

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Introduced by: UAC

Date: April 17, 2008

UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT:

1. The University Writing Program proposed by the Provost's Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction be adopted with the following amendments:
  - a. A University Writing Committee be established as a standing subcommittee of the General Education Committee of the Undergraduate Academic Council of the University Senate. Assessment remains within the structure established by the University Council on Assessment.
  - b. The current General Education policies regarding writing-intensive (WI) courses be revised to replace the Lower Level Writing Intensive requirements by the first-year University Writing Seminar described in Appendix B of the proposal, or its equivalent as deemed by the University Writing Committee.
2. This proposal be forwarded to the Interim President George M. Philip for approval.

Rationale of amendments:

- a. Since the Writing Program is part of the General Education program, the University Writing Committee should be a subcommittee of the General Education Committee.
- b. UAC highly regards the University Writing Program the Provost's Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction. It is a proposal worthwhile to be adopted as originally planned. However, many undergraduate programs are already taxed to a limit with the number of General Education requirements at University at Albany. Given the state and constraints of our programs, it was determined that to improve the current writing program, the university should adopt the University Writing Seminar but still keep the writing requirements at two courses. Should the General

Education requirements be reduced at a later time, then the university could adopt the full-fledged University Writing Proposal attached below.

### Program Rationale

The University at Albany's current program of undergraduate writing instruction does not provide adequate support for students' development as writers, readers, and thinkers during their undergraduate careers. The Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction, charged in August, 2006, by 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 and 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](http://www.albany.edu/ir/UAlb_Writing_Task_Force_Final_Report_2007.pdf)) This proposal is intended to address these concerns and to strengthen undergraduate education at UAlbany by establishing a comprehensive and coherent University Writing Program.

Writing is a complex and multi-faceted cognitive, intellectual, and social activity 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 can 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. 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. Meeting this challenge requires attention to every phase of the writing process, including developing, organizing, revising, and copyediting a written text and assuring that it conforms to the stylistic and surface

conventions appropriate to each context of writing. To support students' development as writers, institutions must provide opportunities for sustained, guided practice in a variety of writing tasks over time and 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 surface errors, syntax problems, and similar difficulties.

Significantly, in order to provide this kind of effective support for students' development as writers, postsecondary institutions must also provide an appropriately trained and expert faculty that is adequately supported by ongoing professional development (see Appendix C). Studies indicate the need for substantive and sustained professional development opportunities buttressed by ongoing local research and assessment. Indeed, 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 virtually unique 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 include a combination of required courses devoted explicitly to writing and writing-intensive courses in which students learn to write within specific academic disciplines. The proposed UWP will offer such a combination of courses. The foundation of the UWP is a required first-year seminar devoted specifically to guided practice in writing as a discipline itself and as an essential form of inquiry in postsecondary education (see Appendix B and G). Given that writing is central to the intellectual inquiry that characterizes postsecondary education, such a seminar is a necessary foundation for students' ongoing development as effective writers and critical thinkers in both academic and non-academic contexts. (In this regard, the proposed writing seminar must be distinguished from a traditional "composition" course in which writing is defined essentially as a "basic skill" rather than a discipline itself; nevertheless, the UWS will address the fundamental skills of writing in the context of the practice of writing as a discipline and a form of inquiry.) The UWP will also strengthen the University's current WI requirements by ensuring that students take the lower-division course early enough in their college careers to provide adequate support for their development as writers. In this way the UWP will provide a sequence of courses that support students' development as writers and move students from a general experience with writing and academic inquiry to increasingly discipline-specific experiences that will enable them to deepen their writing knowledge and competence.

### Major Proposed Changes to Establish the University Writing Program

1. Revise current writing-intensive policies as follows:

- a) All undergraduate students will be required to complete the lower-division WI course by the time they have earned 60 credit hours.
  - b) All undergraduate students will be encouraged to take the upper-division WI course in their major.
  - c) Writing-intensive courses must include explicit attention to writing instruction appropriate to the discipline within which the courses are offered.
2. Establish a University Writing Seminar (UWS) to be required of all entering first-year students and to be taken in the freshman year (see attached course proposal).
  3. Establish a University Writing Committee (UWC) as a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Academic Council.
  4. Implement a multi-faceted faculty development program to support faculty who teach WI courses and faculty who teach the UWS.
  5. Develop and implement an ongoing assessment and evaluation program that is integral to the UWP.

Each of these changes will be explained separately below.

