

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
The City University of New York
ACADEMIC SENATE

**COMMITTEE ON WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES/
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (WID/WAC)**

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TO: Dr. Joel Kuszai, Secretary, Academic Senate Steering Committee
FROM: Dr. Bjorn Berkhout, Chair, Committee on WID/WAC
SUBJECT: Annual Report for Committee on WID/WAC for 2015/2016
DATE: August 28, 2016

Membership

Officers:

Dr. Bjorn Berkhout (Music), Chair
Dr. Peter Grey (English), Secretary

Members:

Dr. Kimberly Ambruso (Nursing)
Dr. Christopher Jimenez (Speech Communications)
Dr. Marvin Gayle (Engineering Technology)
Dr. Daniel Garbin (Mathematics and Computer Sciences)
Dr. James Nichols (History)
Dr. Lakersha Smith (Social Sciences)
Dr. Areti Tsimounis (Biological Sciences and Geology)
Dr. Robert Becker, Dr. Johannes Burgers, and Dr. Jeff Jankowski (Coordinators of the WID/WAC Program)

Liaisons/Designees

Dr. Glenn Burdi (Academic Affairs), President's Designee
Dr. Kathleen Wentrack, Committee on Committees Liason
Dr. Maron Mareno, Steering Committee Designee
Monica Soto (Student Representative)

Committee Meetings

The WID/WAC Committee met three times during the 2015-2016 academic year. The meetings were held on the following dates: December 2, May 11 and May 23. The minutes for each of the meetings are

available for review on the website for the QCC Academic Senate (the minutes for the May 23 meeting will be available upon approval by the committee at its next meeting). The Committee acknowledges the service of the secretary, Dr. Peter Grey, in preparing the minutes. In addition, five waiver requests were coordinated via email during the academic year as they were submitted to the Committee by Dr. Glenn Burdi of Academic Affairs. One waiver came at the end of the summer session of 2016. The vote will be finalized in Fall 2016.

Many of the discussions and deliberations involving the petitions were done through email, which has proven to be both efficient and effective.

Narrative Summary of the Committee Work

Bylaw Charges and the Committee Actions:

- a. Oversee and make recommendations to the Academic Senate related to the WID/WAC Program;

The committee addressed the findings of the HIPS assessment with regards to the WI practice. The initial assessment of the WI Program, based on the evaluation of artifacts collected and scored by CETL, was that many QCC students continue to struggle with writing at a consistently high level. It should be noted that the process scored an end result and did not necessarily measure changes and improvement in the student's writing ability as a result of the class or the impact on 'deep learning' of the materials.

The post-assessment reflection also revealed that faculty themselves had different opinions regarding the balance of WI objectives and whether the goal and focus of assessment should be on the student's ability to write (and thus should be measured against a writing rubric) or on whether the writing helped them learn the materials on a deeper level (and thus should be measured on a content rubric), or measured on both.

As a result, CETL formed a WI pilot program where WI student artifacts were collected and evaluated using two rubric: one for content (developed specially for the pilot) and for writing. Kathleen Landy took the initiative to invite Dr. Berkhout as the Chair of the WID WAC program to participate in the pilot program. It was very helpful to have the chair of WID WAC involved and the committee thanks Kathleen Landy for her welcoming and supportive outreach to the committee on this matter.

The committee discussed that fact that after completion of training that there is no significant follow up for the WI certified faculty. The ongoing volunteer sampling of WI faculty assignments and syllabi by the committee can serve as an initial, though admittedly partial, glimpse at how WI classes evolve post-WI training and further recommendations can be discussed after the collection of the sampled artifacts.

The committee looks forward to continuing working with CETL in this regard and again sees the importance of its role in strengthening communication between administration, WI faculty within

the departments and the WID WAC program via the directors as the college continues to its work with the WID WAC requirement and its role as a high impact practice.

- b. Review and make recommendations to the WID/WAC Director(s) concerning the WID/WAC Professional Development Program

During the 2015-16 academic year it was discovered that there is no easy way of contacting all faculty currently teaching WI classes. This hampers communication between the Committee and WI faculty and limits the Committee's ability to effectively oversee the WID/WAC program. This became noticeable in at least two situations:

- During the 2016 Spring Semester the Administration conducting a QCC High Impact Practice Experience Survey of WI students. In order to improve the response rate it was hoped that an email could be sent to all WI faculty so they were aware of the survey and could encourage the students to respond.
- It was also noticed in our own attempts to survey WI faculty with regard to the syllabus used and the types of assignments being offered.

