

2007-2008 University Senate Executive Committee
September 10, 2007
Reed Hoyt, Chair

MINUTES

PRESENT: Richard Collier, John Delano, Diane Dewar, Sally Friedman, Sanjay Goel, Susan Herbst, Reed Hoyt, William Lanford, Zai Liang, Eric Lifshin, Lawrence Raffalovich, Michael Range, Karin Reinhold-Larsson, Junru Ruan, Joan Savitt

GUESTS: Alain Kaloyeros, Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, CNSE
Robert Yagelski, Chair, Task Force on Undergraduate Writing

MINUTES: The Minutes of April 30, 2007 were approved.

Officer in Charge Report by Susan Herbst: OIC Herbst mentioned her upcoming departure from UAlbany. (A campus-wide email announcement went out that morning.)

- **Harriman Campus:** OIC Herbst reported that our place in the development of the Harriman Campus is still under discussion. The University is very interested in some property there, i.e., student housing and space for the College of Computing and Information administrators.
- **East Campus:** OIC Herbst reported that planning continues for developing a Biotechnology Park at the East Campus. A new corporation has been formed, the UAlbany Biotech Development Corporation, which includes representatives from the Research Foundation, the President of UAlbany, the VP for Finance and Business and others. The group has worked on the ground lease in order to develop the real estate there. She noted that there is debt built up at the East Campus. She offered that Vice President Lowery could address the Senate Executive Committee for more details on the project.
- **Freshmen highlights:** Applications are up; a record 20,249 applications have been received. Overall, this is a great admission season.
- **Interim President Transition:** Interim Chancellor Clark expressed that he would like to move quickly on appointing an interim President, and would like to have a smooth transition process.
- **Blue Ribbon Writing Task Force:** The work has been tremendous. The University Senate will have the job to work toward implementation of this. It will be a phase-in project, done over a few years.
- **Tuition:** The time seems to be right for the legislature and Governor to support a “rational tuition policy” and perhaps “differential tuition.” Another campus is considering an “excellence fee” but if the university centers are able to charge more for tuition than the comprehensive and other colleges in the system this should give us more in the budget for what really matters.

GUEST: Alain Kaloyeros, Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, CNSE

Discussion of his most recent raise: Vice President Kaloyeros explained that his most recent monetary raise is not a counteroffer to stay with UAlbany; that it is money from BAP funding from CNSE research, not from the University based budget. It comes with an additional assignment for him, which is to focus more on economic outreach and to use SUNY as a vehicle to attain this goal. It was agreed upon by OIC Herbst and Interim Chancellor Ryan to add to his portfolio, rather than add a new economic outreach department.

He mentioned that there were a few conditions that needed to be met for him to accept this offer, summed up as follows: That it would be announced after a new position was filled. (John D'Agati is the new Director of Economic Development.) That there would be a 25% raise to match the additional 25% workload expected.

Vice President Kaloyeros has already met with interim CAS Dean Wulfert and others to increase the strategic outreach and education needed to have both CNSE and the other academic units of the University go forward with interdisciplinary research and instruction.

In response to a question whether he saw his new responsibilities as attracting more entrepreneurial and incubator ventures, he responded that these will be attracted by the academic strengths of the campus. Thus, the goal is to continue to build interdisciplinary basic science activities so that the research, science and educational programs drive everything else. In this way, the economic development should not be an “economic boom” (which can often be followed by an “economic bust”) but a steady, gradual long-term success.

OIC Herbst suggested that the AT Kearney report mentioned by Vice President Kaloyeros be sent to SEC member. That and the BFM report will be sent to Chair Hoyt for distribution to the SEC.

In response to a question about how faculty would initiate contact about the interdisciplinary process, he said that he is meeting with deans individually at this time and plans to work with them in developing a process to call for ideas and proposals.

GUEST: Robert Yagelski, Chair, Task Force on Undergraduate Writing. 30-Minute

PowerPoint Presentation: Professor Yagelski reported on the status of the Task Force and will forward a proposal to the UPC. Attached is a copy of the Task Force report.

Chair's Report by Reed Hoyt: Chair Hoyt reported that is has been a busy summer, as he participated in the selection of the CAS Dean Search Committee and continues to serve on the Presidential Search Committees, which has been meeting all summer.

Concerning the Project Renaissance evaluation and the report concerning it in the *Times Union*, Chair Hoyt noted that internal reports need to be approved by OIC before going public and reminded SEC members that the report of the external reviewers is not for public distribution. The results of program assessment eventually need to be reported to the Senate.

Chair Hoyt stressed that Council and Committee Chairs should agree to parliamentary procedures at their first meeting and to review the Senate Charter, particularly the sections that stipulate how a council and its standing committees must be constituted.

The Chair noted that the SEC needs to send a letter of thanks and congratulations to Susan Herbst upon her departure, to which all agreed. He will draft something and send it to the members.

Council and Committee Reports:

CAA: There was much discussion concerning Project Renaissance. Chair Lanford and others noted that not all the questions raised last spring by the council and SEC members had been addressed by the reviewers. There were also questions whether sufficient campus data were forthcoming. The General Education Assessment Committee of CAA was also discussed in this context. Vice Chair Delano added that there may be a need to amend the Charter description for CAA and this was on the agenda of the Governance Council for this year. Lanford asked that Project Renaissance be brought back on the agenda for the next SEC meeting and this was agreed

GOV: Delano listed some of the agenda items for the council, including the process for selecting the committee to nominate candidates for Distinguished Teaching Professor and Distinguished Service Professor; the Council on Academic Assessment's role; the role of the SEC in discussing agenda items that need to be referred to UPC; and the University's role in the consideration of environmental sustainability for future projects. He also noted a concern that is relevant to ULC, the threat posed to the Dippikill campus by all-terrain vehicles.