*1. Revise Current Writing-Intensive Policies.* Current policies regarding writing-intensive courses are included in the description of "Written Discourse" under "Communication and Reasoning Competencies" in the Undergraduate Bulletin:

Students must satisfactorily complete with grades of *C* or higher or *S* a lower division Writing Intensive course, which is expected to be completed within the freshman or sophomore year, and a Writing Intensive course at or above the 300 level, normally completed within the student's major. These 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 understanding of the subject.

Under this proposal, this statement would be revised as follows (with changes indicated in boldface):

Students must satisfactorily complete with grades of *C* or higher or *S* a lower division Writing Intensive course, which is **required to be completed by the time students have earned 60 credit hours**, and a Writing Intensive course at or above the 300 level, **strongly encouraged to be completed within the student's major**. These courses use writing as an important **inquiry** tool in the discipline studied and are **intended to provide opportunities for students to extend their understanding of writing in various academic contexts and to support their continued development as writers and thinkers**. The emphasis is on using

writing as a means of sharpening critical thinking in and understanding of the subject **and enhancing students' ability to use writing effectively in that discipline.**

In addition, the four criteria for approved WI courses will be revised. 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.

Under this proposal, these four criteria would be expanded to five and revised as follows (with changes indicated in boldface):

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 **should include direct assistance from the course instructor, which may take several forms, including written feedback and individual conferences, and may also include other forms, such as** visits to the Writing Center (HU-140).

*Opportunity **for Students** to Revise Some Pieces **of Writing**:* As revision is an essential characteristic of good writing, students should be **given appropriate opportunities** 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.

***Direct Attention to Writing in the Discipline.* Some portion of the course should be devoted explicitly to writing instruction as appropriate to the discipline within which the course is offered. This instruction may take the form of in-class activities, assigned readings, or formal assignments that focus attention specifically on the practices of writing effectively within the discipline.**

Departments and programs will decide how best to configure lower-division and upper-division writing-intensive courses within the revised guidelines. The University Writing Director, working together with the Director of ITLAL, will assist departments in making appropriate changes to existing WI courses or developing new courses that both meet the WI requirements and address departmental staffing and enrollment needs.

*2. Establish a University Writing Seminar (UWS) to be required of all entering freshmen students and to be taken in the freshman year.* The University Writing Seminar emphasizes intensive practice and instruction in academic writing as well as writing in other rhetorical contexts (see Appendix G for course proposal form and sample syllabus). The UWS is based on established principles of rhetorical theory and will function as a sustained inquiry into the nature of written discourse and the practice of writing. It is important to distinguish the UWS from traditional first-year composition courses that present writing as a basic skill and emphasize the technical aspects of writing. By contrast, the UWS will focus on writing as both the subject of study and the practice of inquiry. 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 tasks in different academic and non-academic contexts. The UWS provides the foundation for the two WI courses students are required to take.

The following language will be added to the revised description of "Written Discourse" under "Communication and Reasoning Competencies" in the Undergraduate Bulletin (see above):

Students must satisfactorily complete with grades of *C* or higher or *S* the University Writing Seminar, which is to be taken in the freshman year. The University Writing Seminar provides sustained inquiry into the nature of written discourse and practice writing in various contexts. It is intended to introduce students to intellectual inquiry in undergraduate education and to support students' development as writers and thinkers who can negotiate various rhetorical tasks.

In addition, the following language will be added to the Undergraduate Bulletin description of the University Writing Seminar:

Any appropriate lower-division undergraduate course, including Project Renaissance and Honors College courses, may qualify as the equivalent of the University Writing Seminar, provided that the course is approved as such by the University Writing Committee. Such courses must be similar in intent to the University Writing Seminar and therefore must focus in a central way on writing and provide students with opportunities for regular and sustained practice in writing a variety of forms, for different purposes, to a variety of audiences, and in different media.

The UWS 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 a program director who reports 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 proposed UWP, 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 director of the UWP would not be a new administrative position but the re-establishment of a position that once effectively existed.*)

*Note that during the period of transition from the current WI program to the new UWP (see Appendix F), the UWS will count as the lower-division WI course required under the current General Education curriculum.*

*3. Establish a University Writing Committee (UWC) as a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Academic Council. In order to provide systemic and ongoing oversight of the University Writing Program (UWP), the University Writing Committee will be established as a standing subcommittee of the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC). The UWC would be charged with reviewing UWP policies and procedures, reviewing proposals for courses that would fulfill the UWS requirement, reviewing proposals for writing-intensive courses, monitoring the effectiveness of the UWP, and addressing relevant issues regarding the UWP. Membership on the UWC should be representative of the University community and reflect broad participation from among the various academic disciplines that make up the undergraduate curriculum. The Director of the UWP would be an *ex officio* member of the UWC.*

