The WAC-ky Times
The Official Newsletter of Auburn University at Montgomery’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program

The 2009-2010 Academic Year in Review

Although the WAC Program has only been up and running for a single year, the short span of time didn’t deter the members of the WAC and Executive Writing Committees from accomplishing many things toward the betterment of writing skills among the AUM undergraduate community.

The following is a list of highlights from the past year:

- 24 WAC Course proposals were submitted to the WAC Committee for consideration, with 22 approved; 17 of these content-area writing-intensive courses have already received approval from by Curriculum Committee, with the remainder coming up for review in July.
- Eleven faculty members engaged in the first four sessions of the Writing-Intensive Faculty Development Institute (WFDI) in April 2010.
- The WAC Website (www.aum.edu/writing) was revised and expanded.
- The WAC Committee, with representation from every School and the Library, met seven times.
- AUM Writes!, an event that celebrates the National Day on Writing annually on October 20th, was planned and implemented in Goodwyn Hall.
- The first issue of The WAC-ky Times was shared with the AUM community.
- The WAC Online Assessment Rubric was created, and individual student ratings were submitted by all ENGL 1010 and 1020 instructors.
- The CAAP Writing Skills module, a standardized test published by ACT, was given to students in ENGL 1020; individual score reports were made available in May 2010.

With such an active year behind them, WAC administrators and committee members look forward to even greater things in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.

The AUM Writing Portal: One Stop Shopping

In Summer 2009, Dr. Elizabeth Woodworth, the Director of Composition, had an idea.

As Dr. Woodworth started revising the ENGL 1010 and 1020 classes and articulating the connection of these courses to later writing-intensive courses in the WAC Program, she created the idea of a single online portal for faculty and students that would provide easy access to a variety of writing resources.

The AUM Writing Portal is divided into three primary areas: (a) the first area connects users to information regarding the Learning Center; (b) the second area provides information on MyCompLab, an online medium for producing, sharing and reviewing writing, and the AUM Writing for Success handbook; and (c) the third section links users to the WAC Program, with discipline-specific links to articles and writing samples.

The AUM Writing Across the Curricu-lum (WAC) program seeks to improve the quality of student writing campus-wide by incorporating writing-intensive instruction into all undergraduate students’ required programs of study.

The WAC program provides focused instruction to improve students’ writing skills throughout their academic careers, culminating in writing proficiency specific to their selected future careers.
Focus and Organization

WFDI: Faculty Perspectives on Preliminary Sessions

The first four sessions of Writing-Intensive Faculty Development Institutes (WFDI), which occur prior to the semester of actual writing-intensive instruction, kicked off this past April. Eleven faculty members, representing Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Education, completed the preliminary training.

Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom by John C. Bean (Jossey-Bass, 2001) served as the primary text for the initial sessions. Assigned readings from the text were used to engage participants in lively discussions.

According to Bob Evans of the English Department, “I appreciated the open nature of the discussion in this course. I felt free to ask any question and raise any issue; the atmosphere was at once light-hearted but also serious and productive. The textbook was full of excellent specific examples and suggestions; it’s a book I’ll be able to use for many years to come.”

Each session focuses on a particular theme of writing-intensive instruction or element of the WAC Program. The first session provides an overview of the program specifics at AUM; the second session challenges participants to think about their instructional approaches to creating writing assignments; the third session provides guidance on assessment; and the final session considers support, embedded within the program and on campus, that can be provided to struggling AUM writers.

Bridgette Harper of the Psychology Department commented on some of the diverse topics she learned in WFDI, ranging from organizing peer review to methods for managing grammar errors to the use of feedback: “One thing I especially loved about this course is the importance of feedback (good and clear feedback).” This led to discussions of the importance of breaking large assignments into smaller ones and giving good feedback along the way. This course really gave us the tools to help our students (and actually ourselves) be better writers.”

Like Bridgette, Kellie Shumack of the Foundations and Secondary Education Department added the following reflections after WFDI: “The training has impacted my writing of class assignments in general...not just those that have to do with writing.”

The Changing Face of WFDI: Job-Embedded Development

The next six sessions, or the second part of WFDI, will begin this fall for those instructors who are engaging in their first semester of writing-intensive instruction. These sessions will look and feel different from the first part of the training, as most of the classes are online or in the classroom of other instructors.

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Not only does Jenny Good, WAC Director, intend to support faculty in their understanding and approaches to writing instruction, she also hopes to model the use of technology, namely Blackboard and MyCompLab, as mediums for instruction.

As instructors modify courses for online instruction, they will be able to borrow methods from WFDI and incorporate them into their own instructional approaches in writing-intensive online classrooms.