The committee could also use such a list to send notifications to WI faculty regarding WI standards, possible follow up training opportunities or any other relevant information pertaining to WI classes.

To have the committee manually generate a list each and every semester based on a list of WI faculty does not seem efficient, and it would seem beneficial to look into ways to have such a list generated automatically for the Committee.

This issue is mentioned again under **New Recommendations**.

- c. Consult with the Committee on Course and Standing on waiver requests from students on any writing intensive (WI) degree requirements that the Committee on Course and Standing may be called upon to decide;

During the semester the committee voted to convert an Econ 101 class to WI status after it was discovered through the students' initiative that the class was not WI despite being designated as WI in the class schedule. This was deemed the cleanest and fairest solution. The committee would like to investigate ways of minimizing these types of situations in the future (see **New Recommendations**).

There were six petitions, including two over the summer break. Of the four that occurred over the regular academic year three were approved and one was denied due to lack of evidence and documentation. Of the three that were approved, one involved issues with advisement and another involved a student whose final WI class changed to non-WI status in the days before the semester's start when it was too late to adjust his schedule. In both cases compelling letters of support were included from the faculty and it was clear the students had made a good faith effort to try and satisfy the requirement. The final approval was granted based on a transfer class that was deemed equivalent of our WI classes.

For the two petitions that discussed over the summer, one was denied due to lack of sufficient documentation. The other is pending.

- d. Make the final decision on the designation and recertification of any course or section as WI;

A list of WI certified classes for the 2014-15 academic year was presented to the Committee, discussed and approved. However, the committee is limited in this charge by the following fact: The list represents classes that the Chairs have sanctioned as meeting WI requirements. It is likely that the Chairs will always have more direct knowledge about the nature of these classes and the qualifications of the faculty who teach them than the committee. However, the list provided to the committee prior to the beginning of the semester often unavoidably and quickly changes in the days prior to the start of the semester. This has resulted in the list being approved retroactively after the classes have already begun running, but this is not ideal.

Changes can occur as a result of class cancelations or sudden additions to meet student demand complicated by issues of available faculty. This sometimes creates instances of WI classes being taught by those currently in training or by those who may not yet have had the training or other 'unforeseen circumstances'.

The main concern is WI classes not being taught by properly trained faculty (about 7% of the current WI classes). The committee believes that the best course of action is to make note of the classes approved by the Chairs that end up not being taught by faculty who have completed the training and then communicate this information to the administration. The hope is by monitoring such incidents (which sometimes may be unavoidable, as Chairs must sometimes offer WI classes with faculty substitutes when sudden changes occur with regard to scheduling and course enrollment issues) to reduce such incitements in the future to as few as possible.

Another idea proposed was to have two votes, one 'preliminary' and the other as a final vote after the semester. Though this doesn't solve the problem, it does give the committee a potential chance to voice concerns prior to the start of the semester (see **New Recommendations**).

- e. Coordinate with the Curriculum Committee on issues concerning curriculum.

The committee will continue to observe how the above may impact issues concerning curriculum.

New Recommendations

1. Develop improved procedures for certifying the list of approved WI classes. This could include:
 - Having a preliminary vote prior to the start of the semester and a post semester final vote
 - Continued monitoring of non-certified faculty teaching WI classes

2. Develop an email list that reaches all faculty who are teaching a WI class to better facilitate communication
3. Develop ways of minimizing situations such as the ECON 101 where we needed to certify a class as WI after the start of the semester due to a designation error.
4. It was brought to the committee's attention that the WI program has problems retaining Writing Fellows because of the distance of the commute to Bayside. Options including ride sharing or subsidized travel on the Long Island Railroad should be explored.

Recommendations from the Academic Senate

The Committee addressed the 11 recommendations from the Academic Senate as follows:

1. Receive reports of assessments conducted on WI courses by the Office of Academic Affairs (distinct from conduct of assessments) as well as the WI program more broadly conceived. This would include any evaluations of the effect of Writing Intensive courses as implementation of high-impact activities from the Office of Institutional Research

This recommendation has been covered in detail under Charge a in the narrative portion of the report.

2. Evaluate impact of integration of WID/WAC into the High Impact Activities across campus; consider the possibility of modifying the purview of the WID/WAC committee to incorporate all High Impact Activities;

The committee discussed the unique role of WI within the High Impact Practices. It is the only one that is required, and thus there is a need for the committee to resolve issues regarding student fulfillment of that requirement. Complicating the WI as a High Impact Practice is that several entities take part including the committee, the program itself with its coordinators, the faculty trained to teach WI and the Chairs who initially approve of the classes being offered as WI.