4. *Implement a multi-faceted faculty development program to support faculty who teach WI courses and faculty who teach the UWS.* The proposed UWP would include a comprehensive program for faculty development (see Appendix C). This program for faculty development will be integral to the UWP and essential for its effectiveness in enhancing undergraduate writing instruction at UAlbany. The UWD, working in collaboration with the Director of ITLAL, will oversee the development and implementation of this program, which will provide a variety of kinds of support and training for faculty and graduate student teaching assistants, as described in Appendix C. In effect, the professional development component of the proposed UWP will provide coordinated, structural venues for discussions about writing, writing pedagogy, and assessment in a way that currently does not exist at UAlbany; it will address the need for consistency across WI courses and oversight that the current WI program lacks.

5. *Develop and implement an assessment and evaluation program that is integral to the UWP.* The proposed UWP would be characterized by a carefully designed, ongoing assessment and evaluation program that will be integral to the UWP itself (see Appendix D). Indeed, this assessment program, which will 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), will also be a crucial part of the process of the development and implementation of the UWP according to the timetable described in Appendix F. In other words, it is expected that some of the specific components of the proposed UWP, especially the University Writing Seminar, will evolve during the implementation period in response to the analysis of data collected during this period; moreover, the UWP is expected to continue to evolve even after it is fully implemented as the assessment and evaluation process continues to provide data and insight into the program's effectiveness. Thus, this assessment and evaluation program is a formative process that will not only influence the design and implementation of the UWP but will also provide insight into the nature of student writing and writing instruction at UAlbany.



## APPENDIX A

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

1. A University Writing Director (UWD) should be identified in Spring, 2008, and begin working with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to develop the University Writing Seminar and begin working with departments to bring current writing-intensive courses into line with new policies by the dates indicated in the implementation schedule.
2. The University 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.
3. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, with assistance from the University Writing Director, should coordinate with deans and program directors to insure sufficient seats in writing-intensive courses to enable students to meet WI requirements.
4. Full-time lecturers should be hired through the UWP during early 2009 to provide the core teaching staff for the University Writing Seminar. (See below under "The University Writing Seminar.")
5. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, with assistance from the University Writing Director, should work with the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management, and the Director of Advisement Services Center to establish appropriate transfer course equivalencies for transfer students who wish to transfer courses to fulfill one or more of the three required courses in the University Writing Program. It is recommended that equivalencies for writing courses identified as part of existing articulation agreements with other schools, particularly two-year SUNY colleges, be honored; therefore, students transferring from such schools will be able to use their first-year composition courses as the equivalent of the proposed UWS and other appropriate writing or writing-intensive courses (such as advanced composition) to count as the equivalent of the lower-division WI course at UAlbany. In addition, current policies regarding high school AP English courses should be maintained; UAlbany currently allows students who earn specified minimum scores on the AP English exam to count their high school AP English course as a lower-division WI course. Transfer equivalencies and policies regarding AP course credit should be reviewed by the University Writing Committee and the General Education Committee once the UWP is fully implemented.

6. The University Writing Director should coordinate with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness to develop a system of ongoing program evaluation for the University Writing Program.
7. All departments and programs should work closely with the UWD to identify essential elements of effective writing within their respective disciplines and develop appropriate means of assessment and evaluation for writing-intensive courses. This process should begin upon approval of the UWP and continue under the auspices of the University Writing Committee.
8. The University Writing Director and the Director of ITLAL should assist departments and programs in developing effective models of instruction for writing-intensive courses.

## APPENDIX B

### THE UNIVERSITY WRITING SEMINAR

The University Writing Seminar will become the foundation of the University Writing Program. In view of available research and prevailing practice, sections of the UWS must be limited to 20 students in order to allow for the kind of effective instruction that will characterize the course. (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](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.)

Given that the UWS will be required of all entering first-year students and given that many students will eventually take other courses that will fulfill the requirement for the UWS, approximately 100-120 sections of the course will have to be offered each academic year for the estimated 2400 entering first-year students.

The majority of UWS 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 a teaching load of three courses per semester. Assuming 100 sections per academic year, 16 lecturers would teach 96 sections; the remaining sections would be taught by the UWD, selected graduate teaching assistants, and other interested full-time faculty (under buyout arrangements with their departments).

The lecturers hired to teach in the UWP would be full-time, non-tenure-track faculty. These lecturers would be fully participating faculty who would not only teach the UWS 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 (whose writing program is similar to the proposed UWP). 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, the proposed UWP would be characterized by a stable core staff of appropriately trained experts in writing instruction.

