

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

Second Findings: June 2016-June 2017

Executive Summary

The WAC Group has made progress during the second year of the initial three-year strategic assessment plan toward WAC program assessment. Findings include:

- Students' use of sources and evidence appeared to be less successful than with other categories of writing criteria. (See Section V.A. of this report)
- The UWR framework did not accommodate some 400-level and capstone courses well; it appeared to lack flexibility for disciplinary variations, sometimes imposing an artificiality within what is intended as writing in the disciplines. (Section V.A.)
- Twenty percent of EOU's courses have UWR designation. (Section V.B.a.)
- The annual number of UWR courses completed by students in each of three recent graduating classes (2013, 2014, 2015) was compared to the sums of their GPAs. These data did not support the assumption that completing more UWR courses resulted in higher GPAs. (Section V.B.b.1.)
- The average total of UWR courses completed by unique students across all course prefixes has increased over time. (Section V.B.b.2.)
- The higher average number of UWRs completed by freshmen and on-campus students versus transfer and off-campus students showed little effect on average overall GPAs. Transfer and off-campus students did not appear to be disadvantaged by completing fewer total UWRs on average. (Section V.B.b.3.)
- Transfer students finished UD UWRs their final term *and* finished the overall UWR requirement at a rate about 25% higher than for freshmen. (Section V.B.b.3.)
- Early and late UWR completers fared about the same in terms of GPAs. (Section V.B.c.)
- The total number of UWR courses with unique CRNs offered per term (online, campus, on-site) over three years showed sufficient unfilled sections in which students could have enrolled. The number of on-campus sections from 2013-2015 was stable, but a decline occurred in online and onsite section offerings. (Section V.B.d.)
- Lower average GPAs in UWR courses suggested that students struggled more with academic writing when compared to all courses. Averages were lower in UWR courses; however, students succeeded overall with LD Overall Average GPAs over three years at 2.95 and UD Overall Average GPAs at 3.31. (Section V.B.d.)
- The number of non-passing UD grades decreased over three years, but UD UWR non-passing grades constituted a greater percentage of all non-passing grades. (Section V.B.d.)
- Concerns or trends were not apparent among non-completers (e.g., not enrolled, needed 15 credits or fewer, and/or needed one or more UWR course to graduate) who had not finished the UWR. (V.B.d.)

- Data showed that students who completed UWR courses in their freshman and sophomore years had a higher percentage of completion and graduation in six years. (Section V.B.f.)

Recommendations for Action

The WAC Group recommends that EOU faculty and administrators should review these findings to consider how the UWR integrates with the university's values and educational goals. WAC Group members view this initial assessment process as formative, an inquiry that can be used to inform instructional and assessment approaches, but findings may be considered summative. Current recommendations include:

- The WAC Group should revise future data queries to request papers intended to meet length, revision, and other requirements listed in the UWR framework. Assignments should also be requested. (Section V.A.)
- Review the UWR's purpose and applications, and how disciplinary flexibility can be better supported by the UWR. (Section V.A.)
- Consider as an institution what capstone courses should accomplish. (Section V.A.)
- Increase opportunities for student writing specific to program major and career path. (Section V.A.)
- Increase emphasis on use of sources and evidence. (Section V.A.)
- Consider intentional scaffolding of writing instruction within each program. (Section V.A.)
- Interrogate whether and how writing instruction promotes transfer across disciplines. (Section V.B.a.)
- The trend toward an increasing annual total of completed UWR courses across all course prefixes should be monitored, with attention to whether and how the increase affects student writing and faculty workload. (Section V.B.b.2.)
- Transfer and off-campus students completed fewer UWRs on average than did freshmen and on-campus students while GPAs remained comparable. GPAs of these student populations should continue to be monitored relative to total number of UWR completion, particularly if program curriculum or embedded writing instruction is revised. (Section V.B.b.3.)
- Transfer students may benefit from being advised to enroll in UWR courses upon admission. (Sections V.B.b.4. and V.B.c.)
- Students who enrolled as freshmen at EOU may benefit from being advised to complete more of their UWRs at the sophomore and junior levels. (Section V.B.b.4.)
- Periodically monitor UWR section enrollment by term and location for developing trends in enrollment and offerings. (Section V.B.d.)
- As commencement approaches and spring UWR classes fill close to caps, roadblocks may develop. With section enrollment approaching 18 students or above, consideration should be given to adding sections or distributing sections differently throughout the academic year and/or two-year course rotation. (Section V.B.d.)

- Continuing to inform students early in their college careers about UWR courses and expectations, such as in UNI and CORE courses, may support increased completion and success rates. (V.B.d.)
- Provide opportunities during fall faculty orientation and throughout the academic year for faculty development workshops. Topics for fall 2017 have been suggested in Section VI.
- Continue supporting the WAC Group and the strategic writing program assessment they are engaged in. Data are being gathered that have potential to improve student writing across the curriculum (WAC) and in the disciplines (WID).

The WAC Group, September 15, 2017

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