UAC: Chair Reinhold-Larsson handed out two pages of proposals that were passed at the end of the last academic year that have not yet been reported to the SEC or the Senate.

Concerning the proposal for a Faculty-Initiated Interdisciplinary Major in "Public Health", she said there was a question whether such majors only required UAC approval. Collier noted "programs" require Senate approval, as well as UPC consideration if there are resource issues involved, noting that in spring 2006 the UAC and the UPC reviewed and approved the Faculty-Initiated Interdisciplinary Major proposals for majors in "Document Studies" and "Globalization Studies" which then went to the Senate, where they were approved and submitted to the President. He handed out a copy of the flow chart that used to be used for creating a new major, which noted this specifically included Faculty-Initiated Interdisciplinary Majors.

Concerning the proposal for new course UFSP101 and revived and modified UFSP100 for the proposed Freshman Year Experience Program, there were many questions and concerns, particularly regarding the grading and effect of the "pilot" UUNI150 sections that were offered in fall 2006 without having been approved by the Senate but were discussed in subsequent Senate meeting. It was noted that these courses also constitute a program and require Senate review and approval.

Regarding the UUNI150/350 courses, since the Senate had referred this issue to UAC last year and asked for the council to get back to the Senate, this might be considered old business.

The Writing Proposal was also mentioned in the discussion of UAC matters, and it was agreed that it would be referred first to UAC. In response to concerns that the Senate may need to discuss how these various issues and proposals have arisen and been handled. Senate Chair Hoyt responded that he has been thinking of the Senate's sponsoring a Faculty Forum this fall relating to "Faculty Taking Charge of the Curriculum." This idea was strongly supported, particularly relating to undergraduate programs and education.

ULC: Chair Savitt indicated that the problem of student housing will be on their agenda.

Minutes submitted by
Jayne VanDenburgh

ATTACHMENT

REPORT OF THE UALBANY TASK FORCE ON UNDERGRADUATE WRITING INSTRUCTION

Submitted to Susan V. Herbst, Officer-in-Charge and Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
June 1, 2007

Task Force Members

Jeanette Altarriba, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Psychology and College of Arts and Sciences

Frankie Bailey, Associate Professor, School of Criminal Justice

Thomas Church, Professor and Chair, Political Science

Diane Dewar, Associate Professor, Health Policy, Management & Behavior and Economics

Rachel Dressler, Associate Professor, Art

Michele Forte, Lecturer, Women's Studies and Project Renaissance

Carol Anne Germain, Associate Librarian, User Education

Anne Hildreth, Associate Professor and Associate dean for General Education, Political Science and Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Studies

Sheila Mahan, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs

Stephen North, Distinguished Teaching Professor, English

Melinda Spencer, Vice Provost for Administration & Planning

David Wagner, Associate Professor, Sociology

Robert Yagelski, Associate Professor, Educational Theory & Practice (chair)

Special thanks to Bill Roberson, Director of the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, for his assistance with this task force's work. Thanks also to Clifford Kim for his reliable assistance with administrative matters related to the work of this task force.

Preamble

In 1986, UAlbany undertook a major reform of its undergraduate writing requirements by replacing its conventional first-year composition course, taught by the English Department, with the current writing-intensive program. According to the proposal submitted to the Faculty Senate, the new writing-intensive program would bring "diverse, continuous, and supported practice in writing to the service of learning the concepts and modes of inquiry characteristic of a particular academic discipline" (p. 2). A little more than twenty years later, that goal is not being met for most undergraduate students at UAlbany, and the state of writing instruction on this campus is widely considered by faculty and students to be inconsistent at best and, at worst, inadequate to the point of being irresponsible.

In many respects, the writing-intensive program adopted by UAlbany in 1986 was innovative and ahead of its time; it drew on cutting-edge research as well as the longstanding experience and expertise of UAlbany faculty to try to enhance the writing development of UAlbany's undergraduates. However, the program has not functioned as intended by the faculty group who designed and implemented it. For a variety of reasons, the program that was adopted by the University in 1986 is not the one we have today. The result is that undergraduate students at UAlbany receive insufficient support for their development as literate persons in general and specifically as writers who can function effectively in higher education as well as in non-academic contexts at a time of profound social, economic, and technological change.

After a year-long study of the state of undergraduate writing instruction at this university, this task force has concluded that there is a pressing need for an even more ambitious and innovative reform to UAlbany's undergraduate writing program today. In a 2003 report titled *The Neglected 'R': The Need for a Writing Revolution*, the National Commission on Writing asserted that "although many models of effective writing instruction exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are shortchanged throughout the school and college years" (p. 14). This task force has found that assertion to be true at UAlbany. For many students, writing instruction at UAlbany takes the form of a few writing assignments in designated writing-intensive courses. Some students receive no formal instruction in writing at all while they are at UAlbany, and many do not even take a writing-intensive course until their senior year. At the same time, there is excellent writing instruction on this campus delivered by dedicated and talented faculty members,

though this instruction is neither widely available to students nor coordinated. Moreover, this task force has found that UAlbany faculty care deeply about the quality of writing instruction (and teaching in general) on this campus and strongly support the kinds of reforms we recommend below.

