“Effective written communication” is a staple in colleges’ lists of general education goals. Promoting “competency in writing,” for both professional and civic purposes, is routinely cited in university mission statements. An outsider might assume that all college students write regularly, in various genres, and in classes spanning the curriculum.

But that is not always the case. And it was faculty concern about student writing that provided the impetus for developing a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at UND in the late 1980s.

UND students of the time were required to enroll in composition courses, but there was no institutional support for faculty who were interested in assigning writing beyond the first-year requirements. Furthermore, in an era of expanding class sizes and increasing research expectations, faculty found little incentive and no reward for ensuring that students had opportunities to develop as writers.

With few resources but much enthusiasm, a small group of UND faculty began meeting to talk about teaching with writing. Faculty in attendance reported that students didn’t believe writing should “count” outside of English class. They noted that many students didn’t revise, instead turning in one-shot-wonders written the night before a due date. Essay answers, they said, were often “dumps” of everything that could be dredged up from memory, however peripherally related to the question. They claimed that many students couldn’t—or wouldn’t—spell reasonably, edit competently, or cite appropriately.

The result, faculty said, was that it felt like more work than it was worth to assign writing. “Objective” tests seemed more straightforward and generated fewer arguments with students.

And yet many faculty continued to believe that an ability to communicate in writing was a critical marker of “an educated person.” Unless they were helping students develop that ability, they felt uneasy about their work. There had to be a better way.

It was in this atmosphere that a faculty committee submitted a proposal for a WAC program to the Bush Foundation. When the proposal was funded, UND received support for a cross-disciplinary writing initiative beginning in January 1991 and, with receipt of a renewal grant, extending until 1997.

Recognizing the variety of faculty situations and needs, grant planners imagined a multi-faceted program. Workshops would help faculty with course development and provide opportunities to address shared problems like those around grading. Small grants to departments would support collaboration to incorporate writing across entire programs of study. Linked courses, connecting classes in fields like accounting or nursing with those in composition, would bolster connections between writing and the disciplines. Seminars would provide opportuni-
ties for faculty to work on their own writing, with the notion that practice in the skills of reading and critique would be applicable in their work with student writers. A newsletter would keep faculty informed on strategies that worked.

Some funding was even available to support development of teaching and leadership more broadly: the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) procedure got its start at UND through the WAC grant, as did use of Cross and Angelo’s Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). Both became tools for improving faculty-student communication about learning in general.

Minor changes to the program occurred over time. A “University Writing Program” was created, with the intent of housing existing WAC activities, the Writing Center, and (yet to be developed) writing-in-the-major courses. Changing campus dynamics effectively prevented those writing-in-the-major courses from coming to fruition, but the WAC-Writing Center linkage proved valuable. Lunch meetings became an important means of sustaining connections among faculty dedicated to teaching with writing.

Although the post-grant era WAC program meant reduced funding, most aspects of the program were maintained. Workshops remained popular, regularly addressing new topics like writing as a tool to promote critical thinking. Noon discussion meetings grew, and Faculty Study Seminars, many of which focused on WAC topics, were added. Writing seminars were offered. The WAC newsletter (eventually combined with the OID letter in a new On Teaching format) provided information about effective practices used across campus. Linked courses were discontinued, first in favor of discipline-specific writing consultants housed in specific departments, and later replaced by stronger Writing Center outreach to faculty campus-wide.

The WAC-Writing Center linkage and the WAC-OID linkage, along with traditions of regular workshops, writing seminars, discussion groups, and newsletter publication, are among the most productive legacies of the early years. Those programs, together with a cohort of faculty who were increasingly knowledgeable about and committed to effective teaching with writing, sustained the program into the present.

Next Steps: The Future of WAC at UND

The future of WAC at UND will build on the successes of the first twenty years. Two key priorities guide the next stage of the WAC program.

One priority will be to continue to bring new faculty into the cohort of teachers committed to and knowledgeable about teaching with writing. The cohort is built primarily through an annual course development workshop that takes place in early summer. The knowledge and community created in the workshop will be maintained (and shared with others) during the academic year through WAC-focused lunch seminars, study seminars, and individual consulting. Ongoing faculty writing groups will continue to foster a culture of writing at UND.

