Pittsburg State University Writing Task Force
Report to the Provost
Executive Summary

To address the improvement of student writing at Pittsburg State University, the Writing Task Force has considered the following: 1) Assessment, 2) Upper Division Writing, 3) Writing to Learn, 4) Core Writing, and 5) Writing Center. Based on our analysis of each, we offer the following recommendations:

Assessment
In order to provide regular formative feedback to departments and programs on the state of student writing, we recommend that the University implement a portfolio-style writing assessment program using the Task Force's Writing Assessment Rubric.

Upper Division Writing
We were unable to find a solution to address upper division writing that was acceptable to all departments and colleges. Therefore, we recommend that data from the above assessment program be used to drive this conversation within individual programs.

Writing to Learn
The WAC committee is already engaged in developing guidelines for best practices in Writing to Learn (WL) courses. The Task Force recommends that WL faculty be encouraged to integrate these best practices into their courses and the WL stipend be awarded to faculty who demonstrate that these practices have been used in their WL courses.

Core Writing
In order to improve the overall quality of instruction in ENGL 101 and ENGL 299, we recommend that the English Department enroll new graduate assistants in a 3-credit course in writing pedagogy and assign them to work as tutors in the Writing Center during their first semester instead of placing them immediately in their own classrooms. To compensate for the lost instructional hours, the English department should be allowed to hire three or four full-time instructors with MAs in Composition and Rhetoric. In addition, we recommend capping ENGL 101 and 299 at 20 students, with the goal of reducing the course cap to 15 when fiscal conditions permit. Finally, we recommend that the English Department conduct a self-study of the composition program to determine whether ENGL 101 and 299 continue to meet the needs of today's less-prepared students.

Writing Center
In order to provide additional support for student writing throughout the curriculum, we recommend that the Writing Center expand both its mission and its hours of operation. In addition, we recommend increasing the hours of tutor training and improving the qualifications of the tutoring staff by recruiting graduate student tutors from a variety of departments and making use of English Department GAs and full-time instructors.

Pittsburg State University Writing Task Force
Report to the Provost

As a result of disappointing data on student writing from the National Student Survey on Engagement and the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the PSU Writing Task Force was formed[1] in the fall semester of 2009 with the general charge of examining the existing structure of writing instruction at PSU and proposing changes in keeping with our institutional goals of quality education linked to effective, formative assessment. In the spring semester of 2010, the Task Force began its work. While the Task Force identified several objectives[2] to assist in realizing the general charge, we found it necessary to ask other questions and seek additional information about current writing practices at PSU. As a result of our findings and after great deliberation, the recommendations of the Task Force are divided into five areas: 1) Assessment, 2) Upper Division Writing, 3) Writing to Learn, 4) Core Writing, and 5) Writing Center.

I. Assessment
Current Situation
PSU has no formal, University-wide assessment program capable of providing formative feedback to all departments and programs regarding the writing quality of their graduates, nor does it have a common definition or description of what constitutes good writing for a PSU graduate. While faculty recognize that assessment is here to stay, many are wary that assessment, rather than being used for formative purposes, will be used in a punitive fashion in program review, performance appraisals, etc. An effective assessment program is central to improving writing at PSU, as it can provide us with a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of student writing in general, and it can directly address the writing needs of departments and programs, but its success is dependent on the good will and support of the faculty. Therefore, our first recommendation specifically addresses the issue of how assessment and the results of assessment should be used at PSU.

Task Force Recommendations
1. We recommend that any writing assessment program be used for formative purposes with the specific goal of providing departments and programs with information about the quality of their students' writing. We further recommend that this intention be clearly communicated by the administration to faculty.

2. We recommend that the University adopt the Task Force's Writing Assessment Rubric[3] as the evaluative instrument to be used for department and program-level writing assessment both in the core writing curriculum and beyond. In developing the rubric, we sought to describe the writing values shared by all University stakeholders, and we believe that the final product is an accurate description of PSU's institution-wide goals for student writing. College focus groups were instrumental in providing feedback as to the acceptability of the rubric. We recommend that the rubric be re-evaluated periodically

---

[1] See Appendix A for a description of the Task Force membership.
[2] See Appendix B for a description of the Task Force proposal and objectives.
[3] See Appendix C for the rubric.

to insure that it continues to represent PSU's values for writing and that it meets our needs for assessment purposes. Whether or not the rubric is incorporated into courses or departments, this rubric should be the primary tool for a University writing assessment program.

3. We recommend that the University initiate a two-tiered approach to writing assessment as follows.

      a. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of and provide formative feedback for the core writing sequence (ENGL 101 and ENGL 299), we support the assessment of the Core Writing Program that has been proposed by the University Assessment Committee's Sub-committee on General Education Writing Assessment[4] with the exception that ENGL 299 papers be collected during the spring semester rather than fall. Assessment of core writing will contribute to providing a comprehensive picture of writing skills development at PSU and will inform writing instruction at all levels. In addition, core writing assessment is an integral part of PSU's current reaccreditation efforts.

      b. In order to provide individual departments with program-specific feedback on the writing skills of students who complete their programs, we recommend the adoption of a portfolio-based assessment of upper-division writing as described in Appendix E. In addition to the concrete information such an assessment will provide, we believe that a portfolio requirement will contribute to creating and maintaining the kind of culture of writing PSU seeks to establish.

