Full-time lecturers should be hired during spring 2013 to provide the core teaching staff for Writing and Critical Inquiry. (See Appendix B.)
4. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, with assistance from the Writing Director, should work with the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, the Director of Admissions, and the Director of Advisement Services Center to determine whether transfer courses from non-SUNY schools should be accepted as equivalency courses that would fulfill the requirement that all students must take Writing and Critical Inquiry. In compliance with SUNY policy, students who complete the Basic Communication category of the General Education Requirement at another SUNY institution will not be required to complete WCI, nor will students who complete an AS or AA degree at a SUNY institution. In addition, current policies regarding high school AP English courses should be adjusted such that students who earn a score of 3 or better on the English Language AP exam earn three English credits but *do not* place out of Writing and Critical Inquiry.
5. Beginning in Fall, 2013, the Writing Director should coordinate with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness to begin developing ongoing evaluation of Writing and Critical Inquiry.
6. All departments and programs should work closely with the Writing Director, the General Education Advisory Board, and the Director of ITLAL to identify essential elements of effective writing within their respective disciplines and develop appropriate requirements for their majors to meet the guidelines for advanced writing competency.

APPENDIX B

WRITING AND CRITICAL INQUIRY

Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) will become the foundation of the new undergraduate writing program at UAlbany. In view of current research and prevailing practice, sections of the WCI must be limited to 25 students in order to allow for effective instruction. In a formal statement prepared by its College Section, the National Council of Teachers of English recommends that no more than 20 students be allowed in a writing class: "Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement." See <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/class/107626.htm>. The Association of Departments of English also recommends that writing courses be capped at 20 students; see http://www.ade.org/policy/policy_guidelines.htm. Most college composition courses are limited to 25 students or fewer, and many university systems adopt system-wide enrollment policies for writing courses. The University of California system, for example, sets a limit of 20 students per section for writing courses. At the University of Colorado at Boulder, a peer institution whose undergraduate writing program is very similar to the proposed UWP, introductory writing courses are capped at 20 students. A survey of UAlbany faculty conducted by the Task Force on Undergraduate Writing indicated that a large majority of faculty advocate class sizes of 20 or fewer students in writing-intensive courses. Nonetheless, given the increasing enrollment pressures, decreasing numbers of faculty and staff, and ongoing financial pressures at this institution, this proposal advocates a class size of 25 as a reasonable compromise to balance these competing factors.

As explained earlier in this proposal, WCI emphasizes intensive practice in academic writing as well as writing in other rhetorical contexts. Based on established principles of rhetorical theory, the course will introduce students to the connection between critical inquiry and written discourse. Students will receive sustained practice in various rhetorical tasks for the purpose of deepening their understanding of writing as a mode of inquiry and enhancing their ability to negotiate varied writing tasks in different academic and non-academic contexts. Although the focus in the course will be on rigorous academic writing in general, some sections will have "themes" generally related to humanities, social sciences, life and physical sciences, and the arts. In these sections, writing and reading assignments will reflect the course "theme" and the discourse conventions of humanities, social sciences, life and physical sciences, and the arts. (A sample syllabus for Writing and Critical Inquiry is included in Appendix G.)

Research on writing pedagogy and student learning informs the approach WCI will emphasize. What follows is a select list of studies that elaborate effective strategies for teaching writing:

- Beaufort, A. *College Writing and Beyond: A new Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2007.
- Carroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*. Carbondale: SIUP, 2002.
- Graham, S., and Perin, D. *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools*. Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007.

