Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

First Findings: June 2015—June 2016
Internal Report #1

September 2016

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Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

First Findings: June 2015—June 2016

I. Purpose

The University Writing Requirement (UWR) appeared for the first time in Eastern Oregon University's (EOU) 2004-06 Academic Catalog, replacing the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE), a high-stakes timed writing exam required for degree completion. That fall, in an EOU Campus Assembly meeting, faculty were reminded that the "UWR replaced the WPE for incoming freshmen [that] term" and they should submit paperwork to the Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPCC) as soon as possible to seek approval for courses to be designated as writing-intensive UWRs (Campus Assembly Minutes, November 4, 2004). Since then, faculty have sought UWR designation for new and existing courses, and EOU students have engaged in writing in those courses. Approximately 4,358 students, most who entered EOU as first-time freshmen under the UWR rather than the WPE, have completed degrees between July 2008 and June 2015 (SCARF Reports; see Appendix I).[1] Faculty have conducted student assessment and completed program reviews, including course and program assessment of student writing. In 2012-2013, a pilot in which a few programs developed discipline-specific UWR criteria toward measurable assessment was designed (Davies, Adkison, and Witte, p. 67). However, evidence of comprehensive assessment of university-wide writing has not been apparent.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) First Findings: June 2015—June 2016 initiates assessment of the EOU UWR. This report describes the first year of an ambitious three-year strategic and assessment draft plan linked to WAC mission and program development. Strategic and assessment planning are based on work by White, Elliot, and Peckham (2015), a workshop co-chaired by Klages and Elliot (2015), and an institute presented by Huot and Caswell (2015). The report examines UWR syllabi alignment at the upper and lower division levels, inclusion of UWR courses in minor degree checksheets, and the relationship of the UWR to Capstone courses. The report presents data that can be used in planning and decision making by current and future Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Group members, teaching faculty, programs and colleges involved in writing instruction, and those with oversight responsibilities, such as the Provost, Director of Assessment and Faculty Development, Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and informs the university community about the WAC Group's work and findings.

II. Rationale

The 2015-2016 WAC report on the UWR establishes a visible WAC program and initiates WAC assessment. Faculty support for writing and teaching writing has long been evidenced by

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[1] In fall 2004, the first class of first-time freshmen entered EOU with the expectation of fulfilling the UWR. Some students who entered earlier than fall 2004 and took longer than four years to complete their degrees fulfilled the WPE requirement, as indicated in the catalogue at time of entry.

their development of writing intensive classes in the disciplines; institutional requirements for degree completion, including the WPE and UWR, support for the Writing Center to assist students with revision and writing, and participation in faculty development workshops focusing on writing to learn (WTL) and writing in the disciplines (WID), well-recognized manifestations of WAC.

The UWR has been well-supported by faculty in their disciplines. However, our institution has not investigated whether and how the UWR functions institutionally to prepare students for writing in their courses and careers. To address this, the WAC Group was formed from representative faculty from across the university: one each from Arts & Letters; Science, Math, and Technology; Social Sciences and Modern Languages; Business; Education; Physical Activity and Health; and the Library. Beginning with a draft strategic plan and draft assessment plan, the WAC Group revised and unanimously approved a mission statement (see Appendix II).[2] Of the four priorities identified in the strategic plan—1) Writing Across the Curriculum, 2) Student Retention and Completion, 3) Writing in the Disciplines: Capstones/ePortfolios, and 4) Writing Center—the WAC Group has addressed some targets in all except Priority 2. Recognizing from the beginning that this strategic plan is ambitious, we will address most, but probably not all, of the targets identified in the draft plan.

Trends in UWR efficacy may be apparent in future assessment cycles. Topical sections, beyond those in this first report, will be added as targets are assessed in future years. While summative assessment data will be made available for university purposes, the WAC Group is primarily interested in formative assessment to support faculty in developing writing pedagogies and students in becoming stronger writers during and after their higher education experiences.

