CHAPTER 2.

THE NEW GRASS ROOTS: FACULTY RESPONSES TO THE WRITING-ENRICHED CURRICULUM

Chris M. Anson

North Carolina State University

Although assessment is a crucial component of the WEC model, studies of how faculty respond to its implementation are needed, especially by outsiders who can impartially analyze its successful uptake. This chapter describes an interview-based study of eight faculty—four at a small liberal arts college and four at a large state-supported university—representing five departments all in the formative stages of WEC implementation. Analysis based on grounded theory surfaced five themes that interviewees consistently described, and that appear to be important considerations in the development of the WEC model and in the inductive learning of threshold concepts for WAC: the role of cross-curricular activities such as faculty workshops; the importance of departmental autonomy and self-directed innovation; the usefulness of lower-stakes, learning-based writing; the perception of improvement in student writing ability; and the transformative effects of WEC as a pedagogical and curricular initiative.

In the introduction to this volume, I describe the core attributes of the WEC model—collaboratively created with Pamela Flash—which are variously instantiated in the programs described throughout the chapters. Typically, an institution decides to adopt the model and sets to work with the help of writing experts, often initially recruiting two or three departments that seem the most eager to participate. Theoretically, this approach incentivizes faculty and lets them collectively determine the most appropriate ways to build or revise their curriculum, engage in faculty-development efforts, and track their progress using disciplinarily and departmentally appropriate kinds of assessment. Articulation efforts usually coordinated by the leader(s) of the WEC program help individual departments to learn from each other. Departments not yet engaged can see how WEC advantages and empowers those that are, and one by one additional departments and programs can follow their lead.

As Galin explains in Chapter 5 of this volume and in Cox et al. (2018), sustainability is the lifeblood of WAC programs. If early efforts bear no fruit—if faculty or administrators resist, become complacent, or sense that the barriers are too great to continue—the lore of those experiences can soon poison the campus and subvert activity in further departments. As contributors to this collection explain, the work of WEC implementation is challenging and slow but potentially transformative in the way that writing is supported within departments that have joined the effort. However, because WEC programs are still relatively new compared with other curricular forms of WAC and WID, there has been little inquiry into how faculty feel about the model as it is being implemented—in spite of the plentiful assessment activity in established programs as departments determine how effectively their curricular revisions and innovations are affecting student writing. Of course, WEC leaders themselves, myself among them, are especially close to their own work and can speak with authority about faculty attitudes and uptake of the initiative. But by virtue of their institutional investment, they may lose some objectivity as they advocate for their efforts. Hearing directly and dispassionately from faculty at other institutions that have initiated WEC programs can help WEC leaders to anticipate challenges and adopt successful strategies.

It is also important to understand what happens in the early stages of a WEC program's development, rather than at institutions, like North Carolina State University and the University of Minnesota, that have well-established WEC programs that began many years ago and have become part of the institutional culture. How do faculty initially respond? Do views of writing within a department evolve? Do teaching practices change? Does student writing improve?

This chapter reports on an interview-based study of departments in two quite different institutions working to establish new WEC programs: a research-extensive state-supported university and a small private liberal arts and sciences college. Through interviews with faculty, it documents the consequences of implementation in several departments that were among the earliest to experiment with WEC at these institutions. An analysis of the interviews revealed several themes that emerged consistently across departments at both institutions and, while in need of further validation, appear to be important to the creation and sustenance of WEC programs and demonstrate their effectiveness in changing faculty attitudes toward writing and methods to support it.

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND AND INTERVIEW DETAILS

At the time of this inquiry, both institutions were about two years into their WEC implementation process. That process began with a campus-wide agree-

ment to adopt the WEC model, the appointment of a writing expert to help coordinate it, and an understanding that departments would take the initiative to work on their own curriculum and courses with the support of the coordinator. Several departments in each institution had engaged in faculty-development activities (including multi-day workshops) led by outside WAC experts and by the WEC campus coordinator and had made strides in articulating their goals and outcomes for student writing, studying and revising their curricula, and improving individual courses.

Pound Ridge College[1] is a small, private liberal arts and sciences college founded as a co-educational institution in the mid-nineteenth century. Located in a rural area less than an hour's drive from the nearest major city (but still primarily residential, with 85% of students living on campus), it enrolls approximately 1,600 undergraduate students and around 1,000 graduate students. It offers 35 majors, with the highest enrollments in business, sociology, and psychology. There are approximately 150 full-time faculty, almost all holding the terminal degree in their field; class size averages 15 students.

The WEC program at Pound Ridge had its genesis in a broader curricular overhaul that focused strongly on student writing. However, the version of WEC established at Pound Ridge presented departments with a choice: they could either create one or two writing-intensive (WI) courses exclusively for their majors (such as the nationally popular low-enrollment senior capstone seminar), or they could adopt a total-curriculum approach in which they would "infuse" writing into all the courses in the department. Unlike institutions that first created a writing-intensive program as a credit-bearing requirement and later supplemented that program with a WEC program designed eventually to take its place, Pound Ridge decided to give departments the freedom to discuss and choose their approach from the beginning. The writing-intensive option allowed departments to offer and control their own WI courses and enrollments without the need to serve the interests of the broader academic curriculum. The total-curriculum option provided flexibility for departments to decide how and where writing would occur across all their courses. All three departments whose faculty were interviewed had chosen the total-curriculum approach. At Pound Ridge, the appointed leader of the WEC program was a faculty member from the English Department who had a background in discipline-based writing and experience leading faculty workshops and was fully acquainted with the WEC approach.

Cowling State University is a large research-extensive university with a student enrollment of about 29,000. It has a history of writing across the curric-

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1   The names of both institutions are pseudonyms, as are the names of interviewees.

ulum stretching back many years, but the effort was loosely focused on general faculty development and never achieved cross-campus legitimacy and widespread adoption. Before the establishment of the WEC program, the provost had appointed a task force to discuss concerns about student writing and oral communication and explore possibilities for a campus-wide effort, mirroring some of the processes described in Gary Blank's chapter in this collection about the history that led to the establishment of the WEC program at North Carolina State University in the late-1990s.

After much discussion, Cowling State established a new departmentally focused WEC program to strengthen students' written and oral communication abilities across the campus. This program was initially located in a division of the university that oversees general education. The titular leader of the broader WEC effort, who came from an academic department outside of English or composition, headed this division and oversaw the management and funding of the program. Plans for Cowling State's program included support for faculty development and implementation in the context of individual departments. Because the university acknowledged the need for someone with more specific expertise in cross-disciplinary communication, a coordinator with a background in composition and WAC/WID was hired to help, but only after outside WAC experts were brought to campus over the period of approximately a year to help establish the foundation for the program.