## APPENDIX C

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

A crucial component of the proposed University Writing Program (UWP) will be ongoing professional development not only for faculty who teach WI courses but also for the full-time lecturers hired to teach the University Writing Seminar (UWS). As noted elsewhere in this proposal, this professional development program should be developed and implemented in conjunction with the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership (ITLAL). If the proposed UWP is to be effective in helping students develop as writers and thinkers, it is essential that faculty who teach WI courses or the UWS receive ongoing support to deepen their appreciation for the challenges facing student writers and to develop appropriate strategies for effective writing instruction. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the faculty to identify and articulate expectations for effective writing at this institution and to provide proper support for students to enable them to meet those expectations.

The professional development program implemented as part of the UWP should include some or all of the following components:

- Regular workshops and seminars for faculty who teach WI courses offered through the UWP and coordinated with ITLAL.
- Regular staff meetings for lecturers teaching the UWS.
- Orientation workshops for new faculty who teach WI courses and for new lecturers who teach the UWS.
- A Faculty Writing Fellows Program to support for faculty who wish to enhance their WI courses, which would include a summer workshop and course released 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 identified problems to be addressed in the UWP.

## APPENDIX D

### PROGRAM EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND ASSESSMENT

The proposed UWP is based on available research on writing development and writing instruction as well as on data collected by the Task Force on Undergraduate Writing Instruction during the 2006-2007 academic year. However, in order for the UWP to be effective, ongoing research on student writers and writing instruction at UAlbany must be conducted, and that research must be integral to ongoing program evaluation. This process would be overseen by the University Writing Director in coordination with the Office of Institution Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE); it should also be coordinated with the Council on Academic Assessment (CAA) of the University Senate. It is important to note that some components of this evaluation program, such as some analyses of student writing, would be managed independently by IRPE.

The assessment and evaluation program of the UWP 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 the UWS and WI courses
- analyses of student writing using the SUNY rubric
- analyses of student writing using rubrics and/or other instruments developed specifically for the UWP
- exit interviews with students that focus on their experiences in the UWS and WI courses
- analyses of enrollment data and students grades for the UWS and WI courses
- evaluations of student portfolios according to instruments developed specifically for the UWP.

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

- The University Writing Director, working with IRPE and with the staff of the UWP, begin developing a plan in 2008 for data collection and program evaluation that would begin in 2009 and continue after the UWP is fully implemented in 2010. This plan should include appropriate research design and, possibly, materials for IRB approval.
- Results of data analyses of piloted sections of the UWS in 2009 be used to shape the UWS and make any necessary adjustments to the UWP.
- Criteria and practices for assessment of student writing in the UWS and in WI courses be developed by the UWD in conjunction with the staff of the UWP; these criteria and practices should be consistent with established criteria and

practices nationally with respect to postsecondary writing.

- Regular (e.g. annual or biannual) analyses of UAlbany student writing be conducted by IRPE using instruments developed for this purpose.
- A digital portfolio system, similar to those implemented at Clemson University and the University of Denver, be developed for the UAlbany UWP. This system would facilitate program evaluation and provide data for ongoing research as part of the UWP.
- The staff of the UWP participate fully in ongoing research and program evaluation.
- Results of ongoing research and program evaluation be reported to the University Writing Committee on a regular basis (e.g. annually).

## APPENDIX E

### RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

Costs for the University Writing Program fall mainly into two categories:

1. instructional costs for required writing-intensive courses
2. instructional costs for the University Writing Seminar.

*Costs for Writing-Intensive Courses.* Under the University Writing Program, costs for the lower- and upper-division WI courses will likely increase somewhat from their current levels as departments or programs adjust their WI course offerings in order to comply with the proposed new requirements for WI courses or add seats in WI courses. These adjustments may require changes in resource allocations within those departments or programs. For example, a department may need to offer additional sections of a lower-division WI course as a result of the requirement that the lower-division WI course be completed by undergraduate students prior to their earning 60 credits. The costs of such additional course offerings, however, may be offset by smaller enrollments in other courses. These costs may also be offset through the use of innovative instructional models (as some departments currently use), such as the use of small discussion sections taught by TAs with mentoring and support from ITLAL and the UWD to enable these sections to qualify as writing-intensive.

Given the variety of WI courses across departments and programs, it is impossible to anticipate any significant changes in costs associated with WI courses. Some departments or programs will inevitably make greater changes in their WI course offerings than others. But it is reasonable to assume that departments can make necessary adjustments over time without the need for significant increases in resources. It is expected that departments will work closely with the Undergraduate Dean, the UWD, and ITLAL to make such adjustments in ways that adhere to the new WI policies yet are still essentially resource-neutral as much as possible.