The Need for Writing Reform Today

It is an especially auspicious time to reform the current UAlbany undergraduate writing-intensive program. In recent years writing has moved to the fore of the national education agenda. In addition to the 2003 report of the National Commission on Writing, which has set a nationwide agenda for reform in writing instruction at all levels of education, a number of other high profile reports have focused national attention on writing and writing instruction. Results from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for example, continue to reinforce what the National Commission has asserted: that students generally do not lack basic skills but do not write at high levels of sophistication or proficiency (National Center for Education Statistics). In 2004, the ACT (the competitor to the College Board's SAT) released a study indicating that first-year college students were generally underprepared for academic success in college in three content areas, including English composition. In 2005, for the first time in its history, the SAT, the most widely used test for the purpose of determining college admission, added a timed written essay section to its important and influential test, thereby requiring college-bound students to demonstrate competence in on-demand writing in a way that was previously not required. The so-called Spellings Report, issued in 2006 by the office of the U.S. Secretary of Education, concluded that "there are also disturbing signs that many students who do earn [college] degrees have not actually mastered the reading, writing, and thinking skills we expect of college graduates. Over the past decade, literacy among college graduates has actually declined. Unacceptable numbers of college graduates enter the workforce without the skills employers say they need in an economy in which, as the truism holds correctly, knowledge matters more than ever" (*A Test of Leadership*, p. x). The members of the Spellings Commission pushed for greater accountability on the part of colleges and universities in fostering, monitoring, and documenting student learning, including students' literacy abilities.

These developments reflect a wider recognition of the centrality of writing to student learning that has long been established by researchers and scholars. As Richard Light demonstrated in his 2001 study *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, the more writing is required of students, the more engaged they become with their courses. Light concludes that writing is the single most important characteristic in promoting student engagement:

The results are stunning. The relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students' level of engagement--whether engagement is measured by time spent on the course, or the intellectual challenge it presents, or students' level of interest in it--is stronger than the relationship between students' engagement and any other course characteristic. (p. 55)

Clearly, the importance of effective writing instruction to enhance student learning is more central to ongoing discussions of education reform and the purpose of higher education today than at any time in recent memory. Many postsecondary institutions have taken advantage of these developments either to implement new, innovative writing programs or to improve existing ones. For example, in the past few years St. John's University in New York has established its Institute for Writing Studies, which provides a comprehensive framework for supporting and enhancing writing instruction for its 20,000 undergraduates. Similarly, at Miami University of Ohio, a new Center for Writing Excellence has been established with the explicit goal of establishing that university as the nation's leader in postsecondary writing instruction. This year the University of Denver has implemented an innovative new interdisciplinary undergraduate writing program intended to enhance writing instruction throughout the curriculum. Such efforts to improve undergraduate writing instruction intersect with the growing trend in higher education toward comprehensive, rigorous, interdisciplinary first-year seminars or experiences (similar to our own Project Renaissance). One example of such a program is Cornell University's widely praised First-Year Writing Seminar. In recent years, other institutions have followed suit.

UAlbany is especially well positioned to take advantage of these national trends and to undertake the reforms recommended in this report. In the past few years the University has focused attention on improving undergraduate instruction, increasing the academic rigor of undergraduate programs, and enhancing the overall experience of undergraduates. The recent establishment of the Honors College; the continued support for and success of Project Renaissance, UAlbany's innovative first-year program; and various efforts to recruit exceptional faculty and high-achieving students all attest to the University's renewed commitment to undergraduate instruction. A new comprehensive undergraduate writing program that is carefully designed to meet the needs of UAlbany's student body and enhance the academic quality of the undergraduate curriculum would not only address serious weaknesses in the current undergraduate curriculum but would also help establish UAlbany as a leader in innovative undergraduate programs. Such a program would significantly strengthen UAlbany's efforts to help prepare its students to be active, literate citizens with the sophisticated abilities and knowledge to adapt to a changing and challenging world. It would also likely enhance the university's efforts to recruit and retain excellent students.

A Note on the Definition of Writing

In this report we routinely use the term *writing* to refer generally to the common writing activities and tasks that undergraduate students engage in at this university; however, we also wish to emphasize that we understand *writing* to be a complex, multifaceted cognitive, intellectual, and social activity that encompasses a range of skills and knowledge. Writing is much more than a set of basic communication skills and knowledge of the basic conventions of written language. Rather, writing can usefully be understood in three ways. First, writing is fundamentally epistemic; that is, it is a form of inquiry and knowledge-making. As such, writing is not only an essential skill for academic achievement and for success in society in general but it is also a fundamental act of inquiry that is at the center of academic knowledge-making. Second, writing is a means by which students gain access to and participate in the academic discourses that characterize intellectual inquiry in postsecondary institutions. In other words, writing encompasses a wide and varied range of activities, practices, beliefs, and bodies of knowledge that enable academic disciplines to define and maintain themselves. Third, writing is a complicated cognitive and social process by which students come to know themselves and the world around them better. Understanding and managing this process is one of the most important components of writing competence.

