Lessons Learned in WFDI: From Theory to Practice

Faculty members informally have shared some of the techniques they have learned in WFDI and experimented with in practice this semester. A few select practices used by WFDI-trained faculty are as follows:

Informal In-Class Writing
Tim Henderson, History

I used to think that the only way to teach history was through lectures, and I found the lectures of my college days to be endlessly fascinating. But it seems many AUM students don’t share my enthusiasm for the format. Many scowl at me as though hoping I will spontaneously combust. So I have been making an effort to interrupt my lecturing with a variety of in-class writing assignments. I might ask students to read a document from their textbook, then summarize and react to it.

These assignments have relieved some of the tension and, I think, made students feel more engaged in the learning process.

Peer Review
Lee Farrow, History

I have never liked the idea of peer review in the classroom and have been very reluctant to try it, but after completing the first four sessions of my WAC training and discussing peer review with other WAC trainees, I decided to try it in my Writing Intensive Historical Methods class this fall. I am pleased to report that the students seemed to like it and take it seriously, and the first drafts of their research papers were largely free from the kinds of small, lower level errors that I am used to seeing at this point in the process. I think I may be converted.

Five Minute Papers
Matt Jordan, Philosophy

After completing the first part of WFDI training, I decided to give “five minute papers” a shot in my Applied Ethics course. They’ve turned out to be a terrific tool. I give students a prompt—a particular moral problem, perhaps, or a question about one of the assigned readings—and have them write out their thoughts. This usually accomplishes four distinct goals: (i) it keeps students from mentally disengaging, as sometimes happens with a traditional lecture; (ii) it forces students to think critically about a topic; (iii) it sparks quality discussion; and (iv) it gives me an opportunity to address misunderstandings of course content and clarify relevant issues.

Spring Sessions of WFDI

In 2010, 38 faculty members completed the first four sessions of Writing-Intensive Faculty Development Institute (WFDI). These faculty members represent all five schools and 17 different departments in the university.

The Spring sessions of WFDI have been planned for the following dates and times:

Session I: Wed, January 26 (9 AM to 12 PM) or Thurs, January 27 (1 to 4 PM)

Session II: Wed, February 2 (9 AM to 12 PM) or Thurs, February 3 (1 to 4 PM)

Session III: Wed, February 9 (9 AM to 12 PM) or Thurs, February 10 (1 to 4 PM)

Session IV: Wed, February 16 (9 AM to 12 PM) or Thurs, February 17 (1 to 4 PM)

Are you ready to join numerous other faculty in the WAC movement that is sweeping the campus? You don’t have to be slated to teach a writing-intensive course. You simply need to have the interest in the WAC program and a willingness to learn.

Participants who complete all four sessions receive a $400 stipend that is entered into their departmental accounts.

Send an email to Jenny Good (jgood@aum.edu) to sign up for the day and time of your choice during the spring WFDI sessions.
A new aspect of the WAC Program is currently under development, and the help of all WFDI-trained faculty is needed to make it a success.

In the fall of 2011, ten Writing in the Discipline (WID) interns—from all Schools—will be assigned to WI content-area classes to support the learning and writing growth of the enrolled students.

**WID Program Description**

The model for the WID Intern program follows some, though not all, of the elements of Supplemental Instruction. WID interns are undergraduate students who have successfully completed a WI content-area course and have been nominated by a faculty member who has taught them in the course. Nominations are based on students’ combined understanding of content knowledge and writing skills. Interns are expected to spend time in the classroom with their peers, supporting work as assigned by the instructor, lead study “writing” sessions, and provide individual tutoring sessions outside of the classroom.

Many universities engage in supplemental instruction methods as a means to promote success in targeted high-risk classes; this, in turn, supports retention. In the case of the WID Internship, the targeted courses are writing-intensive content-area courses rather than traditionally “high-risk” courses. The WID Intern program is unique in that it supports both the undergraduate peer tutors in their own learning while simultaneously supporting the writing-intensive instructor in providing assistance to struggling writers.

**WID Intern Qualifications**

WID Interns must be nominated by faculty who have completed the first four sessions of WFDI. Interns should be of junior standing or above during the year of the WID internship. In other words, second-semester sophomores can be nominated in Spring 2011 for the fall WID Intern program. WID interns must have an overall GPA and GPA within their major of at least 3.0, although 3.5 is recommended. Finally, WID interns should have completed a WI course to give them a clear understanding of expectations of writing in a given field or area.

