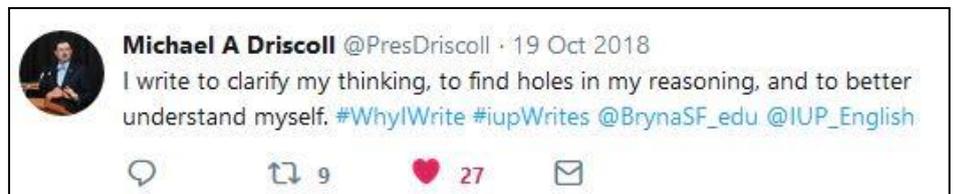




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IUP Celebrates the National Day on Writing

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 National Day on Writing on October 19th, 2018, through social media posts that engaged with the National Council of Teachers of English and thousands of others across the country.

The hashtag #WhyIWrite trended the entire day and was used almost 50,000 times on Twitter alone. More than 100 posts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram included the hashtag #IUPWrites or were written to @IUPWriting, @NCTEIUP, and @IUP_WAC accounts to indicate their IUP affiliation, as they described why writing is important to them.

Some of these posts included a link to a “timely publication” about nursing students’ perceptions of writing, posted by IUP nursing Professor Teresa Shellenbarger; student Brooke

Shottenheimer’s post, “At IUP I learned more about genres and how different genres relate to writing” and President Michael Driscoll’s tweet, “I write to clarify my thinking, to find holes in my reasoning, and to better understand myself.” English professor Chauna Craig posted a beautiful photograph of the Billings, Montana, landscape with the caption, “I write because it takes me cool places. On this National Day of Writing, High Plains Bookfest, here I come!”

Thirteen prizes were awarded for inspirational posts, including Amazon gift cards, t-shirts, and tumblers, sponsored by the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center, IUP NCTE, the IUP Writing Across the Curriculum Program, and the IUP MATESOL program and PhD program in Composition and Applied Linguistics. ■

**Faculty
Leading
Department
Writing Plan
Development**

**Drs. Valerie Gunter
and Beth Mabry**



Once we met with Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Director, Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer, we realized what an opportunity developing a Department Writing Plan would be for us in Sociology to strengthen how we use writing in our courses and our curriculum. We knew faculty had concerns about the quality of student writing and the time and effort we devoted to giving feedback on written assignments. That WAC addresses both was appealing.

Our first impulse was to gather data. We surveyed the faculty at a meeting as to what we thought students should be able to do in terms of writing, then surveyed the students about how well they thought their courses in the major helped them develop those skills. Students thought they were getting what we wanted them to, but we were not seeing it. As we collected information from our colleagues on how they used writing in their courses, we discovered that our assignments centered primarily on academic types of writing—essays, research reports, reaction papers—and a dearth of other genres, particularly writing for non-academic audiences.

Almost all faculty in the Sociology department have applied experience, so we inventoried the various types of writing we had done as part of non-academic jobs. The array provided a wealth of ideas for types of assignments we might use in our courses to expand students' repertoire and prepare them for their careers. From human services case reports to nonprofit grant applications, from advocacy pieces to blogging research, from consumer education handouts to visual three-dimensional media displays, our assignments got a lot more diverse, a lot more relevant, and a lot better at helping students develop the communication skills they need.

The process of developing a Departmental Writing Plan generated some important conversations, too. What are course-level appropriate expectations for students? How should we scaffold skills across the curriculum? How do we assess outcomes in a straightforward but meaningful way? How do we get consensus about these issues without treading on academic freedom? Surprisingly, these discussions were relatively easy once we created a "curriculum map" to compare what we were doing to what we could do in order to achieve the writing outcomes students need when they graduate. We now have a departmental plan, writing statement, and baseline data. Faculty gradually have made adjustments, incorporating elements of WAC learned from workshops, making this transition painless and smooth. Now we await the next round of data collection and look forward to seeing how we can tweak and improve what we are doing to ready our students for their future success. ■

Is Your Department Teaching WAC?

Congratulations to the History and Philosophy departments, who recently completed their Department Writing Plans! 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, 26 departments (up from 18 last year at this time) from five colleges (up from three last year at this time) on campus are working toward developing writing plans. This semester, seven departments across three colleges should finalize their plans.

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

Department	Status as of Spring 2019
Anthropology	Complete!
Art	Drafting
Biology	Finalizing
Child Development	On hold
Criminology	Drafting
English	Finalizing
Food and Nutrition	Complete!
Foreign Languages	Finalizing
Geography & Regional Planning	On hold
Geoscience	On hold
History	Complete!
Hospitality Management	Finalizing
Interior Design	Drafting
Journalism	Finalizing
Kinesiology	Drafting
Mathematics	On hold
Nuclear Medicine	Drafting
Nursing	Drafting
Philosophy	Complete!
Political Science	Drafting
Psychology	Beginning Spring 2018
Professional Studies in Education	Drafting
Religious Studies	Drafting
Respiratory Care	Drafting
Safety Sciences	Finalizing
Sociology	Finalizing

Submit to *The Prompt!*

Have a great writing assignment that's working well and you spent a lot of time crafting? Looking for inspiration to create writing assignments for your students? The new online refereed journal, *Prompt*, publishes academic writing assignments for undergraduate and graduate students from courses across the curriculum. Their mission is to disseminate writing assignments as a mode of intellectual work that is too rarely circulated in public venues, and to provide a resource and a site of engagement for faculty who incorporate writing in their teaching. To read the first edition or to learn more about how to submit, go to <http://thepromptjournal.com>.

