Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC): Key Notions

1. Writing, thinking, and learning are lifelong activities that are inextricably tied to one another. Writing is not a skill that can be mastered once and for all.

2. WAC aims to change the ways in which students learn (and instructors teach). It does not consist of adding a few writing assignments to existing syllabi.

3. WAC programs aim to improve students’ learning (and writing) by emphasizing writing as an effective means of mastering subject matter. They do not aim to improve students’ writing by emphasizing a back-to-basics approach to instruction.

4. WAC programs encourage some form of writing during each class meeting as one way of improving students’ understanding (and writing) in a course.

5. WAC programs advocate a variety of writing assignments, often short responses that nevertheless require a great deal of thinking. They do not stress the traditional term paper (or other long, one-shot assignments) as the major vehicle for improving students’ writing in a course.

6. WAC programs emphasize clarity of expression and complexity of thought, along with an adherence to the appropriate conventions of writing. They do not primarily emphasize the surface “correctness” of a piece of writing.

7. WAC programs promote the notion that classmates and others outside of the course, in addition to instructors, may be an appropriate audience for student writing.

8. WAC programs are guided by the belief that writing is integral to ALL disciplines and that professionals in those disciplines are the experts.

9. WAC programs emphasize practice in writing and inquiry processes rather than just evaluation of final products.

10. WAC programs should change rather than increase instructors’ workloads.