



5-Year Strategic Plan

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Assessing Written Communication at IUP

Now that the CLA+ is discontinued, the WAC program will assess students' written communication skills at both the first-year and senior level.

First-year student writing assessment

The Liberal Studies English (LSE) program has been fine-tuning its strategic plan, designed by Dr. Katrina Miller (University of Nevada-Reno) and enhanced by Dr. Mary Stewart (IUP English) for the past three years. This plan has undergone rigorous planning and piloting in every phase of its development. Based on a calculation in order to report the highest confidence level, in its first year (2016-17), 100% of faculty teaching English 101 submitted writing samples from each of their sections in both semesters (so, every section of English 101) for a true, representative sample of first-year writing (483 total samples/students). In summer 2017, a group of expert raters were trained to read the samples. Data from the ENGL 101 assessment was analyzed to measure how well our first-year students are writing and has been archived for additional analysis in the future (e.g., comparison of score trends from year-to-year).

Most importantly, the results were *actionable*. Because the assessment was locally developed and measured multiple criteria specific to the student learning outcomes of our course at IUP, the LSE program was able to streamline the information learned from the assessment directly into professional development for instructors that has been ongoing for the last two years.

Senior student writing assessment

Nineteen IUP departments or programs have or are working on Department Writing Plans (DWPs) to move to a Writing Across the Curriculum model. The embedded assessment results from those plans are to be reported on five-year review documents and used for professional development or "closing the loop" in order to improve student writing skills. An embedded assessment is a high-stakes assignment or project a professor is using in class, evaluating for a course grade, and then turning over to raters for assessment purposes.

As of April 2019, ten departments have completed writing plans, which means they have baseline assessment data for their seniors (one department has, in fact, completed a 2-year-out assessment, and one department will complete their 2-year-out assessment this spring). Ten more departments/programs from five colleges (up from three last year at this time) on campus are working toward developing writing plans.

This summer, the WAC Director will be able to calculate aggregate baseline assessment data from ten departments representing CHHS, CHSS, and CNSM. While this is not representative of the entire population of seniors, as more departments/programs adopt DWPs, the representation will only continue to grow. Thus, the university will be able to generalize overall the extent to which students are meeting writing expectations by

aggregating scores across writing plans using holistic scores (see Neely on the importance/benefits of holistic scoring¹).

LSE/WAC Combined Assessment Model to Replace CLA+

These two plans together represent a similar model currently used at George Mason University. Several years ago, writing and assessment experts at GMU described a successful plan to satisfy their accreditor’s (SCHIV) requirement for value-added assessment results by combining their first-year writing assessment efforts with their Writing in the Disciplines assessment efforts².

The plan outlined below is in the process of being developed by Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer and Dr. Mary Stewart. It includes plans to assess first-year and senior writing, as well as tracking of students placed into English 100 (Basic Writing) and at-risk students for retention and persistence.

Yearly Plan

	First-Year/Sophomore Data Collection	First-Year/Sophomore Data Analysis	Seniors/WAC Data Collection/Analysis
2018-19	n/a	n/a	Collect writing samples; report on results in writing plans from Anthropology Aggregate results from all departments in WAC annual report Last year to administer CLA+
2019-20	Collect random sample of ENGL100 writing samples in fall Collect random sample of 101 writing samples in fall and spring	Score 101 writing samples Report on 101 learning outcomes; compare with 2016-2017 data	Collect writing samples; report on results in writing plans from History, Food & Nutrition Aggregate results from departments in WAC annual report (Bryna sabbatical Spring 2020)

¹Neely, M. (2019). Helping Faculty Self-Regulate Emotional Responses in Writing Assessment: Use of an “Overall Response” Rubric Category. *Journal of Writing Assessment*. (11)1. Retrieved from <http://journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=131>.