Faculty Teaching of Writing Award

The Teaching of Writing Award is a \$500 award for faculty offered through the CTE along with their annual teaching awards, supported by the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center. The description explains, "Instructor demonstrates 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." Christina Huhn, Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages was the winner of the 2018 award. Huhn received a certificate and \$500 at the CTE Recognition Dinner. Congratulations, Dr. Huhn!

Faculty Workshops

WAC workshops are offered on topics such as writing-to-learn pedagogy, creating effective writing assignments, efficient grading strategies, preventing plagiarism, and what to do with grammar. In the last four years, more than 80 faculty members have attended at least one WAC workshop from departments such as Food and Nutrition, Math, Theater and Dance, Sociology, and Biology.

When asked if they would recommend WAC workshops to their colleagues, attendees indicate overwhelmingly that they would. For example, one attendee said, "Attending the workshops gave me a better perspective on how I should look at writing assignments to make them more useful to students and how to evaluate writing assignments to help students improve".

The majority of attendees also indicate that they have been able to incorporate what they learned in the workshops in both the liberal studies and majors courses that they teach by changing the types of writing assignments they assign. These results are very promising and indicate the workshops are encouraging faculty to teach more writing or experiment with teaching writing in different ways.

Spring 2019 Scheduled Workshops

Introduction to Writing to Learn: Tuesday, February 5, 9:45-10:45 a.m. in HSS 306

Creating Effective Writing Assignments: Tuesday, April 2, 2:00-3:00 p.m. in HSS 306

Available Workshops On Demand

If you have a group of colleagues (graduate students and/or faculty) interested in a WAC workshop, contact Bryna Siegel Finer at brynasf@iup.edu to set up a personalized workshop at a time that works for you.

Creating Effective Writing Assignments

Help your students who struggle with writing assignments succeed by making simple changes to the design and language in your assignment sheets.

Getting More Bang for Your Buck: An Introduction to Writing to Learn

Implement quick, low-stakes writing into any classroom to help students improve their writing without increasing your workload.

Strategies for Efficiently Grading Student Writing: Faster Response that Benefits You and Your Students

Maximize your feedback with response strategies that improve student writing and save you time.

Teaching Students to Write-to-Learn

Give your students more practice with writing without taking up too much class time.

What's Grammar Got to Do With it? Teaching Writing Without a Red Pen

Comment effectively on student writing and still respond productively without spending time editing and correcting grammar.

Essay Exams: Writing Prompts for Student Success

Use essay exams to help your students improve writing skills and increase learning.

Teaching and Grading Writing in Larger Classes

Develop strategies to implement writing activities even in your largest class.

Reading and Writing to Learn: Do Required Writing Assignments Promote Reading Compliance and Student Engagement in Social Science Classes?

“Reading and Writing to Learn: Do Required Writing Assignments Promote Reading Compliance and Student Engagement in Social Science Classes?” by Tracy Steffy and Maria Bartolomeo-Maida, was published in the May 2018 issue of *Currents and Teaching in Learning*. Both Assistant Professors at Kingsborough Community College, Steffy teaches in the Political Science department, while Bartolomeo-Maida teaches in the Psychology department.

Steffy and Bartolomeo-Maida sought through their research to determine whether “the use of required, prompted, low-stakes, written assignments based on assigned readings promotes compliance and engagement with course content in introductory, social science classes” (59). The researchers began this study because employers see that a lack of reading comprehension negatively impacts the performance of their employees, so they sought a way to increase the reading comprehension of college-educated employees through improved reading compliance in their courses.

This research was conducted over the course of two semesters, fall 2015 and spring 2016. During fall 2015 one researcher taught two sections of American Politics and Government, and in spring 2016 the other researcher taught two sections of Introductory Psychology. Each researcher used one section as a control while assigning the second section a learning journal which required students to write about each assigned chapter or other reading before the class discussion. Each entry asked students to respond to four open-ended prompts (ex: “which two items were the most interesting to read about and why?” (62)). Students also participated in a mini-lesson on the process of critical thinking and were provided with sample entries to model good and poor journal entries before they began. Additionally, at the end of the semester, the students in the learning journal sections were asked to reflect on their experience and compare it to their experience in other classes which did not require learning journals.

Based on the reflections given at the end of each semester, students were overall in favor of the journals. Positive assessments included that the journals made it necessary for students to read, and therefore helped in preparation for class discussion. The critical assessments focused on the heavy reading and writing load that came with the journals.

The study utilized a Pearson chi-square to analyze the participation grades of students who participated in the study. Researchers found that there was a significant relationship between the use of the journals and the final participation grade of the students. In the sections which utilized the journals, higher participation grades were found. Additionally, the more journals entries completed by an individual student resulted in a higher likelihood that student would earn a higher participation grade.

The results of this study show that using prompted, low-stakes, written assignments based on assigned readings did promote student engagement with reading and greater participation in class, which lead to higher reading comprehension. Ultimately, this study indicates that writing-to-learn assignments are beneficial for students and have implications for their success both in the classroom and in the workplace. Additional research is needed to confirm these conclusions, but there is a strong initial suggestion that WAC methods in the classroom may be the “best practices for a variety of teaching contexts” (67). ■

Connect with IUP Writing Across the Curriculum

Facebook.com/IUPWAC • Twitter: @IUP_WAC • www.iup.edu/wac