

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

WAC

Writing Across the Curriculum

In This Issue

- National Day on Writing1
- WAC Faculty Column2
- New Department Writing Plans Completed.....2
- Faculty Teaching Writing Award.....2
- Assessment Through DWPs.....3
- Teaching Writing with the NYT4
- Publishing Opportunities...4



IUP Celebrates the National Day on Writing

Teach. Write. *Teach Writing.*

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program provides support for faculty university wide in implementing writing into their courses.

The program aims to create and sustain a community of writers at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

If you have questions about WAC, please contact Bryna Siegel Finer at brynasf@iup.edu.

WAC Director, Bryna Siegel Finer
Newsletter Editor, Melissa Lutz

IUP students, faculty, and staff celebrated the 2019 NCTE National Day on Writing by creating a Writing Tips Tree. A collaboration between the Writing Across the Curriculum program, Kathleen Jones White Writing Center, the Liberal Studies English program, and NCTE English, the tree was posted Eicher Hall outside of the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center.

Between October 14th and October 20th, members of the IUP community contributed leaves to the tree on which they wrote their best writing tips. These tips were also posted to social media with the hashtags #WhyIWrite and #IUPWrites.

A reception was held to view the writing Tips Tree on October 21st, which included refreshments and prizes, such as Amazon gift cards, t-shirts, and mugs, for best tips contributed to the tree.

Some of the tips added to the tree were:

- “Always plan ahead before you start writing your paper.” – Jinze Li, Biology
- “Writing is a great way to express who you are!” – Katelynn Cramer, Academic Affairs
- “Feedback will help your writing to get where you want it to be. Ask for help!” – Miranda Carr, Psychology
- “Writing is a skill. It’s okay to need practice!” – Renee Kusnir, English

Established in 2009 by the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Day on Writing celebrates composition in all forms—from stories and poems to text messages, videos, and audio recordings—and demonstrates how writing is a vital part of our lives. Thousands of writers from across the country recognize the National Day on Writing with local events. This year marks the seventh celebration at IUP. ■



Supporting Professional Healthcare Communicators with a Nursing WAC Plan

Drs. Johanna Boothby and Patricia Hockensmith

Is Your Department Teaching WAC?

Congratulations to the departments of Religious Studies, Nursing, Professional Studies in Education, and Political Science, who completed their Department Writing Plans in Fall 2019! The cornerstone of the WAC program at IUP is the Department Writing Plan (DWP). To develop a plan, the WAC Director meets regularly with one or two appointed liaisons from the department, and they exchange DWP drafts throughout the academic year and summer. Currently, 14 departments (up from 4 last year at this time) from five colleges (up from four last year at this time) have completed their writing plans; several more are actively working toward completing their writing plans by the end of fall 2020.

Contact brynasf@iup.edu to learn how your department can get started!

Department	Status as of Spring 2020	College
Anthropology	Complete	CHSS
Biology	Complete	CNSM
Criminology & Criminal Justice	Drafting	CHHS
English	Complete	CHSS
Food and Nutrition	Complete	CHHS
Foreign Languages	Complete	CHSS
History	Complete	CHSS
Hospitality Management	Complete	CHHS
Journalism & Public Relations	Complete	CHSS
Nuclear Medicine	Drafting	CHHS
Nursing	Complete	CHHS
Philosophy	Complete	CHSS
Political Science	Complete	CHSS
Professional Studies in Education	Complete	COEC
Psychology	Finalizing	CNSM
Religious Studies	Complete	CHSS
Respiratory Care	Drafting	CHHS
Safety Sciences	Finalizing	CHHS
Sociology	Complete	CHSS

Faculty Teaching of Writing Award

Each year, the WAC Program offers a \$500 award through the Center for Teaching Excellence as part of their annual faculty recognition awards. To be considered for the WAC award, an instructor must demonstrate the teaching of writing in combination with the teaching of course content through writing as a mode of learning. This award is intended to recognize the thoughtful use and balance of writing-to-learn activities, writing-to-communicate assignments, and a commitment to improving students' communication skills. Application materials are distributed by CTE – check your email for more information.

Assessment Through Department Writing Plans

As IUP moves toward a full WAC model of course study in which the majority of courses in a students' major teach and reinforce writing skills, the WAC program has focused on working with departments to create Department Writing Plans (DWP). A DWP is a living document that continually adapts as the department uses the assessment results they gather to determine the effects of the DWP curriculum. As departments create DWPs, they develop embedded assessment of their program. This assessment is done biannually for each department with a DWP.

The WAC director, Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer, has worked with 14 departments to complete DWPs as of the end of fall 2019. Of these departments, eight had data which could be aggregated and used to draw conclusions about seniors' writing abilities at IUP. A universal rubric was developed to assess writing across departments using the same criteria.

The table below shows aggregate data for the eight department writing plans, representing up to 202 seniors graduating between fall 2017 and spring 2019 for each of the criteria outlined in the universal rubric.