III. Executive Summary

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

- Syllabi for 75% of lower-division UWR courses and 70% of upper-division UWR courses were available through college archives of courses taught in Fall of 2015. (see Section V.A. of this report)
- A greater number of lower division syllabi included explicitly stated UWR outcomes than did upper division syllabi. Lower division syllabi ranged from 56% to 100% mention of UWR criterion, with five out of seven criteria consistent at 89%. Upper division syllabi ranged from 40% to 67% across all seven criteria. Lower division UWR syllabi showed greater alignment between syllabi and UWR across all criteria than did upper division syllabi. (see Section V.A. of this report)
- Most minors do not require UWRs. Based on current checksheets (available 2015-2016), 33.3% of minors require a UWR course, with 29.7% requiring a second UWR. (see Section V.B. of this report)

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[2] WAC Group members each have one vote, with the director voting only in the case of a tie.

- About 73% of majors (27 out of 37) require one or more capstone course for degree completion. Of those 27, 63% are designated as UWR courses. (see Section V.C. of this report)
- Of the total 37 programs/majors, 46% required a UWR-designated capstone. (see Section V.C. of this report)

IV. Recommendations for Action

The WAC Group recommends that interested 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, but findings may be considered summative. Current recommendations include:

- The process for future syllabi reviews should require a double-blind review of each syllabus, followed by a third review by the director where data differ. This approximates the process followed for the Fall 2015 review. In addition, preliminary syllabus sorting or more detailed training on locating syllabi should be done in advance of data collection. (Section V.A.)
- Discuss as an institution how UWR criteria should be presented to students. (Section V.A.)
- Examine whether and how students in minor degree programs are learning about writing in the discipline (Section V.B.)
- In majors that do not include a capstone course or project, consider identifying an upper division course for writing program assessment. This will provide a more complete view of EOU students' writing mastery as they approach graduation, begin graduate programs, and/or enter the workforce. (Section V.C.)
- Provide opportunities during fall faculty orientation and throughout the academic year for faculty development workshops. Topics for fall 2016 have been suggested in Section VI.
- Continue supporting the WAC Group and the strategic writing program assessment they are engaged in. While the plan is ambitious, data are being gathered that have potential to improve writing across the curriculum (WAC) and in the disciplines (WID).

V. Findings

V.A. UWR Syllabi Alignment

In Fall 2015, the WAC Group was provided with access to first-year writing and UWR course syllabi archived by the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the Colleges of Business and Education (CoBE). The list of fall UWR courses was obtained from Webster. Two people were assigned to review each syllabus, and data were collected using a Google Form. Data gathered focused on whether UWR outcomes and expectations had been explicitly copied into the syllabus and/or assignments provided evidence of alignment with UWR outcomes.

In the Lower Division UWR Syllabus Review for Fall 2015 (below), 9 syllabi examinations were completed, with 2 syllabi unavailable (n = 11). For the majority of lower division UWR criteria, 89% of syllabi (8 total) made explicit mention of individual UWR criteria, with 100% indicating that students would write at least one paper integrating information from at least one source

and employ appropriate documentation style for the course discipline. However, only 56% of lower-division syllabi demonstrated alignment, either through the presence of UWR outcomes or stated assignment requirements, with the criterion indicating that 30% of the overall grade in a UWR course is allocated to formal writing assignments or that evaluation of single-author papers that had been revised following feedback accounted for 25% of the grade. Informing students of the connection between revision after feedback and their total grade may influence their attention to this part of the writing process.

Lower Division UWR Syllabus Review Fall 2015 (n = 9 available out of 11 lower division UWR courses taught)

UWR Criteria	% "Yes" of Total Available (n = 9)
Lower Division – Students will produce at least 3,000 words (including drafts, in-class writing, informal papers, and polished papers); 1,000 words of this total should be in polished papers which students have revised after receiving feedback and criticism.	89%
The syllabus mentions (explicitly or implicitly) that students will be introduced to discourse forms appropriate to the discipline.	89%
Syllabus states that students will write at least one paper integrating information from at least one source, employing the appropriate documentation style for the discipline represented by the course.	**100%**
The syllabus clearly states that drafts and revisions are required.	89%
The syllabus states that students will seek assistance from a Writing Tutor in the Writing Center when needed and when referred by the instructor.	89%
The syllabus clearly states students must earn a C- or better on writing assignments.	89%
The syllabus indicates that the course allocates at least 30% of the overall grade to formal writing assignments, with at least 25% of the overall grade based on evaluation of individually written papers that have been revised after feedback.	**56%**
Total number of syllabi available in archive	9

