The enthusiasm generated by initial writing across the curriculum workshops can be translated into lasting curricular change.

Translating Enthusiasm into Curricular Change

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Directors of writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs are agents of change. The change in faculty attitudes, including the enthusiasm generated by faculty workshops, is a well-documented outcome of such programs (Weiss and Peich, 1980; Fulwiler, 1984; Rose, 1979). But enthusiasm can wane; workshop faculty often move on or retire. How can program directors ensure that the workshops have some lasting effect on the curriculum? This chapter suggests how to translate faculty enthusiasm into curricular change once the workshops are over.

What Kinds of Curricular Change Are Needed?

What kinds of change are we WAC people after? The answer is far-reaching: more required writing classes, more writing required in existing classes. The ultimate goal of all WAC programs is to establish writing as a teaching and learning tool throughout the entire postsecondary curriculum, integrating it completely into every class and every discipline. We are out to change the world. But, while many of us keep this as our ultimate goal, we also recognize that it probably won't happen. The environment of academia has a strong and subtle undertow of resistance to change (Swanson-Owens, 1986), a resistance with many causes. Sometimes entire departments hold out against WAC efforts. I know, for

example, of a psychology department made up entirely of behaviorists; multiple-choice tests make a good deal of sense in their educational paradigm, while writing-to-learn assignments do not. And there is always a certain group of faculty from all departments whose teaching methods are set in concrete and whom revelation itself would not change. We should acknowledge the fact that some faculty will never agree that writing, like learning, is the province of all disciplines, and concentrate our energies where we know change can take place.

Where, then, should we concentrate on bringing about curricular change? I suggest we look at three specific areas in the curriculum: freshman composition, general education (or "core") courses, and upper-division writing-emphasis courses. All three areas present us with challenges and opportunities for change.

Freshman Composition. The first of these areas is easy to overlook in any WAC effort because it is so close to home. Writing across the curriculum is usually an outreach effort, missionary work in unexplored territory, working with the "other" rather than the "self." But our introductory composition courses are usually the ones we have the most control over and the ones that most (sometimes all) freshmen have to take. Making freshman composition a WAC course means rethinking our assumptions about its content.

Since the days of the Dartmouth Conference, the personal growth model of composition has gained hegemony; students write to know and understand themselves and to make sense of the world around them. I do not want to denigrate this "student-centered" approach, since I believe that the student-centered, rather than the teacher-centered, classroom is an important aspect of the teaching of writing. But the kind of writing assigned in this approach is usually the personal essay, a nineteenth-century belletristic form that requires an introspective writing process, a process much like that of creative writing. Students are expected to look in their hearts and write.

A WAC freshman composition course would include but not give preference to the personal essay and the writing process that goes with it. It would instead view writing as a social process and would include reading selections from all disciplines along with journal assignments where students would react to and make sense of those readings. Along with these writing-to-learn assignments, the course would include the types of writing most commonly required by other disciplines: summaries, critiques, short library research papers, laboratory reports. It would, in sum, become a course in which students come to know not only themselves but also the discourse conventions and expectations of the academic community of which they are now a part. In Elaine Maimon's (1983) phrase, it would introduce students into the ongoing scholarly conversation of the university.

Bringing about this sort of change is challenging because it means that those of us involved in writing programs must learn the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are involved with these writing tasks. We must work collaboratively with our colleagues in other disciplines in order to learn about their expectations, their discourse communities, their epistemologies. Some work in this area has already been done (Bazerman, 1981; Bizzell, 1982; Bruffee, 1986; Faigley and Hansen, 1985; Jolliffe, 1987), but we need to know more. Bringing about such change is also challenging because we must work within particular departmental and institutional frameworks that determine to a large extent what sort of curricular changes we can make. Enlisting the cooperation of the faculty who teach the composition courses needs to be given careful consideration.

General Education Courses. At many institutions across the country, general education programs are being rethought; the reform is broad enough to make headlines in the *New York Times* ("Changes Sweeping Universities' Curriculums," 1987). Distribution requirements at the lower-division level are changing, interdisciplinary courses are proliferating, old requirements abolished during the 1960s and 1970s are being revived. While the programs coming out of these reforms differ from institution to institution, one idea is common to almost all of the debates: a concern for students' critical thinking and higher-order reasoning skills. Because writing and thinking are so closely linked, it is natural that the place of writing in the general education curriculum should be part of these debates.