II. Core Writing
Current Situation

At PSU, graduate assistants and adjunct faculty teach most of the required writing courses (ENGL 101 and 299). Currently, first year GAs receive 2-4 hours of training before the semester begins, in the form of a workshop conducted by Dr. Lyle Morgan, director of Freshmen Composition, followed by a one credit hour course, ENGL 845 Problems in Teaching of Composition, which is taken during their first semester of teaching. As a result, GAs are asked to teach these courses with minimal training. Moreover, most adjunct faculty are trained in literature, not composition and rhetoric. In addition, adjunct faculty have limited incentive to use formative feedback to improve their teaching, as improvement would mean redesigning courses and assignments (additional work) without any compensation or reward. Because the English department has become dependent on a very small pool of qualified adjuncts to cover course offerings, it has not been feasible to make job security contingent on performance.

Task Force Recommendations

1. To better prepare GAs for the classroom, we recommend the following.

---

[4] See Appendix D for description of the General Education Writing Assessment Proposal.

- First-semester GAs should be assigned to the Writing Center, instead of teaching ENGL 101, where they will receive training and experience in coaching the writing process;
- GAs should take a three credit hour graduate course on teaching writing before they teach ENGL 101. This course, plus the training for and experience of working in the Writing Center, will better prepare GAs for the classroom.

2. To release first-semester GAs from teaching ENGL 101 in order to work in the Writing Center, we offer the following recommendations:
- Three or four full-time instructor positions (possibly phased in over a three or four year period) should be added to the English department (four if caps on writing courses are lowered), with the minimum qualification for those positions being an MA in Composition and Rhetoric.
- Because of the intensive workload of writing courses, these full time instructors should teach a maximum of 3-4 courses per semester with additional hours assigned to the Writing Center. This will help reduce the likelihood of burnout, will help insure high-quality instruction, and will provide opportunities for professional development.
- The English department chair should be allowed flexibility in assigning workload for these instructors in order to manage the shifting need for writing courses from fall to spring semesters.
- ENGL 101 and 299 should be capped at 20 students, with the goal of reducing the course cap to 15 when fiscal conditions permit. This is consistent with the course caps recommended by the National Council for Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication.[5] Cap reduction should be phased in over a four-year period to coincide with the hiring of the four full-time instructors.

4. We recommend the English department do a self-study of the composition program to determine the following:
1. Whether the standard ENGL 101 and 299 curricula currently in use still meet the needs of today's less-prepared students;
2. Whether it would be advisable and feasible to offer remediation in the form of a "with review" option and/or studio support courses for ENGL 101 and/or 299.

III. Writing Center
Current Situation
The Writing Center is the logical place to offer support for faculty seeking to improve student writing and the logical place to offer support to students seeking to become better writers. However, tutors receive limited training in the tutoring process, and most tutors are predominantly undergraduates. For the first time in its history, this semester the Writing Center is open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm most weekdays (with additional evening

---

[5] See Richard Haswell's "Class Size for Regular, Basic, and Honors Writing Courses": http://comppile.org/profresources/classsize.htm

hours on Wednesdays), but hours are frequently covered by only one tutor, limiting the number of students who can be helped.

Task Force Recommendations
The Writing Center can improve both the quality and extent of its services, and to do that the Task Force offers the following recommendations:

1. The instructors described in item II. 2. (above) should be assigned to the Writing Center as a regular part of their workload. This will bring more experienced and professional tutoring to the Writing Center, and their presence will provide a resource for less experienced tutors, elevating the overall quality of tutoring.

2. First-semester graduate assistants should work in the Writing Center rather than teach ENGL 101. These more experienced writers will also add to the quality of tutoring, and this experience will better prepare them for the classroom the following semester.

3. Tutors should be recruited from the graduate student body so that the writing center can offer tutoring that is related to the specific needs of a variety of disciplines. Recruitment can come directly from colleges or departments who wish to have a tutor available to help their specific majors. For example, currently the College of Business appoints one of their GAs to a half-time appointment in the writing center. This GA is trained to work as a tutor and is available for business majors when specifically requested but can also tutor other students as well. Recruitment can also come from the general graduate student body. Ideally faculty would recommend strong writers from their programs, or students could apply for work in the Writing Center and provide a writing sample for Writing Center staff to evaluate. Graduate students who work as hourly employees should be paid a minimum of $10 per hour.

4. Undergraduates from across campus should also be invited to apply for tutoring positions in the Writing Center, following the same guidelines for hiring graduate student tutors (recommendations from their departments and/or a strong writing sample). Current practices for undergraduate student employees should be followed. For example, the Chemistry department routinely identifies a Chemistry student with strong writing skills to work as a tutor in the Writing Center. While this tutor is available to work with Chemistry majors, he or she is also capable of working with other students. Moreover, this tutor periodically meets with students in the classroom when requested by faculty.

