

# Institute Writing Committee

Report to Academic Senate – May, 2016

## Committee

Committee members (listed below) met regularly during AY2015-16. It reviewed all “Writing Intensive” (WI) course materials submitted. The registrar was informed of all courses approved as WI by the committee, and an IWC spreadsheet was updated online each semester.

## Membership

David Martins (UWP Director), Co-Chair  
Sarah Thompson (CIAS), Co-Chair  
Cathy Beaton (GCCIS)  
Pamela R. Conley (NTID)/Pam Kincheloe (NTID)  
Steven Day (KGCOE)  
Andrea Hickerson (CLA)  
Stephen LaGrou (SCB)/ Michael Palanski (SCB)  
Carl Lutzer (COS)  
Yossi Nygate (CAST)  
Harvey Palmer (KGCOE - Dean Representative)  
Phillippa Thiuri (Senior Director, ASC)  
Nancy Valentage (CHST)  
Stanley Van Horn (ELC Director)  
Dianna Winslow (First-Year Writing Director)

## Charges to the Institute Writing Committee

1. Monitor and report to Academic Senate on the implementation of the Institute Writing Policy.
2. Identify meaningful practices for assessing Writing Intensive courses.
3. Highlight University best practices in Writing Intensive course instruction

## Implementation of the Institute Writing Policy

Committee efforts to implement the Institute Writing Policy have focused on two areas: monitoring the development and approval of WI course offerings, and working with the UWP to identify areas of support for faculty teaching First Year, General Education, and Program WI courses.

## Course Approval and Monitoring

The IWC has reviewed and approved 13 courses during the 2015-2016 Academic Year. Over all, since becoming a standing committee of the Academic Senate, the IWC has approved 149 courses as WI.

Working with the registrar’s office and the CLA office of Student Services, the IWC created a process and form allowing students to “Petition to Substitute a General Education Writing Intensive Requirement (WI-GE).” There are times when a student completes a course that has not been approved as WI, but that matches the WI criteria. That course may have been taken at RIT or is a course taken elsewhere that is already receiving General Education transfer credit.

Two other issues were discussed by the IWC to help with the implementation of the Institute Writing Policy: 1) allowing sections of a course to be designated as WI, and 2) working with departments to create a WI version of Independent Study/Special Topics courses. At this time, neither action has been taken, though creating these options in SIS is possible.

The committee also participated in the revision of the New Course Outline form, integrating and reformatting the “Course Criteria Checklist” into the new outline.

### Identifying areas of faculty support

The IWC and the UWP director collaborated on a survey of RIT instructional faculty. The feedback provided by faculty (n=141) has helped in determining the nature and scope of IWC and UWP activities, including workshop series, invited guest lectures, and other faculty support opportunities. Over the past three semesters, the director of the UWP, along with four Writing Fellows partnered with faculty in Mechanical Engineering and Biology in 11 sections of WI courses and introductory labs. Based on Writing Fellow partnership experiences, the IWC will continue working with the director of the UWP to identify effective and sustainable models for continued faculty support.

The committee also made revisions to the IWC website in order to make the current site more user friendly and practical. The IWC will continue to make improvements to the website.

### Assessing Writing Intensive Courses

#### First Year Writing (FYW)

The University Writing Program works with the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (OEAA; formerly the Office of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment) to assess specific learning outcomes: Revise and improve written products; Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English; and Use relevant evidence gathered through accepted scholarly methods and properly acknowledge sources of information. General Education assessment reports are available [here](#). Dianna Winslow, Director of First Year Writing, is the contact person for the assessment of FYW.

#### General Education Writing Intensive (WI-GE)

With the recent approval of General Education Essential Outcomes and their inclusion in the new RIT Course Outline, assessment of WI-GE courses can be accomplished following the approved General Education Assessment Plan prepared by the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment, and approved by the General Education Committee. As with other General Education assessment projects, faculty teams can be brought together to assess relevant Gen Ed learning outcomes (e.g., Revise and improve written products; Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English). As appropriate, student materials produced in WI-GE courses might also be used in the assessment of other relevant learning outcomes (e.g., the “Critical Thinking” learning outcome as it pertains to writing projects in specific WI-GE courses).

#### Program Writing Intensive (WI-PR)

Every program has developed a “Program Level Outcomes Assessment Plan” (PLOAP). The IWC recommends that each program regularly assess its own WI course(s) as part of its assessment plan. Some programs already have a program-level writing goal and student learning outcome. If the

assessment of WI-PR courses has not already been integrated into their assessment plans, programs have a number of opportunities:

1. Programs revise their current assessment plans to include a program goal related to writing and a program SLO related to writing, and designate a WI-PR course(s) as the assessment method.
2. Programs align their current WI-PR course-level writing outcome and course to an **existing** program goal or SLO.
3. Programs align their current WI-PR course-level writing outcome and course to a **new** Program Goal and SLO.

IWC members and the director of the University Writing Program can serve as support for programs consulting with program faculty in the articulation of program goals and in the design and implementation of the writing outcome assessment. As those assessments are completed and the results reported to the OEEA, the IWC will highlight the findings of each program's assessment as part of its own yearly reporting on the impact of the institute writing policy.

The IWC, along with other campus programs and committees (e.g., the UWP, OEEA, and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee), will collaborate together to develop a Program WI questionnaire that seeks to identify current challenges and opportunities for integrating WI-PR course learning outcomes assessment into existing PLOAPs. That questionnaire would also help identify current practice in WI-PR assessment. Existing examples of programs articulating writing-related program goals and learning outcomes, and their methods of assessing those outcomes, will be made available to the campus community.

### Highlighting "best practices"

Over the past 18 months, the committee spent time considering ways to highlight writing pedagogy best practices at RIT. The committee considered reinstating a writing prize, modified from the original IWC writing awards, to include recognition of student writing and faculty teaching. Although such an award is possible in the future, the committee elected to highlight best practices by hosting a spring (4/29/2016) breakfast event: "The Life of WI: A Celebration of Writing @ RIT."

Invitations to the breakfast were sent out to the more than 150 faculty teaching WI courses at RIT this academic year. More than 30 faculty participated in the event that was designed to provide faculty opportunities to meet each other, talk about the range of writing activities they use in their teaching, and discuss their own writing practices. A follow-up, repeat event is planned for the fall 2016. Again, all faculty teaching scheduled to teach WI courses during the academic year, along with faculty who have taught WI courses in the past, will be invited to the event.

### Possible IWC Charges for AY2016-17

1. Monitor and report to AS on the implementation of the Institute Writing Policy.
2. Highlight RIT "best practices" for use of writing in course instruction, especially WI courses.
3. Report to the Academic Senate and campus community progress on the assessment of WI courses.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Martins  
May 2016