The WEC programs at both institutions were created in the spirit of the principles and operating procedures described in the Introduction to this volume: departmentally-focused, faculty-driven, bottom-up, data-enhanced, designed to draw out and make explicit the tacit disciplinary knowledge of faculty, and supported by the expertise of a campus writing coordinator acquainted with WEC-related practices such as what Sheriff, in Chapter 6 of this volume, calls "rhetorical listening."

Eight interviewees, all tenured full-time faculty with several to many years of employment at their campus, agreed to participate, four from each institution (see Table 2.1). At Pound Ridge, these represented three departments. At Cowling State, interviewees came from two departments because at the time it was not possible to recruit an interviewee from the third department that was part of the inaugural year of the program. Interviewees represented both gender and racial diversity. This study focuses entirely on the voices of the faculty and does not represent the views of the WEC coordinators on each campus. However, faculty interviewees made abundantly clear the importance of those coordinators to the successful implementation of their WEC programs.

Interviews were semi-structured (Given, 2008), based on a common set of questions I posed to participants with latitude for follow-through or clarification:

- What's the history of the WEC effort in your department?
- How specifically did you work on this initiative? What happened?
- What do you think the consequences of this effort have been in your department?
- How did faculty respond to the effort?
- What challenges did you face?
- Have you tried to assess how well the initiative is working?

Table 2.1. Interviewees and disciplines at the two institutions

Pound Ridge College	Cowling State University
Prof. Joanne Smith, political science	Prof. Harold Jones, social work
Prof. Courtney Sykes, biology	Prof. Paul White, social work
Prof. John Holcomb, chemistry	Prof. Michael Pruett, sociology
Prof. Janet Sims, political science	Prof. Dorothy Hackett, sociology

At the start, I provided a scripted overview that explained the purpose of the interviews and the fact that I was recording them; that assured anonymity (which was also important in allowing the interviewees to speak freely); and that asked participants, when it wasn't obvious, to say whether a response reflected the general feelings or experiences of the department or was a personal opinion without evidence that it was shared.

Interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using the constant-comparison method (Stern, 2008) from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). In this method, pieces of data (in this case, statements or assertions in the transcripts) are continuously compared with all other pieces of data, eventually yielding theories or observations "grounded" in the data. The method involves sorting and labeling the data based on specific properties. Analysis is primarily inductive, allowing patterns or themes to "emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Based on the nature of the data, it wasn't necessary to code the transcripts more formally, which would ordinarily be required in a mixed-method or quantitative study. The unit of analysis was any self-contained assertion, more than one of which could appear within a sentence or which could encompass several sentences.

Analysis yielded a number of overlapping observations, i.e., ones mentioned in similar ways by faculty in three or more departments and which therefore rose to the level of themes. In Figure 2.1, these themes are listed in order of strength (shown to the left of the figure), which refers to the number of interviewees who mentioned them at both institutions: strongest themes appear toward the bottom. Interestingly, the stronger the theme on this basis, the more likely it reflect-

ed the collective response of the department rather than the view of the individual interviewee. For this reason, a second, parallel way the themes are ordered is based on the extent to which they affected the individual faculty member or the collective interests of the department (shown to the right of the figure): themes reflecting the most faculty agreement within interviewees' departments appear toward the bottom.

The ordering process in Figure 2.1 is illustrated in a remark made by two of the interviewees from Pound Ridge College. Both said that they were incentivized to attend multi-day general faculty-development sessions, prior to starting their departmental WEC initiative, because their participation earned a modest a stipend (although both also said it was not the main reason they attended). The mention of the stipends was not entirely idiosyncratic, but also not collectively observed across the interviews; and the stipends were more individually important to the interviewees than, at least without further inquiry, to their entire department. As a result, they were not included in Figure 2.1. Of course, although this observation did not rise to the level of a theme, it still has value in WEC discussions because it highlights the possible role of extrinsic rewards for engaging in WEC-related activities, which could also include administrative recognition of participation, course release, or even the conviviality occasioned by food and refreshments (see the descriptions of stipends in Flash, Chapter 1, and Galin, Chapter 8 of this volume).

Each of the emergent themes in Figure 2.1 will be described and supported with relevant quotations from the interviews with the faculty at Pound Ridge and Cowling State (which are abbreviated PR and CS).

THE ROLE OF CROSS-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

At both Pound Ridge and Cowling State, departmental agreements to embark on WEC programs had their genesis and inspiration in higher-level planning groups as well as campus-wide faculty development opportunities (workshops, seminars, and "kick-off" presentations) led by outside experts and by the appointed director of the WEC program. On both campuses, members of different departments worked together to discuss the role of writing in their curricula and disciplines and overcome challenges the faculty perceived as they considered a stronger focus on the development of students' writing abilities. Several interviewees pointed to these experiences as important motivators to then work on writing within their own departments. As Joanne Smith (PR) explained:

> Part of it was the incentive of having [an outside WAC expert]
> come and talk to the general faculty . . . and I think that sort

of sparked people's interests. [The WAC director also] did these two-day workshops in which we used some of the materials that [the outside expert] had brought to [the Director's] attention.

Courtney Sykes (PR) pointed out that as a result of all of the Biology faculty attending the campus-wide workshops put on by the WEC director, the department then met to discuss their own curriculum. Those early discussions focused on the lack of support students were given as they completed higher-stakes assignments, and led to ideas about how the faculty could "stage [their] traditional assignments—the traditional lab reports, the end-of-the-semester paper—and break [them] down into pieces." The workshops, in other words, provided new ways for members of the Biology Department to think about students' experiences with writing, which inspired them to embark in earnest on WEC implementation. John Holcomb, in Pound Ridge's chemistry department, made a similar point: "The programs that the [director] put on really helped raise my awareness and the [outside expert's] seminar helped particularly with regard to, you don't have to be a first-year writing teacher in order to be able to do this."

