

At Utica College we too have gone through several permutations of a "writing intensive" curriculum. Those of us in the English Dept., for the most part, subscribe to Barbara Walvoord's view that every course should be writing intensive.

However, several years ago a college-wide task force on writing (of which I was briefly a part until I withdrew in absolute horror at what was being formalized) proposed a two part Writing-across-the-Curriculum requirement.

The first part was a Writing Portfolio which became a graduation requirement. All students had to submit a portfolio with 6 entries, each of which had earned at least a C in the course for which they were written--two papers from W-I courses, one in-class writing assignment, one research paper, and two submissions "to be determined by their major." In addition, each student had to submit a "metacognitive" statement for each submission ("how this piece contributed to my development as a writer"), and a final assessment of his/her development as a writer during his/her college career. In theory, this was a noble experiment; however, since the college's Committee on Writing eschewed any form of assessment of any of the pieces of writing submitted for the portfolios on the ground they wouldn't dare "second guess" any classroom instructor's evaluation of students' writing, students soon realized it was just one more hoop to jump through before they received their diplomas. The "metacognitive assessments" of their own writing were accomplished in 2-3 minutes as they waited for department secretaries to log in their portfolios, and sometimes verged on the inane or the obscene. In any case, the completed portfolios continued to pile up in department offices.

A colleague and I once took advantage of a summer fellowship opportunity to try to assess how this system had improved students' writing. While we didn't get very far (with little secretarial assistance, we had to scan individual papers into a computer and then try to analyze them with a program we developed), our preliminary results indicated there was very little difference between ordinary portfolios and those which had been awarded the "with distinction" notation by the Committee on Writing which reviewed yet another "metacognitive statement" written by students who submitted all "A" papers.

Eventually, solely because of the backlog of portfolios that were clogging up storage space, the portfolio requirement was abandoned.

We are now left with a requirement that all students take two W-I courses. W-I courses are so designated by the college's Committee on Writing if they meet the criteria that they include both "writing to learn" and "learning to write" assignments. There are no page requirements. Submissions are made to the Committee on Writing which, in theory, is constituted of three

members of the English Department and two members of each of the three academic divisions (Arts & Sciences, Social Sciences, Health Sciences) though currently there are two English professors and two health sciences professors on the committee since Social Sciences has refused to participate in a program they don't adhere to. W-I designations are made for four years and are by instructor, not by course. Currently, approximately 40% of the W-I courses are lodged in the Division of Arts & Sciences (and many of them, in my opinion, fall into the Writing Instructional category); 35% in the Division of Social sciences, and 25% in the Division of Health Sciences. W-I courses are capped at 20 students which may obviously be an incentive for an instructor to apply for a W-I designation for a particular course.

A final note--transfer students are required to take only one W-I to satisfy graduation requirements.

The college's Curriculum Committee, which I in expiation my past sins chair, recently asked the Committee on Writing to reconsider its requirements and to reopen a discussion of the meaning of W-I college-wide. We were told they see no reason to do so--though they agree to sponsor a college forum on innovative methods current W-I instructors use. I suspect the floodgates will open and will keep everyone posted.

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