Lower Division UWR syllabi available in archive (% of total taught: n = 11)	**75%**

The Upper Division UWR Syllabus Review for Fall 2015 included 19 reviews, with 8 syllabi unavailable (n = 27 total). Syllabi archives contained 70% of upper-division UWR syllabi taught in fall 2015. The percentage of each criterion mentioned for available upper division syllabi (n = 21) varied from 29% to 67%. The highest percentage of alignment, 67%, occurred with explicit mention that students must write at least one paper in that discipline's style while integrating and documenting sources. The lowest percentage of alignment, 29%, was in regard to clear statement that students must earn a C- or better on writing assignments. Students may benefit from consistent, explicit mention in syllabi of upper division UWR criteria, and particular mention of how grades on writing in UWR courses relate to their overall course success.

Upper Division UWR Syllabus Review Fall 2015 (n=27)

UWR Criteria	% "Yes" of Total Available
Upper Division - produce at least 5,000 words (including drafts, in-class writing, informal papers, and polished papers); 2,000 words of this total should be in polished papers which students have revised after receiving feedback and criticism.	57%
The syllabus clearly states that students will practice the forms of writing and reflect upon the nature of the writing used by graduates and professionals in the discipline the course represents.	48%
Syllabus explicitly states that students will write at least one paper integrating information from more than one source, employing the appropriate documentation style for the discipline represented by the course.	**67%**
The syllabus clearly states that students will draft, revise, and edit their formal written work.	52%
The syllabus states that students will seek assistance from a Writing Tutor in the Writing Center when needed and when referred by the instructor information about the Writing Tutor and the Writing Center.	57%

The syllabus clearly states students must earn a C- or better on writing assignments.	**29%**
The syllabus indicates that the course allocates at least 30% of the overall grade to formal writing assignments, with at least 25% of the overall grade based on evaluation of individually written papers that have been revised after feedback.	48%
Total number of UD UWR syllabi available in archive	19
Upper Division UWR syllabi available in archive (% of total)	**70%**

V.B. UWRs in Minors

The On-Campus and Online/Onsite lists of Banner-generated minors, found on the Academics & Programs webpage, were compared to determine that all minors were represented in this review. EOU lists 27 minors. OSU minors taught at EOU were not included in the review.

Of the 27 minor degree programs at EOU, nine (9) include at least one required UWR course on their checksheets, with eight (8) of those listing a second required UWR course. In other words, 33.3% of 27 minors require at least one UWR course for completion; 29.6% require at least two UWR courses. One research methods course designated as a UWR was identified among all EOU minors, representing 3.7% inclusion across all 27 minors.

2015-2016 Banner-Generated Minors

    EOU Minors = 27

    OSU Minors = 7

Minors (Winter 2016): UWR & Methods Course Review (n = 27 EOU Minors)

UWR Courses Required in Minors	UWR #1	UWR #2	Methods Course #1	Methods Course #2
Cells with Yes (1)	**9**	**8**	**1**	0
Cells with No (0)	18	19	26	27
Minors Requiring UWR (% of total)	**33.3%**	29.6%	**3.7%**	-0-

Note: The list of minors was found at https://www.eou.edu/academics/ in Majors and Minors.

V.C. 2015-2016 Programs/Majors Capstones with/without UWR Designation

In the review of 37 undergraduate Current Program Check Sheets for 2015-2016, 27 majors, or 73%, included at least one capstone course. Of these 27 capstone courses, 17 (63%) were designated as UWRs. Eleven (11) of 27 programs/majors (40.7%) included a second capstone, of which five (5), or 45.5% of second capstones, were UWRs.

Of the total 37 programs/majors, 46% required a UWR-designated capstone, and 13.5% required a second UWR capstone course.

2015-2016 Programs/Majors Capstones with/without UWR Designation

	Capstone Course #1 Yes (1) or No (0)	Is this a UWR? Yes (1) or No (0)	Capstone Course #2 Yes (1) or No (0)	Is this a UWR? Yes (1) or No (0)
Total Number of Undergraduate Programs/Majors: n = 37				
Yes (Capstone Course in Major)	27	**17**	11	**5**
No (Capstone Course in Major)	10	20	26	32
Programs with designated capstones (% of total)	**73%**		**29.8%**	
Capstones designated as UWRs (% of total)		**46%**		**13.5%**

Note: Data sources include the 2015-2016 UWR Courses at EOU, posted on the Registrar's website at https://www.eou.edu/registrar/uwr/; Current Program Check Sheets for The 2015-2016 Academic Year, on the Advising page at https://www.eou.edu/advising/2015-2016-program_check-sheets/; and a list of EOU Capstone courses generated on March 18, 2016, by Holly Chason, Director of Institutional Research.