Number of observations	Collective impact	

Themes	Relevance to WEC Development
Cross-curricular activities	Campus-wide workshops and planning groups inform and incentivize faculty prior to WEC implementation
Autonomy and self-directed innovation	Department members study and improve their own curricula, courses, and pedagogy
Writing to learn	Faculty discover and embrace the relationship of writing and learning
Improvement in student ability	Prior to formal assessment, there is impressionistic evidence of stronger student writing
Transformative effects	Collective change is seen positively

Figure 2.1. Themes by strength and individual-to-collective impact (least to most)

Interviewees at Cowling State recounted similar experiences. Half a dozen faculty in the Department of Social Work attended a general orientation to WAC led by two outside experts. As Paul White explains it,

The initial team that went got very excited about the possibilities that writing across the curriculum would offer to us. It would give us some common language to work with and also help us to think a little bit more about measuring the writ-

ing. Everyone came back excited, and the next time training
became available more people wanted to attend because of the
excitement of the initial group.

Confirming this account, Harold Jones said that after participating in a workshop, "the faculty saw right away how they could go ahead and do things with regard to assignments and begin to implement techniques further on, and that created some synergy." As the other faculty saw how the workshop attendees "were embracing certain techniques, they wanted to do the same." The process became, as Jones put it, "a little bit contagious," and the department formally began its implementation of WEC.

Both Michael Pruett and Dorothy Hackett (CS), along with come colleagues, also participated in a two-day campus-wide workshop designed to inspire departments to adopt the WEC approach. Pruett remarked that after the workshop, "we realized what this could do and what the potential was and then brought it to our department and sold our colleagues on it." Hackett also pointed to "how useful" the two-day workshop was for subsequent departmental planning.

As Flash describes the WEC approach at the University of Minnesota in Chapter 1 of this volume, consultations usually begin with more focused work within departments, precipitated by the WEC leader's insertion into departmental meetings to explore instructional support for student writing. Based on the experiences of faculty at Cowling State and Pound Ridge College, interdisciplinary, campus-wide orientations to WAC, especially at institutions that have had little prior experience rethinking the role of writing in discipline-based instruction, appear to be an important and valuable way to begin the effort, incentivizing some departments to start their context-specific work. But such experiences need to be expertly planned. A poorly coordinated workshop or an uninspiring and ill-delivered presentation can sour departments to the prospect of implementing a WEC program. Some institutions, of course, may have already provided plentiful faculty-development opportunities that have "primed" the campus for the initiation of a WEC program or may, like NC State, continuously offer those opportunities alongside departmental WEC development. The WEC program at the University of Minnesota followed years of general faculty development in WAC stretching back to my own ad hoc workshops there in the late 1980s and 1990s, and the eventual creation of a full-fledged writing-intensive program. The University of Vermont, as described by Harrington and colleagues in Chapter 9 of this volume, historically relied on a previous national leader in WAC to "cultivate and organize grassroots individual and departmental attention to writing." Similarly, Galin in Chapter 8 of this volume explains the

historical importance of faculty workshops he conducted, starting in 2004, to the development of WEC at Florida Atlantic University. These histories suggest the need for further inquiry into the relationship between general cross-disciplinary faculty development in WAC (historical or contemporaneous, successful or not) and the uptake of the WEC model, as well as the relationship between intradepartmental and interdepartmental experiences.

Similar to campus-wide workshops and presentations focusing on writing, certain kinds of cross-disciplinary planning groups and task forces can also provide conceptual frameworks to inspire the beginning of WEC within departments. Two of the respondents participated in such groups prior to the establishment of the WEC program on their campus. Courtney Sykes (PR) explained that after attending meetings of the college-wide WEC planning committee, she would "come back and talk to everybody in the [biology] department about where the planning was going," which then led to critical decisions within her department. Similarly, Dorothy Hackett (CS) was a member of a task force on communication across the curriculum that considered several models before settling on WEC (similar to how the WAC committee described by Galin in Chapter 8 of this volume chose the WEC model for their QEP-inspired plan):

> We were really attracted to the departmental model, where different departments would in sequence implement these kinds of processes at the departmental level and try to think about, you know, spreading this idea across the curriculum and across the campus in that way, one department at a time, basically. . . . And it seemed like a good idea for me to volunteer my department. So we started this process as one of the first pilot departments for the communication-across-the-curriculum departmental model here.

Although interviewees described their participation in terms of its effects on their own interest in the WEC approach, their experiences appear to have influenced their colleagues as they moved forward. In light of these positive influences, one factor to consider in the creation of WEC programs, especially in their initial stages, is whether members of pilot departments are involved in broader, cross-curricular planning, where common concerns can be discussed alongside those that are specific to particular disciplines or curricula. Ideally, if more than one member of a department participates in a pre-WEC planning group, the multivocal nature of their subsequent work within their department could have stronger persuasive value. Importantly, however, such groups need to be seen as

advocating for and representing faculty interests rather than those of higher-level administrators creating plans to be imposed from above.

THE ROLE OF AUTONOMY AND SELF-DIRECTED INNOVATION

The principle of autonomy plays a central role in the departmental approach. As Flash argues in Chapter 1 of this collection, WEC is a "tested strategy for putting control of writing instruction and assessment into the hands of people best positioned to make informed, locally relevant decisions—namely, a department's faculty." Buy-in comes from the freedom to do with writing what makes most sense in the context of the department, its goals for students, its curriculum, and other factors. Unconstrained by specific institutional and curricular expectations, departments articulate their goals and outcomes and design their own processes for weaving writing into their curriculum. Freedom to choose implementation and assessment methods motivates them to action because it encourages creativity and engagement in the process. This theme, clearly articulated in the interviews, focused on how departments adopted the model and took control, but acknowledged the importance of ongoing support from the WEC director, the upper administration, and others.

Having considered different approaches to implementing WAC, the interviewees tied their commitment to WEC to the opportunity for independent decision-making and self-direction. Paul White (CS) explained that he didn't think WEC would be successful "if we were trying to make this an add-on to the existing curriculum. . . . But if you develop communication objectives for every course and they are progressive, then everyone seems to be on board with that." As Harold Jones (CS) explained, it was effective for his department because "if it was a very traditional model where everyone had been in their places and all of a sudden they [the administration] are coming in and they're saying 'OK, go ahead and take this on,' I don't know how all that would have worked. Having it imposed from the top down here . . . I would have no confidence of anyone taking it seriously." Echoing Jones's sentiments, Paul White explained that in contrast to the WEC approach, creating writing-intensive courses would feel "like a real top-down kind of thing" because of the need to adhere to syllabus criteria usually imposed by a university committee or other governing group.