² Zawacki, T.M., Reid, E.S., Zhou, Y., & Baker, S.E., (2009). Voices at the Table: Balancing the Needs and Wants of Program Stakeholders to Design a Value-added Writing Assessment Plan. *Across the Disciplines*. 06. Retrieved from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/assessment/zawackietal.cfm>

2020-21	<p>Collect ENGL100 random sample of writing samples in fall</p> <p>Collect 202 writing samples in fall and spring</p> <p>Collect 101 and 202 data from students who were in 2019-2020 100 dataset</p>	<p>Score 202 writing samples</p> <p>Report on 202 learning outcomes; compare with 2017-2018 data</p>	<p>Collect writing samples on report on results in department writing plans from Anthropology, English, Sociology, Foreign Languages, Philosophy, Biology, Hospitality Management</p> <p>Aggregate results from departments in WAC annual report</p>
2021-22	<p>Collect ENGL100 random sample of writing samples in fall</p> <p>Collect 101 writing samples in fall and spring</p> <p>Collect 101 and 202 data from students who were in 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 100 dataset</p>	<p>Score 101 writing samples</p> <p>Report on 101 learning outcomes; compare with 2019-2020 data</p>	<p>Collect writing samples; report on results in writing plans from History, Food & Nutrition</p> <p>Aggregate results from departments in WAC annual report</p>
2022-23	<p>Collect ENGL100 random sample of writing samples in fall</p> <p>Collect 202 writing samples in fall and spring</p> <p>Collect 101 and 202 data from students who were in 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 or 2021-2022 100 dataset</p>	<p>Score 202 writing samples</p> <p>Report on 202 students learning outcomes; compare with 2020-2021 data</p>	<p>Collect writing samples on report on results in department writing plans from Anthropology, Food & Nutrition, History, Hospitality Management</p> <p>Aggregate results from departments in WAC annual report</p>
2023-24	<p>Collect longitudinal data for Fall 2019 cohort from institutional research</p>	<p>Score ENGL100 samples collected from 2019-2024</p> <p>Report on longitudinal data, tracking 100 and at-risk students from fall 2019 cohort</p>	<p>Collect writing samples; report on results in writing plans from History, Food & Nutrition</p> <p>Aggregate results from departments in WAC annual report</p>

Renowned writing assessment specialist (and IUP C&T PhD graduate) Brian Huot says that “the best assessment is **site-based** and **locally controlled** with questions and measures **developed by those who have a stake in the process** and the results; led by writing professionals; grounded in theory; and conducted with a conscious awareness of the beliefs

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and assumptions underlying our actions” (emphasis added³). A model like this is sustainable at IUP under at least three financial conditions (see Budget/Costs below):

- Funding for LSE and WAC assessment must be secure
- Continued commitment to funding WAC Director position
- Continued commitment to funding Liberal Studies English assessment coordinator position

More importantly, this model is sustainable only under some changes to cultural conditions. The university *must develop incentives for departments to want to develop DWPs* and the assessment that is part of them. In addition to the removal of Writing Intensive course requirements for a department using the WAC model, this could involve:

- Release time for developing plans and/or doing assessment
- Simplified 5yr review process
- Reward structure for completing plans
- Other supports to be determined

The WAC Director (Siegel Finer) plans to discuss the above incentives with the Director of Liberal Studies and the Provost’s Associate and implement them as part of this five-year strategic plan.

Budget/Costs

The WAC program has experienced tremendous growth over the last several years, expanding from one department writing plan in 2016 to ten in 2019, with ten other departments/programs currently working on plans (six more are currently on hold).

Savings from the discontinuation of the CLA+ are in excess of \$10,000. It is proposed that those savings be **shifted to a cost center** for Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing Assessment under the supervision of Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer.