5. Undergraduates from ENGL 480, Techniques Laboratory, will likely continue to provide tutors for the Writing Center. These students will not be paid, as this tutoring is part of their training and course work. However, historically these students often return to the Writing Center in subsequent semesters to work as regular tutors, so this arrangement may continue to provide a pool of potential tutors.

6. Writing Center tutors should participate in 20 hours of training prior to working in the Writing Center, with additional training made available as Writing Center services diversify. The Writing Center staff should monitor the quality of tutoring to determine if

this level of tutor training is adequate and make recommendations for changing the number of training hours as needed. In addition, tutors should be paid for one hour a week for additional training and staff meetings.

7. The Writing Center should begin offering on-line tutoring at a pace that is manageable given its funding and tutors. Efforts are currently under way to develop the skills and provide a platform for this effort. Operating hours and the number of tutors will be the most important aspects for making this service viable. As more courses are being offered on-line at PSU, this service will also be invaluable to the success of many of those courses, and student success that results from Writing Center services will contribute to student retention.

IV. Writing to Learn
Current Situation
The Writing to Learn (WL) program has focused exclusively on using writing to learn course content. This is a valuable pedagogical practice, but with no attention given to quality of writing, there is a risk that poor writers will simply reinforce their poor writing habits in WL courses. The result is that while WL courses may help students with writing fluency (the ability to produce text), they may not help students become better writers. The WL stipend is paid to any WL faculty who completes the summary/response form, but while this form provides an opportunity to reflect on how successful the use of writing is in a particular class, it does not demonstrate that any significant writing has actually taken place.

Task Force Recommendations
1. We recommend the Writing to Learn program begin shifting the emphasis of WL courses to include more writing that is evaluated for quality of both writing and content, rather than content only. In anticipation of this recommendation, the WAC committee has already begun identifying "best practices" for WL courses.

2. We, therefore, recommend that the WL stipend be awarded to faculty who employ these "best practices" in their WL courses, rather than offering the stipend to those who complete the summary/response form currently used for WL courses.

3. We recommend that the WAC committee should determine how to collect course information and should be responsible for evaluating WL courses with regards to the allocation of the WL stipend and that whatever process the committee develops should be as objective and transparent as possible.

V. Upper Division Writing
Current Situation
Upper division writing instruction (writing in the disciplines) at PSU is extremely limited. While some departments have upper division writing courses, most do not. Informal writing instruction in the form of faculty intervention in the writing process is also limited across campus. The result is that many students receive little or no instruction on how to write in their majors apart from final grades on assignments. This

information is based on a campus-wide survey conducted by the Task Force; however, we must acknowledge that responses to the survey were fewer than we would have liked.

Task Force Recommendations
We recommend the university leave the issue of upper division writing instruction to the discretion of colleges and/or departments. A survey conducted by the Task Force suggests that there is no acceptable "one-size-fits-all" program for upper division writing instruction. While we recognize that students will only learn to do the writing of their disciplines by being taught to write by faculty in their disciplines, we were not able to find a solution to insure that students receive writing instruction within their disciplines. Therefore, we believe that writing in the disciplines will be more authentic and be better supported if it grows organically out of the needs of the colleges and departments. An assessment program like the one mentioned above can provide regular reports to colleges and departments on the quality of their graduating seniors' writing skills. With this data, colleges and departments will be in a better position to determine how best to address any shortcomings in student writing. We feel it is better to allow formative assessment feedback to drive that conversation within the colleges and departments.

VI. Budget
Assessment of General Education Writing
No cost estimate has yet been made for this program.

Upper-Division Assessment Program
If universal assessment is employed on a three-year cycle, the cost of assessment breaks down in the following manner:
Year one (Business and Education)

Training for 14 faculty	$1960[6]
Norming session	$840
Assessment (173 hr x $35)	$6055
Total	$8855

Year two (Technology)

Training for 2 faculty	$280
Norming session	$840
Assessment (124 hr x $35)	$4340
Total	$5460

Year three (Arts & Sciences)

Training for 2 faculty	$280
Norming session	$840
Assessment (201 hr x $35)	$7035
Total	$8155

---

[6] This is the initial cost for training. Every year thereafter, cost for training will be $280.

If random sampling is employed on a three-year cycle, the cost of assessment breaks down in the following manner:

Year one (Business and Education)

Training for 14 faculty	$1960[7]
Norming session	$840
Assessment (35 hr x $35)	$1225
Total	$4025

Year two (Technology)

Training for 2 faculty	$280
Norming session	$840
Assessment (33 hr x $35)	$1155
Total	$2275

Year three (Arts & Sciences)

Training for 2 faculty	$280
Norming session	$840
Assessment (33 hr x $35)	$1155
Total	$2275

All figures are based on graduation rates for fall 2009, spring 2010, and summer 2010.