Similar comparisons led Dorothy Hackett (CS) to "absolutely" believe that WEC was preferable because of how it affected faculty buy-in:

> The fact that we as a department got to define what were the
> writing and speaking outcomes we wanted for our students

and then figure out how to get there—that made a big differ-
ence in terms of faculty buy-in. It wasn't just one more thing
we have to do or one more report we have to fill out. It was
really the fact that it was something that was useful to them
in a way that it wouldn't have if it had been sent down from
on high.

This sense of ownership in the process appears to have flowed across the
department; as Hackett put it, "We have very good participation across all the
different ranks of faculty." In similarly praising the WEC approach, John Hol-
comb (PR) described how he and his colleagues "sat down as a department,"
took control of their own curriculum, and committed to weaving writing into
every course: "We basically decided that writing ought to be something that is
across the four years, that is across the curriculum. And so we took that type of
approach in an attempt to incorporate some kind of writing in just about every
course that our majors take."

In addition to these and other positive general statements, the advantages
of departmental ownership were evidenced in the interviewees' descriptions of
their self-directed departmental activities. As Dorothy Hackett (CS) explained,
the Department of Sociology decided to collectively analyze their curriculum to
pinpoint the role of writing and oral communication in different courses:

We've done a lot of things along the way. We have done an
audit of all our courses by doing syllabus examination about
what writing was actually occurring and what speaking was
occurring in different courses. We mapped them all our
into a great big matrix on big giant pieces of paper to try to
see where we maybe were missing some things or where we
had too much of certain kinds of writing. We've had several
faculty retreats around this idea, thinking about what is it we
really want our students to get out of communication activi-
ties within the sociology major and within our coursework
more generally, and really made that departmental effort over
time to think more strategically about how we are using these
activities.

According to Courtney Sykes, before adopting the WEC approach, the bi-
ology department at Pound Ridge thought about hiring a specialist to teach
writing courses, which would increase attention to writing but relieve the rest of
the faculty of the responsibility. But with the help of the WEC coordinator and
experience in faculty workshops, she and her colleagues "sat down and looked

at all of our courses together within our bio department meetings," which led them to build significant amounts of writing into all their courses, focusing especially on "staging" the major assignments, "breaking them down into pieces." This soon led to the revision of courses for non-majors as well, so that writing "saturated" the entire biology curriculum—and removed the idea of a specialist from consideration.

The common WEC process of mapping a curriculum and analyzing the place of writing within it often reveals gaps and inconsistences in coverage and writing experience, as one of our Natural Resources departments at North Carolina State University discovered when, with our help, they found that three courses were assigning students to write a resume—a genre that does not scaffold in disciplinary complexity and therefore needs no iterations of support. Subsequently, the resume was dropped from two courses in favor of other genres, enhancing students' experience. Curricular mapping also reveals the sequence of writing throughout the major and the coordination of writing across required and elective courses. Joanne Smith (PR) explained that the WEC-focused conversations in her department led to an understanding that the existing focus on junior-level writing "was way too late in the discipline to begin to teach them how to write in the discipline. We scrapped that idea entirely and started looking at all our courses" based on more clearly defined learning outcomes. This resulted in the addition of writing where it was weakly represented and a "beefing up" of the nature of writing in courses where it was already assigned. More specific genres were developed for pre-law students, such as assignments focusing on legal reasoning; for students concentrating in public policy, such as policy briefs; and for political theory and philosophy students, such as critical and analytical essays. Similarly, the Department of Social Work at Cowling State inventoried their curriculum for the articulation of outcomes and how they were being supported. As Harold Jones (CS) put it, "We've looked at all the courses in the undergraduate curriculum. In every course, we have some kind of communication objective now. So as the student moves through the social work curriculum, they get assignments in courses that build on what was taught in previous courses, all the way through." (See also Anson & Dannels, 2009, for an example of curricular mapping in a department of food, bioprocessing, and nutrition science.)

One interesting consequence of the WEC model is the way it stimulates thinking about other aspects of instruction and curricular design. For example, in describing the effects of WEC implementation in the Department of Political Science at Pound Ridge, Janet Sims explained that the focus on writing soon opened up other possibilities for curricular innovation, such "experimentation with learning communities and interdisciplinary courses" that she and her colleagues felt improved their major:

> Each piece of the curriculum feeds the others, and all of our
> conversations are ending up with a much better final product,
> if we can call the students the final product, because we have
> a lot of discussions and debates . . . cross-fertilization, I guess
> that's the word I'm looking for. I actually think what we're
> doing with our curriculum is pretty remarkable. . . . The writ-
> ing in the disciplines is really feeding everything. The writing
> informs everything else. I actually think that with very few
> resources, we are doing some really excellent work.

Taking control of writing in their own departments also appears to affect
faculty advocacy for WEC more broadly across the institution. Janet Sims ex-
plained that interdepartmental workshops put on by Pound Ridge's faculty-de-
velopment office allowed members of departments implementing the WEC
approach to "spread the news and encourage others to come to subsequent
workshops, so it gets out there. . . . And there are a lot of conversations that also
happen informally."

In discussing their self-directed work as part of the WEC initiative, it was
important for most of the interviewees to recognize the role of the WEC coordi-
nator on their campus. At the time of the interviews, for social work at Cowling
State the need for support was especially acute in the process of assessment, where
they were getting significant assistance from the WEC director. For sociology at
Cowling State, as Dorothy Hackett explains, "having a central resource person
whose specialization is in how to teach writing available to us . . . having some
structure that we can fall back on when we need some additional help, has made
the departmental model work well. Without that, I think we might have felt a
little adrift." As the contributions to this collection all demonstrate, the role of
what Flash describes in Chapter 1 as a "skilled WAC consultant, someone out-
side the discipline and outside the department," is a crucial component to the
success of WEC programs. Those "skills," which are not the focus of this study
but are described throughout this collection, should not be underestimated.

THE USE OF WRITING AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING

A strong theme to emerge across all the interviews and collectively shared within
departments was how writing enhances students' learning of the discipline—
how writing can, as Fulwiler and Young put it, become "a tool for discovering,
for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding" (1982, p. x). Although
writing to learn has been a central part of the writing-across-the-curriculum
movement from its inception (see Applebee, 1985; Britton et al., 1975; Emig,

1977; Herrington, 1981; Odell, 1980), the improvement of students' "skills" of formal academic and disciplinary writing continues to define the purpose of many programs. The importance of the relationship between writing and learning was especially apparent in interviewees' remarks about lower-stakes, "input-based" assignments (see Anson, 2017).