- Haswell, R. *Gaining ground in college writing: tales of development and interpretation*. Dallas: SMU Press, 1991.
- Haswell, R. "Documenting improvement in college writing: A longitudinal approach." *Written Communication*, 17 (3), 307-352, 2000.
- Hillocks, Jr., G. *Research on written composition*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1986.
- Light, Richard. *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- McCarthy, Lucille Parkinson. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." *Research in the Teaching of English* (October 1987).
- Sternglass, Marilyn S. *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997.
- Walvoord, Barbara, and Lucille McCarthy. *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Students in Four Disciplines*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990.
- Walvoord, Barbara, Linda Hunt, H. Fil Dowling, and Joan McMahan. *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

As the rationale at the beginning of this document notes, the writing program and first-year seminar produce better academic writers among our students while also improving the overall student experience at UAlbany. Studies show that small-class experiences early in a student's career can help boost retention and increase student satisfaction (see Jennifer L. Crissman, "The Impact of Clustering First Year Seminars with English Composition Courses on New Students' Retention Rates." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice* 3 (2001-2002), 137-152; and, Carolyn A. Schell, and Curt D. Doetkott, "First-Year Seminars Produce Long-Term Impact." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice* 4 (2002-2003), 377-391). Writing and Critical Inquiry, as the only required course devoted exclusively to first-year students, will provide an opportunity for UAlbany students to bond around a common academic experience.

Because Writing and Critical Inquiry will be required of all entering first-year students, approximately 100 sections of the course will have to be offered each academic year for the estimated 2400 entering first-year students. These sections would be distributed across fall and spring semester; in addition, beginning in 2014, it is assumed that sections of the course will be offered during the summer sessions.

The majority of WCI sections will be taught by a core staff of full-time lecturers with appropriate expertise and experience. These positions would be configured according to current University practice for full-time lecturers and would carry an official teaching load of three courses for one semester and four courses for the other semester. However, lecturers would be released from one course per year to assist with professional development activities, as assigned by the Writing Director.

Assuming 100 sections per academic year and a 3-4 load per lecturer, 14-16 lecturers would be needed. (It is important to note that most but not all lecturers would have assigned duties in lieu

of a fourth section of WCI during one semester. In addition, some sections of WCI would be taught by the UWD, by other interested full-time faculty as appropriate.

The lecturers hired to teach Writing and Critical Inquiry would be full-time, non-tenure-track faculty hired on three-year renewable contracts. These lecturers would be fully participating faculty who would not only teach WCI but also help develop the course and participate in ongoing research and evaluation initiatives (as described below). This core staff of expert writing faculty would be part of an innovative instructional model that has been implemented successfully at several postsecondary institutions, including the University of Colorado at Boulder (a peer institution) and the University of Denver (which has a writing program similar to the proposed program). This model differs significantly from the conventional model in place at most universities, in which the majority of sections of first-year writing are taught by part-time adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants. By contrast, WCI would be taught by a stable core staff of experts appropriately trained in writing instruction.

APPENDIX C

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

The effectiveness of the changes to undergraduate writing described in this proposal will depend in part of ongoing professional development not only for faculty who teach writing-intensive courses but also for the full-time staff hired to teach Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI). As noted elsewhere in this proposal, appropriate professional development support should be implemented in conjunction with the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership (ITLAL).

Moreover, departments and programs must be supported appropriately as they develop and implement plans to meet the new advanced writing requirements for their majors. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the faculty and their departments to identify and articulate expectations for effective writing within disciplinary contexts at this institution and to provide proper support for students to enable them to meet those expectations. However, the Writing Director, the writing staff, and ITLAL will provide expertise and support as departments and programs develop, implement, and refine their plans for meeting the advanced writing requirement.

The professional development program to support the undergraduate writing instruction should include some or all of the following components:

- Regular workshops and seminars for faculty who teach WI courses offered through the undergraduate writing program and coordinated with ITLAL.
- Regular staff meetings for lecturers teaching Writing and Critical Inquiry.
- Orientation workshops for new faculty who teach WI courses and for new lecturers who teach WCI.
- A Faculty Writing Fellows Program to support for faculty who wish to enhance their WI courses, which would include a summer workshop and course releases to develop and/or enhance WI courses.
- Periodic meetings of WI faculty from various disciplines to review WI courses and develop effective instructional strategies for such courses.

These components would be developed and adjusted as program needs are identified and as the ongoing evaluation program identifies problems to be addressed in undergraduate writing instruction at UAlbany.

