MINUTES
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING
November 1, 2004

Attending: Alice Clark
Larry Lorenz
Cassandra Mabe
Mary McCay
Melanie McKay
Janet Melancon
Kendra Reed
Elizabeth Orgeron
Robert Bell
Zack McGar
Avia Morgan

Absent: Mary Algero
Barbara Ewell

The meeting was called to order at 3:40 pm. Melanie McKay thanked the WAC committee members for their attendance, and introduced two new board members. Kendra Reed, will be the representative from the College of Business Administration and Zack McGar, will be the student representative. Kate Adams, director of Freshman Composition is also in attendance.

Melanie discussed the importance of writing within the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP). The First Year Experience (FYE) is to build on the emphasis of writing in the Arts and Sciences department. The QEP has focused topics using critical thinking and writing. Mary McCay discussed the integration of a freshman seminar course, common curriculum with a major component based on religious intolerance. This idea can used in all classes, such as history, English, common curriculum and elective classes also.

Mary McCay stated that whatever topic is decided upon, that critical thinking and writing are the main emphasis to build on the FYE, and into the students’ major classes, and thereafter.

Melanie McKay discussed the emphasis on the writing component beyond the selected book and guest speaker.

Dr. Adams discussed a freshman seminar course in conjunction with the FYE, and the common curriculum. This course would be team-taught by several faculty members using the underlying theme as the backdrop and incorporating the writing and critical thinking component. Several North Carolina universities are giving their faculty members extra money to teach these seminar courses. This theme could be used again in the upper-level courses. Dr. Adams spoke with Dr. David Estes and he suggested that
critical thinking and writing are not just concentrated in the common curriculum classes. Critical Thinking and writing must continue pass the freshman first year experience, into the major and upper-level courses. The freshman seminar classes are in small numbers and using the central theme in several other classes.

Melanie McKay discussed the California critical thinking test that was given to all freshmen, but this test is a multiple-choice test, without a writing component. Melanie McKay stated that critical writing cannot be tested without using a writing component. Mary McCay suggested that maybe this test should be administered at the end of the student’s senior year.

Melanie McKay discussed the university’s assessment plan discuss measuring the writing level of students beyond course grades, and to access writing beyond the university level. She further stated that, what if the outcome produces students whose writing level has not improved, and then resources will be needed to help solve this dilemma. Also, how can writing be measured without using a writing sample? In 2006, the SAT will have an optional writing component, and Loyola is trying to decide whether this writing component will be part of the admission to its college. Melanie McKay stated that she tried, but could not get WAC or a writing enhancement statement included in the college strategic plan. Melanie McKay stated that several faculty members feel that if students don’t enroll in English 122 or 125, they do not receive any writing instruction. Lorenz stated that two of his senior students did not know how to write a term paper and they also did not know how to cite citations. If students don’t write papers past the freshman year and past English 122 and 125, they are not inclined to improve their writing. Melanie stated that maybe a course incorporating WAC, English and the library; using critical thinking and writing should be included in the QEP. Several students test out of English 122 and 125, so they miss crucial writing classes. Alice Clark stated that A&S have the writing classes in their common curriculum, but this isn’t true for all divisions.

Melanie McKay is teaching an English 125 course that is linked to a Louisiana History course, taught by Mark Fernandez. This course has a heavy emphasis on writing and critical thinking. The freshman seminar courses should be limited to 20 students, and may or may not use the central theme; maybe several different themes, so that the students would have choices.

Kate Adams stated that through the self-study, the university has to emphasize and put money into SACS accreditation. She suggested that our ideas be submitted now and not wait until later, because it won’t be funded.

Alice Clark stated that she would like to see faculty members get paid for teaching the seminars.

Beth Orgeron is working with Professor Shuh’s biology classes to help them with their research papers. Beth and Professor Shuh prepared a short movie clip to help the students with their papers. This movie clip can be assessed from the Blackboard site, to enable the students to watch it on their time, and not giving up a class period to explain
research methods. The students can stop by the reference desk and ask for additional help with their assignment.

Melanie McKay stated that she is not sure if we should suggest a bundle or just a FYE, or a four-year package, but she wants to send in request because the university has not ever funded WAC. The university has not tried to assist the writing program with funds to hire qualified tutors. This semester, the WAC center has two students on strictly a voluntary basis.

Melanie McKay stated that Service Learning Centers are on the rise, but how does that SEC fit into the Jesuit identity?

Beth Orgeron went to the Jesuit Core Curriculum Conference last year and she announced that the next conference will be in March 05 in Marquette. The conference discusses Service Learning.