Core Writing

To accommodate a course cap reduction from 24 to 20 in all sections of ENGL 101 and 299, the English department would need to offer 5.6 more sections of 101 and 2.2 more sections of 299 in the fall and 2 more sections of 101 and 4.4 more sections of 299 in the spring. If first semester GAs are working in the Writing Center rather than teaching, four full-time instructors will be needed to cover the additional number of courses. If course caps are not reduced but first semester GAs are assigned to the Writing Center rather than teaching, only three full-time instructors will be needed. The cost per full time instructor is as follows:

Salary	$38,400
Benefits	$16,000
Total	$54,400

Total cost for three instructors:	$163,200
Total cost for four instructors:	$217,600

Writing Center

The projected cost of wages is based on ten paid tutors (half graduate and half undergraduate) with the Writing Center open 50 hours per week (two tutors on

---

[7] This is the initial cost for training. Every year thereafter, cost for training will be $280.

staff at all times) for 13 weeks per semester. Training assumes 20 hours per semester plus 13 hours for staff meetings.

Wages (undergraduate)	$9425.00
Wages (graduate)	$13,000.00
Total	$22,425.00

Training for undergraduate tutors (5 x 2 sem. x 33 hr x $7.25)	$2392.50
Training for graduate tutors (5 X 2 sem. x 33 hr x $10.00)	$3300.00
Total	$5692.50

Staffing levels can be phased in over three to four years, but training should be addressed immediately.

Writing to Learn
The current budget for the WAC program should remain the same with the exception of two half-time summer appointments for assessment, WAC, and Writing Center needs.

Upper Division Writing
No budget required.

Conclusion
Although all of the recommendations outlined in this report address urgent long-term needs, we recognize the immediate need to identify first steps that offer the greatest certainty of return on investment at a fairly low initial cost. That being the case, we urge that two of these recommendations be given immediate priority: increased staffing in the Writing Center and the development of a University-wide portfolio assessment program.

Improving the quality and availability of Writing Center services would immediately increase the support available for writing throughout the University, thereby allowing faculty who already teach writing to raise their expectations and to increase the instructional value of the writing they require.

At the same time, the presence of a portfolio requirement (and the faculty development necessary to sustain it) will have an immediate impact on both student and faculty attention to writing, even before assessment data is available. Once the first assessment cycle is complete, all departments will have access to program-specific information about the performance of their own students that will likely motivate many departments to undertake in-house curricular change to improve student writing.

In addition to the somewhat more costly investments in the Writing Center and a university-wide assessment program, we recommend immediate adoption of two additional proposals that will have significant impact for no net cost: shifting the

focus of Writing to Learn courses (including changing the basis for awarding the WL stipend) and recommending that the English Department engage in a self-study to investigate possible changes to the ENGL 101 and 299 curriculum.

Ultimately, however, core writing will always be the foundation of students' college writing skills. Therefore, we believe that investment in improving the professional qualifications and professional development of those who teach ENGL 101 and 299 is of utmost importance and should be made a highest priority as soon as funding becomes available.

Finally, it should be remembered that implementation of these recommendations should not be seen as obviating the need for more discipline-specific writing instruction in upper-level courses. To address writing in the disciplines, departments and colleges will need to deal with issues of class size and work load, and this process is likely to occur with increasing urgency as assessment makes data available. However, to demonstrate a serious commitment to improving student writing, all faculty need to "own" writing, rather than relegating it to a few faculty members or one course. Students need to see that writing is expected and valued at all levels, and faculty need to acknowledge their expertise in writing in their disciplines. As long as writing is seen as the province of one department or a couple of courses, writing will be viewed as extra work (to be avoided when possible) rather than a normal part of a college education.

Appendix A: Task Force Membership
To insure that the Task Force represented the PSU campus, the task force membership included the following faculty and administrators:

- Harriet Bachner, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Counseling, College of Education
- Dean Cortes, Chair of Economics, Financing & Banking, College of Business
- Julie Dainty, Instructor of Technology and Workforce Learning, College of Technology
- Bruce Dallman, Dean of the College of Technology
- Brenda Frieden, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology
- David Gordon, Associate Professor of Biology, College or Arts & Sciences
- Donald Judd, Associate Professor of English, WAC Director, College of Arts & Sciences
- Anil Lal, Professor of Economics, Financing & Banking, College of Business
- Robert Lindsey, Assistant Professor of Instruction/Reference Librarian, Library Services
- Celia Patterson, Chair of English, College of Arts & Sciences*
- Bob Wilkinson, Director of Analysis, Planning & Assessment
- Janet Zepernick, Assistant Professor of English, WAC Assistant Director, College of Arts & Sciences

* Dr. Patterson was asked to join the Task Force during the fall semester 2010 as we began looking at the Core Writing program housed in the English department.

<u>Appendix B: Task Force Proposal and Objectives</u>
November 5, 2009

Dear Dr. Olson:

Given the recent CLA outcomes, the results from the NSSE surveys, and the administration's commitment to improving student writing skills, this is an opportune time for a broader institutional analysis of what writing is and where and how it is or should be taught. Since writing is a complex skill that requires sustained practice and guidance, the university should be examining how writing instruction can be vertically integrated into all four years of an undergraduate's academic career.