APPENDIX D

PROGRAM EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND ASSESSMENT

In order for the changes proposed here to be effective, ongoing research on student writers and writing instruction at UAlbany should be conducted, and that research should be integral to ongoing program evaluation. This process would be overseen by the Writing Director in coordination with the Office of Institution Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE), and will be reviewed by the Council on Academic Assessment (CAA). It is important to note that some components of this evaluation program would be managed independently by IRPE.

The assessment and evaluation program will include the collection and analysis of various data sets, some of which already exist (such as those that are part of the campus-wide assessment process mandated by SUNY Central); it will include various quantitative and qualitative measures such as the following:

- UAlbany course evaluations
- course evaluations designed specifically for WCI and WI courses
- analyses of student writing using the SUNY rubric
- analyses of student writing using rubrics and/or other instruments developed for this purpose
- exit interviews with students that focus on their experiences in WCI and WI courses
- analyses of enrollment data and students grades for WCI and WI courses
- evaluations of student portfolios according to instruments developed specifically for the undergraduate writing program.

In order to develop and implement an effective program of ongoing research and evaluation, it is recommended that

- The Writing Director, working with IRPE, will develop and implement a plan in 2013 for data collection and program evaluation that would begin in during the first year of the program and continue after WCI is fully implemented. This plan should include appropriate research design and, possibly, materials for IRB approval.
- Criteria and practices for assessment of student writing in WCI and in WI courses be developed by the Writing Director in conjunction with the writing staff; these criteria and practices should be consistent with established criteria and practices nationally with respect to postsecondary writing, and with current SUNY and campus assessment practices with regard to the General Education Program.
- Regular (e.g. annual or biannual) analyses of UAlbany student writing be conducted by IRPE using instruments developed for this purpose, and be shared with CAA.

- A digital portfolio system, similar to those implemented at Clemson University and the University of Denver, be developed for UAlbany undergraduate writing. This system would facilitate program evaluation and provide data for ongoing research.
- The writing staff participate fully in ongoing research and program evaluation.
- Results of ongoing research and program evaluation be reported to CAA and its General Education Assessment Committee, the General Education Committee of UAC, and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Instruction on a regular basis (e.g. annually).
- Assessment of the program will also include evaluation of the individual lecturers, as well as an evaluation of the staffing model, with a particular focus on the unit's capacity to deliver the high-quality writing instruction envisioned here with a stable corps of instructors who are integrated into the life of the university and make important contributions to its educational mission more broadly. To that end, the Writing Director will work with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Provost to evaluate the staff and the staffing model, and will examine both the classroom performance of individual lecturers and the staffing model as a whole to determine whether the program is attracting high-quality instructors who remain in their positions in order to provide the desired stability and help build a coherent program.

APPENDIX E

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

Primary costs for the revised undergraduate writing program described in this proposal include the following:

Instructors for Writing and Critical Inquiry: approximately \$640,000. This figure represents the cost of a writing staff of sixteen full-time lecturers hired at a starting annual salary of approximately \$40,000 each. This starting salary is consistent with salaries for similar positions at UAlbany and its peer institutions. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine salaries with precision. The positions will be non-tenure track but will be designed in a way to attract highly qualified candidates, including consideration for a longer term contract at competitive salary to promote the stability and quality of the program. The Writing Director, the university administration, and prevailing market conditions in the field will ultimately determine the details.

University Writing Director: approximately \$100,000. This figure represents the estimated salary for the University Writing Director. Writing program administrators at institutions similar to UAlbany typically earn \$80,000 - \$125,000.

Costs for hiring, infrastructure, other support: approximately \$260,000. (Please see attached spread sheet for a detailed breakdown.)

Additional costs could include the following:

Course buyouts for faculty members who would teach WCI. The Writing Director (and any assistant directors assigned to the undergraduate writing program) would teach at least one section of WCI per year. (Assistant directors, if appointed, would be bought out of at least one of their regular courses per semester in their home departments.) Other full-time faculty members with an interest in the undergraduate writing program, whose professional situations allow their participation in the undergraduate writing program, may make similar arrangements in order to teach one or more sections of WCI..