Item # ⁴	Item	Cost
Category 1: First-Year Writing Assessment		
1	Rater training	\$600
2	Rater scoring (two 8-hour days)	\$3800
3	Rater lunch (two 8-hour days)	\$600

³ As cited in Zawacki, T.M., Reid, E.S., Zhou, Y., & Baker, S.E., (2009). Voices at the Table: Balancing the Needs and Wants of Program Stakeholders to Design a Value-added Writing Assessment Plan. *Across the Disciplines*. 06. Retrieved from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/assessment/zawackietal.cfm>

⁴ All initiatives in this table are fully described below by item number.

	Subtotal Category One:	\$5000
Category 2: Senior Writing Assessment		
4	Stipend/travel funding for first-time department writing plan assessment raters training (\$200 each up to 6 faculty each year)	\$1200
	Subtotal Category Two:	\$1200
Category 3: Operating Budget		
5	Annual Spring Newsletter	\$150
6	Writing Culture Events (e.g., National Day on Writing celebration; LSE Writing Gallery)	\$1130
7	Marketing (copying, novelty items like pens and notepads with WAC logo, brochure printing, books for workshops)	\$1000
8	Faculty Teaching of Writing Award (facilitated by Center for Teaching Excellence)	\$500
9	Writing Fellows, 2 per year (cost for one fellow in one section of a course for one semester is \$510)	\$1020
10	Graduate Assistant – 10 hours	Cost-shift from Provost’s Associate
	Subtotal Category Three:	\$3800
TOTAL: \$10,000		

1-3 Rater Training and Scoring

Prior to 2016-17 (when we redesigned first-year student writing assessment), LSE assessment in the English Department cost ~\$1400 to read 74 convenience samples (that is, whatever samples we were able to collect). The 2016-2017 LSE assessment of ENGL 101 was ambitious in its goals to collect a representative sample of student writing that can yield results with a high enough confidence level ($p < .05$) to make inferential claims about the entire population of writers in ENGL 101.

Although the overall costs increased as the sample size increased, **the cost per student sample read *decreased* under this new model.**

Cost per student sample:

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2014-2015 \$18.91 per student sample
2016-2017 \$9.04 per student sample

We have now completed three cycles of our new assessment design (Engl 101 in 2016-17, Engl 202 in 2017-2018, and Engl 121 in 2018-2019) with a 100% collection rate for almost every semester. Total assessment costs each year include two rounds of rater training (with rubric piloting) and two scoring sessions. In December, we hold a **one-day pilot scoring session** with only a few raters to read a subsample of the student papers collected in the fall. This pilot scoring session allows us to calculate interrater reliability, better understand the variety of assignments raters will need to score, and monitor operational concerns (timing for scoring sessions, spatial arrangements for scoring, materials needed). We use information gathered from this December pilot scoring session to plan our second scoring session in May. In May, we hold a **two-day scoring session** for *all* samples collected from fall and spring (approximately 350-500 samples depending on the course and enrollment). We hire between 12 and 14 raters in order to read and rate each paper twice and in order to conduct third reads for a small percentage of samples.

Sample First-Year Assessment Expense Report

Expense	Cost
December Pilot Scoring (8 hrs x \$20/hr x 4 raters)	\$760.00
New Rater Training (\$15/hr x 3 hr x 11 raters)	\$495.00
Returning Rater Training (\$20 x 3 hr x 2 raters)	\$120.00
May Scoring Session (\$15 or \$20/hr x 14 hrs x 14 raters)	\$2,870.00
Food for Raters (May Scoring Sessions)	907.61
Total	\$5,152.00

Going forward, programmatic assessment expenses may vary depending on the type and scope of assessment conducted. As enrollment goes down, we anticipate that future direct assessments of student writing samples will require between \$4500 and \$5000 to properly and compensate expert raters. This significant investment of resources helps sustain best practices in assessment, which in turn, provides the most valid and reliable data possible.

4 Stipends for First-time Department Writing Plan Raters

Departments creating DWPs develop embedded assessment plans in their own programs, typically through capstone or 400-level courses. What makes the WAC program as currently conceived most sustainable is the assessment piece incorporated into every Department Writing Plan. IUP's self-study, approved by all major stakeholders at the university, indicates a commitment to Middle States standard 5 regarding assessment. Because an assessment cycle is written into each Department Writing Plan and that assessment is to be reported in five-year program reviews, programs will more automatically close the loop between what is learned from assessment and how that knowledge is turned into instruction and curriculum revision.

