Program Advising and WAC Student Requirements

The current AUM freshman class is the first class expected to participate fully in the Writing Across the Curriculum Program.

Students in this freshman class, and students who transfer to AUM to be a part of this cohort, will be required to meet the WAC program requirements prior to graduation. Specifically, all students must take a series of five WAC-approved and designated courses in order to qualify for graduation in 2013 or beyond.

The first two required courses are the composition series, English 1010 and 1020. These classes can be taken at AUM or credit can be transferred from another institution.

For the third course, students can select from a designated composition or rhetoric course, required of many of the academic programs, or a course from the Core Curriculum.

The final two courses in the program must be program-required courses in the student’s specific discipline that are labeled as writing intensive.

When a course has been approved for writing-intensive instruction, it will carry a special designation and be listed on the WAC website to assist students and advisors in planning.

Students from the cohort who graduate in Spring 2013 or later will have their transcripts checked to ensure that they have met the minimum 5-course WAC requirements during their AUM academic careers.

The WAC program started in Fall 2009 with major revisions of English 1010 and 1020 by Dr. Elizabeth Woodworth, Director of Composition, and a Composition committee of faculty, staff, and administrators. After this collaborative revision, composition instructors engaged in training in the summer of 2009.

The WAC program will continue to unfold incrementally to meet the demands and needs of students as they progress through their programs.

Recognizing WAC Classes During Registration

“I know that ENGL 1010 and 1020 are the first two required courses of the WAC Program, but how will I know when I register for classes if the remaining three courses are WAC-approved as writing-intensive instruction?”

And the answer is . . .

The Registrar and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness teamed up to find a common labeling system for writing-intensive courses at AUM.

WAC-approved writing-intensive courses will be labeled in the section field of Banner as WI1, WI2, WI3, and so on.

Students can look for any sections that have WI labels and know confidently that they are registering for one of the three remaining writing-intensive graduation requirements.

In addition, WAC-approved courses will have a WI label before the course title. Students and advisors can do quick and easy checks to locate the three content-area WAC requirements by finding the WI label in front of course titles on student transcripts.
The WAC Committee celebrated writing and kicked off the WAC Program on October 20, 2009, the National Day on Writing.

Each School displayed written products and writing assignments typical of its discipline in booths dispersed throughout the lobby of Goodwyn Hall. Throughout the day, students and faculty were entertained with skits, and many participated in writing contests in 109 Goodwyn Hall.

Skits included performances by the staff of the Learning Center, the Executive Writing Committee, and members of Student Housing. Poetica sponsored an open mic session.

Eight students participated in an hour-long write-a-thon that generated over $300 dollars in donations for the Central Alabama Laubach Literacy Council. In response to the donation, the Executive Director of the Center told participants that the “gift will most certainly support the writing skills of adults in our region.”

The day ended with the Worst Opening Sentence contest, in which participants deliberately drafted horrible opening lines for novels and essays. A panel of judges provided commentary on each sentence, and the award winner was selected based upon the level of audience applause.

Marianne Simms, the 2003 winner of the international contest who hails from Wetumpka, Alabama, opened this event with advice for the contestants.

Assessing Progress: Measuring Writing Skills in ENGL 1020

“In the last three years, writing instructors and program administrators have heard more than ever before about the need for assessment” (Council of Writing Program Administrators).

For this reason WAC Administrators have devised a systematic and multi-layered program evaluation plan to act as a check and balance during WAC Program development.

The first step of the WAC Program evaluation will occur in April 2010. All students in English 1020 will be given a 72-item standardized test published by ACT, known as CAAP. The test will take approximately 40 minutes to complete.

The CAAP Writing Skills test will measure students’ understanding of punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, organization, and style. The results from the test can be compared to students’ incoming ACT English scores in order to measure progress in these important areas of writing growth. The test will be given to students in English 1020 in April of all even years to provide a longitudinal overview of WAC program development.

This test is only one component of the multilayered WAC Program evaluation. Students completing content-area writing-intensive courses in spring of even years will take the CAAP Writing Essay Test, in which students complete two independent essays in response to situational prompts.