Professional development. The professional development component of the undergraduate writing program, which is not a formal component of this proposal, will evolve over time as the Writing Director works with ITLAL and other units to create substantive and sustainable mechanisms to support faculty who teach WI courses and who participate in the undergraduate writing program. Costs for many of the likely components of the professional development program of the undergraduate writing program, such as coordinated workshops, would be minimal. More extensive initiatives, such as a Faculty Writing Fellows program that might include course buyouts for participating faculty, might require larger financial commitments from the University administration and can perhaps be funded through several existing funding streams for faculty development.

APPENDIX F

RECOMMENDED TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The main components of the undergraduate writing program and the major policy changes associated with it would be implemented according to the following timetable (assuming that this proposal is approved before the end of the fall semester, 2012. If delays occur in the approval process, adjustments to the process and timeline will be made as appropriate.

- Interim implementation committee appointed by Provost to undertake necessary actions prior to arrival of University Writing Director (e.g. scheduling of WCI sections and initiation of lecturer searches): December 2012-January 2013.
- University Writing Director appointed: Spring, 2013.
- 14-16 full-time lecturers hired to begin teaching WCI for fall, 2013: Spring, 2013.
- Writing and Critical Inquiry a general education requirement for all newly matriculating students: Fall, 2013.
- Departments and programs begin developing plans to meet advanced writing requirements: Fall, 2013.
- Adjustments made to WCI as a result of analysis of data from first year of program: Spring and Summer, 2014.
- Evaluation and assessment program developed and piloted: 2013-2014.
- Evaluation and assessment program implemented: Fall, 2014.

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE SYLLABUS FOR WRITING AND CRITICAL INQUIRY

****[Note: This is a sample syllabus, intended to provide an idea of what form a WCI course might take. However, the writing director and writing staff would determine the form of the course in general, while individual instructors would further shape their sections they teach according to their professional, academic, and disciplinary interests.]****

UNI 1XX: WRITING AND CRITICAL INQUIRY

Course Description

Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) emphasizes intensive practice in academic writing as well as writing in other rhetorical contexts. Based on established principles of rhetorical theory, WCI engages students in sustained inquiry into the nature of written discourse and the practice of writing. In WCI, writing is both the subject of study and the vehicle for academic inquiry at the postsecondary level. Students will engage in rigorous guided practice in various rhetorical tasks in order to deepen their understanding of writing and enhancing their ability to negotiate varied writing tasks in different academic and non-academic contexts.

Students will

- (a) learn to approach writing as an individual process, a form of inquiry, and a social practice;
- (b) practice applying rhetorical principles to assess and complete discipline-based writing tasks;
- (c) be given sustained, guided experience writing for a variety of purposes, to different audiences, and in different media (including traditional, digital and multi-media formats); and
- (d) develop an appropriate lexicon for discussing and analyzing writing and writing situations.

Rationale

While all students come to UAlbany with backgrounds in writing, they need—and deserve—an introduction to the culture of postsecondary academic inquiry. Writing and Critical Inquiry is thus an invitation for students to explore, in a hands-on way, their new academic community's conceptions and practices of writing and, equally important, to prepare to collaborate with their subsequent instructors in continuing that exploration, not only in writing and writing-intensive courses, but in all their studies.

Writing and Critical Inquiry, therefore, examines writing and language. Readings, short writings, and related assignments enable students to examine writing as a disciplined and disciplinary activity. At its center are four writing projects that exemplify uses of writing students will encounter in their academic careers (and beyond):

- writing to explore or inquire into a problem, experience, idea, concept, question, or issue
- writing to analyze a text, idea, experience, event, or phenomenon
- writing to report on an issue, event, or concept
- writing to establish and defend a position

In the process of completing these assignments, students will

- have opportunities for individual conferences with the course instructor;
- participate in peer response groups to examine one another's work-in-progress; and
- revise their projects in response to instructor and peer feedback.

