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# WAC Course Development Grants at CSU: A Panel Discussion

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# WAC at CSU

An Overview of the Course Development Grants







# History of WAC at CSU

- Established as a conventional WAC program in 1984 by Kate Kiefer, Steven Reid, and others
- With state funding, shifted to an integrated, technology-supported model in 1991-1993
- Launched the Online Writing Center in 1993 and established the Writing Center as the face of writing at CSU
- Moved to the web in 1996
- Launched the WAC Clearinghouse in 1997
- Launched the Writing Studio project in 1998 (released for wide use in 2004; retired in 2016)
- Funding lost during the Great Recession
- Funding provided through TILT and CSU Online for WAC activities from 2010 to 2018
- Relaunched as a formal program in 2021-22



# Course Development Grant History

- Pilot projects in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022
- First call for proposals fall 2023
  - Seven proposals
- First round of grant recipients spring 2024
  - Four faculty from civil engineering, human development and family services and political science
- Call for proposals spring 2024
  - 32 proposals
- Second round of grant recipients fall 2024
  - Eight recipients—one continuing—from civil engineering, computer science, art history, economics, human development and family services, geosciences, and psychology



# Course Development Grant Philosophy and Process

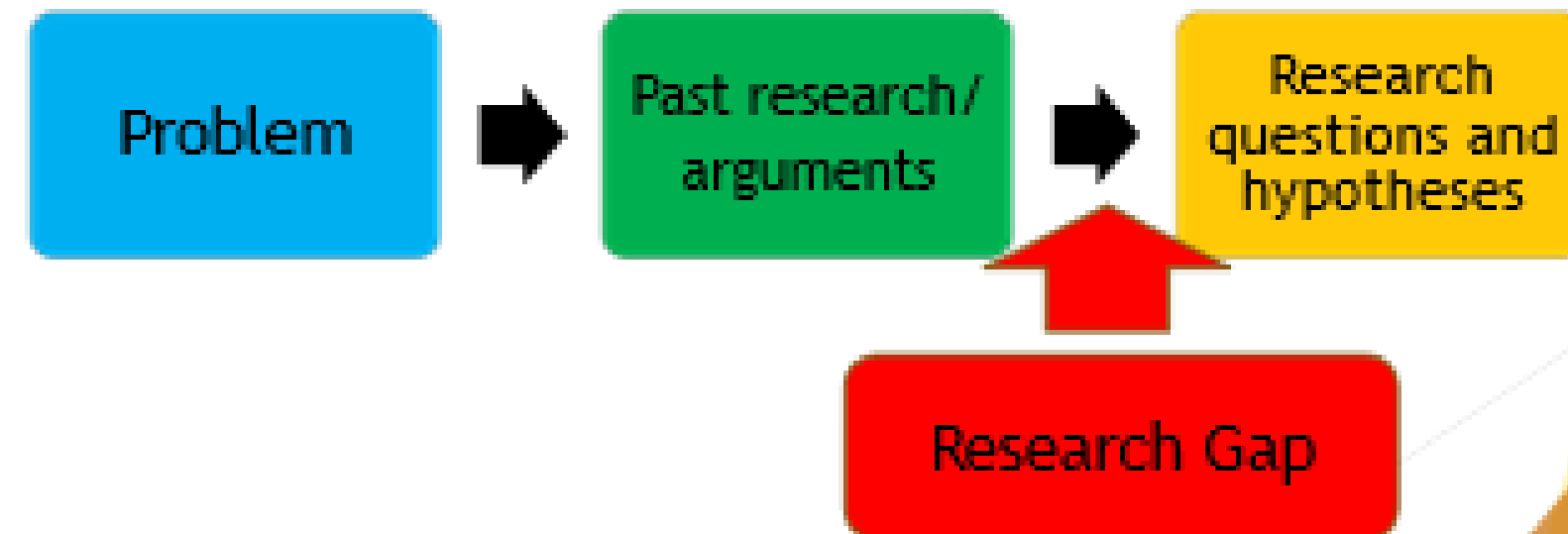
- The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program supports the use of writing and other communication activities and assignments to enhance student learning, critical thinking, and preparation for participation in their disciplines or professions. The program helps faculty use writing in the disciplines, identified as one of the first four high-impact practices in ways that support students while minimizing the time demands on faculty members.
- Intake
  - Goal setting with grant recipients. Often includes identifying a "problem" or motivation for seeking the WAC Grant
- Process
  - Writing interventions often include using WTL, WTE, and WID strategies and assignment design
- Assessment of student writing
  - Evaluating student writing
- Impact at a glance
  - ~1800 students enrolled in WAC Grant courses in fall 2024