Task Force Charge
Therefore, I am writing to propose that you form a task force with the charge to examine the existing structure of writing instruction at PSU and propose effective changes that are in keeping with our institutional goals of quality education linked to effective, formative assessment.

Task Force Objectives
Objective 1: Study vertical models of writing programs at other institutions.
Objective 2: Develop a vertical model of writing instruction that is workable for PSU.
Objective 3: Examine definitions or explanations of college writing and developing a definition for PSU.
Objective 4: Examine writing assessment programs at other institutions, and develop a program for PSU.

Task Force Composition
The task force should include the two WAC directors and representatives from the various colleges, drawing from both faculty and administrators.

Task Force Duration
The task force should be instituted for three consecutive semesters, beginning in spring semester 2010 and completing its task by the end of spring semester 2011. Member should be identified during the fall semester 2009 so the task force can begin working immediately the following semester.

Task Force Calendar (tentative)
Spring Semester 2010 (planning)
Seven meetings spring semester (1/19-22; 2/1-5; 2/15-19; 3/1-5; 3/22-26; 4/5-9; 4/19-23)
- First meeting: Presentation of writing programs at PSU (Core Writing Director, WAC Directors, Technical Writing Program Director).

- Second, third, fourth: Examining other programs.
- Fifth, sixth, seventh: Developing our program.

Fall Semester 2010 (researching and developing)
Five to seven meetings
- Two to three meetings researching definitions or explanations of college writing and developing a definition for PSU.
- Three to four meetings researching writing assessment programs, and developing a program for PSU.

Spring Semester 2011 (explaining/promoting)
Four to five meetings fall semester for presentations to the following: Provost's Leadership Council, other university administrators, Faculty Senate, and PSU faculty.

I hope this provides you with the information you need, but if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Dr. Janet Zepernick. Thank you for your consideration, guidance, and support.

Sincerely yours,

Donald Judd
WAC Director
Associate Professor of English

Appendix C: Task Force Rubric for General Education Writing Mastery, revised March 2011

	Exceeds Expectations	**Meets Expectations**	**Falls Below Expectations**	**No Credit**
Focus	The paper's main idea is clearly indicated and supported by both content selection and effective use of sentence-level structures such as thesis statement, forecasting statements, and sentences that connect the content of individual paragraphs to the overall point of the paper.	The paper is controlled by one main idea, contains only relevant information, and avoids content that adds length without adding substance.	The paper is generally controlled by one main idea but contains some noticeably irrelevant content, or includes content that adds length without adding substance.	The paper has no clear main idea, OR the main idea suggested by the content is at odds with the paper's stated purpose, OR the paper's main idea does not fit the parameters of the assignment.
Development	The paper entirely fulfills the goals of the assignment. Its claims are supported with appropriate evidence and valid reasoning, and its ideas are elaborated with explanation, demonstration, and/or illustration suited to its audience and purpose. The argument does not include errors of fact or unsupported generalizations. Opinions are clearly distinguished from facts.	The paper completes the task specified by the assignment and includes all of the assignment's required components. The paper's claims are supported with appropriate evidence and valid reasoning. The argument includes no important errors of fact or unsupported generalizations. Opinions are usually distinguished from facts.	The paper slightly misses the point of the assignment, is superficial in its use of evidence, fails to fully explain or support its claims, includes some errors of fact or unsupported generalizations, or is somewhat unclear in distinguishing between fact and opinion.	The paper is incomplete, does something other than assigned task, entirely misses the point of the assignment, does not include evidence, fails to explain or support its claims, includes significant errors of fact or unsupported generalizations, or fails to distinguish between fact and opinion.
Use of Sources	Outside sources clearly support development of the main idea. The writer clearly distinguishes between source material and the writer's own ideas and clearly indicates the provenance of all source material. Quotes and/or paraphrases are effective, and the writer is clearly in control of all content.	Outside sources usually support development of the main idea. The writer distinguishes between source material and the writer's own ideas and indicates the provenance of all source material. Quotes are usually effective although the author may not always seem fully in control of quoted and/or paraphrased material.	Outside source material is inadequate or does not fully support development of the main idea; OR The writing shows noticeable loss of control in its use of quotes, paraphrases, attribution phrases, and/or source citations; OR The writer fails to distinguish between source material and the writer's own ideas; OR Provenance of some source material is unclear.	Source material is missing, is inappropriate to the main idea, or is used inappropriately; OR The paper fails to distinguish between source material and the writer's own ideas and/or may fail to indicate the provenance of source material; OR Quotes and/or paraphrases are largely incoherent.
Organization	Ideas are organized into paragraphs, and paragraph breaks are used to indicate shifts in focus. Both within and between paragraphs, ideas are presented in a logical sequence that supports development of the main point. The text makes effective use of sentence structures that indicate and support the organization of ideas.	Paragraphing shows how ideas are related, and paragraph breaks and transitions clearly signal the shift from one idea to another. Both within and between paragraphs, the sequence of ideas is clear although it may not be ideal.	Either within or between paragraphs, the sequence of ideas is confusing or unclear, and/or grouping and division of ideas into paragraphs does not effectively support the main point.	The paper shows little attempt to group like ideas into paragraphs or to use paragraph breaks to show shifts in focus. The sequence of ideas shows no clear pattern or is largely inappropriate to the argument being made.
Style	Sentences are effective and coherent. Vocabulary is broad, and word choice shows attention to the audience, purpose, and context for writing. Word choice, sentence structure, and tone are appropriate for the context. The paper makes effective use of content-area vocabulary (where appropriate).	The document gives an overall impression of sentence-level coherence but may include occasional lapses. Word choice, sentence structure, and tone are generally appropriate for college-level writing. Uses some content-area vocabulary (where appropriate) but not yet at a level that suggests confidence.	The document is understandable but is marred by confusing or ineffective sentences, shows frequent lapses of tone, or is written in an overly simplistic or overly elaborate style. Vocabulary is narrow, and/or inappropriately simplistic or excessively grand. Content area vocabulary is absent or is used inappropriately.	Noticeable portions of the document fail to convey their point due to dysfunctions at the sentence level (not just mechanical errors). Vocabulary is frequently inappropriate for college-level writing and/or suggests that the writer is using words s/he does not understand.
Editing	The paper is nearly free of errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choice. Formatting follows 1. the guidelines of the assignment (if any), and/or 2. the formatting conventions of the discipline (if relevant), and/or 3. the formatting conventions of general academic writing. The overall effect is highly professional.	Errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word choice may be present but are not intrusive. Formatting may show occasional lapses, but generally follows the guidelines of the assignment and/or the conventions of general academic writing. The overall effective is appropriate to college-level academic work.	Errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word choice, are frequent, noticeable, and/or intrusive, OR Formatting is flawed enough to make the paper inappropriate for its implied audience and/or purpose, although there is evidence of some attention to formatting.	The writing shows seriously deficient control of sentence mechanics and/or the conventions of written English; AND/OR The paper shows little attempt to follow either the assignment's formatting guidelines (if any) or the formatting conventions of general academic writing.