*Costs for the University Writing Seminar.* Initially, direct instructional costs for the UWS would be approximately \$575,000-600,000 per year. The bulk of this expenditure would be devoted to salaries for the staff of fifteen full-time lecturers who would be hired to teach the UWS. At an annual salary of \$35,000 each (which is in line with current salaries of full-time lecturers at UAlbany and with salaries for similar positions at other institutions, such as the University of Colorado at Boulder), salaries for 15 lecturers would cost \$560,000.

The remaining costs for the UWS would be for course buyouts for faculty members and graduate TAs who would teach the UWS. It is anticipated that the University Writing Director and any assistant directors assigned to the UWP would teach at least one section of the UWS per semester and thus would be bought out of at least one of their regular



courses per semester in their home departments. It is also anticipated that other full-time faculty members with an interest in the UWP, whose professional situations allow their participation in the UWP, would make similar arrangements in order to teach one or more sections of the UWS. And it is anticipated that interested and qualified doctoral TAs from various departments may be assigned to the UWP and, working under the mentorship of the UWD and ITLAL, would teach sections of the UWS.

Ideally, arrangements that enable full-time, tenure-track faculty and doctoral TAs to teach the UWS will increase over time so that the percentage of sections taught by the full-time lecturers would decrease. It is also expected that, as the UWP is implemented and developed over time, regular tenure-track faculty lines would be devoted to it, most likely in the context of joint appointments (as is common with programs such as Women's Studies). The goal is to create an expert, diverse, and stable staff to deliver instruction in the UWP.

*Additional Costs of the University Writing Program.* The professional development component of the UWP, which is not a formal component of this proposal, will evolve over time as the UWD works closely with ITLAL and other available units to create substantive and sustainable mechanisms to support faculty who teach WI courses and who participate in the UWP. (These mechanisms are described in the report of the Provost's Task Force on Undergraduate Writing.) Costs for many of the likely components of the professional development program of the UWP, such as coordinated workshops, are expected to be minimal. More extensive initiatives, such as a Faculty Writing Fellows program that might include course buyouts for participating faculty, may require larger financial commitments from the University administration and can perhaps be funded through several existing funding streams for faculty development.

As is noted in the report of the Provost's Task Force on Undergraduate Writing, the current university administration has expressed strong support for this initiative and has identified several potential funding sources for the proposed UWP. It is expected that adequate funding for the UWP will be provided in the university budget. *It is also important to note that the University must identify new sources of funding for the UWP rather than rely exclusively on diverting monies from existing funding streams.*

## APPENDIX F

### RECOMMENDED TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The main components of the University Writing Program and the major policy changes associated with it would be implemented according to the following timetable:

- University Writing Director appointed: Summer, 2008
- University Writing Committee established: Fall, 2008.
- Professional Development Program developed: 2008-2009.
- Pilot sections of University Writing Seminar offered (these sections will fulfill the lower-division WI course requirement): Spring, 2009.
- Initial cohort of full-time lecturers (approximately 8 positions) hired to begin teaching the UWS in fall, 2009: Spring, 2009.
- Adjustments made to UWS as a result of analysis of pilot sections from spring, 2009: Summer, 2009.
- University Writing Seminar offered to entering freshmen (these sections will fulfill the lower-division WI course requirement): Fall, 2009.
- Evaluation and assessment program implemented: Fall, 2009.
- Additional full-time lecturers hired to begin teaching the UWS in fall, 2010: Spring, 2010.
- Adjustments made to UWS on the basis of analyses of data collected as part of the evaluation and assessment program during 2009-2010: Summer, 2010.
- University Writing Seminar required of all entering freshmen: Fall, 2010.
- Lower-Division WI course required before 60 credits taken applies to students entering in Fall 2010.

## APPENDIX G

### COURSE PROPOSAL FOR THE UNIVERSITY WRITING SEMINAR

#### **UNI 000: University Writing Seminar**

##### **Course Description**

As the first of at least three courses students will take in the University Writing Program (one lower- and one upper-division WI course are also required), the University Writing Seminar introduces students to the culture of writing in the academy, and prepares them to take an active role in their own literacy educations.

To those ends, they 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 negotiate 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 local culture. The Seminar is thus an invitation for them to explore, in a very hands-on way, their new academic community's conceptions 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.

Topically, then, the Seminar is a course that deals with writing and language. Readings, short writings and related assignments enable students to examine writing as a disciplined and disciplinary activity. At its center, however, are four writing projects that exemplify uses of writing students will engage again and again in their academic careers (and beyond):

- \*\*\*writing to explore or inquire into a problem, experience, idea, concept, or issue
- \*\*\*writing to analyze a text, idea, event, or phenomenon
- \*\*\*writing with support from sources to report on or explore an issue or concept
- \*\*\*writing to establish and defend a position

In the process of completing each of 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.