Some of the widespread dissatisfaction with the current UAlbany writing-intensive program stems from a belief that writing is essentially a basic skill and that students should come to college having already mastered that skill. That common misunderstanding leads to the idea that students can be taught "the basics" of writing in high school or in a one-semester course focused on writing as a technical skill. Such an understanding ignores the complexity of writing and is at odds with a rich body of scholarship and research. Perhaps more important, this understanding of writing ignores the developmental nature of literacy learning. Students continue to develop as writers over their entire undergraduate career, and a university writing program should support that complex and sometimes uneven development as an integral part of students' undergraduate education in general. To accomplish that goal requires that we change perceptions of writing and foster a new culture of writing on campus that reflects our collective appreciation for the complexity and power of writing.

Writing Instruction at UAlbany

It has become a truism of sorts that undergraduate writing instruction at UAlbany is insufficient. This task force set out to learn whether that widely held perception is valid. Simply put, it is. Despite the work of many faculty members who provide excellent instruction, guidance, and support for student writers, the University's Writing-Intensive (WI) program in its current form does not adequately support the development of our undergraduate students as writers and thinkers. On the contrary: 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.

On the basis of data we collected through focus groups with UAlbany students and faculty, an extensive faculty survey, and several additional bodies of data provided by the Office for Institutional Research supplemented by a review of existing research on writing instruction and an examination of writing programs at other universities (including peer institutions), this task force has identified several important weaknesses in the current WI program. We can place these weaknesses into three main categories, each of which we discuss below.

A. UAlbany's current Writing-Intensive program is inconsistent with available research on writing development and effective writing instruction; it is also inconsistent with widely accepted principles regarding the outcomes of college-level writing instruction, especially the Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in 2000.

1. Existing research suggests that students' writing abilities develop over time and require guided practice and support so that students gain experience in academic discourse and in writing across different disciplinary contexts (Carroll; Haswell; Herrington & Curtis; McCarthy; Sternglass; Walvoord & McCarthy). Although not essential to students' development as competent writers, a substantive first-year experience with writing instruction is for most students an integral component of their writing development during the college years. As Sommers and Salz assert in their overview of the role of the first-year writing course in a student's development as a writer,

To be asked to write in college is to be asked to see farther, wider, and deeper, and ultimately to develop one's own lenses through which to see the world. Writing does not shape a student's education in one course or one year. It is the cumulative practice and sustained instruction—the gaining of expertise—that gives students opportunities to participate in the world of ideas, first as novices and later as experts. The story of the freshman year, then, is the story of students' first steps toward discovering that academic writing can be a generous and democratic exchange. It is the story of the role that writing plays in welcoming students into the academy, showing them they have much to give and much to gain (p. 147).

UAlbany's current WI program does not provide such a first-year experience for most of its undergraduate students, nor does it provide in a systematic way "cumulative practice and sustained instruction" over the course of a student's undergraduate career.

2. Writing-across-the-curriculum or writing-in-the-discipline programs, which are common at colleges and universities, can be a crucial component of a university's efforts to support students' development as writers. However, UAlbany's current WI does not provide an opportunity for most undergraduates to develop the knowledge and understanding of writing that the Council of Writing Program Administrators describe in its Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, including important rhetorical knowledge and related understandings of writing as a process and as a matter of participation in the discourses that define academic disciplines. In addition, as currently implemented UAlbany's WI program does not take advantage of what research has shown to be the power of writing as a vehicle for disciplinary learning, nor does it effectively introduce students to the discourses of the academic disciplines they are studying. A robust scholarly literature attests to the effectiveness of these characteristics of writing as a vehicle for learning; however, as currently configured, the UAlbany WI program fails to take advantage of writing in ways supported by available research.

B. Under our current writing-intensive program, 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.

1. Students are not required to take their lower-division writing-intensive course in their first year; moreover, there is a severe lack of available seats in lower-division WI courses for the many freshmen or sophomores who wish to enroll in such courses. As a result, many students do not fulfill this requirement until their junior or senior year, thereby defeating the intent of the lower-division WI course, which is to introduce students to college-level writing and give them practice in such writing early in their college careers. (To illustrate, a snapshot of students enrolled in Fall Semester, 2006, revealed that 18% of seniors and 17% of juniors had not met their lower-division WI requirement.)
2. Many current lower-division (and even upper-division) writing-intensive courses are too large to give students sufficient support for their writing and to allow for effective direct instruction in writing. (Results from our faculty survey indicate that faculty members have serious concerns about large enrollments in WI courses, which impede faculty efforts to teach writing effectively.) In addition, students are often unable to secure seats in WI courses because of an insufficient supply of such seats under the current WI program.
3. Unless students take a *writing course* (such as AENG 300), they will almost certainly receive no direct instruction in writing while fulfilling their writing-intensive requirements. Students, therefore, may not receive adequate practice in writing in a variety of academic and non-academic forms and may not have opportunities to develop the sophisticated literacy skills that apply across disciplinary contexts.
4. The lack of dedicated program oversight results in little consistency across writing-intensive courses with respect to the nature and amount of the writing students are expected to do, the competencies they are expected to exhibit or acquire, the rhetorical skills and knowledge that they should develop, or the general standards by which their writing should be evaluated.
5. The current program offers virtually no direct, structured support for faculty who teach writing-intensive courses in the form of systematic mentoring, professional development, properly trained teaching assistants, or course releases. Moreover, the Writing Center, once a *de facto* component of the writing-intensive program, now functions outside the program except to the extent that individual faculty members seek its assistance.

C. Many faculty feel underprepared and insufficiently supported to teach writing effectively and to help undergraduate students successfully meet the challenges of learning to write effectively at the college level.