Appendix D: General Education Writing Assessment Proposal
GE WL Assessment Sub-committee
Discussion and Points from 9/27/10 Meeting: Wilkinson; Judd; Zepernick; McCune; Kelley
Revised based on comments from 11/4/10 General Assessment Committee meeting

If we are going to emphasize and assess writing we need to integrate a common rubric into our GE education classes starting with ENGL 101, through both WL classes, and finishing with ENGL 299/190. We are going to move more from WL to Learning to Write (LW) – it does not have to be the central aspect of a class (content can still rule) but it must be an important part of any WL class.

1. Agreed to employ Writing Task Force rubric to assess GE writing in all classes.

2. ENGL 101 must make rubric central to class, included in all syllabi–there needs to be a common graded task at the beginning of the semester that assesses student ability to write. This will allow us to engage K-12 to let them know what we think good writing is and how well prepared high school graduates are to write in college. We will have a trained faculty cadre evaluate student performance from a **sample** of ENGL 101 classes.

3. WL classes must employ the rubric to assess at least one paper or equivalent, as part of student class grade.
   The rubric will be included in all WL syllabi–define good writing at the start
   PD money will be for faculty who participate in the rubric-based assessment -- no need to survey classes about what is done in the class to receive PD funds
   Class sizes will remain at 25

4. ENGL 299 must make the rubric central to the class. We will **sample** ENGL 299 classes on a common task (developed by ENGL faculty) at the end of the semester. This will allow us to measure how successful we are at teaching the basic writing skills in GE, comparing sample scores from rubric graded 101 entry task and the 299 completion task.

5. There will be a cadre of paid faculty (apply to WL Committee) who after satisfactorily completing training will examine ENGL 101 and ENGL 299 writing samples.

6. Timeline:
   We will use Fall classes for our data collection–sampling 101 and 299 classes. Assessment by faculty cadre done in the spring–report at end of spring semester.

Observation: We agree if the university is serious about teaching writing it is important to move from relying on GTAs to using FTT faculty. We will do better if we have a relatively permanent and trained composition faculty.

Summary of Assessment Process

1.   All ENGL 101 classes include the rubric in the syllabus and employ it in class.

2.   All ENGL 101 classes will have a common task, developed with the WL Committee and English department faculty that will permit an assessment of student writing competence relative to the rubric.

3.   All students will perform the common task early in the semester, with a deadline established by the OAPA, in consultation with English faculty and WL Committee.

4.   A sample of ENGL 101 classes from the **fall semester** (the number of classes/students to be determined by OAPA) will send the results of the common task to a cadre of trained faculty who will evaluate the writing relative to the rubric. The cadre will develop a summary score of student writing competence (initial competence).

5.   The initial competence scores will be sent to OAPA, the WL Committee, and English chair. The OAPA will maintain and use the scores to assess how well the university promotes student writing competency.

6.   All WL classes will include the rubric in their syllabi and have at least one paper or equivalent assessed using the rubric.

7.   All ENGL 299 classes include the rubric in the syllabus and employ it in class.

8.   All ENGL 299 classes will have a completion task, as developed with the WL Committee and English department faculty that will permit an assessment of student writing competence relative to the rubric.