Another priority for the WAC program will be to leverage the energy of the cohort and the power of faculty collaboration by supporting departments and programs as they identify and assess writing-related learning outcomes.

Many departments are engaged in this work as a result of Essential Studies advanced communication and capstone components. These components give departments an opportunity to provide a writing-in-the-major experience for their students. Designing capstone courses also gives departments a chance to reflect on what it means to complete their programs and what abilities set their majors apart from other college graduates. Since many capstone courses are also designated as advanced communication courses and include a significant writing project, faculty have the opportunity to choose learning outcomes for writing.

Another benefit to thinking about writing in this way is that departments can use their students’ capstone and advanced communication writing to gauge how well curricular goals are being met, and to make changes to improve learning. Promising models for this kind of assessment and curricular planning exist here at UND (such as the Political Science capstone developed by Paul Sum and Steve Light) as well as elsewhere. One aim of the WAC program will be to assist departments in these efforts.

Being able to set and assess goals for writing allows departments to look back at the program’s curriculum and build in targeted writing practice so students will be able to master the particular kinds of writing required of a graduate. The WAC program will provide opportunities for faculty to apply current research on writing to meeting their curricular goals.

Scholarship on writing in various settings tells us that people learn to write in different contexts through repeated practice over time. We also know that writers draw on several different kinds of knowledge when they write, including their knowledge of the subject matter they are writing about, the conventions of the community in which they are writing, and the writing process. Because these multiple “knowledge domains” need to be developed over time, students need ample opportunities to build up experience in each area. The WAC program can help faculty and depart-

(continued on page 3)
ments consider all of these knowledge areas as they create a plan to reach their writing outcomes.

The concerns that have always been expressed about student writing reflect how much the academic community values writing and its commitment to passing that value on to students. Students can learn to produce the kinds of writing expected of graduates in their fields, but no single professor or single course can get them there.

Students have a chance to learn what they need to know when we all teach with writing, and they have an especially good chance when we coordinate our efforts. First year composition courses play an important role by emphasizing the writing process and by introducing students to analytical tools that can help them understand the different kinds of writing they will encounter in their majors. Courses across the disciplines can build on students’ experience in first year comp and acquaint students with the subject matter knowledge and disciplinary conventions they will need to meet their program’s learning outcomes.

Through the next twenty years (and beyond) the WAC program will be here to help faculty accomplish those goals.

SPOTLIGHT ON TEACHING WITH WRITING: WRITING FOR THE REAL WORLD
Robin David, Honors

In Spring 2011, I taught Honors 392: Refugee Integration. In addition to standard coursework, students completed weekly service in the local New American community. This experience both greatly enhanced their understanding of the issues and allowed them to make a real contribution to the community as the service requirement was linked with a very specific community need. The Global Friends Coalition, a refugee integration organization in Grand Forks, was launching a new mentoring and English tutoring program, and students in the class were the first volunteers.

Throughout the semester the class offered valuable feedback on the new program based on their experiences. They spent the semester helping new arrivals navigate life here, studying integration issues in their course texts, and observing how integration plays out in our local community.

The final assignment for the class was to write an 8-10 page analysis of a refugee integration issue in Grand Forks, along with a recommendation of programs or structures to best address the issue. The abstracts for their research projects were then given to the Global Friends Coalition Board of Directors, and the full papers were made available as needed. Students took the writing assignment seriously, as they knew this was not an arbitrary exercise. Rather than following service with a classroom reflection, the writing assignment became an extension of their service, a way to continue the contribution they were making in the community, this time by using their analytical and writing skills to offer usable feedback to a local agency.

For such an assignment to be successful, a close relationship must be formed between the agency and the class. The agency should be able to define their needs so that the class is gathering the information and making the recommendations that will be most helpful to the agency. The class also needs direct and recurring instruction from the agency so they can better understand the work it is doing and the issues it is facing. Without this relationship, the class could be seen as offering ill-informed and irrelevant criticism of an agency which is working hard to address social concerns in our community. But when a genuine reciprocal partnership is established, the class can get valuable, real-world experience and the agency can benefit from the scholarship and motivation of the students.