1. To be effective, writing-across-the-curriculum programs require carefully designed, systematic, and ongoing professional development for faculty, especially those whose formal academic preparation and areas of expertise do not include writing pedagogy. Although important resources exist to support UAlbany faculty who teach WI courses (including the Institute for Learning, Achievement, and Academic Leadership), such resources are not coordinated as part of the WI program. In fact, UAlbany's current WI program provides no systematic program of professional development of faculty or graduate teaching assistants.
2. Faculty who responded to a survey conducted by this task force in February, 2007 indicated clear support for professional development opportunities related to teaching writing. Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents indicated "support" or "strong support" for "a structured program of training and ongoing support for faculty teaching writing-intensive courses."

It is worth noting that what is true for faculty is also true for doctoral students who may be assigned to teach WI courses.

Recommended Changes to UAlbany's Undergraduate Writing Program

To achieve the University's goals for undergraduate education, to address the problems described above, and to provide effective support for the development of our undergraduate students as writers and thinkers over the course of their academic careers, this task force recommends the following set of ambitious reforms that would establish a coherent, multi-faceted, carefully designed program for writing instruction and faculty development that we are tentatively calling the University Writing Program (UWP). This program would not only address the serious weaknesses in the current UAlbany WI requirement but would also enhance undergraduate instruction in demonstrable ways that are consistent with the University's recent efforts to improve undergraduate education. Moreover, this program would take advantage of the University's already considerable expertise in writing and teaching and help establish this institution as a leader in undergraduate education.

The program we are recommending is large, complex, and comprehensive. It is not a piece-meal approach but rather a large-scale effort to address a large and complex challenge. On the basis of our research and deliberations, this task force does not believe that tinkering with the current WI program or adding limited components to it will meet the challenge. In short, if we hope to help our students develop as writers and thinkers who can function effectively in academic contexts as well as in a changing world, we will need to devote the necessary time, energy, and resources to a large-scale effort to improve writing instruction at this university. The recommendations described below are intended to achieve that goal.

The UAlbany writing program that we are proposing should be structured around a clearly articulated vision of effective writing and a clear sense of the purposes of undergraduate writing instruction. To that end, all academic programs--and particularly all undergraduate majors and minors--should articulate and exemplify, for faculty and students alike, the kinds of writing they require and the standards by which such writing is evaluated. This vision should be overtly linked to the overall vision of an undergraduate education as reflected in the general education program; it should, therefore, extend beyond competence in conventional forms of academic writing to the larger goal of engaging students in substantive, multi-disciplinary intellectual inquiry to foster in students the development of a sophisticated understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit. The process of working out this vision will be ongoing and driven by some of the structural changes to the current undergraduate writing requirement as recommended below.

Many of the details of the program we are recommending remain to be worked out, but the following recommendations lay out the broad outlines of the kind of vigorous and innovative undergraduate writing program that this university needs and its students deserve.

We have organized our proposal for a University Writing Program into seven related but distinct recommendations. However, these seven recommendations can be understood as leading to a UWP with two main inter-related components:

- (1) a three-course sequence of required undergraduate writing-intensive courses, including a new first-year writing seminar along with a revitalized version of the existing two-course writing-intensive requirement;
- (2) a comprehensive program of professional development that includes training and mentoring of doctoral teaching assistants and training and ongoing support for faculty involved in writing-intensive courses.

As we envision the UWP described in the seven recommendations below, undergraduate students would take the new first-year writing seminar as a way to provide a solid foundation for their development as writers over the course of their college careers. Before their junior year they would take a lower-division WI course whose primary purpose would be to continue to support their development as writers in the context of an academic discipline (not necessarily their major). Students would complete the three-course sequence with a senior WI course in their major.

With that overall vision in mind, we present our seven recommendations for a new University Writing Program:

1. Re-invigorate the current two-course Writing-Intensive (WI) requirement under the General Education program with the following changes:

- Create a revised set of general criteria for lower-division writing-intensive courses to promote consistency across these courses and ensure that they meet the general education criteria for writing-intensive courses.
- Require students to take the lower-division WI course before their junior year and ensure an adequate and varied supply of WI courses that will allow students to do so (with appropriate accommodation made for transfer students). (Note: Departments will differ in the number and type of lower-division WI courses they will be willing and/or able to offer, and students will not be required to take this lower-division WI course in their major, assuming they have declared one; however, these lower-division courses can be an effective vehicle for recruiting students into a particular major.)
- Assist departments or programs in strengthening writing-intensive courses in their majors and in developing new senior or capstone writing projects. (Many departments currently have such requirements.)
- Invite departments to participate in the development of a set of criteria and guidelines for what constitutes effective writing within their own academic disciplines as a way of fostering a common understanding of effective writing throughout the University. (Note: This process would fall under the duties of the new Director of the UWP and the University Writing Committee and would be an ongoing process that would intersect with the assessment of students and program evaluation, as described in #7 below.)

2. Establish a new interdisciplinary first-year writing seminar that will be required of all undergraduates except those entering Project Renaissance and the Honors College (since these programs should offer their students substantive experiences with and practice in writing).