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To maintain the cycle of assessment, raters need to be trained and then read writing samples, usually over the summer, every two years. Any department with a writing plan should have dedicated funding to perform these assessments supported by the Provost. Costs vary depending on how many writing samples a department needs to rate in order to have confidence they are assessing a representative sample of their graduating student population. Some departments may be able to do this for little or no cost if they have a very small class of seniors, their sampling size is small, and faculty are willing to do the rating themselves. In all cases, the WAC director trains faculty or graduate student assessment raters as part of her WAC release time. This proposed funding is a small stipend (up to \$250) to incentivize faculty to participate in rating writing samples the first time a writing plan is assessed and would be distributed as travel funding/ professional development.

5 WAC Newsletter

The IUP WAC Newsletter is published each spring online through issu.com, as a PDF on our website, and hard copies are sent to the mailboxes of upper administration, college deans, department chairs, and department WAC liaisons. The CHSS and the Department of English have previously paid for printing at a cost of a bit over \$1 per copy.

6 Writing Culture Events

The WAC program has been tasked with creating a culture of writing on IUP's campus. Each year, WAC and the Jones White Writing Center collaborate to celebrate the National Day on Writing. October 20th is designated by Congress as the NDoW and is officially sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). We have celebrated with an Instagram contest, a Tweetathon, a Writing Carnival, and an open-mic reading. We award prizes and other incentives to get students and faculty involved in the event. The Writing Center, English Department, and CHSS have previously paid all costs. The collaboration with the Writing Center is successful and should be continued, but WAC should have its own funding to contribute to supporting the event.

The Liberal Studies English program has, for three years now, facilitated an annual celebration of writing by students in ENGL 100, 101, 121, 202. The celebration aims to help students find meaning in writing for required ENGL courses, so they see this writing as valued beyond checking off a LS box. Students from all majors come to the 5th floor of the CHSS building, mingle with department faculty, see their work displayed in the hallways, and win awards for their writing.

7 Marketing and Promotions

In the next year, the WAC program will be heavily marketing the Writing Fellows program. Workshop attendees enjoy incentives (such as pens and notepads with WAC logo). This budget also covers brochure printing (brochures are distributed at New Faculty Orientation and elsewhere) and books distributed at workshops.

8 Teaching of Writing Faculty Award

The Center for Teaching Excellence offers \$500 teaching awards each year. For two years, the Dean of CHSS has provided \$500 for a Teaching of Writing Award, which “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.” In its third and fourth year, the Jones White Writing Center took over funding the award. To allow CTE to continue offering this award, it should be paid for by the WAC program, which proposed the award and helps choose the winner.

9 Writing Fellows

Undergraduate students currently have the opportunity to serve as peer tutors in the Writing Center. A Writing Fellows program extends that concept to give students the chance to work directly with an instructor in a class in the student’s major. Exemplary students, typically juniors or seniors nominated by faculty in departments with writing plans, will take a one-credit seminar or independent study in peer tutoring methods in the semester before they serve as a fellow (this could be taught by the WAC director or the Writing Center director). They will then assist those faculty by coming to classes on days when students are working on major writing assignments; they will conference with individual students, work with students in small groups, and offer tutoring hours out of class. This alleviates some of the burden of grading writing for the faculty member whose time is already stretched; the fellow will discuss early drafts with students and provide feedback toward revision before students’ writing is graded by the faculty member. This provides a mutually beneficial situation for the faculty member, the students in the class, and the Writing Fellow⁵. To ensure that the peer tutor is not exploited and that the faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement is followed, the student fellow will be paid at the student employee rate of \$7.25 an hour, possibly through work-study. A typical fellow would work about five hours a week for the semester, which includes attending the class, meeting with the instructor, and holding tutoring hours for the students (\$507.50 for one fellow).