The committee believes the first issue to resolve is the previously mentioned improvement in communication between the committee and the WI faculty. Once that can be settled, the committee's involvement in other High Impact Practices can be examined.

3. Evaluate suggestions for expanding the number of WID/WAC courses in order to meet student demand for courses that enable them to fulfill WID/WAC requirement

There were 285 WI sections offered in the Fall of 2015. The low number of WI petitions show students do not in general have problems finding WI classes to meet their needs. The problems that do surface have more to do with sudden changes to a class deemed WI (often because of unforeseen problems with scheduling, teacher availability and sufficient enrollment).

One of the petitions had a letter of support from an ASAP student manager that mentioned she was noticing more WI classes changing after registration has begun. This is something that can cause problems, particularly for students who schedules become set or if it isn't clearly communicated to students that a change has occurred. So far the number of cases brought to the committee where this has been a problem is quite manageable though we were also forced to change a class to WI status as a result of an error in the WI listing at the registrar. These are issues the committee should continue to monitor.

4. Evaluate impact of WID/WAC certification for upper-level English courses, and consider the possibility of certifying upper level electives in other subjects, if they meet various writing intensive criteria.

The committee is happy to consider all upper level classes in any subject.

5. Report on any procedural changes in the approval of WID/WAC courses or certification of WID/WAC faculty as a result of new CETL leadership

There has been no new problems, but please reference the issue covered under Charge d in the narrative section of the report.

6. Obtain list of WID/WAC trained faculty

The list was obtained and cross referenced with those who were teaching WI classes in the Fall 2015 semester. It revealed that 19 instructors without certification were teaching 21 sections (out of 285) of WI classes (see the narrative section under Charge d).

7. Explore possibility of creating a “voluntary sampling of WI class syllabi

A concern surfaced as the committee crafted language requesting samples of WI syllabi and assignments. These samples are simply to give the committee and WID WAC directors a window into how WI classes evolve take after the faculty receive their training with any information discovered used to improve the program as a whole. The committee does not wish to create the appearance that we were monitoring or judging the assignments or syllabi submitted, which would lead to concerns of academic freedom.

Wording has been a delicate matter, and it is preferred that the request go directly to WI faculty rather than relying on the Chairs to pass on the request as earlier planned so that the individual instructors feel no pressure to do the voluntary submissions. Again, the issue of creating a WI faculty email list must first be solved.

The committee is also looking for ways to collect samples anonymously. One potential solution is to set up a shared file where faculty can upload their artifacts without any personal identification as opposed to emailing them directly to the WID WAC Chair. This way, all the WID WAC Committee and program directors would have access to the artifacts as well while keeping them anonymous.

8. Work with the Committee on Committees to identify WI trained faculty in each department who can serve on the WID/WAC committee

The committee had nine full members (up from five) representing a broad range of departments during the 2015-16 academic year after adding four additional qualifying members. The committee thanks Dr. David Sarno, Chair of the Committee on Committees for his work on bringing our total up to the full nine members.

9. As per recommendations of Annual Report for 2014-2015, edit and update committee website

Upon preparing of the final report it was noticed that the website description still lists three rather than nine members. The committee will address this again in the fall.

10. Respond to questions related to the need for working during annual leave period

Two waivers came during the annual leave period, but no meetings needed to be called during the summer session.

11. Revise committee guide, as needed

The committee will continue to monitor the committee guide and revise as needed

12. Contribute comment on the impact of WID/WAC for Queensborough's meeting of revised Middle States Accreditation Standard 3:

- *an institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.*

As well as revised Middle States Accreditation Standard 5:

- *Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.*

With the completion of CETL's initial evaluation of the WID WAC program, the committee is happy to contribute comment with our perspective, but the committee would find it helpful for direction in terms of scope and timing of such comments.

Matters of Interest

- As of 2015-16 the WID WAC program had three co-directors: Dr. Jeffrey Jankowski, Dr. Joost Burgers and Dr. Robert Becker.

- Dr. Christopher Jimenez (Speech Communication) was elected chair at its meeting on May 23 and replaces Dr. Bjorn Berkhout, whose term on the committee ended at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. Dr. Scott Litroff will be joining the committee representing the Department of Music.
- Dr. Peter Gray will no longer be at QCC as he has taken another positions out of state. Another member will need to be found to replace him and the committee will need to elect a new secretary for the 2016-17 academic year and.
- The Committee acknowledges the time spent by Dr. Glenn Burdi in preparing the cases for the committee's consideration.
- The Chairperson would like to thank all members who served on the Committee throughout the academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Bjorn Berkhout
Chair, 2015-2016