Before the implementation of WEC at both institutions, the faculty in the five departments in this study were not familiar with this orientation—writing was associated with papers that reflected the consequences of learning rather than as a way into learning, and that were expected to be written formally and were formally evaluated. After the interviewees participated in faculty-development workshops on both campuses, writing to learn became an important part of WEC planning and was strongly integrated into coursework and the design of departments' writing-enriched curricula. Courtney Sikes (PR) explained that lower-stakes writing was "very new" to all of the faculty and an important component in their curricular redesign. For the political science department at Pound Ridge, the idea of lower-stakes writing also had a major impact. As Joanne Smith put it, "Once we implemented [WEC], every single person in my department is using short writing exercises . . . we've seen it be enormously effective across every single class in our department." These sentiments were echoed by her colleague Janet Sims, who said that the faculty had "made great use of lower-stakes writing assignments" and described the concept of writing to learn "as a sort of revelation to all of us," leading to the widespread integration of writing-to-learn assignments across the entire department. Even in John Holcomb's chemistry department, whose curriculum "look[s] down the road to the careers students are going to occupy" and therefore focuses on the need for students "to be able to communicate their ideas in writing, orally, and visually," the faculty reconceptualized lab reports as a kind of lower-stakes writing designed to help students to learn experimental methods, causes and effects, and principles of chemistry.

The interest in writing to learn was also a manifestation of a broader conceptual change in faculty understanding of writing. As Harold Jones (CS) explained,

> In part [WEC] is about writing and communication skills. But more fundamentally and at the department level, it's about helping our students learn, and what do we want them to be able to do by the time they graduate, having studied sociology, and how can we use writing and oral communication to get them there. It's about substance and content as well as skills. As soon as we started to frame our discussion in that way, people's initial hesitation that "oh, I'm not trained to teach writing, I'm not trained to teach communication and

this is one more thing I have to worry about when I grade"—
once we were able to shift that mindset to this is something
that we integrate into what we do, to let us do better, to teach
better and for our students to learn more, that really opened
it up.

This view was also evident in Dorothy Hackett's (CS) reflection on the
broader role of writing in the Sociology curriculum:

For a lot of people it's been a really nice shift to think about
writing and speaking in the classroom is not learning to write
and learning to speak, it's writing to learn. And I think that's
made a big difference in the way a lot of people approach
creating their classes. It's been really positive across the board.

IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In addition to enhancing students' learning of subject matter, an important goal
of any WAC program is for students to leave their university and their depart-
ment with improved communication abilities. This assumption often drives
the stated rationales or missions of WAC programs because, as Kinkead has
reminded us, writing is "one area most frequently targeted in accountability and
assessment conversations" (1997, p. 37). A key component of the WEC mod-
el, therefore, involves continuous assessment of student writing ability, but like
the development of goals and outcomes, and the choice of specific pedagogical
and curricular strategies to realize them, assessment works from the bottom up,
"based on what the *faculty* in the department believe should be the abilities
of students who graduate with a degree in that discipline" (Anson, 2006, pp.
108-109). Consequently, the means of assessment will vary. In a small depart-
ment that tracks its graduates' employment carefully, alumni or even employer
surveys could be one means of assessing the effectiveness of the WEC program.
(The Department of Social Work at Cowling State, for example, gets "a lot of
community feedback" about students' writing and oral communication—how
"students need to be able to do progress notes for their patients better, students
would do better if they knew how to form an argument to advocate for a certain
policy change.") In another department whose graduates go off in a hundred di-
rections, such a method would be too challenging and unproductive to pursue.

At the point of the interviews, the Department of Social Work at Cowling
State was just gearing up to do "a first big assessment" of how effectively the
WEC program had worked but had not yet started. Only the biology depart-

ment at Pound Ridge had conducted any formal assessment of student writing that could gauge the effectiveness of their WEC activities (an analysis of student capstone projects, which revealed that the lower end of the scale of quality had improved significantly and that students felt "better prepared for the capstone than they used to be"). Yet the anecdotal evidence from both institutions suggested that once departments started implementing the WEC approach, improvements were noticeable in student writing, largely as a result of changes in teaching behavior. In Janet Smith's (PR) department, because of a significant increase in student writing and a strong emphasis on peer review, the writing "did get better. I mean, it was great for the students because they didn't go out of [their majors] saying 'I'm a bad writer. I know how to write now.'" Summing up the overall effects of her department's WEC-related work, Smith claimed that it "dramatically improved their writing." John Holcomb (PR) remarked that "writing has definitely improved. I've been teaching for 41 years. The papers are quite good, really. We used to get some really atrocious papers, and that doesn't happen anymore." The political science department at Pound Ridge came to the same conclusion. As Janet Sims put it, "we have actually seen improvement. We can really see the difference. . . . The students who were doing the senior seminar this year [had] pretty good projects and much more skill in writing than we had seen in previous years."

Interviewees also described the ways that their WEC programs had started to affect students' attitudes toward writing and their self-efficacy. In Dorothy Hackett's (CS) view, she and her colleagues "definitely have seen" a change in the student culture with respect to writing. For example, she soon found that students learned the value of peer review in a required core course that had been restructured as a result of the department's writing-enriched curriculum:

> I've had a number of students from that course come and tell me, "Now I see why we did peer review in my sophomore-level class; we're going to have to do it in this class when we're writing these big papers and it really makes a difference." So they're seeing the connections across the courses, they're seeing different kinds of new activities in new places that they hadn't seen before. And they're feeling like they see how it's connected and how it's building in a way that we certainly never had before—that *we* had never thought about that way.

Although the faculty from the Department of Social Work at Cowling State were not able to say whether student writing had improved yet, both interviewees saw tangible evidence that WEC was affecting instruction. Paul White explained that their work was "making a difference in terms of how we teach."