### **Course Goals**

Students who complete the Seminar successfully will have met the following seven goals:

1. Compiled a portfolio of their own writings, revisions and instructors' commentaries thereon.
2. Gained an understanding of writing as a process, practiced managing their own versions of that process, and developed a critical, self-reflective approach to writing that will aid their subsequent development.
3. Developed an understanding of and a lexicon for handling discipline-based inquiry in higher education, the central role of writing in such inquiry, and the kinds of writing sponsored by various academic disciplines.
4. Learned to ask appropriate questions of rhetorical situations in both academic and non-academic contexts so as to negotiate those situations effectively as writers and readers.
5. Refined their ability to locate, assess and use appropriate texts and other sources in order to complete writing tasks.
6. Improved both their understanding of and ability to follow the conventions of academic discourse (including those concerning form, attribution, style, and usage).
7. Gained experience using a variety of media for written communication.

## SAMPLE SYLLABUS

### UNI 000: The University Writing Seminar

**Instructor:**

**Class:**

**Office:**

**Email:**

**Office Hours:**

**Required books:**

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 (available at Shipmates or the Library's E-Reserves)

**Course Goals**

The University Writing Seminar satisfies the first of the University's three Writing Intensive requirements. It has the following seven goals:

(1) To allow you to compile a portfolio of your work: drafts, revisions, and the commentaries on them (by me, as your instructor, and by your classmates). We will use this collection to assess your learning over the term and to identify those strengths and weaknesses that will most affect your next steps as a writer.

(2) To help you gain an understanding of writing as a process and to give you guided practice managing your individual versions of that process. People approach writing in a wide variety of ways—there is no “perfect” method—but there is a good deal we can learn both from one another and from research on writing about successful practices. And of course there is no substitute for learning by doing, so you can expect to do, reflect on, and talk about writing on a regular basis.

(3) To introduce you to 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. At the heart of the academy is the process we might call knowledge-making, and at the heart of that process—the heart of the heart of higher education—is writing. We will look carefully at how scholars in different fields go about this work.

(4) To teach you to ask appropriate questions of rhetorical situations in both academic and non-academic contexts so that you can negotiate those situations effectively as

writers. We always write in a specific context: to some reader(s) for some purpose as a particular version of ourselves following some particular set of rules or conventions. It is certainly possible to write without considering such things—to depend on luck, or to proceed on sheer instinct—but you increase your chances of succeeding as a writer by getting a handle on these variables in advance, and proceeding accordingly.

(5) To refine your ability to locate, assess and use appropriate texts and other sources in order to complete writing tasks. Academic writing, in particular, is a kind of extended conversation, a collective effort to understand the world. In order to participate, then, we have to begin by learning how to listen, as it were: to draw upon the work and words of others. To that end, we will explore the world of academic publication, including its rapidly growing digital dimension; discuss how to evaluate sources; and examine the rules that govern how we represent what those sources have to offer in our own writing.

(6) To improve your understanding of the conventions of public writing in general, and academic discourse in particular, and to strengthen your ability to follow those conventions in your own writing. (These conventions include such things as formatting, usage, documentation, spelling, and so on.) If you want your writing to achieve its purpose—to earn you an A, to win you a grant, to land you a job—you need to know, and probably to follow, the conventions your audience will be expecting you to recognize. In other words, you will usually want to write a research paper that looks like a research paper, a grant proposal that looks like a grant proposal, an application letter that looks like an application letter. You will want to punctuate your writing in ways that your readers think a writer ought to punctuate, spell the way they think a writer ought to spell, and so on. Even if you decide to violate those conventions—and you might have reason to do so—you can’t do that (or do it as well) unless you know what they are.

(7) To give you appropriate experiences with using various media (e.g., digital technologies, online forums) for written communication and multimedia presentation. Powerful and rapidly developing technologies are changing the way we communicate, and even reshaping what it means to write. You will increasingly be asked to use these technologies in your academic work, as well as in your life outside of school. Accordingly, we will examine these technologies and their attendant new media, not only to learn how to use them effectively, but also to consider the ways in which they “use” us, as it were: the ways in which they are (re)shaping the nature of writing itself.