Because the program is young in its development, a nomination from a WFDI-trained faculty member who feels confident of a student’s writing skills would suffice for the first pilot year of the program.

**Call for Nominations**

All WFDI-trained instructors will be contacted in March of 2011, requesting nominations for the WID Intern program by April 15.

Nominees will be requested to apply for the program, and those selected will have to complete WID Intern training.

**AUM Writes! A Review of October 20, 2010**

Entertaining. Inspiring. Invigorating.

These words described the air of excitement felt at the second annual AUM Writes! presented by Dr. Elizabeth Woodworth, Director of Composition, and other members of the composition faculty on October 20, 2010. The day is presented annually to celebrate the National Day on Writing.

Inside Goodwyn 109, AUM Writes! featured informative talks by renowned author Daniel Black and outstanding performances by rising vocalist, pianist, and song-writer Tim Halperin. AUM administrators also shared writing experiences and advice with students.

Other notable performances included a parody of Star Wars, performed by the tutors of the Learning Center, under the direction of Susan Barganier, and a Read It skit, performed by composition students to the tune of Michael Jackson’s Beat It.

In the lobby of Goodwyn Hall, faculty members from all five schools and the library displayed student writing and discussed writing in the disciplines with the hundreds of AUM students who gathered for the event. Local bookstores and publishers also shared free items with the crowds. Giveaways included a Kindle, a Flip Camera, buttons, and t-shirts featuring SuperComposition Person and Ninja Editor.

Additional thanks go to the Clinical Composition Instructors at AUM who made the day a success: Susanna Coleman, Amie Seidman, and Amy Locklear.
Spring 2011: And the WI Courses Keep Coming

Thirty-six content area classes—from 16 departments and all five academic schools—have been approved as writing-intensive courses.

In the spring of 2011, 21 of these WI courses, some content-area and some advanced composition and writing courses, have been designated in Banner. Spring 2011 WI courses are listed in the table to the right.

Five courses, including ENGL 1010 and 1020, which can be taken at any university, are required of AUM undergraduates prior to graduation. Three of the courses must be taken at AUM and must carry the WI designation.

Students and advisors can recognize these courses by looking for the WI in the section field and course title during registration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Dpt Code</th>
<th>Course No.</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th># WI Sect</th>
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<td>Introduction to Sociology</td>
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WAC and Research: What We Have Learned About Program Development

The AUM WAC Program is spreading the word about evaluation, program development, and assessment strategies of university writing programs.

In the past two years, AUM faculty and staff have presented the following papers at regional conferences of the Mid-South Educational Researcher Association:

- Launching Writing Across the Curriculum program evaluation through rubric development in composition courses. (Woodworth, E., Birchfield, K., Barganier, S., & Good, J., November 2009; Baton Rouge, LA).

- Using survey data to inform Writing Across the Curriculum program development. (Birchfield, K., Woodworth, E., Good, J., & Barksdale, J., November 2009; Baton Rouge, LA).

- An online rubric: Adding flexibility, feasibility, and accessibility to writing assessment. (Good, J. & Osborne, K., November 2010, Mobile, AL).

- Full manuscripts, including literature reviews and statistical results, of papers presented at the conferences are available for review at the WAC website.

Members of the OIE Staff will be presenting a full overview of the WAC writing assessment system at the national conference of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans in April of 2011.

AUM faculty and staff are doing great things in writing instruction and assessment, and other professionals are taking notice!
Q: How many WAC courses do undergraduate students need to take to graduate from AUM?

A: Students must take five courses, including ENGL 1010 and 1020. Three of the courses must be taken at AUM and carry the WI designation on the student transcript.

Q: How many WFDI sessions must I attend in order to become a writing-intensive instructor?

A: WI instructors must attend four sessions prior to writing-intensive instruction and six sessions during the first semester of writing-intensive instruction for a total of ten sessions.

Q: How many papers must be included in course instruction and evaluation in order to be considered as a writing-intensive course?

A: WI courses include four papers, and one of the papers must instruct students through the writing process.

Q: How often is WFDI offered?

A: WFDI is offered every semester. The first four sessions are offered early in the semester. The remaining six sessions are offered, primarily online, throughout the semester.

Q: How do I propose a course for WI instruction?

A: Go to the WAC website and find the link to the WAC Course Proposal Form on the right side of the page. Complete the form and send it to Jenny Good (jgood@aum.edu), along with a current syllabus from the course.

The complete WAC Policies and Procedure Manual is available for review on AUMnet.