Criteria	Description	Exceeding or Meeting Expectations	Emerging or Below Expectations
1. Holistic Rating	General success of the piece of writing	73.98	25.82
2. Thesis Statement	Statement of the purpose for writing, and an argument to defend/hypothesis to test	77.42	22.38
3. Analysis, Synthesis, and Formal Structure	Understanding of ideas, thematic development, and relating of ideas to each other; organization of the text itself	70.27	29.93
4. Supporting Evidence and Detail	Incorporation of concrete examples from experience or study	67.60	32.60
5. Awareness of Audience and Purpose	Understanding of the target reader's identity and purpose for reading; focus on the purpose outlined in the thesis	76.34	23.86
6. Explanation and Application of Concepts	Contextualization of arguments to the wider academic discipline through use of concepts learned in class or through research	71.80	28.6
7. Grammar and Mechanics	Command of grammar rules and punctuation	87.44	12.73
8. Citations, Use of Sources, and Formatting	Technically correct attribution of others' words and ideas; consistency in following a given style guide	67.05	33.11

An analysis of the data gathered through the DWPs and the universal rubric found that IUP students are strongest in (7) *Grammar and Mechanics* and (2) *Thesis statements*, and that they are weakest in (4) *Supporting Evidence and Detail*, and (8) *Citations, Use of Sources, and Formatting*. This data will be used to prepare faculty development sessions for instructors as well as in the Jones White Writing Center to help support students across the university. ■

When the Department of Nursing first decided to participate in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), our faculty were hesitant or reluctant to implement this change. We wondered, "how could we possibly add another thing to our already intense curriculum?"

As part of the Nursing Department curriculum committee, the two of us decided to take the lead and meet with the WAC Director, Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer, to discuss what was needed to get this process underway. We met with Bryna on numerous occasions, looking at this process one step at time. We continually emphasized the importance of preparing our students to pass the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX), and we did not want WAC to take away from this test preparation. Due to limited time, an abundance of information, and large lecture classes, there is little time for writing in our courses; we focus more on providing the information to prepare for the exam and ultimately become a registered nurse. In addition to preparing for the NCLEX exam, verbal and written communication is strongly emphasized throughout the program.

The Nursing Department faculty provided information needed from all written/oral presentation assignments required in NURS major courses and electives. The inventory of existing assignments helped to create a writing outcomes curriculum map. As we began to review our curriculum and see where writing could be implemented, we found that we already have students write and communicate in various ways. A few examples include completing patient assessments, care plans, and writing narrative notes. Additionally, nursing students write research papers using APA format and critique literature and journal articles. The WAC process helped us consider ways to enhance the writing activities we already use in class so that they do more to support student learning.

With the implementation of the focused Writing Across the Curriculum plan, achievement of communication outcomes can be monitored and assessed for improvement. We evaluated baseline data collected in a senior clinical section of student nurses using a writing rubric. Follow-up data collection and survey questions from senior student nurses may potentially showcase a writing-enriched nursing program. In the present healthcare environment, interprofessional collaboration and communication are essential for safety and quality outcomes for all patients. With our Department Writing Plan in place through the IUP WAC program, we feel our students will be more prepared than ever as professional healthcare communicators. ■

Teaching Writing with *The New York Times*

Instructors from many different disciplines have been using *The New York Times* as a learning resource for years. The paper provides articles on many different topics that can be incorporated into the classroom. Composition instructors, in particular, have found many ways to use the resources found in the *NYT*.

In 1998 the paper established “The Learning Network” as a way to help both teach and learn by using the resources found in the *NYT*. With “The Learning Network,” student writers have had access to daily prompts, live-moderated forums, and annual writing contests. This has given these writers a place to practice their writing. For the 2019-2020 school year, the *NYT* has expanded their offerings and started publishing resources to teach students *how* to write. These offerings include a series of writing units which can be used in the classroom. While aimed toward middle and high school students, the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum makes it scalable up toward college students, as well.

Each of these units includes daily opportunities to practice writing for an authentic audience, guided practice with mentor texts, teaching ideas and webinars, and a contest that can act as a culminating project. In particular, mentor texts, defined by the National Writing Project as “a [piece] of literature that you—both teacher and student—can return to and reread for many different purposes” are useful because they provide students with models for analysis and unveil some of the mysteries of how writing happens.

During the 2019-2020 school year seven units are being offered. These units are The Personal Narrative Essay, The Review, Analysis and Connection-Making, Informational Writing, Argumentative Writing, Multi-Genre Writing, and Independent Reading and Writing.

To access the full units as they become available throughout the school year, you can visit the *NYT* at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/22/learning/free-writing-curriculum-with-nyt.html?module=inline>. ■

Faculty Research/Publishing Opportunities in WAC

Double Helix, a peer-reviewed open-access journal, publishes work addressing linkages between critical thinking and writing, in and across the disciplines, and it is especially interested in pieces that explore and report on connections between pedagogical theory and classroom practice. For more information, go to <http://qudoublehelixjournal.org/index.php/dh/index>

Prompt is a biannual, refereed online journal that publishes academic writing assignments directed at both undergraduate and graduate students from all academic disciplines. Their mission is to disseminate a mode of intellectual work that is too rarely circulated in public venues. They publish excellent and innovative writing assignments in order to create both a resource and a site of engagement for faculty who incorporate writing in their teaching. For more information, go to <http://thepromptjournal.com/index.php/prompt/index>

Interested in doing WAC research but not sure where to start? Email brynasf@iup.edu for resources and assistance. ■

Connect with IUP Writing Across the Curriculum

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