## **Course Sequence**

To these ends, we will undertake four related writing projects. Each one features a use for writing you will turn to again and again during your academic career and beyond:

\*\*\*writing to explore or inquire into a problem, experience, idea, concept, or issue

\*\*\*writing to analyze a text, idea, event, or phenomenon

\*\*\*writing with support from sources to report on an issue or concept

\*\*\*writing to establish and defend a position

For the sake of coherence and efficiency, all four of these projects will revolve around the same general topic and will follow the same general pattern. We will begin by analyzing examples of writing which, though drawn from different disciplines, model the kind of work you will be doing. Some of these will be by professional scholars, but we will also consider student writings, and our object will be to help you develop a sense of the kind of writing you are aiming to produce. Next, we will do one or more exercises to get you started in the right direction—have you experiment, for example, with the initial steps of whichever use of writing it is from the perspective of the humanities, say, then the social sciences, and then the hard sciences. Then you will head off to produce a first draft of the target writing, bring it to class to get feedback (from both classmates and instructor) on the basis of which you will revise it for a second submission and a grade. For at least one of these four main assignments, you will be encouraged to venture beyond a traditional print-based product and incorporate new technologies to produce a multimedia document or a document in a medium suited to your purpose (such as a website).

## Course Policies

1. **Timeliness, preparedness and attendance:** Class meetings will begin **promptly** at ###. If you arrive after that (and coming in late is, of course, both counterproductive and rude), you will be marked absent. Similarly, you need to come to class having done the requisite reading and writing. If you have not—if you come to class unprepared—you will be marked absent. You are allotted three (3) absences for the term. Any additional absences constitute grounds for failure.

2. **Due dates:** All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day designated unless otherwise noted. **EXCEPTION:** You may have ONE extension on a writing project, but (a) you must request that extension in writing or by email **BEFORE** the project is due; and (b) in that request, you must specifically propose the new deadline, get approval for it, and then meet it. Late papers will **NOT** be accepted.

## Evaluation

Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

**In-class exercises, short writing assignments, quizzes** 10%

**Writing Projects:** To get full credit on any of the four writing projects, you must submit all portions, and submit them on time. Thus, while the final grade will be heavily influenced by the quality of the final draft, I will also take into account strong early drafts and the constructive use of feedback.

<b>Exploring a problem, experience, idea, concept, or issue</b>	10%
<b>Analyzing a text, idea, event, or phenomenon</b>	15%
<b>Drawing upon sources to report on an issue or concept</b>	20%
<b>Establishing and defending a position</b>	25%

## **University Policy on Plagiarism**

The *Undergraduate Bulletin* spells out the following definition of and policy on plagiarism:

“Presenting as one's own work the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else). Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences for violating University regulations.

*Examples of plagiarism include:* failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper's or project's structure; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one's own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.”



## Illustrative Course Schedule

### ***Week 1: Writing to explore an experience (I)***

**Day 1:** Introduction to the course. In-class writing about the syllabus; discussion.

Reading assignment: models of reflective writing from a humanities perspective

Writing assignment: “My Background in Writing.”

**Day 2:** Share essays on background, discuss, submit.

Analyze and discuss models for reflective writing.

Writing assignment: reflective writing from humanities perspective

### ***Week 2: Writing to explore an experience (II)***

**Day 3:** Share essay drafts in small groups, identifying similarities and differences. Plenary discussion. Submit essays.

Reading assignments:

(a) Models of reflective writing from social sciences perspective

(b) “Preface” to *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, “Demystifying Academic Conversation”

Writing assignment: revise “My Background in Writing”

**Day 4:** Analyze models of reflective writing from social sciences perspective.

Discuss preface to *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*.

Writing assignment: reflective writing from social sciences perspective

### ***Week 3: Writing to explore an experience (III)***

**Day 5:** Share essays in small groups, identifying similarities and differences. Plenary discussion. Submit essays.

Reading assignments:

(a) Models of reflective writing from hard sciences perspective

(b) “Introduction” to *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, “Entering the Conversation”

**Day 6:** Analyze models of reflective writing from a hard sciences perspective.

Discuss “Introduction” to *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*

Writing assignment: reflective essay from hard sciences perspective

***Week 4: Writing to explore an experience (IV)/Writing to analyze (I)***

**Day 7:** Share essays in small groups, identifying similarities and differences. Plenary discussion. Submit essays.

Reading assignment: models of analytical essays from humanities perspective

**Day 8:** Examine models of analytical essays from humanities perspective

Writing assignment: draft of an essay analyzing phenomenon from humanities perspective. Bring four extra copies of draft to class.

Reading assignment: Guidelines for peer response

***Week 5: Writing to analyze (II)***

**Day 9:** Review the guidelines for peer response, then move into groups to give both oral and written responses to drafts of analyses.