As a result, he believed that because writing was not something "added on to the courses" but integrated into them, it was "not a matter of saying that writing across the curriculum is the thing that's made the difference" in students' overall achievement. Echoing this view, Harold Jones (CS) mentioned that "In [our] culture, what I pick up on is around faculty members. They're more likely to say that embracing these techniques is all part of me becoming a better teacher and a better professor." As the department began working on appropriate assessment methods, they realized how "threaded" writing and communication were throughout the curriculum, suggesting the challenge (or questioning the wisdom) of pulling them apart from other aspects of students' learning. More tangibly, both Jones and White were seeing increased confidence in students arising from changes in faculty behaviors such as "multiple opportunities to get feedback and to assess themselves," and also as a result of writing across courses.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF WEC

The WEC approach has been described as potentially "transformative" (Anson & Dannels, 2009; Bastian, 2014; Flash, 2016; and, in this volume, Flash, Chapter 1; Yancey, Chapter 3; and Luskey & Emery, Chapter 4). As Luskey and Emery argue, a prerequisite to such transformation is the acquisition of threshold writing concepts, which they study at points of "liminality," or stages of "conceptual transition" that offer insights into the way that faculty are developing through their work on writing-enriched curricula. Liminality, they argue, "is no guarantee of transformation, [but] it is the catalyst if such a transformation is to occur." As I have claimed elsewhere, the most important threshold concepts for writing across the curriculum are that writing is shaped within disciplinary and other contexts; that it serves social and rhetorical purposes; that it can be used both to explore and to learn as well as to communicate to others; that instructionally it must rely on shared responsibilities across the disciplines; that students must to some extent "learn anew" in new communities of practice and cannot "transfer" their abilities effortlessly; and that becoming a more proficient writer is a long, developmental process (Anson, 2015).

As Sheriff points out in Chapter 6 of this volume, helping faculty in the disciplines to acquire these and other threshold concepts associated with writing may be one of the greatest challenges to change because the faculty may struggle even to "describe specific ways of writing, thinking, and researching that they expect of graduates in their majors." As evidenced in their comments, the interviewees' experience with the WEC approach in their departments appears to have inductively helped them and their colleagues to acquire these central threshold concepts associated with the principles of writing across the curriculum. Interviewees described

the way that their departments had restructured their curricula and changed their courses to more accurately link writing to the work of their disciplines and view entry-level writing courses not as "inoculation" centers to "fix" student writing but as the foundation for what would follow in the disciplines. By linking writing more strongly to the goals of their disciplines, they also began creating more authentic, socially purposeful writing assignments that looked ahead to the rhetorical and informational work of their students' careers. In what some of them described as a "revelation," the interviewees pointed to their enhanced understanding of how lower-stakes writing can strengthen students' learning without creating additional evaluative burdens. They also spoke about the collective efforts of their colleagues to strengthen students' writing and pay more attention to it in their courses, without relying on outside entities to do it for them or to tell them what to do. This commitment demonstrated an understanding that writing is highly situated and that when contexts differ from each other, it becomes the responsibility of faculty in the disciplines to guide and mentor their students and help them to learn situated genres and communication practices. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the interviews reflected an understanding that writing is not acquired once, that improvement is slow to develop, and that as a result, it needs constant practice and reinforcement across a range of settings.

In addition to the many new ways that the representative departments in this study began to rethink the nature and role of writing in their curriculum, interviewees also related the "ripple effects" of their WEC endeavors. Janet Sims, for example, pointed to the way that the WEC approach in political science at Pound Ridge led to further innovations not directly related to writing. "The writing in the discipline is really feeding everything," she remarked, including an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and the creation of learning communities. "It [the WEC approach] has actually affected everything else in the curriculum. Writing informs everything else." Similarly, Harold Jones (CS) described how WEC started to affect much more than writing and communication: "One of the most interesting and exciting parts of this is that it ended up being an opportunity for more discussions about teaching in the department." And Joanne Smith (PR) explained that "once [the faculty] were confronted with some really workable models and they started doing it," they realized the advantages to their students' learning, and even, by virtue of students' improved expression, their grading, "because you can really discern what they are learning in the discipline as opposed to, 'I know this but I can't express it.'" As Joanne Smith (PR) put it, all of the faculty bought into the approach, "miraculously so. It's been a real combination of factors."

The reciprocity of collaborative departmental work and individual faculty change also came through in some of the interviews. As a result of extensive

work on their curriculum supported by the WEC director and the outside consultants, Michael Pruett (CS) pointed to the concept of "constructive alignment," developed by educational scholar John Biggs (2011). This concept refers to the extent to which goals for student learning, student-facing methods for achieving those goals, and assessment of the results are in "alignment." Courses and curricula that are not constructively aligned fail to teach or assess in ways that are aimed toward goals and outcomes. As Pruett put it,

> the notion of constructive alignment has become a part of me, not only thinking about how it influences communication across the curriculum but also how I build my courses more broadly and how my courses fit into the goals for the department as well as for education. I find myself talking in those terms and thinking in those terms in many ways. It's another example of how it's not just about communication, it's about learning and how all these things fit together. It's been really for me a beneficial process of improving my own teaching as well as how what I do fits into something bigger.

Although the process of articulating expectations for the development of students' disciplinary knowledge and abilities was one of the strongest motivations for faculty to work on their department's curriculum, some other factors also played a role. The Department of Social Work at Cowling State, for example, mentioned the importance of accreditation in their focus on writing. Harold Jones and Paul White both remarked that their accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education, strengthened their commitment to a departmental focus on writing and oral communication. Jones explained that "the timing was right. We could fold it in to what we knew we were going to have to do anyway." Paul White further clarified that only later did the department realize that WEC could help them with their upcoming accreditation review:

> It wasn't intentional; we got the invitation to participate in [WEC] and it was afterwards that it became clear how much we needed to do in terms of curriculum redevelopment to fit with the new accreditation criteria, so they both came along right at a convenient time for us to do it. I also think that was the impetus for us to really look at WEC and what it could offer, because we already had to make substantial changes to the curriculum anyway.

These experiences were similar to what my colleagues and I have seen in some of the STEM fields at North Carolina State University, especially when

the new accreditation guidelines were formulated as part of ABET 2000 (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). These standards strongly emphasized written and oral communication and shifted the focus from "what is taught to what is learned" (https://www.abet.org/about-abet/history/). As a result, ABET-accredited departments could see the advantage of our WEC model as they studied their curricula, delved more deeply into what they wanted students and faculty to achieve, and engaged in both formative and summative assessment of student ability. Interestingly, the accrediting bodies themselves can learn from the innovations at particular institutions, as Blank describes in Chapter 5 of this volume, when word of the NC State Department of Forestry's efforts influenced programs at other universities and eventually convinced the Society of American Foresters to adopt an integrated approach to writing in its new criteria and review process.