The semester's accumulated body of work will be assembled in a portfolio that students will review with the Seminar instructor, and continue to build in subsequent courses.

Required Texts

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (W.W. Norton, 2005)

James Lester, *The Essential Guide to Research Writing Across the Disciplines* (MLA, 2004)

Course packet

Course Goals

Writing and Critical Inquiry satisfies the first-year writing requirement University's General Education curriculum. In WCI students will

- gain an understanding of writing as a process of meaning-making and a mode of inquiry;
- enhance their understanding of themselves as writers, readers, and thinkers in order to strengthen ability to produce, read, and evaluate a variety of texts for a variety of rhetorical purposes;
- learn to manage the process of writing in order to write efficiently and effectively for specific rhetorical situations;
- develop an appropriate and distinctive voice appropriate for academic writing as well as writing in other contexts;

- gain an understanding of the nature of discipline-based inquiry in higher education, the central role of writing in such inquiry, and the kinds of writing sponsored by various academic disciplines;
- analyze rhetorical situations, especially in academic contexts, so that they can make appropriate decisions about their drafts-in-progress in order to address their intended audiences appropriately and achieve their rhetorical purposes;
- enhance their ability to read critically a variety of texts, including drafts-in-progress;
- gain experience with using various media (e.g., digital technologies, online forums) for written communication and multimedia presentation as appropriate to the rhetorical situation;
- critically examine evolving media and new technologies for communication not only to learn how to use them effectively, but also to consider the ways in which they influence the composing process and shape the nature of writing itself;
- refine their ability to locate, evaluate, use, and cite appropriate sources in order to complete writing tasks;
- improve their understanding of the conventions of public writing in general, and academic discourse in particular, and to strengthen their ability to follow those conventions in their own writing. (These conventions include matters such as formatting, usage, style, documentation, spelling, etc.).

Course Requirements

Writing. To accomplish these goals and provide sustained practice in writing as inquiry, students will complete four related writing projects:

- writing to explore or inquire into a problem, experience, idea, concept, question, or issue
- writing to analyze a text, idea, experience, event, or phenomenon
- writing to report on an issue, event, or concept
- writing to establish and defend a position

These four projects will revolve around the same general topic and thus represent four different modes of a sustained inquiry into that topic. For each project, students will produce several drafts, revising in response to feedback from peers and their instructor. For at least one of these projects, students will be expected to venture beyond a traditional print-based product and incorporate new technologies to produce a document in a medium suited to the rhetorical purpose (such as a website, digital narrative, or multimedia presentation).

In addition, students will submit several shorter reflective essays on their own writing, assigned readings, and their progress as writers.

Reading. In addition to the required course texts, each of the four main writing assignments will require students to read a variety of texts related to the assignments. Some of these texts will be assigned by the instructor; others will be selected by the students as they engage in research related to each assignment. In addition, students will regularly read and respond to each other's drafts of writing-in-progress.

Collaboration. Each student in WCI will be assigned to a writing group whose primary purpose will be to facilitate inquiry into the nature of writing as a process of inquiry and meaning-making and provide regular response to writing-in-progress. Writing groups will follow an established protocol for reading, evaluating, and responding to drafts-in-progress.

Writing groups will also provide a venue for discussing assigned readings.

Each writing group will also make a culminating formal presentation to the class on a topic of their choice related to their inquiry into writing as a process of academic inquiry. These presentations, which can take a variety of forms and incorporate various media, will represent a kind of research into the nature of writing in general and into specific aspects of writing that students choose to explore.

Course Grading

Final grades for Writing and Critical Inquiry will break down as follows:

four main writing assignments	60%
brief reflective essays	15%
writing group collaborative presentation:	15%
participation	10%

Course Policies

Participation

Your learning in this course will depend upon your genuine and consistent participation in course discussions and activities, especially the writing and study groups. Grading for this component of the course will be based on the extent of your participation: if you participate according to the guidelines, you'll receive full credit for this portion of your grade for the course; if you participate haphazardly or not at all, your grade will be adjusted accordingly. In addition, missing or poorly executed work will result in a lower participation grade.