- The first-year writing seminar will emphasize intensive practice and instruction in academic writing as well as writing in other rhetorical contexts. (90% of respondents to the faculty survey conducted by this task force indicated very strong support for the establishment of a required first-year writing course.)
- The seminar will be 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 in various contexts.
- The goals of this seminar are consistent with the goals of the undergraduate curriculum and will support the university's broader efforts to encourage sustained and substantive intellectual inquiry, to promote a just community, to foster critical awareness of the self and the wider world, and to work toward responsible and ethical citizenship as reflected in initiatives like "UAlbany Goes Green."
- Sections of the first-year writing seminar would be capped at 20-25 students. (Respondents to the faculty survey conveyed very strong feelings about the need to cap writing and WI courses at 15-20 students per section.)
- Instructors for the first-year writing seminar would include faculty as well as experienced doctoral teaching assistants (see recommendation #3 below). However, the bulk of the instructional load for this new course would be shouldered by 10-14 new full-time lecturers,

each teaching a 3-4 course load, who would be hired specifically to teach the new first-year writing seminar. These lecturers would have appropriate professional credentials and experience and would be supervised by the University Writing Director (see recommendation #5).

3. Develop and implement an innovative program of training, mentoring, and support for experienced doctoral students who will teach the first-year writing seminar. This program, modeled after successful programs at other universities, including Rutgers University, will include:

- a multi-day summer orientation and workshop for doctoral teaching assistants (TAs) who are new to the program;
- year-long mentoring by faculty members;
- regular staff meetings where issues related to teaching writing in the context of the first-year seminar are addressed;
- an evaluation process to monitor TA performance and enhance their progress as teachers.

4. Integrate programmatic support through the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership (ITLAL) for faculty who teach writing-intensive courses or first-year writing seminars.

- Create a Faculty Writing Fellows program, similar to existing programs at institutions like Eastern Michigan University and St. John's University, intended to provide substantive and sustained professional development opportunities for interested faculty. This program would include a summer institute in which faculty develop writing-intensive courses and enhance their understanding of writing instruction; it would also include ongoing support and incentives for implementing and improving writing-intensive courses. (Note: Faculty Writing Fellows would not constitute a separate kind of appointment at the university. These Fellows would be regular faculty who participate in the program and serve as resource persons for their departments or programs and mentors for doctoral TAs who teach WI courses.)
- Provide regular workshops and similar opportunities through ITLAL for faculty who teach writing-intensive courses.

5. Establish the position of UWP Director, with appropriate staff, to develop and oversee this program. (Note: The position of director of the writing-intensive program was part of the original proposal for the existing WI program; however, that position seems to have been eliminated, and the responsibility for overseeing the WI program has been subsumed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. We propose that this position be filled again, as described below, but also that the director assume responsibility for the new components of the UWP proposed in this report.)

- The UWP Director would report to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and work in conjunction with the Director of ITLAL.
- The UWP Director would be responsible for the development, implementation, and assessment of the UWP, including supervising the instructional staff for the new first-year writing seminar, and should manage a dedicated program budget.
- The UWP Director should be a full-time, tenure-line faculty with an appropriate professional background.

6. Establish a University Writing Committee (UWC) as part of the existing governance structure to oversee the University Writing Program.

- The UWP Director would be an *ex officio* member of this committee.
- The UWC would be charged with reviewing UWP policies and procedures, reviewing proposals for writing-intensive courses, and addressing problems with the UWP.
- The UWC would become part of the University Senate governance structure and would work in conjunction with appropriate standing committees, including the Council on Academic Assessment, the Undergraduate Academic Council, the General Education Committee, and the University Planning and Policy Council.

7. Design and implement an assessment program to gauge students' progress as writers and to monitor and improve the writing program.

- The UWP Director, working with the Office of Institutional Research and in conjunction with faculty teaching UWP or WI courses, will develop measures to assess students' development as writers.
- Course evaluations will be developed to generate data specific to the first-year writing seminar and WI courses.
- The Office of Institutional Research will be charged with overseeing periodic review of the UWP, ideally every two years.
- This ongoing assessment process will be integral to the UWP and will include several bodies of data and analyses to monitor the program and guide decisions regarding changes or adjustments to the program.

Benefits of the Proposed University Writing Program

In addition to addressing the specific problems we have identified with the current Writing -Intensive program and establishing an innovative writing program consistent with UAlbany's commitment to undergraduate education, the proposed University Writing Program would offer the following benefits:

- It would provide a systematic, research-based approach to writing instruction at UAlbany.
- It would contribute to the establishment of a culture of academic rigor and intellectual inquiry on the UAlbany campus consistent with recent initiatives such as the Honors College.
- It would create a curricular space devoted exclusively to practice and instruction in writing in the context of rigorous intellectual inquiry.
- It would improve the existing WI program and bring it more closely into line with its original goals as well as the University's ongoing efforts to enhance undergraduate instruction.
- It would provide a program of training and mentoring for doctoral students that would enhance their own preparation as college-level teachers and contribute to their appeal as candidates for many positions on academic job market.

- It would establish a systematic program of support for faculty who teach WI course, which does not currently exist at this university. This program would draw on the considerable expertise and experience of UAlbany faculty to improve teaching and learning on this campus.
- It would enhance retention. Available research indicates that first-year seminars and writing programs significantly improve the persistence of undergraduate students (Crissman; Schell & Doetkott).
- It would help establish important ways of thinking about intellectual inquiry at the beginning of students' college careers at UAlbany.
- It would help create a new culture of writing and academic inquiry among faculty and students on campus and demonstrate the University's commitment to the rigorous intellectual development of its students.