In addition to the accreditation of specific programs, broader institution-wide accreditation by the major regional bodies (MSCHE, ABET, WASC, etc.) can provide support for WEC leaders enlisting departments to join the effort. An important principle for developing WEC is to see its potential in the context of the need to showcase support for developing student communication abilities and assessment of that support. More importantly, the link to accreditation strengthens the sustainability of the WEC effort. As Paul White (CS) explained, because the WEC effort is "blended" with accreditation, "it's not going to disappear; as long as the writing and oral communication objectives remain in the syllabi—and they will because all of that is tied to our accreditation—then it's not going to disappear; it's going to be part of a continual improvement program."

CHALLENGES

The WEC model, as in any cross-curricular effort, is not a panacea, and it is confronted with its own share of struggles, oppositions, and frustrations. Unlike the collective successes and positive experiences recounted above, however, challenges mentioned in the interviews were mixed and more idiosyncratic. But one consistency emerged: interviewees positioned challenges not as impediments that forestalled implementation but as problems that their WEC program helped to *solve*. John Holcomb (PR), for example, explained the shift in his department's collective attitude toward writing:

> Initially with the writing in the disciplines, our department—and I think this was true in a lot of departments in the college—viewed that as a nuisance—viewed it as, "well, we already have enough trouble educating our students with

regard to the discipline; this is just something else that's in the way." But when we got a little further with [WEC] being put into place, eventually the conviction of faculty that you need to be able to communicate, and one way of doing that is writing, has worked its way through. And I think that's what now really drives it.

Similarly, Janet Sims (PR) had difficulty identifying any significant roadblocks to her colleagues' work in political science but attributed that to being in a department that is "very innovative, always trying new things and really open to discussion." Still, if there were any frustrations among the faculty, she believed that the improvements in student' writing erased those: "In a relatively short period of time, we see much better research projects, much better senior seminar or capstone projects, and people are beginning to see the value of [WEC]." Similarly, Harold Jones (CS) expressed little concern about any defensiveness among the faculty: "Even the term 'resistance' would be a misnomer for the department. There's no resistance to it." In part, he explained, this lack of push-back owed to the existence of a least some writing prior to the implementation of the WEC program, with new ideas and methods then inspiring the faculty to innovate.

For the Department of Biology at Pound Ridge, Courtney Sikes raised a concern about some personnel turnover that required orienting the newly-hired faculty to their departmental WEC efforts—but a challenge that she also saw positively as part of faculty development. Similarly, for the Department of Chemistry at Pound Ridge, John Holcomb worried about the possible "loss of vision" and "consistency" that can come from changes in the faculty and the assignment of redesigned courses to those who had not taught them. Tied to this, he explained, is the fact that, at smaller colleges, academic freedom "has high value." The evidence at Pound Ridge suggests a remarkable level of agreement in the departments in this study for supporting student writing development and innovating the curriculum. Still, the ever-present concern about consistency suggests the need for WEC leaders to "honor the autonomy and expertise of the faculty," as Fodrey and Hassay put it in Chapter 7 of this volume, while also providing outside support and formative oversight. It also requires vigilance in follow-through, as described in Anson and Dannels (2009) and in Flash (Chapter 1 of this volume).

Another potential concern obviated by WEC implementation was shared by Harold Jones (CS). Initially, he and his colleagues feared a faculty perception (in the midst of being constantly "slammed" with work) that a WEC program would take additional time and energy. This view is related to a belief that writing will "intrude" on the coverage of course content—that it is "added on to" a course already packed with information (see Fulwiler, 1984;

and Scheurer, 2014). Interestingly, however, the WEC initiative ended up not being seen as intrusion:

> A lot of the other things are seen as sort of infringements on teaching—so you *have* to do this or you *have* to do this. But writing across the curriculum was more like, we're doing it because we thought it was important and we wanted to do it, not because we had to. And that was good. That made it a lot more palatable.

SUMMING UP: THE VALUE OF THE WRITING-ENRICHED CURRICULUM

In an analysis of how WAC programs can both respond to and effectuate changes in higher education institutions, McLeod and Miraglia argue that such changes are not linear and do not take the form of mandated policy, but involve a process in which "complexities interact and coalesce into periodic patterns that are unknowable in advance" (2011, p. 20). In reflecting on how the work of writing across the curriculum might create broader improvements in teaching and learning, they draw on Fullan's (1995) "Eight Basic Lessons for the New Paradigm of Change" (p. 21).

Table 2.3. Fullan's (1995) Lessons for Change

Lesson 1	You can't mandate what matters (the more complex the change, the less you can force it).
Lesson 2	Change is a journey, not a blueprint (change is nonlinear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement, and sometimes perverse).
Lesson 3	Problems are our friends (problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them).
Lesson 4	Vision and strategic planning come later (premature visions and planning blind us to other possibilities).
Lesson 5	Individualism and collectivism must have equal power (there are no one-sided solutions).
Lesson 6	Neither centralization nor decentralization works alone (both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary).
Lesson 7	Connection with the wider environment is critical for success (the best organizations learn externally as well as internally).
Lesson 8	Every person is a change agent (change is too important to leave to the experts).

This interview-based study involved a small group of faculty in several departments at two different institutions of dramatically different size, in different regions of the US, with different student populations, missions, curricula, reward systems, and organizational structures. Comments from the faculty about their respective WEC programs can't be generalized and must be seen in the context of their institutional ecologies. Not only do WEC programs vary across institutions, but their implementation in specific departments will not look the same, and the experiences of the faculty there will vary. Yet standing back from the collective experiences reflected in the interviews synthesized here, we can see the enactment of many of Fulland's principles.

Consider, for example, the idea that change cannot be mandated and that it involves a kind of journey, with unexpected twists and turns and variations in the landscape. From the perspective of simplistic ideas about writing—that students need grammar instruction, or that they need to write more papers—change may seem simple and therefore able to be mandated. But the development of writing abilities is extraordinarily complex, made more so when we consider its rhetorical and linguistic dimensions within disciplines, the need to learn particular genres and their features, or the deployment or transfer of previously learned skills or perspectives (Bazerman, 2011). In the experience of this book's contributors and clearly demonstrated in this chapter's interviews, integrating writing into departments that often have little experience explicitly considering its nature and role or that continue to act on inherited beliefs and practices is best accomplished from the bottom up with appropriate support. Although WEC as a programmatic initiative often begins at the top of an institution's hierarchy (but see Blank, Chapter 5 of this volume), its processes are not manded from there; rather, as McLeod has put it, "profound curricular and pedagogical change can come about as a result of a WAC program, but such change will not take place unless it comes from the faculty themselves" (1992, p. 4). Interviews from a humanities department, a social science department, two science departments, and one professional program at different institutions demonstrated the promise of discipline-specific, collective leadership in (re)shaping the role of writing in assignments, courses, and entire curricula.