The total number of 37 undergraduate programs/majors includes 29 baccalaureates (BA/BS), one Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), two Associate of Arts (AA), and five certificate programs.

VI. Future Plans for Assessment

The WAC Group has made preliminary preparations to continue writing program assessment in the fall 2016:

- Professional development workshops based on what has been learned from syllabus review and on what WAC Group members have learned from their own teaching experience are being planned. Two time blocks have been requested during orientation for topics listed below, and others have tentatively been discussed to occur throughout the academic year:

    o **What's in *Your* Syllabus? A WACky Workshop**--Faculty will be asked to bring a printed or digital copy of a syllabus with them and meet in the Library Computer Classroom to work together.
    o **Writing Assignments that Matter: A WACky Forum**—Faculty will be asked to bring a writing assignment to share. This will involve a guided conversation around designing writing assignments to address outcomes.

- Capstone papers have been collected from the 2015-2016 academic year, and a coding system based on the Written Communication VALUE Rubric has been piloted for use in assessing high/medium/low samples.

- The WAC Group requested and has received data from Institutional Research (see Appendix III).

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Appendix I

Number of Bachelor's degrees awarded by academic year from July 1-June 30

Academic Year (n=7)	Annual number of Bachelor's degrees awarded
2008-2009	539
2009-2010	573
2010-2011	540
2011-2012	619
2012-2013	674
2013-2014	710
2014-2015	703
Total Bachelor's degrees over 7 years	**4358**

Note: Data come from the Student Centralized Administrative Reporting Files (SCARF) labeled for years 2010 through 2016. These numbers include some first-time freshmen entering in 2004 and 2005 who completed degrees in four years and were subject to the University Writing Requirement. Some first-time freshmen entering in 2002 or earlier and subject to the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) requirement may be included.

Appendix II

Eastern Oregon University Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Three-Year Strategic Plan

Mission: Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) at Eastern Oregon University supports the view that writing aids in learning and critical thinking, and should happen across the academic community throughout a student's formal education. WAC is committed to ensuring all students receive attention to writing throughout their studies in small class environments and, through Writing in the Disciplines (WID), students learn and practice discipline-specific conventions. Students will develop habits of mind and communication skills necessary to play productive roles in their disciplines, careers, and communities, and be prepared for responsible and reflective action in a diverse and interconnected world. (Aligned with the February 3, 2004, University Mission statement; approved by the WAC Group on November 20, 2015.)

Strategy Priorities: We will achieve our mission through strategic priorities aimed to promote writing and the teaching of writing at all levels and in all disciplines, to help students achieve mastery or acceptable writing fluency for careers beyond college, to support student writing through access to the Writing Center, and to support faculty design of writing assignments and assessments.

Impact: Over the three years of the strategic plan, we anticipate that a collaborative culture of writing, involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators, will grow from these efforts, enhancing students' learning and professional success.

Targets: Three targets have been identified: to ascertain whether UWR-designated courses employ the UWR framework, whether that framework is effective in teaching and promoting student writing, and whether use of Discipline-Specific UWR Criteria (maps or rubrics) gather useable data; to measure student awareness of Writing Center support; to promote genre diversification; and to offer writing courses and/or support for students whose needs are not being met.

Assessment: Using qualitative and quantitative methods, we will document efforts and efficacy of writing curriculum, outcomes, and support, and use the information to improve our writing instruction and understanding of how to support students' practices of writing to learn and communicate effectively.

Communication: To strengthen community involvement, we pledge to establish the EOU Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Group to collaborate on writing

assessment efforts and to report our work to our constituencies—shared governance, administration, faculty and instructional staff, parents, students, professional societies, and the public—in ways appropriate to each.

Priority 1: Writing Across the Curriculum

Form and convene WAC Group.

Ascertain whether UWR-designated courses employ the UWR framework through syllabus review.

