

Meeting of the University Writing Committee—Minutes
April 15, 2016
1:00-2:15pm

Called to order at 1:05 PM

Members in attendance: Herman Fong, Kristin Bock, Dani Kodess, Deb McCutchen, Susan Ware, Haivan Hoang, Alice Cheung, Rebecca Dingo, Kelin Loe, Travis Grandy (Minutes), Judy Goodenough, Dina Navon, Molly Lehman

- I. Review of the Minutes from April 16, 2016
- II. JYWP QQ Reviews
 - a. [#2782 PHIL 400 - Logic and Language](#)
 - i. Discussion: College writing should be added as a pre-req. Reviewers asked about clarification for writing assignments, including the amount of assigned writing. This is a new course that the instructor hasn't taught before.
 - ii. Decision: **Approved**. Judy abstaining.
 - b. [#3060 CLASSICS 381 - JYW - The Field of Classics](#)
 - i. Discussion: Reviewers felt the course was well designed and noted possible ways of expanding career development. The syllabus was very easy to read.
 - ii. Decision: **Approved**.
 - c. [#3080 ART 370 - Junior Year Writing Program](#)
 - i. Discussion: Reviewers liked how there were a variety of assignments that cater to Art students. There's a lot of writing and revision.
 - ii. Decision: **Approved**.
- III. JYW Program Review:
 - a. The UWC will be conducting a review of the JYW Program as a whole during AY 2016-2017.
See the past program review here:
<https://www.umass.edu/senate/sites/default/files/University-Writing-Committee-Junior-Year-Writing-Program-Review-2007-2008.pdf>
 - b. Executive Summary
 - c. Planning Discussion
 - d. The committee discussed the data already collected from the QQ review and then what additional questions the committee would like to ask in the program review. Travis summarized some of the data already collected on sections offered, section enrollment, and course structure. The committee discussed the program review as an opportunity for outreach. Additional possible topics included:
 - Learning outcomes
 - Portfolios of student writing for breadth of writing and assessment
 - Opportunities to publish research
 - How JYW fits in with how the department covers information literacy and research methods
 - Possible repetition between JYW and IE regarding certain assignments
 - What's the relationship between JYW and other courses in the major?
 - What's the relationship between JYW and gen ed courses?
 - What do you want your students to know and be able to do by taking the course?

- Looking at core course goals across sections (such as revision)
- Where instructors get support and information about JYW (UWC, Department)?
- Conduct a focus group of students in the spring
- How many departments we'd like to visit

Thank you for your hard work this year!

The Next UWC Meeting is September 16, 2016. Location TBA.

Junior Year Writing Program Review (07-08)

I. Executive Summary

In 1982, the University of Massachusetts Amherst instituted a groundbreaking two-part writing requirement for all undergraduates, requiring that they take both a common first-year course on general writing processes and practices and a discipline-specific junior-year course on writing in their majors.¹ While the First Year Writing course was reconceived during this change and has become a national model for postsecondary writing instruction, the innovation in 1982 was the relocation and transformation of the second semester of the Freshman Rhetoric course to the Junior year and its dispersal into the different majors on campus. The idea was to give students practice in and guidance on writing throughout their college years and across their studies.

In 2007-08, the UWC conducted a major review of the JYW courses. The review focused on instruction and administration. The UWC sent in October 2007 a detailed questionnaire to faculty and representatives from every one of the 59 JYW programs; visited and interviewed key figures in a dozen selected programs in February and March 2008; elicited feedback from department representatives during a general program “summit” in April 2008; and analyzed these and other sources of information, including course syllabi and departmental websites. Programs had the opportunity to comment on an early draft of the UWC Report.

We found among faculty, representatives, chairs, and deans nearly universal support for the JYW requirement on this campus. Most instructors see value in the teaching of disciplinary writing to upper-division undergraduates; they think that the JYW requirement is needed; and they believe that, in general, students’ writing improves as a result of the course. We were pleased to find high levels of commitment, enthusiasm, and innovation regarding the course—all the more remarkable given the challenges of attending to student writing in advanced undergraduate courses in the majors at a large public research university such as UMass Amherst.

We also found evidence that the JYWP faces challenges. Again and again, we saw the results of flat or declining resources for JYW: increasing class sizes; attenuated involvement by tenure system faculty; shrinking resources for training and faculty development; and isolation of instructors from the UWP, the UWC, and other JYW instructors. Twenty-six years after its inception, the excitement and purpose of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is in danger of dissipating. In contrast to earlier years, the JYW community on this campus has significantly weakened. Despite individual and programmatic initiated consultation with the JYWP Director and the UWP Director, individual instructors are operating in a vacuum and their enthusiasm, talent, and commitment are not being matched by the resources, communication, and support necessary for the Program to flourish.

In short, it seemed that UMass Amherst has many JYW courses but no real JYW Program. The lack of integration of courses into a comprehensive whole may in part be the inevitable result of a program designed explicitly to be de-centralized, with instruction in advanced writing dispersed across the majors. But decentralization need not mean isolation; and dispersal need not mean disconnection from

¹ See Sen. Doc. No. 82-057, “Special Report of the Academic Matters Council concerning a UWP,” (http://www.umass.edu/senate/fs_docs/SEN_DOC_NO_82-057_WRITING_PROG.pdf).

a university-wide commitment to developing student writing. Writing courses deeply embedded in their own departments and disciplines can benefit from increasing central resources, cross-campus sharing and community-building, establishing collective advocacy, and implementing other common initiatives.

Our single biggest recommendation, then, is that the University substantially and publicly re-commit itself to JYW by: 1) significantly increasing the JYW allotment to departments to keep class sizes down and instructional quality high; and 2) charging (and providing resources for) the UWP to better support JYW through enhanced faculty training and development and better cross-campus communication about JYW. Other suggestions, detailed in the Recommendations, include:

- Addressing ESL concerns for the JYWP.
- Addressing the connection between Freshman Writing and JYW.
- Increased communication between the UWC and departments regarding procedures and the purpose of JYW.
- Increased communication between the JYWP and departments via the creation of a newsletter, the development of an interactive website, and the promotion of other resources.
- Increased celebration of student writing, of the work of JYW directors and instructors, and of the JYWP as a nationally-admired program.

The JYWP has a long and proud history here. We need to revitalize the spirit that animated it from the beginning and that made it a national leader in WAC, while encouraging the program to evolve and grow, and to lead undergraduate writing at UMass Amherst into the 21st century, as our students, our disciplines and professions change and our University, and society itself changes.