# Panelist Introductions



## What is a Research Gap?

- ▶ Research gap: what needs to be done/discovered in the research area. What is missing?
  - ▶ Not helpful to address questions we already have the answers to
- ▶ Important: gives context for the research questions that will be asked. Identifies a direction for potentially new and exciting research.
- ▶ Can create research questions that address that gap



## What is your research gap?

- ▶ Step 1: Identify what we do know or have agreement on. Where is there lots of research about your topic (i.e., look at the research you just covered in the above argument paragraphs and summarize what we know).
- ▶ Step 2: Identify what we do not know or have little information on or what is unclear. What do we not know much about and need to study? This is the research gap.
- ▶ Be prepared to answer step 2 in an iclicker

What is your research gap? Type in your answer.

## Explicitly state gap in your paper - From guide to organizing paper

### 3) RESEARCH GAP – In 2-3 sentences explicitly state what research gap exists.

- First, state what we do know about (or have agreement on) or have lots of research on about your topic (i.e., look at the research you just covered in the above argument paragraphs and summarize what we know).
- Second, state what we do not know much about and need to study. This is specifically the research gap. Use this gap to help you to identify your specific research questions.
- Make sure that you wrote about the variables related to the research gap issues or variables in the earlier paragraphs. The research gap sentences here are designed to explicitly tell the reader the gap. You should have provided all of the literature and information we know about the research gap variables earlier in the paper.

Example: We know X, Y, and Z about this issue. However, there is little information about B and D. (Make sure that X, Y, Z and B and D were discussed in earlier paragraphs!)

## Research Gap leads to Research Questions

- ▶ Use research gap to create your research questions
- ▶ Example gap: There are few studies that have evaluated if **green space in a kid's neighborhood** plays a role in **physical activity level**. Also that there are inconsistent findings on whether there is a **gender difference** in **physical activity**.
  - ▶ Is there a link between **green space in a neighborhood** and **kids' physical activity level**?
  - ▶ Is there a **difference between girls and boys** in their **level of physical activity**?
- ▶ Same variables in the gap and questions



# CS 150B:



## Motivation for Grant:

- Course Goals: CS 150B blends Python programming with computing history and societal impacts, fulfilling Arts/Humanities AUCC requirements with a strong writing component.
- ~750 students each fall, I *aim* to help them grow as thinkers and communicators, especially in using academic sources effectively. However, I am not used to teaching writing! **Needed expert help!**

## Intervention:

- [Close-Reading Activity](#): Partnered with composition expert Annie to develop activities that guide students in analyzing and incorporating sources into their writing.

## Challenges & Rewards:

- Challenges: Usual rollout bumps.
- Rewards: Valuable support in assignment design, enhancing writing skill development across all areas of student work. This semester a NOTICIBLE difference in student use of incorporating sources in their writing.

## Insights Gained:

- Building in more structured scaffolding across all assignments





# Environmental Engineering Courses

- Motivation: Encourage students to create more meaningful reports, discussion posts, peer feedback. Improve teamwork and individual contributions
- Interventions: Well defined and structured prompts (individual and collective work, sample assignments as guides)
- Challenges: Making sure that the assignments were not overloading the students
- Rewards: Significant improvement in student work, teamwork collaboration and contribution
- Innovation: Expanding the scaffolding and feedback, guided AI use in writing



# Questions





# Questions for Panel Members

- What was the problem, or motivating factor, that prompted you to apply for the course development grant?
- What interventions did you develop as part of the grant?
- What were the challenges and the rewards of this process?
- Has this experience led to any other innovations or insights into your own teaching or program development within your department?







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# Let's continue the conversation!

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