Melanie McKay will be on Sabbatical, Spring 05. Robert Bell will be the Acting Chair and responsible for the Writing Fellows. Melanie McKay will be in for the WAC Assessment Plan, as needed. Melanie McKay would like the WAC Advisory Committee to review the WAC Assessment Plan and vote to approve it.

The assessments will be done with surveys filled out by the students, tutors and faculty members. The WAC Center is working for with second consecutive year with the Psychology department to assist the Psychology majors with their writing and critical thinking skills. Faculty members use the electronic classroom for their special teaching needs. Larry Lorenz stated that Goal 4- tied to electronic needs should be incorporated with Goal 2 or Goal 3. Robert Bell stated that one professor has required her class to visit the WAC Center and have their power point presentations reviewed by our tutors. Alice Clark stated that the power point presentations are reviewed for content and not for the technical skills that students produce. Larry Lorenz stated that he doesn’t see a subject in the Goal 4. Beth Orgeron stated that maybe WAC should include how often a student’s technical skills and writing skills are used for both power point presentations as well as company reports. McKay stated that the electronic classroom is a service for faculty; therefore it is difficult to assess this room. The assessment must be phrased to student outcome.

Melanie McKay will change the WAC Assessment Plan and post it to the web. She will ask for the WAC Advisory Board Committee Members to vote to approve this plan.

Robert Bell stated that our tutoring sessions are up 40 percent, but the number of our staff has remained the same or less. The WAC tutors have complained to him that they feel overworked. The tutees receive an email survey about our facilities and 95% of the respondents stated that they would recommend the WAC Center to other students, and 95% of the respondents feel that the quality of our tutoring is excellent or very good. Robert stated that since the beginning of the fall semester, we have lost three students. We cannot continue to rely on the work-study pool to staff this center. Robert feels that
we also need qualified tutors who are not eligible for work study, but can be paid from student assistant funds.

Melanie McKay stated that $7,100 dollars was allotted for the student assistant fund in the WAC Center. She requested additional funds from A&S, and Frank Scully gave the WAC Center an additional $3,000. This amount is for the academic year. The WAC Center tutors all students, law, business, City College, nursing, and the tutors are working seven days a week. The Academic Provost gave the WAC Center $3,000 for ESL Specialists. Melanie McKay is requesting additional money from Marcel Dumestre, dean of City College, because of the large amount of his college’s student visits.

Beth Orgeron suggested sending a letter from the WAC Advisory Board Committee to Frank Scully requesting more money and stating how the WAC Center is in desperate need to be funded.

Janet Melancon suggested that WAC review the comments by the respondents who stated that they are not satisfied with the quality of tutoring. This could be used in WAC’s favor by hiring qualified upperclassmen. Melanie McKay stated that we could change our hours of operation, because we are open twelve hours a day Monday through Thursday and six hours on the weekends. We have had to use freshmen tutors within the first two weeks of school, who have not been properly trained, to fulfill our center and the walk-in tutees. Melanie McKay cannot continue to rely mainly on the work-study pool. Alice Clark suggested that our center use the statistics from the surveys to request the funding for qualified tutors. Beth Orgeron stated that in the library has the student technology experts program, where the students make ten dollars an hour. She is not sure how it is funded, but there is a waiting list for the jobs.

Melanie McKay asked the committee members what specific items they would like to include in the letter to Frank Scully to request additional funding for the WAC Tutors besides the narrative from the surveys and the parallel from the library. Larry Lorenz suggested that testimonials from the faculty who frequently use the electronic classroom and our Advise/Revise entire classroom tutoring sessions. These faculty members must state that the students are not receiving the quality of tutoring as in the past.

Kendra Reed asked if these faculty members are telling the WAC personnel that they are experiencing difficulty with meeting the writing needs of their students and each class. Melanie McKay stated that faculty members are stopping her on campus asking for suggestions to meet their students’ writing needs.

Robert Bell stated that more students are testing out of English 122 and 125 because of their SAT standardized scores, but many of these students do need English 122 and English 125. Alice Clark stated that one course doesn’t teach these students everything they need to know in writing. Robert Bell stated that WAC trains about fifteen to twenty new students every semester. Melanie McKay would like to have twenty qualified trained tutors working and an additional fifteen students being trained each semester.
Melanie McKay would like with the WAC Advisory Board Committee to send a suggestion to be included in the QEP plan and to Frank Scully. Melanie McKay gave out a folder to each committee member that she delivers to the new faculty orientation members. This folder contains information about a writing assignment with and without the help of the WAC Center.

The minutes, and the WAC Assessment plan will be mailed out to the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.