The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program at Illinois 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 was established in 1990. It was charged with 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 and coordination of a cross-disciplinary graduate specialization in Writing Studies to support the first two missions.

CWS offers a variety of programs in relation to its WAC mission. We offer an Introductory WAC Seminar for faculty, a variety of shorter WAC II Seminars, Introductory WAC Seminars (each August and January) for graduate teaching assistants nominated by departments or faculty, and varied short workshops. Faculty and teaching assistants receive a stipend to attend the introductory seminars, which focus on the principles and practices described on the back of this sheet. We can also, upon request, consult with instructors or give presentations to departments or to groups of instructors working in a common course. Finally, we engage 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 Office Administrator (333-3251, tbertram@illinois.edu) or Professor Paul Prior, the Director of CWS (333-3251, pprior@illinois.edu).
Basic Principles of the WAC Programs at Illinois

Writing is a tool in making, unmaking, and negotiating knowledge within disciplines.
Writing conventions and practices 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 reading, observation, activity, and class discussion

Process
- multiple opportunities, i.e., multiple drafts or repeated tasks
- shorter, more frequent writing (e.g., 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 tasks and sequencing tasks over time
- structuring a resource-rich environment to support student writing and learning
- integrating writing with disciplinary conventions and content

Response/Evaluation
- responding in progress
  - substantive, preferably ungraded, response by instructors
  - fitting response to purpose and stage in 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”)
  - 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)

Multimodality
- Writing involves chains of reading, talk, observation, and action as well as writing.
- Writing tasks are parts of multimodal genre systems; structuring and tuning the system is critical to writing (and writing instruction).