The benefits to this type of assignment were many—both to the agency and the students. Because students were working on recommendations which would be read by an actual community organization developing programs to enable refugee integration, they became even more connected to the cause. Following the class several students became more involved with the Global Friends Coalition and the agencies that work with refugees because they had a real stake in this community issue.

As writers, the students were intrinsically motivated to do thorough background research, substantiate their ideas, consider audience, and communicate effectively. In addition, students became better able to appreciate the importance of writing not just as a way to earn a decent grade in a class, but as a way to work successfully in a professional setting and to make a difference on issues they care about.

Teaching with Writing Conferences

Consider applying for funding to attend one of these upcoming conferences focused on teaching with writing.

Visit the conference websites for more information.

• Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC) http://www.ncte.org/ccc/conv
  April 6-9, 2011 in Atlanta, Georgia
• European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW) http://www.ul.ie/rwc/eataw2011/
  June 29 to July 1, 2011 at The University of Limerick (UL), Limerick, Ireland
INSIDE THE WRITING CENTER: WHAT PEER CONSULTANTS LEARN
Cora Nasset

Cora Nasset is an undergraduate peer writing consultant at the UND Writing Center. She is double majoring in English literature and Spanish.

I think we can agree that students benefit from coming to the Writing Center; even writers who excel can learn something new by talking to a consultant. However, we don’t often talk about the benefits of becoming a writing center consultant. If you know of a student, from any discipline, who is a strong writer, you might suggest that he or she consider a job at the Writing Center.

The past three semesters of being a consultant have taught me how to effectively help writers: I’ve learned to be flexible and firm, patient and demanding, compassionate; I’ve learned when I should expect more and when I should quit pushing; I became acquainted with some of my limits and met those of others as well; I had to be more social, and figured out that there are some situations in which this isn’t necessary. I have gained these qualities and abilities because I need them to be a good consultant.

We help writers with whatever their projects might be. But who we work with and what we focus our energy upon isn’t easily categorized. We work with beginning composition students, some creative projects, business proposals, aviation students’ reports, graduate students’ theses, even some papers up for publication. There are the obvious issues of transitions, organization, topic sentences, conjunctions, using “in” or “at”, and where we should put those commas. On top of this, we have to give attention to the person with whom we’re in the session. Is he struggling with the course? Does she understand the assignment? Is English his native language? Is she frustrated with the session or the work or something entirely different? Will he understand me if I use a word like “ambiguous”? Is this person in a hurry or is that just her personality? For each writer and work, we consultants learn to adapt our strategies so that we can be as effective as possible; however, due to the range of people with whom we work and their varying projects, it’s not really possible to feel entirely prepared for each session. So I’ve learned to quit looking for a script.

The writers who come to the center are all struggling with different things—sometimes they can articulate it but sometimes not, sometimes they just need a confidence boost, other times instructors have been kind enough to push them to our door, and often they just want their work proofread. Being able to figure out what the issue is, adapting to the specific situation, and doing this smoothly within the allotted thirty minutes is what makes consultants effective.

We’re trained to be perceptive to the nuances involved in a session because we want to accommodate any writer who walks into the center. These skills—being perceptive, adaptable, flexible, socially intelligent—translate to any number of fields. For that reason, students at UND should consider a position at the Writing Center a formative experience that would be valuable for any future they are considering, regardless of their field of study.

You’re invited
WAC 20th Anniversary Open House
Tuesday, February 1, 2011
11:00 am to 1:00 pm
Merrifield 12A
Spring 2011 Faculty Study Seminars


What is the “Bologna Process”? Why are faculty talking about “tuning”? And what does this have to do with teaching and learning at UND? These are questions we will address through conversations about The Challenge of Bologna.

