

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**of the**  
**UNIVERSITY WRITING COMMITTEE**  
**2003-2004**

**Presented at the**  
**635<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate**  
**December 2, 2004**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**Maria Botelho**  
**Genevieve E. Chandler, Chair**  
**Diane Chase, *student rep.***  
**Heather Comtois, *student rep.***  
**John Cunningham, *ex officio***  
**J. Michael Davis**  
**Patt Dodds**  
**Dina Friedman**  
**Linda LaDuc, *ex officio***  
**Holly Lawrence**  
**Donna LeCourt, *ex officio***  
**Jose Mestre**  
**Stephen Olbrys**

Last year the committee adopted a five-year rotation:

- \* 2003-2004: Creative Year
- \* 2004-2005 Collecting materials for First Year Writing Program review
- \* 2005-2006 First Year Writing Program review
- \* 2006-2007 Creative Year
- \* 2007-2008 Junior Year Review.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the University Writing Committee met five times. We began with fewer members than allotted and reached our full membership after the first of the year. The Committee meetings resulted in the following innovations:

- **Writing Center Proposal** – The attached proposal recommends a physical and on-line place where students can receive guidance in their writing and faculty can be mentored in their teaching of writing. This proposal has been forwarded to the Chancellor's Office.
- **Review of Freshman Placement and Analysis** – We explored several possibilities for student placement including, portfolio, timed essay, SAT scores and directed self placement. The Committee decided to keep the current placement procedure in place.
- **Junior Year Writing** – We recommend that JYW could use a coordinating body in addition to one director, especially with the increased number of on-line Junior Year Writing Courses. The Committee explored concerns arising from this new development, and solicited opinions from faculty experts who provided the following insights for teachers and department administrators of on-line Junior Year Writing courses:
  - Expect a three-fold increase in design and class prep time.
  - Don't place new or inexperienced teachers in an on-line course.
  - Decrease the number of assignments.
  - Devise grading contracts.
  - Develop an on-line etiquette format.
  - Supplement on-line courses with in-person meetings, if possible.
  - Plan for technology glitches.
  - Design research activities that can be conducted in an on-line environment.

Holly and Steve will draft a list of recommendations for Academic Matters and the new JYW Director.

- The Committee recognized JWP Director, Linda LaDuc's enormous contribution to the writing program over the past eight years.
- Lee Badgett has accepted the JWP position for '04-'06.

Respectfully submitted,

Genevieve E. Chandler  
Chair

## **Proposal to the Chancellor: A University Writing Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst**

The University Writing Committee and the University Writing Program propose a Writing Center that is a physical and on-line “place” where students could receive guidance on their writing and faculty could be mentored in their teaching of writing. We envision the Writing Center providing opportunities for student/teacher collaboration on research in writing and for strengthening established community and business connections. The Center would be located administratively within the University Writing Program and its principal clients would be students and faculty.

### **Rationale**

Arguably, no activity is more central to a literate people than writing. Writing facilitates critical thinking and is the primary means by which most educated citizens communicate personally, publicly, and professionally. New communication technologies, globalization, and increased centralization of professional tasks have created a demand for stronger and more complex writing skills from our students, if they are to succeed not only in academia, but as citizens and professionals. The popular press has chronicled the “writing crisis” we face (*Star Tribune*, 2003), and business and industry have issued calls for “the ability to communicate technical information effectively” (Barclay, et. al., 1991). Experts continue to predict that good communication skills will be far more important in the new century than the last (Andrews 1992). We feel compelled to respond vigorously to this need.

And the need is clear. Demands for improved writing ability come from engineering, sociology, business, education, and the public sector. Combined with the new genres of writing evolving from informational and Internet technologies, these developments have exposed “gaps” in our approach to writing instruction at the undergraduate level. The writing skills and knowledge that students gain during their current undergraduate experience are not enough today, for these reasons:

- Because of the monetary investment required to incorporate the latest technologies into teaching, higher education has been slow to produce “useful” knowledge about new writing technologies and the genres that are evolving from these technologies.
- Industry developments frequently occur within specific disciplinary contexts and are not readily accessible to those who develop writing pedagogy; few researchers in these disciplines have specific expertise in the study of writing.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> century model of writing programs compartmentalizes the study of writing in ways that make it difficult for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing researchers across disciplines to share knowledge and to translate their expertise directly into writing pedagogy.