Like the process of writing itself, cycles of continuous program review and formative improvement always loop back to the original plans and goals that generated them, because no context is stable. Early in our work at North Carolina State University, we developed such a model, shown in its basic form in Figure 2.2. Notice that the model involves a cycle of activity, but is not linear, suggesting continuous renewal: the relationship between implementation and assessment is recursive and either can be pursued first. The entire model also assumes an evolution of outcomes and what follows (consider, for example, outcomes developed before many of the affordances of the Internet).
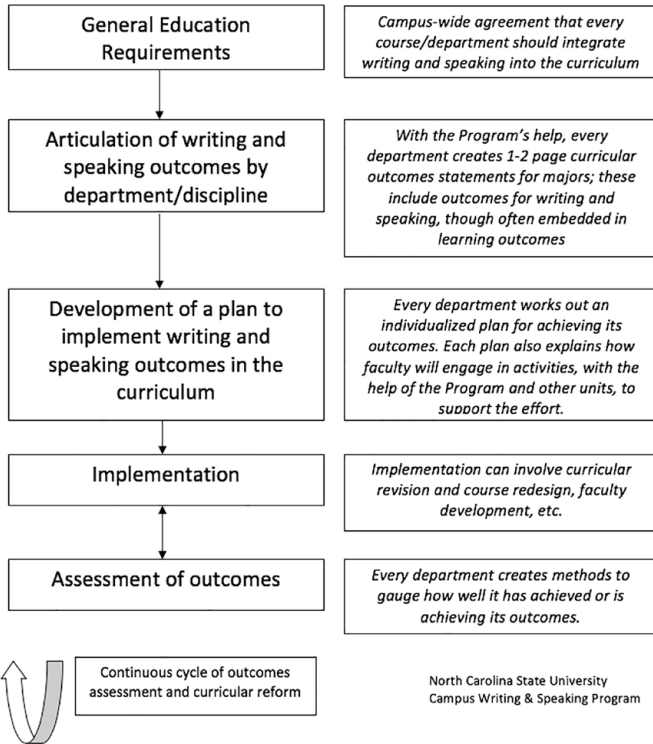
Figure 2.2 Early NC State departmental WEC model (Anson & Dannels, 2000).

At the point of the interviews in this study, departments' WEC-focused efforts were too new to inquire into sustainability or the need for continuous renewal. But experiences elsewhere show that no WEC program can be established once and let go. Departmental demographics change; student populations change; and the disciplines evolve. Consequently, WEC programs are living, evolving systems requiring a certain level of "maintenance and support" (Anson & Dannels, 2009). This will always yield continuing problems and challenges, but in the spirit of WEC, faculty embrace these as necessary to the vitality of their own programs. From this perspective, we can also imagine departments' consideration of ever more complex aspects of writing and student learning that typically (and problematically) are not the subjects of focus during the earliest stages of implementation, such as the relationship between writing assessment and implicit racial bias or dialect variation or the linguistic characteristics of L2 speakers of English (see Anson, 2012).

In the context of WAC leaders' desire to create plans for implementation, the fourth lesson may seem counterintuitive, because WEC programs—notwithstanding Blank's departmental description in Chapter 5 of this volume—are designed as campus-wide initiatives localized in departments. But in spite of the

overarching planning processes at both the institutions profiled in this chapter, faculty in the departments began the process with an exploratory stage, engaging in general faculty development activities, holding retreats to discuss possibilities, and studying the status quo in their curricula to decide how to proceed. This preliminary heuristic stage, with the guidance of WEC leaders, may be a better way to begin than jumping immediately to creating plans, especially because various theoretical shifts and the weakening of entrenched views may be necessary.

Although by design the interviews here focused on faculty experiences within their departments, enough emerged about the association of their WEC work with administrative leadership to suggest the reciprocity in Lesson 6 and the relationship between departmental autonomy to work with other units in Lesson 7. In both cases, there was campus-wide agreement to pursue a WEC program, but individual faculty or small teams shuttled between committees and planning groups or other units, which precipitated broader involvement. Connection with wider environments can include other departments, first-year writing programs, writing centers, libraries, curriculum committees, technology centers, centers for teaching and learning, second-language centers, and others—as demonstrated in many of the chapters in this collection.

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that nothing would happen across the departments without collective agreements and collaboration. But that requires members of the department to see themselves individually as advocates and change agents, which McLeod and Miraglia (2011) position as the most important of the eight lessons. Throughout this study, the commitment to the interviewees' own instructional methods, to the shared vision in their departments, and to the overall effects that the WEC approach could have across their institutions was abundantly evident.

Although this study elicited feedback from department faculty involved in WEC implementation (not the local WEC directors), some further thoughts about the organizational nature of WEC programs are warranted. In particular, the approach compels us to reassess our ideology of leadership and contests our established roles as faculty developers, guides, mentors, keepers of the flame, and writing or communication experts. As several contributors to this collection point out, the WEC approach requires a delicate balance between expert consultant and naïve but interested listener. Walvoord (1999) has called this a "client-customer" relationship in which the department is free to use the WEC director's counsel within the parameters of the model. Guiding the initial departmental discussions takes considerable expertise and diplomacy—a tolerance, as Carter suggests in his Foreword to this collection, for early faculty skepticism or even resistance, and a willingness to concede, at least initially, to ideas that may seem problematic if only to let them play out, to let the faculty reach certain

understandings on their own. This is where, as the interviewees pointed out, workshops and other activities can be helpful in providing new perspectives for faculty before they begin tackling tough decisions in their departments.

Finally, the WEC approach hinges in many ways on the concept of intrinsic motivation. Although programs like Florida Atlantic's (as described by Galin in Chapter 8 of this collection) provide financial support to departments, fundamentally WEC assumes that faculty care about the students in their majors and equate their success with the development of their departmental status and reputation. Over nearly 25 years of overseeing the WEC program at North Carolina State University, my colleagues and I have not found a single department that was willing to set the bar of its learning outcomes low enough to minimize their work and their attention to students' learning. Just the reverse: goals are aspirational, based on what the faculty believe to be the strongest communication abilities one might find in a graduate of their department or program. At the same time, the goals are not so challenging as to dissuade faculty from joining the effort. And when over time, department by department, an entire institution is working cooperatively to achieve localized goals, the whole institution improves.

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