But here is the backdrop to the book. Faculty everywhere – including in Europe – are facing ever-growing numbers of transfer students. Students tell horror stories of accumulating 150 or 180 credits from four or five different (accredited) colleges, but being unable to graduate because each college rejects many of the equivalencies accepted by some or all of the others. A mini-scandal was provoked this fall when a report documented nonsensical transfer policies applicable to public institutions within a single city. And transfer is only one aspect of the problem. Politicians and employers claim that it’s impossible to know what a degree in Physics or History means. What will those grads know? What can they do? Can anything be taken for granted?

Europe is confronting these challenges through a process called “tuning,” and tuning projects are already being piloted in several states. As we read about the European model – and our counterpart – we will consider implications for UND and for the U.S. more generally. If you are interested in thinking about the future of higher education, you will want to read this book.

This FSS will be facilitated by Joan Hawthorne. To participate, contact her at joan.hawthorne@email.und.edu or 7-4684.


If you laughed out loud when reading the words “faculty” and “work-life balance” in the title of a single book, or if you are one of the more optimistic among us, we hope you’ll join us to read this book and discuss issues of dual career couples, parenting, and living an academic life.

From the publisher: “Helping Faculty Find Work-Life Balance gives voice to faculty and reveals the myriad personal and professional issues faculty face over the span of their academic careers. Based on years of in-the-field research and two gender-based studies, Maike Ingrid Philipsen and Timothy Bostic give the issue of work-life balance a fresh perspective by taking a comparative approach to the topic in regard to both gender and career stage. The authors' research reports on the experiences of male and female faculty at early-, mid-, and late-career stages. In addition, the book goes beyond the typical ‘family-friendly’ approach and takes an all-encompassing ‘life-friendly’ view, recognizing the need to strive for balance in the lives of all faculty members.

Philipsen and Bostic describe enablers and obstacles that faculty encounter during their careers and how policies and programs might more effectively address the needs of faculty. Helping Faculty Find Work-Life Balance is filled with illustrative cases from exemplary institutions to showcase what they are doing to reform the system.”

This FSS will be co-facilitated by Joe and Kathleen Vacek. To participate, contact Kathleen at kathleen.vacek@und.edu or 7-6381.


Interdisciplinarity -- it’s a word we’ve heard a lot lately here at UND. Recent university discussions have highlighted the need to increase interdisciplinary research and teaching opportunities. The subject has also been one of national emphasis and debate. But we all know that many barriers exist including lack of funding and the current academic reward system. How can we break down these barriers—and other more subtle, hidden barriers—in order to realize the incredible potential of interdisciplinary work? Myra Strober, Emerita Professor of Education and of Economics at Stanford University, tackles these very issues in her new book, Interdisciplinary Conversations, which analyzes six case studies of recent interdisciplinary faculty seminars held at research universities across the country, to investigate “pivotal points in interdisciplinary interactions and analyzes the factors that make them work—or not.”

As we strive to enrich research and teaching here at UND, we may find valuable information and discussion points in this book which University of California editor Steven Brint says “challenges widely held assumptions about the value of interdisciplinary interactions and offers fresh and novel insights.” He goes on to claim that “If academic and administrative leaders follow her recommendations, they will greatly improve the chances of fostering successful interdisciplinary conversations.”

Interdisciplinary conversations centered around this book will be facilitated by Tami Carmichael. Contact Tami at tami.carmichael@und.edu to participate. Faculty Study Seminars are open to all faculty, administrators, and staff.
Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) Announces Fall Semester Awards

The following faculty members were awarded FIDC grants during the fall semester.