Determine whether the UWR framework is effective in attaining its stated goals (that students receive attention to writing throughout their studies, and that students demonstrate their mastery of discipline-specific writing) by reviewing signature assignments and sample papers (high, medium, low) from UWR courses.

Gather and assess disciplinary writing data through program-designed Discipline-Specific UWR Criteria maps or rubrics

Identify current writing genres assigned in UWR courses through syllabus review.

Identify UWR courses required in minors through checklist review.

Survey 400-level UWR courses.

Priority 2: Student Retention and Achievement

Assess writing proficiency in WR 115, WR 121, 200-, 300- and 400-level UWR with skill levels documented.

Identify any gaps in college-level writing instruction for specific student populations and develop plan of action.

Coordinate with academic programs and Career Services to prepare students for workplace and graduate-school success.

Priority 3: Writing in the Disciplines: Capstones/ePortfolios

Ensure student writing proficiency in genres required in the major.

Ensure student writing proficiency in genres required in the minor.

Promote and ensure that Capstones/ePortfolios are designated as UWR courses.

Offer workshops to teaching faculty on scaffolding writing curriculum and assignments.

Establish periodic review of capstone writing and readiness for career writing using the Written Communication VALUE rubric.

Ensure both print and digital writing exposure.

Query alumni regarding perceived readiness for career writing.

Priority 4: Writing Center

Ensure student awareness of Writing Center.

Broaden tutoring support to include not only writing, but also other literacies, including reading, English language learning (speaking, listening, reading, writing), and digital/visual rhetoric.

Offer support for print and digital assignment and assessment development to teaching faculty.

Note: The watermark "Draft" appears on this document to indicate that this plan may be revised by the WAC Group at any time.
Approved by Provost Sarah Witte on 8/10/2015
Revised with Vice Provost Donald Wolff's input on 8/27/15
Presented to CTLA on 9/21/15
Mission approved by WAC Group on 11/20/2015

Appendix III

<div align="center">WAC Group Data Request</div>

Current Course Information
What proportion of classes (not sections) are designated as UWR courses?

1. Total number (#) of discrete courses taught at EOU (individual courses, not sections, with a specific prefix and course number, e.g., WR 121)
2. Total # of discrete UWR courses

Data requested for three academic years: 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15
Are UWR courses accessible for students?

3. Total # of UWR courses (all sections) offered per term over three previous years

Do students who take more than the required number of writing intensive courses exhibit higher performance, as demonstrated by GPAs?

4. Total # of UWR courses completed by students in each of the last three graduating classes (2013, 2014, 2015), broken down by major or discipline

Do students delay completion of UWRs? When do students complete LD and UD UWR requirements? Do early completers fair better than late completers, as gauged by GPA?

5. Timeline profile of when students take UWRs, broken down by major or discipline (e.g., Year 1 Fall/Winter/Spring/Summer; Year 2 by term, Year 3, and so on)
6. Compare overall GPAs for students who complete UWRs in Year 3 and Year 4.
7. # students enrolled in last required UWR during their final term before completion
8. Compare # students enrolled in LD or UD UWR during final term

Do UWR courses create a roadblock for retention and completion? If so, where do roadblocks appear?

9. Average/median/mode course GPA for Upper Division UWR courses compared to average GPA for all Upper Division undergraduate courses
10. Average/median/mode course GPA for Lower Division UWR courses compared to average GPA for all Lower Division undergraduate courses
11. Compare total # of grades below C- for UWR courses to total # of grades below C- for all other courses
12. Total # of Withdrawals from UWR courses compared to total # of non-UWR withdrawals
13. Total # of students not currently enrolled <u>and</u> who need 15 credits or fewer <u>and</u> one or more UWR course(s) to graduate

Data requested for 2014-15 and 2015-2016

What is the frequency of GECs combined with UWRs in LD to 300-level courses to provide early disciplinary writing experiences and double-dipping opportunities?

14. UWR courses that are also Gen Ed:
    a. #UWR courses that are also Gen Ed: AEH.
    b. #UWR courses that are also Gen Ed: APC.
    c. #UWR courses that are also Gen Ed: Math/Sci.
    d. #UWR courses that are also Gen Ed: SSC.
    e. #UWR courses that are also Gen Ed: GTW.
    f. #UWR courses that are NOT Gen Ed.