Funding

This task force was not charged with providing a detailed fiscal analysis as part of its investigation into the current UAlbany WI program, since financial planning is intertwined with larger, more complex issues of the overall campus financial plan; therefore, we have not conducted a precise analysis of the potential costs of each of our recommendations.

As the Provost has noted to our committee and to the campus, she and central administrators will work to fund important major initiatives in the area of undergraduate education that are approved enthusiastically by the university faculty. With regard to the UWP, assuming it is approved by the Senate, the Provost has indicated that she will either redirect existing funds toward the program (e.g., move newly open staff lines or decrease other budgets), or more likely, direct new incoming funds toward these initiatives. While the university budget and campus financial plan do change with each year, new funds should come to the university in the form of better grant performance (which yields indirect funds), expansion of the university endowment, and additions to the university operating budget from the state. Final financial planning for the UWP, assuming approval by the Senate, would take place during March and April 2008, when the university typically receives budget figures from the central administration of SUNY and the division budget hearings are complete. At that time, commitments will be made to fund the UWP into the future, as part of overall campus financial planning.

Leaving aside these larger issues related to the campus financial plan, we have identified significant areas of cost that would be associated with the UWP, for consideration by the Provost, Vice President for Finance and Business, and others with fiduciary responsibility for the University:

1. *Instructional costs for new first-year writing seminar.* Given an enrollment cap of 20-25 students per section in the proposed new first-year seminar and assuming the need to accommodate approximately 2000 first-year students in this seminar each academic year (this figure would exclude students enrolled in the Honors College and Project Renaissance), approximately 80-100 sections of the first-year seminar would need to be offered during an academic year. Instructors for these sections would include full- and part-time faculty and selected doctoral teaching assistants, but the primary instructors for this course would be 10-14 full-time lecturers hired specifically for this purpose and teaching seven sections of the first-year writing seminar per academic year (3 or 4 sections per semester, or 3 per semester and one in the summer). The appointments for these lecturers would conform to existing UAlbany policies for such positions. Given current rates of compensation for lecturers at UAlbany and given current rates of compensation to departments for releasing faculty or teaching assistants from courses (see item #3 below), approximately \$450,000 would be needed to cover instructional costs for this program per academic year.

2. *Salaries for the University Writing Director and staff.* These would not necessarily be new expenditures. For example, if the University Writing Director is appointed from among current UAlbany faculty, presumably that person's current salary might increase by some amount and would therefore not require the University to create an entirely new faculty line. Similarly, initially a currently employed secretary might be given duties related to the University Writing Program as part of a currently existing secretarial position. However, once appropriate governance approvals are secured, the position of University Writing Director should be formalized, ideally as an Associate Vice Provost serving under the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. In that case, salary would be commensurate with the responsibilities of the position.

3. *Stipends and related costs for the faculty professional development and doctoral training programs.* These costs would include stipends and related costs for the summer institute of the Writing Fellows Program (see recommendation # 4 above), costs for the orientation and workshop for doctoral teaching assistants (see recommendation #3 above), release time and/or stipends for faculty members serving as mentors in the UWP, and similar expenditures. Such costs are relatively modest. In June, 2006, a three-day workshop on teaching writing in the disciplines was conducted at the request of the Provost. The 24 participants, all of whom were full-time faculty, were each paid a stipend of \$500 for a total cost of approximately \$12,000. Additional costs for the workshop included a fee of \$3000 paid to the workshop leader along with lunch provided on each of the three days. Total costs for the workshop were under \$20,000. A similar format could be used for the Writing Fellows program. Additional costs for this program would include compensation to departments for buying participating faculty members out of a course. These costs would vary depending upon the number of participating faculty. As an illustration, if 10 full-time faculty members participated in this program, costs for the summer workshop would be approximately \$10,000. Costs for buying each faculty member out of one course for the following academic year (in order to teach a section of the first-year writing seminar) would be approximately \$30,000 (\$3,000 for each course X 10 faculty members). (These costs are included in total instructional costs in the illustration below.) Doctoral teaching assistants would participate in this program at the same basic costs as faculty members; that is, costs for buying out a TA would be similar to costs for buying out a full-time faculty member.

Estimated costs for the proposed Undergraduate Writing Program, once it is fully implemented, for one academic year would be as follows, assuming (for the purposes of illustration) 90 sections of the course offered during an academic year:

- Instructional costs for 70 sections of first-year writing seminar taught by 10 lecturers, each teaching 7 sections per academic year (assuming gross annual salary of \$35,000): \$350,000

- Instructional costs for 20 sections of first-year seminar taught by selected faculty and doctoral teaching assistants (assuming \$3000/course paid to department of participating faculty and graduate students): \$60,000

- Costs of summer Writing Fellows workshops (assuming participation of 20 faculty members and/or doctoral teaching assistants each receiving a \$500 stipend and assuming the workshop will be conducted either by UWD or ITLAL Director): \$12,000

- Total estimated cost: \$422,000.

The University Writing Program that we are recommending would be an ideal candidate for special targeted giving as well as external grant funding. For example, new writing programs at St. John's University and Miami University of Ohio were begun with gifts targeted by donors specifically for

undergraduate education and/or writing. The new writing program at the University of Denver is supported by a grant from the Marsico Foundation. In short, external funding opportunities exist for innovative programs such as we are recommending in this report.