Other components of the WAC program evaluation include the development of an internal online rating system. Based upon five commonly recognized areas of writing strengths that have been captured in a rubric, instructors will evaluate students’ writing abilities at the end of each semester of writing-intensive instruction.

The rubric allows flexibility in interpreting and defining four of the five components being evaluated to allow a discipline-specific approach to writing under a common umbrella of skills.

The rubric can be viewed by clicking the link on the right-hand side of the following webpage: www.aum.edu/writing.
The WAC Course Approval Process

Although many courses embed writing into instruction, not all of them will be designated as WAC writing-intensive courses in the content area. It takes a combination of faculty development and course review to earn the writing-intensive label.

Administrators in Schools and departments select courses that seem most logical for writing-intensive instruction in their program. Simultaneously, the administrators work with faculty to identify those individuals who would be interested in teaching writing-intensive content-area courses.

After selecting courses within programs, faculty and administrators submit a WAC Course Proposal Form to the WAC Director. This form can be located on the WAC website: www.aum.edu/writing.

The WAC Director then copies the proposal form and attached syllabus for review at a monthly WAC Committee meeting. The WAC Committee is comprised of at least one representative from each School and the Library.

Once the WAC Committee has approved the course from writing-intensive instruction, the WAC Director submits the course to the University’s Curriculum Committee for further review.

After the course proposal has progressed through these two unique committees, it is then determined if it should be labeled as writing intensive. Once approved, the WAC Director contacts department heads and targeted faculty to invite members to join a faculty development cohort.

After course proposal review and faculty development in Spring and Summer 2010 has occurred, Fall 2010 will mark the first semester of discipline-specific writing-intensive offerings for undergraduate students.

The WAC Course Watch List

The WAC Committee has reviewed a number of courses, and these courses will move forward to the Curriculum Committee for consideration as the first writing-intensive content offerings of Fall 2010.

Although the list is not fully inclusive, some of the courses that have been approved by the WAC Committee are as follows:

- VISU 1010: Art Appreciation
- HIST 1020: World History Since 1648
- HIST 3840: Historical Methods
- PSYC 2103: Research Design
- PSYC 4952: Writing in Psychology
- THEA 4310: Theatre History I
- THEA 4320: Theatre History II
- MATH 4950: Senior Seminar in Math
- ENGL 2540: Survey of English Literature II
- ENGL 3004: Professional Writing for Educators
- ENGL 3005: Professional Writing for Nurses
- ENGL 3050: Advanced Expository Writing
- ENGL 3050: Advanced Expository Writing
- ENGL 3060: Business and Professional Writing
- ENGL 4060: Advanced Expository Writing
- BIOL 4033: General Virology
- FNDS 2010: Social Foundations in Education
- It is the hope of the WAC Committee to have at least one course per School ready for writing-intensive instruction in Fall 2010.

Check the WAC website (www.aum.edu/writing) this spring and summer to watch the list grow.
Many members of the faculty—from across all disciplines—are expert writers. Many are also expert instructors of writing. Instructors on the AUM campus have been incorporating writing into their course instruction for decades.

The Writing-Intensive Faculty Development Institute (WFDI), with the first training dates anticipated in March and April 2010, provides an opportunity for these talented faculty to share their expertise in writing and writing instruction with colleagues from across all disciplines while learning about the policies and logistics of the WAC program.

The WFDI is divided into three distinct sections: (a) four sessions prior to the initial semester of writing-intensive instruction; (b) five sessions during the initial semester of writing-intensive course instruction; and (c) one final debriefing session at the end of the first semester of instruction.

Topics of the initial sessions of the WFDI include the following: An Overview of the WAC Program; Tips for Managing Writing Assessment; Sharing of Instructional Strategies that Work; and Support for Struggling Writers.

The five faculty development sessions embedded within the first semester of writing-intensive instruction include peer observation sessions and online sharing of thoughts regarding classroom dilemmas encountered in a writing-intensive course.

The final debriefing session allows faculty to share success stories and validate the writing rubric used in the WAC program evaluation.

Faculty Training Begins! A Time to Share and Grow

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

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

We’re on the Web!
www.aum.edu/writing

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