9.   A sample of ENGL 299 classes from the **fall semester** (the number of classes/students to be determined by OAPA) will send the results of the completion task to a cadre of trained faculty who will evaluate the writing relative to the rubric. The cadre will develop a summary score of student writing competence (completion competence).

10.   The completion competence scores will be sent to OAPA, the WL Committee, and English chair. The OAPA will maintain and use the scores to assess how well the university promotes student writing competency through its WL program by comparing initial and completion competence from the student samples.

11. The OPAA will develop a report to be completed and presented to the Provost, WL committee, and English chair by the end of the spring semester.

Implications for Faculty

A. Curricular
1. ENGL 101, ENGL 299, and WL faculty must include the rubric in their syllabi and use it in their classes. WL faculty must use it on a graded assignment at least once.
2. Writing quality, as defined by rubric, must be part of student's grade – at least on the rubric-evaluated assignment(s).
3. With the rubric, we are formalizing what it already done in most WL and ENGL writing classes.
4. Training for new WL faculty will include use of the rubric, with rubric training available to current WL faculty.
   [Since the university has defined good writing as an institutional goal it is incumbent upon us to move slightly away from a pure WL philosophy to one that requires faculty to consider student writing competency when grading *particular* student assignments. Content and WL philosophy can predominate but the use of a common and completion tasks allow us to evaluate relative to the goal of defining PSU as a writing focused university.]

B. Compensation
1. WL PD money is contingent upon including the rubric in the syllabus and using it at least once to evaluate a paper or equivalent assignment.
2. Faculty will be compensated for training as part of the evaluation cadre.
3. Faculty will be compensated for evaluating initial and completion competency tasks.

C. Filters
1. Since most honors college students come with ENGL 101 credit, we will not survey honors college students.
2. OIS will provide the information necessary for the evaluation cadre to filter out students from ENGL 299 who are transfers or who have not taken both WL classes. [OAPA can decide whether or not we want to score these students.] We want to evaluate only those students who take ENGL 101, both WL classes, and ENGL 299 at PSU.
   [We are not interested in comparing ourselves with any other school; rather, we are concerned with how well we teach good writing or improve student writing competency as defined by the rubric. We don't need to include everyone and we should only look at those students who have   gone through our 4-course sequence, i.e., ENGL 101, WL, WL, ENGL 299.]

<u>Appendix E: Portfolio Assessment Proposal</u>
An important part of the Task Force's original charge was to explore options for a vertical writing curriculum at PSU, with particular attention to building more writing into upper-level courses. Because PSU's departments and programs are so varied, it proved impossible to find any single approach that would meet the needs of every program. Therefore, the Task Force's recommendation is to begin the transformation of writing at PSU by developing a University-wide assessment program that will give individual departments and programs specific information about the quality of their own students' writing. With program-specific feedback on the writing skills of program graduates, the conversation about what should be done to address student writing can occur at the department level. We believe that making decisions about student writing a departmental issue, subject to local control, is likely to have the best chance of producing solutions that combine faculty buy-in with effective outcomes.

The program we recommend is an in-house exit-level portfolio assessment jointly administered by WAC and the Office of Analysis, Planning, and Assessment using full-time PSU faculty (preferably tenured and tenure-seeking) as evaluators (raters).

A. Portfolio Content and Collection
We recommend the adoption of a writing portfolio as a graduation requirement for all students. Although we are aware that fiscal constraints will prevent reading all portfolios every year, we believe that the portfolio requirement (and the thought and action it will require from students) will help to create the culture of writing PSU is trying to promote. Therefore, we see the portfolio requirement as a positive step in its own right.

The portfolio should consist of 4000 words (approximately 12 double-spaced pages in Times New Roman 12 point) of finished draft previously submitted as part of the student's course work (excluding group projects). Items placed in the portfolio should be selected by the student with the stated portfolio evaluation criteria and any additional departmental requirements in mind. Items placed in the portfolio should have been written during the students' last 60 credit hours and should have earned a grade of C or above from the instructor to whom they were originally submitted. Other submission requirements should be developed as necessary in order to facilitate the collection of materials that best represent the student's writing skills at graduation.

We recommend the University-wide adoption of a service such as LiveText in order 1) to manage collection of, storage of, and access to portfolios, and 2) to tabulate assessment data.

We recommend that the Office of Planning, Analysis, and Assessment work with the Office of the Registrar and individual colleges or departments to develop an effective mechanism for ensuring student compliance with the portfolio requirement.

B. Sampling Methods

We recommend that student writing be assessed from every academic department and program offering a major on a regular basis in order to provide formative feedback to all colleges, departments, and programs. Assessing every student would provide us with the most reliable feedback; however, using appropriate sampling models, we should be able to provide programs and departments with adequate feedback about their students' writing performance without reading portfolios from every graduating senior every year.

Initially, we recommend a three-year cycle, phased in over three years, as follows.