The table to the right provides an outline for the second part of WFDI in Fall 2010.

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Launching your first WI Course: Online Discussion</td>
<td>Blackboard Site</td>
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<td>Peer Observation I</td>
<td>Classroom of a Colleague</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm: Touching Base</td>
<td>Traditional Session in Clement Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Observation II (Swap Instructor)</td>
<td>Classroom of Colleague</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussion</td>
<td>Blackboard Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Session: Sharing Successes</td>
<td>Traditional Session in Clement Hall</td>
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During the 2009-2010 year, ENGL 1010 and 1020 instructors had the opportunity to interact with new curricula, new methodologies, and a new assessment rubric.

Using a common university-wide rubric available on the WAC website (www.aum.edu/writing), ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020 instructors evaluated their students as writers, based upon ratings on multiple individual writing samples collected throughout the spring semester.

The online rubric rating system, designed by Kevin Osborne, formerly of OIE, will be used each semester. This will provide a method to track longitudinal writing growth of AUM students through all five courses in the WAC Program.

Using a scale of 1 (Inadequate) to 5 (Excellent), the averages for in both ENGL 1010 and 1020 scores in Spring 2010 indicated that student writing on all five indicators fell in an Acceptable to Good range (3 or above).

The chart shows the comparison of scores for students in both classes and suggests that 1020 students have developed stronger writing skills than their 1010 counterparts, as would be expected.

This finding helps to validate the WAC Assessment rubric.

Contact Jenny Good (jgood@aum.edu) in OIE if you are interested in more details regarding the WAC online assessment system or the assessment reports generated in Spring 2010.

In Spring 2010, AUM adopted the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), published by ACT, to measure academic achievement and growth of students enrolled at AUM.

Thanks to the cooperation of instructors who sacrificed an hour and a half of instructional time, 351 AUM Students completed the CAAP Writing Skills module in Spring 2010 through their ENGL 1020 courses.

The CAAP Writing Skills module is a 72-item objective multiple-choice test that measures conventions of standard written English in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style.

Using a score range of 40 to 80, the average score of AUM students ($M=63.2$) was highly parallel to the national average score ($M=64.1$) collected among sophomores across the country over the past three years.

The performance of the AUM students on this first round of CAAP testing should be commended. Of the 351 AUM students who completed the Writing Skills module, 155 (44%) received Certificates of Achievement from ACT, indicating that they scored above the national mean.

24% of the AUM students who completed the test performed in the top quartile, based on performance of the national percentile group at the 25th percentile level.

Individual score reports were made available to all students who completed the test. ACT also sent special certificates for those students who performed above the national mean.

AUM administrators are eager to receive the ACT-prepared Linkage Report. This report will link the performance of our students who completed the ACT writing skills test with their performance on CAAP writing skills, in an effort to measure the value added of an AUM education on this particular learning outcome.

As of Spring 2012, the WAC Program will also assess students using the CAAP Writing Essay module, a performance-based assessment that is a direct measurement of writing skills.

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As the WAC program has developed during the 2009-2010 year, all information chronicling its growth has been placed on AUMnet for faculty and staff to read and review.

Minutes of the Executive Writing Committee and the WAC Committee have been placed on AUMnet as well as a number of reports, plans, and information in a section entitled WAC Documents.

You’ve got questions? We’ve got answers!

Are you interested in learning about the entire assessment plan over the next five years for the WAC Program? You can gain easy access to this plan with a couple of clicks on AUMnet.

Do you want to see a copy of the by-laws that govern the WAC Committee? You can find the by-laws on the link immediately below the Assessment Plan on AUMnet.

In order to access these documents, just do the following: (a) Log in to AUMnet; (b) Click on the Academic Affairs tab that runs along the top of the page; and (c) Follow to the Writing Across the Curriculum link at the bottom of the left-hand column.

A world of WAC-ky information is waiting for you to read, review, and respond. Contact Jenny Good (jgood@aum.edu) if you have questions about the WAC Program.

Meet the WAC Committee:
- Venessa Funches, Business
- Lynne Mills, Education
- Lee Farrow, Liberal Arts
- Ramona Lazenby, Nursing
- Sue Thomson, Sciences
- Jason Kneip, Library

Contact the WAC Director:
Dr. Jennifer M. Good
Phone: 334-244-3481
Fax: 334-244-3436
E-mail: jgood@aum.edu

We’re on the Web!
www.aum.edu/writing

Meet the Executive Writing Committee:
- Susan Barganier, Associate Director of the Learning Center
- Jenny Good, Director of WAC
- Elizabeth Woodworth, Director of Composition

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