The Center for Writing Studies  
WAC Programs at UIUC

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program at UIUC emerged from an institutional reevaluation of General Education at the end of the 1980s. The first reform proposed and implemented by the General Education Board was a second composition requirement (named Comp II, now renamed Advanced Composition), preferably fulfilled by taking a writing-intensive course in the major rather than through courses offered by the traditional providers of writing instruction (mainly English and Speech Communication). To support this requirement, the Center for Writing Studies (CWS) was established in 1990. Approved by the IBHE as a Center in 1991, it assumed three missions:

1) leadership in developing a WAC Program for faculty and TAs,
2) provision of individual tutoring through an expanded writing center (the Writers’ Workshop), and
3) development of a cross-disciplinary graduate specialization in Writing Studies to support the first two missions.

The Center offers a variety of programs in relation to its WAC mission, and the Faculty WAC Seminar held each May is pivotal to its mission. Over 350 faculty members on the UIUC campus have attended since the inaugural seminar in 1991. In addition, each August, January, and May, the Center offers Introductory WAC Seminars for teaching assistants who have been nominated by their departments or faculty members. Faculty and teaching assistants receive a stipend to attend the seminars, which focus on the principles and practices described on the back of this sheet. CWS faculty and research assistants also, upon request, consult with instructors or give presentations to departments or groups of instructors working in a common course. Finally, the Center is engaged in ongoing evaluation research to better understand the ways WAC is being implemented in diverse programs across campus. To find out more about these programs, you may contact Teresa Bertram, the CWS Secretary (333-3251, tbertram@uiuc.edu), Professor Gail Hawisher, the Director of CWS (333-3251, hawisher@uiuc.edu), or
Professor Paul Prior, the Associate Director of CWS (333-3251, pprior@uiuc.edu).

**Basic Principles of the WAC Program at UIUC**

Writing is a tool in making, unmaking, and negotiating knowledge within disciplines.

Writing conventions and values are diverse, shaped by fields of specialization.

Writing should be an object and mode of instruction, not a constant test.

Writing should help students generate meaning and explore identity.

Writing, content, and development are inextricably connected.

**Practices Emphasized in CWS WAC Seminars**

**Informal Writing/Writing to learn**

- quick writing, various kinds of logs and journals, microthemes
- writing as a tool to enhance class discussion and reading

**Process**

- multiple opportunities, i.e., multiple drafts or repeated tasks
- shorter, more frequent writing (perhaps, breaking up larger tasks into shorter steps)
- structured occasions for in-progress invention and response from self, peers, instructors
- structuring student processes through intermediate steps

**Assignments**

- considering student interest or motivation
- building process into individual tasks and sequencing tasks
- structuring a resource-rich environment to support student writing and learning
- integrating writing with disciplinary conventions, course content, and student evaluation

**Response/Evaluation**

- responding in progress
  - substantive, preferably ungraded, response by instructors
  - fitting response to stage in the process (e.g., not proofreading first drafts)
  - peer and self response (guided by appropriate models)
- minimal response as an option for some kinds of writing (e.g., quick writing, journal assignments, responses to peers)
- the value of positive/substantive response at all stages
- considering alternative audiences (public, external professional, other students)
- reflection on the clarity and adequacy of written response text itself
  - avoiding paradoxical comments like “be clear” and “don’t use contractions”
  - avoiding underspecified rules (e.g., do not change tenses, do not use “I,” consider your audience)
  - considering the clarity of telegraphic responses (awk, log, dev)
• including process components in grading (i.e., counting engagement in the process)
• making evaluation broader and clearer (e.g., portfolios, primary trait scales)