Those of us involved in WAC programs should be actively involved in the reform of general education requirements. We need to make sure that what we have learned from the last two decades of research in writing is part of the debate so that the revival of old requirements does not also mean the revival of the term paper as the only student writing assignment. Writing-to-learn assignments (such as the journal or reading log) need to be introduced to faculty involved in general education classes; this is especially important in universities where such classes are very large, since class size is one of the most common reasons faculty give for not including writing. That significant writing can be included in large classes has been proved in a number of institutions; Montana State University (Bean, Drenk, and Lee, 1982) is one example. But there are also successful alternatives to the model of designating certain large lecture classes as general education courses; George Mason University's Plan for Alternative General Education (PAGE) program, for example, offers lower-division students an interdisciplinary option for fulfilling their general education requirements, an option that uses writing to learn in every course (Nelson, 1986).

Upper-Division Writing-Emphasis Courses. These courses are usually

an introduction to writing in the professions; students learn the conventions of their chosen discourse communities—how to write like an engineer or historian or literary critic. Because of the need for expert knowledge, these courses are usually taught by someone in the particular field. Many such courses already exist; upper-division writing courses in history departments, for example, are established offerings at many institutions. In some cases, however, these courses now have to be set up, often as a result of a mandate for writing proficiency requirements from some higher authority (a state legislature or a board of regents), as has happened in the state of California. Nervous faculty in various disciplines then find themselves assigned to create a writing-intensive course. Those of us involved in WAC programs need to work with these faculty as they conceptualize the new courses, helping them to look not only at how professionals transmit knowledge in their field but also at how they create that knowledge through writing. Our challenge is to help them create courses that do not simply offer a "forms and formats" approach to writing in the professions but that examine writing and epistemology in each particular disciplinary context and that include writing to learn as part of the theoretical underpinnings. The writing across the curriculum program at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona has been particularly successful in helping faculty design such courses.

How Can We Bring About These Changes?

Before we can change the world, we must study it. WAC directors who want to bring about lasting change in the curriculum should take two steps before setting out to change things. First, they should study carefully the structure of their particular school. Where does the power flow from—that is, who will make sure that changes are implemented? If the school has a strong central administration, then key administrators must be made aware of the need for change in particular areas and must demonstrate administrative support for such changes through commitment of funds, provision of release time for a director of the WAC program, and vocal public support of the move toward change, If, on the other hand, there is a strong tradition of faculty power and governance, arguments and plans for change should be taken to the faculty senate.

Second, WAC directors should establish an informed network of faculty and administrators from all disciplines, people who can sit on key committees and argue for change within their own constituencies. These should be campus leaders and agents of change; because such people are usually among the first to sign up for faculty workshops and seminars, the WAC workshop usually forms the network core. WAC directors should also identify supportive deans and department chairs and get to know them (perhaps by offering a short workshop in a particular depart-

ment or division); they should attend faculty senate meetings and identify campus leaders who are potential supporters; and they should use formal and informal campus gatherings (such as luncheons, convocations, departmental seminars, and faculty days) to get to know the larger campus community and publicize the WAC program. Follow-up meetings of workshop members, to which other interested faculty and administrators are invited, help to keep the network informed and cohesive; copies of articles on WAC and on curricular change sent to network members also help to keep interest high.

Once WAC directors have determined the structure of their institutions and established a network of like-minded faculty and administrators, they should make sure that network members become members of key institutional committees. Here are some examples of committees that are central to any effort toward curricular change.

The Composition Committee. This kind of committee takes many forms; sometimes it exists within an English department, sometimes it is a campuswide committee, and sometimes it is a subset of a departmental curriculum committee. If at all possible, WAC directors themselves should be on the committee in question in order to have some influence on the content of freshman composition. Due to the lamentable fact that many introductory writing courses are taught by teaching assistants or by temporary faculty assigned to classes at the last minute, these courses tend to be text driven; because of lack of experience or preparation time, teachers often simply follow whatever book has been suggested for the class. It is crucial, then, if one wants to establish a WAC freshman composition course, to recommend or require a text that supports an emphasis on writing across the curriculum. It is becoming easier to find such texts, now that publishing companies have jumped on the WAC bandwagon; on the other hand, one must be cautious, since the WAC label has been pasted on readers that have simply added essays by a scientist or two, just as the "process" tag has been applied to rhetoric texts that have simply added a chapter on revising. Emphases on writing to learn and on the social contexts of writing are the hallmarks of a truly useful WAC text. Faculty involved in choosing composition texts should read Kathleen Welch's (1987) excellent article on the relationship of theory to writing pedagogy in textbook production.