Writing assignment: revise humanities-based analysis in response to peer feedback, and prepare for submission. Be sure to append all peer responses.

Reading assignment: models for analytical essay from social sciences perspective

**Day 10:** Submit the revised humanities-based analysis with all peer responses appended. Discuss models for analytical essay from social sciences perspective.

Writing assignment: draft of an essay analyzing phenomenon from social sciences perspective. Bring four extra copies of draft to class.

***Week 6: Writing to analyze (III)***

**Day 11:** Review again the guidelines for peer response, and talk about amendments or additions. Move into groups to give both oral and written responses to drafts of social science-based analyses.

Writing assignment: revise social sciences-based analysis in response to peer feedback, and prepare for submission. Be sure to append all peer responses.

Reading assignment: models for analytical essay from hard sciences perspective

**Day 12:** Submit the revised social sciences-based analysis with all peer responses appended. Discuss models for analytical essay from hard-sciences perspective.

Writing assignment: draft of an essay analyzing phenomenon from hard-sciences perspective. Bring four extra copies of draft to class.

***Week 7: Writing to analyze (IV)/Drawing Upon Resources to Write a Report (I)***

**Day 13:** Using the guidelines for peer response, provide both oral and written responses to drafts of essays analyzing phenomenon from a hard-science perspective.

Writing assignment: revise hard sciences-based analysis in response to peer feedback, and prepare for submission. Be sure to append all peer responses.

Reading assignments:

(a) model of research-based report from humanities perspective;

(b) *The Essential Guide to Research Writing Across the Disciplines* on annotated bibliographies

**Day 14:** Submit the revised hard sciences-based analysis with all peer responses appended.

Analyze models of research-based report from humanities perspective.

Reading assignments:

(a) model of research-based report from social sciences perspective;

(b) *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* on quotation

***Week 8: Drawing Upon Sources to Write a Report (II)***

**Day 15:** Analyze models of research-based report from social sciences perspective

Reading assignments:

(a) model of research-based report from hard sciences perspective;

(b) *The Essential Guide to Research Writing Across the Disciplines* on documentation

**Day 16:** Analyze models of research-based report from hard sciences perspective.

Writing assignment: Choose a research perspective and topic, and draft a one-page prospectus with 4-6 sources listed in an annotated bibliography.

***Week 9: Drawing Upon Sources to Write a Report (III)***

**Day 17:** Share prospectuses and annotated bibliographies in response groups. Plenary discussion will identify strengths and weaknesses. Submit to instructor at end of period.

**Day 18:** Instructor returns prospectuses and annotated bibliographies with comments. Discussion of proposed projects.

Writing assignment: draft of research report. Bring four extra copies of draft to class.

***Week 10: Drawing Upon Sources to Write a Report (IV)***

**Day 19:** Using the guidelines for peer response, provide both oral and written responses to drafts of research reports.

Writing assignment: revise research reports in response to peer feedback, and prepare for submission. Be sure to append all peer responses. Due Day 21.

Reading assignment: model(s) of humanities-based writing to establish and defend a position

**Day 20:** Discuss model of humanities-based writing to establish and defend a position

Reading assignment: model(s) social sciences-based writing to establish and defend a position

***Week 11: Writing to Establish and Defend a Position (I)***

**Day 21:** Discuss model(s) of social sciences-based writing to establish and defend a position

Submit draft of research reports to instructor.

Reading assignment: model(s) hard sciences-based writing to establish and defend a position

**Day 22:** Discuss model(s) of hard sciences-based writing to establish and defend a position

Writing assignment: Draft of prospectus and annotated bibliography for position paper. Bring four extra copies of draft to class.

***Week 12: Writing to Establish and Defend a Position (II)***

**Day 23:** Using the guidelines for peer response, provide both oral and written responses to half of the group members' drafts of research reports.

**Day 24:** Using the guidelines for peer response, provide both oral and written responses to other half of group members' drafts of research reports.

Writing assignment: revise position papers in response to peer feedback, and prepare for submission. Be sure to append all peer responses. Due Day 25.

Reading assignment: assemble all work written this term and prepare to bring it to class

***Week 13: Assembling the Course Portfolio I***

**Day 25:** Read and discuss guidelines for portfolio assembly. Begin work on portfolio in class.

Writing assignment: draft of reflective essay on portfolio materials.

**Day 26:** Share drafts of reflective essays and discuss.

Writing assignment: final draft of reflective essay. Prepare portfolio for final submission.

***Week 14: Assembling the Course Portfolio II***

**Day 27:** Submit final portfolios.  
Course evaluation forms.

**Day 28:** Final individual conferences on portfolios begin, and extend through the final examination period.