Implementation Schedule

In providing the following schedule for the implementation for the recommendations made in this report, we wish to point out that although several components of the proposed University Writing Program described in this report would require governance approval, some of our recommendations reflect existing policy and represent steps to improve the existing program. Such measures can be implemented by the university without any formal changes to the existing WI program, the undergraduate curriculum, or administrative structure of the university. For example, the university can appoint a University Writing Director (without creating a new administrative position), enhance faculty support for writing instruction, and address shortages in lower-division WI courses. Similarly, the professional development program described in this report can be developed and implemented immediately through ITLAL. In short, important, substantive steps can be taken immediately to address the pressing need to improve writing instruction on this campus, and we emphasize the need to move forward with such measures while more complex components of the UWP move through proper University governance channels. Given the problems that we have identified in this report, we believe that to delay addressing the need for improving writing instruction and undergraduate education on this campus would be irresponsible.

Therefore, we propose the following schedule for implementing the program described in this report:

- Summer, 2007:**
- Appoint members of the current Task Force to begin working with ITLAL Director on the initiatives listed here.
 - Explore solutions to the current situation with respect to lower-division writing intensive course offerings, including determining the need and estimating the resources necessary to support a sufficient supply, and developing options to address the shortage.
- Fall, 2007:**
- Develop formal proposals for the University Writing Program to the appropriate committees and according to established governance procedures.
 - Develop syllabus for prototype of the proposed first-year writing seminar.
 - Begin developing appropriate proposals for governance approval for prototype of first-year writing seminar.
 - UWP Director and ITLAL Director begin working with individual departments to identify guidelines and criteria for discipline-specific writing effectiveness.
- Spring, 2008:**
- Submit formal proposals for the University Writing Program to the appropriate committees and according to established governance procedures.
- Summer, 2008:**
- Begin identifying external funding sources for proposed UWP.
 - Increase the supply of WI courses. (This task would be overseen by the UWP Director in conjunction with the appropriate university offices and authorities.)
 - ITLAL Director, in conjunction with UWD, begins developing Writing Fellows program for implementation during Summer, 2008.
- Summer, 2008:**
- Implement the Writing Fellows program; conduct first summer institute to begin working with faculty from across the university on developing or revising Writing-Intensive courses.
- Fall, 2008:**
- Finalize syllabi for the first-year seminar courses to be piloted in Spring, 2009.
 - Identify and begin working with instructors for prototype of first-year writing seminar to be piloted in Spring '09.
 - Continue appropriate governance efforts.
 - Continue working with departments to enhance writing-intensive courses.
 - Continue development of professional development components of UWP.
 - Create job description for the 12-15 new lecturer positions in the UWP that will be

- filled for the 2009-2010 academic year.
- Spring, 2009:**
- Pilot several sections of the new first-year writing seminar.
 - Begin developing assessment program for first-year seminars and WI courses.
 - Finalize professional development components of the UWP for the 2009-2010 academic year.
 - Continue development of first-year seminar based on experience of pilot sections.
 - Take appropriate steps to create the University Writing Committee as part of the existing University Senate structure of councils and committees.
 - Begin recruitment of 12-15 new lecturers to teach the first-year writing seminar in 2009-2010.
- Summer, 2009:**
- Offer appropriate professional development workshops and orientation for new lecturers, current faculty, and selected doctoral teaching assistants who will be instructors for the first-year writing seminars during the 2009-2010 academic year.
 - Continue working with faculty from across the university to develop or revise Writing-Intensive courses.
- Fall, 2009:**
- New first-year writing seminar offered on voluntary basis to all incoming undergraduate students.
 - ITLAL Director and UWD work with participating Writing Fellows as new or revised WI courses are implemented.
- Spring, 2010:**
- Make adjustments to first-year seminar for Fall, 2010, based on evaluation of seminar sections taught during 2009-2010 academic year.
 - Recruit new and/or additional lecturers to teach the first-year writing seminar in 2010-2011.
 - Finalize assessment program for first-year seminars and WI courses.
- Summer, 2010:**
- Offer appropriate professional development workshops and orientation for new lecturers, current faculty, and selected doctoral teaching assistants who will be instructors for the first-year writing seminars during the 2010-2011 academic year.
 - Continue development of Writing Fellows program.
- Spring, 2010:**
- Full implementation of UWP; first-year writing seminar required of all incoming undergraduate students.

We wish to end this section by pointing out that the University has already taken several important steps to lay the foundation for the University Writing Program described in this report. First, a three-day workshop for faculty who teach WI courses was conducted in June, 2006. Second, Bill Roberson, new director for ITLAL was hired in 2006; he has a professional background in writing instruction and brings to UAlbany experience in the professional development of writing faculty. Third, this task force has been working together for a full academic year and will continue its work through the 2007-2008 academic year. In short, momentum has been building for the kinds of recommendations we are making in this report. But the need to move forward with dispatch is urgent, and we urge the university to take the steps we have outlined in this timetable without delay.

We also wish to emphasize that the recommendations in this report are based on sound research on writing development and draw on the best of what other postsecondary institutions have done in fostering undergraduate writing development. We are confident that implementing these recommendations will enhance the education of UAlbany's undergraduate students and effectively support their development as writers and thinkers in ways that are consistent with the University's mission and the best hopes of its faculty. It is clear from our investigation that the lack of effective support for writing development on this campus is a serious weakness in the education we offer to our students. To ignore these problems, we believe, is not an option. Our recommendations are offered in the spirit of fulfilling our responsibility to our students.

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