This budget would cover one fellow per semester per academic year. This fellowship would be competitive; a college or faculty member could apply for a fellow to be paid by the WAC program. Hopefully this idea will catch on (through PR/marketing) and other departments/colleges will be willing to pay the cost for their own fellow(s).

10 Graduate Assistant

Responsibilities include promoting WAC through the newsletter, website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, and IUP news feed; assisting in writing up research about the WAC program at IUP; creating reports of collected data and creating surveys using Qualtrics; facilitating writing fellows match-ups and follow-up.

⁵ For more information on in-class peer tutoring, see Spigelman, Candace and Laurie Grobman. *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* or the March 2008 special issue of *Across the Disciplines* on Writing Fellows as Agents of Change.

Leadership and Support

In Fall 2019 (see Table 2), Dr. Lynn Shelly (English) will take over as Liberal Studies English (LSE) Director and Dr. Mary Stewart (English) will continue as LSE Assessment Coordinator (first-year writing assessment). Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer (English) will be on sabbatical in Spring 2020. Upon her return in Fall 2020, Siegel Finer will continue as WAC Director and possibly take over as LSE Assessment Coordinator (see table 3), subsuming responsibility for both senior and first-year writing assessment.

Table 1

		Time for Position	Clerical/research support
2018-2019	LSE Director (Bryna Siegel Finer)	3cr AWE fall & spring	5hr graduate student paid hourly by English department ⁶
	WAC Director (Bryna Siegel Finer)	3cr AWE fall & spring	10hr secretary paid by Writing Center ⁷
	LSE Assessment Coordinator (Mary Stewart)	3 cr AWE fall & spring	20hr GA paid by English department (graduate program) ⁸

Table 2

		Time for Position	Clerical/research support
2019-2020	LSE Director (Lynn Shelly)	3cr AWE fall & spring	5hr graduate student paid hourly by English department
	WAC Director (Bryna Siegel Finer) ⁹	3cr AWE fall & spring	10hr secretary paid by Writing Center 10hr GA paid by Provost's office (split with Liberal Studies, 10hrs per position)
	LSE Assessment Coordinator (Mary Stewart)	3 cr AWE fall & spring	20hr GA paid by English department PhD program

Table 3

⁶ This is a position intended to professionalize a graduate student in the PhD program in Composition and Applied Linguistics in the work of Writing Program Administration. The student mainly works on the LSE Celebration of Student Writing and other events.

⁷ This person completes clerical tasks including website updating, news posts, and newsletter editing. She also prepares copies of documents for workshops and processes paperwork.

⁸ As doctoral faculty, Dr. Stewart will have a GA regardless of her position. Currently this GA processes assessment data, runs reports, and creates professional development documents based on assessment data.

⁹ Sabbatical spring 2020

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		Time for Position	Clerical/research support
2020-2021	LSE Director (Lynn Shelly)	3cr AWE fall & spring	5hr graduate student paid hourly by English department
	WAC Director (Bryna Siegel Finer) ¹⁰	3cr AWE fall & spring	10hr secretary paid by Writing Center
	LSE (first-year writing) Assessment Coordinator (Bryna Siegel Finer -or- Mary Stewart)	3cr AWE fall & spring	10hr GA paid by Provost's office (split with Liberal Studies, 10hrs per position) ¹¹

¹⁰ Note that as of 2020-2021, Bryna Siegel Finer will most likely be solely responsible for assessing written communication skills at IUP as Mary Stewart takes on other responsibilities in the CAL PhD program. Thus, release time and clerical/GA support are imperative.

¹¹ The WAC/Writing Assessment program will essentially lose 20 hours of support in 2020-2021. Hopefully the GA in this position will continue to process data, collect writing samples, develop documents, and help to facilitate rater training sessions.