**Materials Grant Awards were made to:**

- **Julie Abrahamson** (Chemistry) Purchase of Water Kit Models for use in Chemistry Teaching $214
- **April Bradley** (Psychology) Purchase of five DVDs from the American Psychological Association that focus on Learning to do Psychotherapy $1,140.59
- **Phoebe Stubblefield** (Anthropology) Purchase of a Life-Sized Muscled Joint Set $399

**Travel Grant Awards were made to:**

- **Tami Carmichael** (Humanities and Integrated Studies) 50th Annual Conference of the Association for General and Liberal Studies $1,000
- **Steven Finney** (Languages) Nortana Pedagogy Workshop $534
- **Yvette LaPierre** (Humanities and Integrated Studies) 50th Annual Conference of the Association for General and Liberal Studies $1,000
- **Claudia Routon** (Languages) American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages $1,000
- **Brian Schill** (Honors) Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: AAC&U Undergraduate Research in and Across the Disciplines Conference $1,000
- **Linda Shanta** (Nursing) The Global Alliance for Leadership in Nursing Education and Science- 2nd Annual International Conference $1,000

FIDC grant proposals may be used to purchase instructional materials, to travel for pedagogical development or to make a SoTL presentation, or other projects related to teaching. To submit a proposal, visit www.oid.und.edu. Proposals may be submitted at any time during the academic year and are reviewed on a monthly basis by the FIDC. The next deadline is **February 1 at noon**. Please call OID at **7-3325** with any questions.

Instructional or professional development projects that fall outside FIDC guidelines may qualify for funding through OID's Flexible Grant program. For more information contact **Anne Kelsch** at **7-4233** or **anne.kelsch@und.edu**

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**Save the date**

Reflecting on Teaching: An All Campus Colloquium

September 30-October 1, 2011

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**March 1 Deadline to Apply for Summer Support**

Summer Instructional Development Professorships (SIDPs) fund course development grounded in sound teaching practices. Designed to allow faculty to work full-time on instructional development for four weeks during the summer, these Professorships provide a salary stipend of $4000. Work must go beyond normal course development (the program does not fund updating of course content for example) and focus on enhancing student learning.

The Online Summer Instructional Development Professorship (Online SIDP) program grants $4000 summer stipends to UND faculty working full-time for four weeks on innovative instructional projects for online courses offered through Distance Education in the following academic year. As with traditional SIDPs, the project must go beyond normal course development and have the potential to increase student learning.

The deadline for both programs is **March 1 (noon)** and complete information is available online at **oid.und.edu**
Schedule an SGID in Your Classroom

Arrangements for SGIDs (small group instructional diagnosis, a process for soliciting student feedback at midterm) can be made now. SGIDs are done by trained faculty who work as facilitators for the process in colleagues’ classrooms. A facilitator will collect information from your students, write it up into a report for you, and provide you with high-quality student input regarding their learning at mid-semester, rather than waiting until semester’s end when course evaluations are completed. Furthermore, the interactive nature of the process can motivate students to think more carefully and deeply, so SGID feedback is often more thorough, providing you with a clear understanding of student perceptions. SGIDs are intended to be formative (i.e., for your own benefit as a teacher) rather than summative (for a promotion and tenure file).

To schedule an SGID, please contact Jana Lagro at jana.lagro@und.edu or 7-4998.

Writing Center Offers Class Visits

A Writing Center class visit is a great way to encourage students to visit the Writing Center. A brief introduction to the Writing Center takes 10-15 minutes. A consultant will come to the class to talk to students about Writing Center services, answer their questions, and distribute brochures.

To schedule a visit, contact Kathleen Vacek at 7-6381 or kathleen.vacek@und.edu.
Upcoming On Teaching Lunch Seminars

Classroom Management in the Online Environment
*Tuesday, February 15, 12:30 - 1:30 (register by Friday, Feb. 11 by noon)*

ESL Students’ Writing: An Open Conversation
*Monday, March 7, 12:30 - 1:30 (register by Thursday, March 3 by noon)*

The Nitty Gritty of Managing Students in their Co-ops/Clinicals/Experiential Learning/Field Work
*Tuesday, April 12, 12:30 - 1:30 (register by Friday, April 8 by noon)*

Course Design for Critical and Creative Thinking in the Major
*Wednesday, April 27, 12:00 - 1:00 (register by Monday, April 25 by noon)*

All sessions take place in the Badlands Room of the Union unless otherwise noted. Visit the Office of Instructional Development online ([www.oid.und.edu](http://www.oid.und.edu)) to register. For information contact Jana Lagro at 7-4998 or jana.lagro@und.edu.