Attendance

Attendance in this course is essential. There is simply no way to reproduce in-class activities and discussions, which are central to the learning you will do in this course. Equally as important is

the community we create in this course, which requires everyone's participation. Accordingly, *if you miss more than one class during the semester without prior approval, your grade may be adversely affected. Missing more than two classes may result in a failing grade.*

Additional Course Policies

1. The nature of this course is such that we will address many complex and sometimes controversial issues. To do so in a productive way requires that we treat one another with respect and cultivate an atmosphere of tolerance, even in the face of divergent views and disagreement.
2. Plagiarism is unequivocally unacceptable. Please familiarize yourself with the University policies on plagiarism, which are available on the University's website at http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html. If you are caught plagiarizing, you may fail the course and be subject to University disciplinary procedures.
3. Incompletes will be considered as a grade for this course *only* in the event of unusual circumstances, such as serious illness or a family crisis.
4. *Chronic lateness* is unacceptable and is considered a violation of the spirit of a tolerant and respectful classroom community. Please make arrangements to be in class on time.
5. *Please turn off cell phones during class meetings.* Use of laptops to take notes is acceptable, but please refrain from using your laptop to browse the web, send text messages, etc. during class.
6. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

Sample Course Schedule

Week 1	<p>Introduction to Academic Writing What is Writing? Self-evaluation as a Writer <u>Readings:</u> Hooks, “Talking Back”</p>
Week 2	<p>Managing the Writing Process Begin Work on Writing Assignment #1 (Writing to Explore an Experience) <u>Readings:</u> Preface and Introduction of <i>They Say/I Say</i>; Yagelski, “Entering the Conversations”</p>
Week 3	<p>Writing as Inquiry Draft of Assignment #1 due <u>Readings:</u> models of academic writing as inquiry</p>
Week 4	<p>Rhetorical Analysis Revised draft of Assignment #1 due First Reflective Essay due Begin Work on Writing Assignment #2 (Writing to Analyze) <u>Readings:</u> Carroll, “Backpacks vs. Briefcases: What is Rhetorical Analysis?”</p>
Week 5	<p>Analysis in Academic Disciplines Draft of Writing Assignment #2 due <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 1, 7, and 9 in Lester, <i>Essential Guide to Research Writing</i></p>
Week 6	<p>Analysis, continued Developing an Academic Style Revised Draft of Writing Assignment #2 due <u>Readings:</u> models of analysis across the disciplines</p>
Week 7	<p>Introduction to Research Final Version of Writing Assignment #2 due Second Reflective Essay due Begin Writing Assignment #3 (Writing to Report) <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6 in Lester, <i>Essential Guide to Research Writing</i></p>
Week 8	<p>Writing to Report Across the Disciplines Digital and Multimedia Writing Draft of Writing Assignment #3 due <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 1-3 of Graff, <i>They Say/I Say</i>; models of research-based writing; selected digital texts and multimedia presentations</p>

Week 9	<p>Writing to Report, continued Digital and Multimedia Writing, continued Working with Sources Revised Draft of Writing Assignment #3 due <u>Readings:</u> Chapter 5 in Lester, <i>Essential Guide to Research Writing</i>; selected digital texts and multimedia presentations</p>
Week 10	<p>Writing to Defend a Position (Argument) Final Version of Writing Assignment #3 due Third Reflective Essay due Begin Writing Assignment #4 (Argument) <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 4-7 of Graff, <i>They Say/I Say</i></p>
Week 11	<p>Argument, continued Draft of Writing Assignment #4 due <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 8-10 of Graff, <i>They Say/I Say</i></p>
Week 12	<p>Argument, continued Revised Draft of Writing Assignment #4 due <u>Readings:</u> models of academic argument</p>
Week 13	<p>Reflections on Academic Writing and Discourse Final Version of Writing Assignment #4 due Final Reflective Essay due <u>Readings:</u></p>
Week 14	<p>Writing Group Presentations</p>
Week 15	<p>Writing Group Presentations Portfolios due</p>