Year One

College of Business and College of Education[8] introduce portfolio requirement, educate students and faculty, and collect portfolios. At the end of year one, assessment takes place for the Colleges of Business and Education.

Year Two

College of Technology introduces portfolio requirement, educates students and faculty, and collects portfolios. At the end of year two, assessment takes place for the College of Technology.

Colleges of Business and Education review assessment data from previous year, evaluate student writing skills against program goals, plan and begin implementing curricular adjustments as needed.

Year Three

College of Arts and Sciences introduces portfolio requirement, educates students and faculty, and collects portfolios. At the end of year three, assessment takes place for the College of Arts and Sciences.

College of Technology reviews assessment data from previous year, evaluates student writing skills against program goals, plans and begins implementing curricular adjustments as needed.

Colleges of Business and Education continue implementation of curricular adjustments.

This represents one complete cycle. In year four, assessment will occur again for the Colleges of Business and Education, giving those colleges an opportunity to evaluate the results of the curricular adjustments made during years two and three.

When funding permits, we recommend that assessment include all students in programs every three years, particularly in programs graduating fewer than 30 students per year. Initially (and until funding permits the inclusion of more students), we recommend a

---

[8] The rational for starting this cycle with the Colleges of Business and Education is that they are already using LiveText.

minimum of five students (or all graduates if fewer than five) or 15% of program graduates, whichever is greater.

We recommend that assessment occur at the end of every spring semester, drawing portfolios from students who graduate in the combined fall and spring semesters of the academic year.

C. The Assessment Process
We recommend that students should decide, in consultation with faculty, what writing samples are placed in the portfolio, but that any paper placed in the portfolio must be endorsed by the faculty of record. The "faculty of record" is the faculty member who assigned and graded the paper under consideration. "Endorsed" means that the faculty of record has agreed with the student that this paper would be appropriate for assessment purposes, that this paper should pass assessment, and that this is the paper turned in for a final grade in the course for which it was written. While self-selection of which papers go into the portfolio appears to go against the idea of random sampling, the concern is to examine what students identify as their best effort, not to examine student writing at any or all levels of development. We recognize that learning is a process that often results in stages of regression, especially as students tackle more complex projects in their writing. Moreover, the expectation of selecting their best work will help reinforce PSU writing values for both the student and the faculty of record.

We recommend the adoption of a single rater assessment process as follows. Because the work submitted to the portfolio will have been approved by the faculty of record, the faculty of record serves as a first rater. During assessment, all portfolios selected for inclusion will be read by one rater. Portfolios that earn a score of Meets Expectations will exit the rating process at that point. Portfolios scored Exceeds Expectations or Falls Below Expectations or No Credit will be read by a second rater to verify scoring.

This model was developed by Richard Haswell at Washington State University and has been checked for inter-rater reliability, which shows it to be as consistent as the two-rater system we used for our upper division writing assessment project associated with the PSU Performance Agreement with the Board of Regents. According to Bill Condon, former WAC director at Washington State University, about 15-20% of papers generally fall into the Falls Below Expectation range and about the same percent fall into the Exceeds Expectation range. With only 30 to 40% of papers requiring a second reading, this significantly lowers the cost for assessment.[9]

D. Selection and Training of Raters
We recommend that raters be drawn from the ranks of full-time faculty from across campus (preferably tenured and tenure-seeking). Like the portfolio requirement, we feel strongly that faculty participation in the assessment process is a positive good in its own

---

[9] For a more detailed explanation of this model, see *Beyond Outcomes: Assessment and Instruction within a University Writing Program*, editor Richard H. Haswell, Ablex Publishing, 2001.

right. Participating in the writing assessment process is a professional development opportunity that will substantially improve participants' understanding of writing, expectations for student writing, effective assignment design, and writing instruction. In addition, when faculty participate in assessment, they will become more conversant with PSU's writing values and the assessment process itself, which will undoubtedly carry over into their classroom practices.

We recommend that prospective raters participate in a 4-hour training workshop conducted by the WAC staff. The first 2-hour session is to become familiar with the rubric and its criteria; the second 2-hour session is to practice using the rubric on an assortment of papers. Successfully completing this training will qualify faculty to work as raters. Additionally, at the beginning of any assessment session, participants must take part in a norming session used to insure inter-rater reliability.

E. Staffing

Raters
We recommend training 14 raters initially, as this will give us a large enough pool for our assessment program even if some fail the training. In addition, we recommend that two new people be trained every year, as this will increase the number of faculty who are conversant with PSU's writing values and the assessment program and who can serve as resources in their departments.

Administration
We recommend that the assessment be administered jointly by the Office of Analysis, Planning, and Assessment and the directors of Writing Across the Curriculum.

F. Costs

Faculty raters should be paid for participating in assessment as well as training and norming sessions. The current hourly rate for assessment raters at PSU is $35 an hour. We recommend continuing this rate.

We also recommend half-time summer appointments for the WAC/Writing Center directors in order to conduct training and norming sessions, interpret and report results to individual departments and programs, assist programs in developing curricular responses to assessment data, and conduct faculty development workshops to assist faculty in carrying out departments' curricular changes.