Because of its history and reputation as a leader in writing studies, UMass-Amherst is in a unique position to address the challenge posed by the new communication needs of this century. In the early '80s, UMass was among the first institutions to implement both a first-year writing program and a junior-year writing-across-the-disciplines approach to teaching student writing. This focus on disciplinary writing, in fact, led to the program's recognition as one of 25 “programs that work” by *U.S. News and World Report* (2002). UMass also houses a nationally recognized Ph.D. program in composition, a business writing program at the forefront of its field, and a ground-breaking Information Technology major. Its reputation for excellence puts UMass in an ideal position to again take the lead in writing

research and to pass the ensuing benefits on – to our students, our community, and our faculty. However, these efforts must be more seriously coordinated in order to advance our knowledge about writing and disseminate it to teachers, industry, and students.

### **The Writing Center in Brief**

To provide a focused and comprehensive solution, we propose a writing center that will be physically located at the center of the university project, to conceptually demonstrate writing's centrality to all curricular and scholarly efforts. The Center will support the core research and instructional missions of the university: it will support student writing for academic purposes, and faculty and student efforts to write for public and civic purposes; it will support faculty in their efforts to teach writing; it will centralize writing research and development efforts with business and communities; it will support research that can be immediately applied to pedagogy; it will support research and teaching efforts as outreach. In sum, the Writing Center will be a multi-function facility that organizes several initiatives:

- direct and on-line tutoring for students working with print and web-based documents
- customized support for faculty who teach writing-intensive, general education or junior-year writing courses
- administrative support for research in writing and the teaching of writing
- development and implementation of campus-wide writing assessment
- consulting for business and industry on particular writing needs
- development help for those pursuing grants and research in writing studies
- readings by faculty and visitors on various writing topics (e.g., writing as civic action)
- a place for groups to meet and discuss writing, from the technical to the creative
- a centralized place to originate and oversee programs that connect with the community: fee-for-service consulting and editing; programs that connect with teaching in K-12 schools through the Western Massachusetts Writing Project; and campus-based programs that enhance the visibility of writing and the teaching of writing, such as conferences, readings, publications, workshops, and visiting writers. (See figure attached).

As conceived, the Center will put UMass at the forefront of writing and literacy efforts nationwide by expanding the current concept of a writing center beyond its common tutorial mission to include the research component central to creating and influencing writing pedagogy at all levels of instruction and across disciplines.

### **Proposed Administrative Structure**

The Writing Center would be administered through the University Writing Program and would report to the Faculty Senate, through the University Writing Committee. The budget would be a discrete and identifiable component of the Writing Program budget. The Center would be directed by an Associate Director of the Writing Program, who would report to the Director of the Writing Program. Center initiatives would be undertaken with advice and consent of the Director of the Writing Program and, as appropriate, by the University Writing Committee.

## Proposed Annual Budget

Writing Center Director (TT)	\$65,000
Tutoring Coordinator (Lecturer; NTT)	\$36,000
Writing in the Disciplines Outreach Coordinator (NTT)	\$36,000
Research Assistants (2)	\$22,000
Office Staff	\$45,000
Tutor Stipends: 4 Teaching Assistants, plus undergrad tutors	\$32,000
Telephone, Supplies, Copying, Printing	\$20,000
Books and Software	\$10,000
Technology: acquisition, maintenance, depreciation	\$15,000
Furnishings: acquisition, maintenance, depreciation	\$5,000
Campus-wide writing assessment	\$30,000
Total, annual budget	\$316,000

Gift required to support this budget @4%: \$7,900,000

**Submitted by:** University Writing Committee

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