If there is a committee that puts together a common syllabus for composition courses, then the wise WAC director will get on it or will find a network member who can help out; the common syllabus can be a powerful tool for helping instructors hired at the last minute or those new to teaching composition. Course descriptions for college catalogues are periodically updated; WAC directors should see to it that descriptions of the writing program include something about writing across the curriculum.

Finally, if there is some kind of preservice or in-service training for teachers of composition, WAC directors should make sure that information on writing across the curriculum is a part of this training. If there is no such program, it is time to think about setting one up.

The General Education Committee. On those campuses involved with the reform of the general education curriculum, this is an important committee. Alert WAC directors should make sure that several of their campus network members, especially campus leaders who command respect, are on this committee. There is a wealth of articles on how writing has been integrated into general education courses at various institutions; directors should feed this information to their network members on the general education committee, who can use it to keep the committee members informed. Directors should also make a guest appearance at one of the meetings to suggest specific changes. They should be sure to present not only the ideas but also suggestions for implementation, since some faculty are always skeptical about whether integrating writing will really work in *their* classes. It is best to prepare examples of how peer institutions have done it and to suggest that one's own institution can do even better. The goal is to obtain a consensus in this committee that general education courses should have a substantial writing component and that this component should be informed by all we have learned about writing and writing to learn in the past two decades. Assigning more term papers is not the goal here; writing to learn is. There should also be a committee with some capacity to oversee the changes, to certify proposed general education courses, and to monitor the inclusion of writing.

Departmental Committees Across Campus. There are many opportunities for curricular change within particular departments. Departmental curriculum committees are natural places for WAC campus network members; they can keep WAC directors posted as the curriculum is reexamined and can ask for information to distribute to their colleagues. Departmental self-studies and reviews are also good opportunities for network members to discuss the place of writing in the departmental curriculum. Some departments, especially in applied areas, have advisory committees made up of professionals in the field. One can check to see if these advisory groups have made any comments about the writing ability of the department's graduates. I know of a civil engineering department that was terribly chagrined by a letter from the chair of its advisory board lamenting the poor communication skills of the graduates he had hired; faculty embarrassment led to a careful examination of their curriculum and an eagerness to learn about current research in writing so that they could better prepare their students for their profession.

All-University Writing Committees. These committees are usually set up to coordinate various writing efforts across campus and to make sure

that proposed curricular changes actually take place. Often these committees are involved with placement or proficiency examinations. Wise WAC directors will work to ensure that these committees do not become punitive in nature, but instead establish positive programs informed by research on writing. It is crucial for committee members to understand the nature of writing development, to see the link between assessment and instruction, and to grasp the fact that, if they are to give us useful information, assessment measures should be direct (a piece of writing) instead of indirect (a grammar test). When discussing assessment with such committees, one should find a resident testing expert and make friendly overtures; such an ally is crucial to one's credibility. Outside consultants, such as Ed White from California State University, San Bernardino, carry even more weight with committees and are well worth inviting for a day on campus. White's (1985) book, *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, should be on the shelf of every WAC director who needs to help a committee deal with the issues of assessment and outcomes measures.

WAC Advisory Committee. If a WAC advisory committee does not exist, WAC directors should set one up and, if possible, chair it. The most powerful and influential people on campus should sit on this committee; they should be given a good deal of power and press but not much work, other than to dispense advice to the chair. The existence of the committee is symbolic, showing that the entire university supports the writing across the curriculum effort, but its presence can also be enormously useful when dealing with timorous departments or faculty. One memorandum to a department chair from a committee composed, in part, of deans from that chair's division can sometimes bring about sudden and wondrous departmental enthusiasm for learning more about writing. Budget problems that get snagged in other committees can be brought to this committee's attention and can often be resolved on the spot. But its most important function is to act in an advisory capacity; WAC directors need the seasoned opinions of some of the wisest people on campus as they move toward change.

Final Thoughts

Some readers may find the suggestions made here a bit Machiavellian. Certainly they are not meant to be suggestions for how one might build a power base within an institution, but rather for how to change the university curriculum for the better. But they are indeed political in one sense: The WAC director needs to be aware of institutional issues that many academics prefer to ignore—issues concerning power and who wields it, turf and who owns it, change and who wants it. We need to be alert and aware, but not coercive; the best change is one that takes place by consensus. By thinking carefully about the issues raised in this chapter

and by mapping out a coherent plan of action, WAC directors can help bring about precisely that sort of curricular change.

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