
Interdisciplinarity@WMU- Phase One planning Template

- 1. Brief Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the proposed interdisciplinary initiative. What types of questions would the initiative ask? What types of complex problems would it seek to solve?

The Writing Institute will optimize WMU's English Dept. and Writing Center (WC) collaboration to increase

- Grad/undergrad student engagement with and understanding of writing strategies and discipline-specific rhetoric
- Writing instruction approaches for all students
- Writing pedagogy development for interested faculty

Grad/undergrad students in all majors and certifications will benefit. The initiative includes three agreements:

- Yearly, the WC director will teach two English classes, including a 3-hour one for undergraduates hoping to work in the WC and graduate students assigned there. This effort will help with instructional shortages in two English programs and will generate about \$20K (cost savings plus tuition monies).
- English Graduate Assistants will have the opportunity to work weekly WC hours as part of their assistantship.
- The WC will maintain its current yearly budgets for consultant salaries (in Covid-reduction money, about \$45K), director's salary/benefits, and equipment/operations.
- Faculty, including English faculty, may have WC workload assignments or courtesy appointments.

Added WC efforts may include individual/group consultations, tailored writing resources, original discipline-specific presentations, class-based tutoring, and discipline-specific writing instructor collaborations.

WC training will move from an expense to a revenue-generating category via a 5000-level "WC Theory & Strategies" class to replace the current model. The English class will generate an additional 24 hours of consultation per class student. The new model will offer consultants a better training experience and offer WC staff a better means of judging potential staff.

GAs will enhance CVs. Faculty may collaborate with class on writing pedagogy efforts and take class.

Current WC Training

33 to 48 hrs (12 2-hr meetings; 3 observations; + co-consulting 5--20 hours based on student's ability)

33-hrs train. x \$12 an hr = \$396

48-hrs train. x \$12 an hr = \$576

- 2. Impacted units:** What existing units, programs, and colleges would be involved in the proposed initiative? What other possibilities for collaboration across campus or in the broader community might exist now or in the future?

The colleges, units, and programs most directly impacted by this proposal are:

1) The College of Arts and Sciences; Department of English (Graduate Programs, Rhetoric and Writing Studies Undergraduate Major, and First-Year Writing Program)

2) University College, Writing Center

Future campus collaborations can occur with any campus degree or certificate granting academic department, University Libraries, University College units, WMUx, advising units, student success initiatives, and grant-based programs (both TRiO and Upward Bound programs as well as CAMP).

A significant opportunity exists for additional cost-savings if grant-based programs, many of which hire writing consultants for their undergraduate students, would reconceptualize their line-item expenses for writing consultants as opportunities to collaborate with Western Michigan University's Writing Institute.

- 3. Impact on teaching, learning, and curricula:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on teaching, learning, and curricula. How might this initiative help to grow enrollment, including by reaching new audiences of learners through continuing education, dual enrollment, or professional certification? How will the proposed initiative positively impact the training of undergraduate and graduate students? How does it enhance our institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The impact on teaching, learning, and curricula will be evident within the first year of the Writing Institute. Students will gain increased writing instruction via English courses and WC sessions.

GAs will increase their understanding of writing as a rhetorical process that can differ for each writer and will learn to discern how each writer understands and negotiates writing situations. With increased understanding of how writers approach assignments, GAs will write more nuanced writing assignments and offer more effective conferences, commenting, and grading. The above will improve undergraduate learning and GA knowledge of writing pedagogy.

Faculty who collaborate with the Writing Institute on class projects will share insights about their discipline discourse and student writers. Many will experience writing pedagogy and insight growth via a trickle-up process by working with GAs and the WC director. Faculty will develop a better understanding of how students read assignments and may learn better writing commenting, grading, and conferencing strategies.

In addition to students who enroll in "WC Theory & Strategies," the class could be opened to K-12 teachers and workplace managers who want to help writers more effectively.

The Writing Institute will enhance student, faculty, and staff understanding of the socio-political aspects of writing and dialect/discourse bias.

WCs, including WMU's, have a long history of social justice, equity, and inclusion; most began to help all writers recognize their abilities and learn effective, audience-focused writing strategies.

The English Dept.'s 1st-year writing curriculum focuses on student success, and engages diversity, equity, and inclusion through lenses of writing. Students grapple with complex, multifaceted, real-world problems to understand how information and perspective can challenge inequity, increase diversity, and promote inclusion.

The Writing Institute will continue this work.

- 4. Impact on research and creative activity:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on research and creative activity. How will this initiative promote discovery and creative scholarship? How might it result in increased external funding?

The Writing Institute will bring new research ideas and new opportunities for research and potential external funding to Western Michigan University. The Institute will provide opportunities for students and faculty alike to engage in research that can be readily translated into publications for rhetoric and writing studies journals as well as for journals in other disciplines. This initiative seeks to build upon past collaborations between the Director of the Writing Center and the Director of First-Year Writing and, as in past years, involve undergraduate and graduate students in presentations to professional societies at the regional and national level as well as publications for global audiences.

- 5. Efficiencies and/or cost savings:** How might the proposed initiative contribute to increased efficiencies and/or cost savings, for example by reducing administrative positions (e.g. chairs/directors), sharing staff support services and/or by sharing facilities?

Efficiencies and cost-savings would be realized in three ways:

- As noted, the Writing Institute initiative will add more quality hours of writing assistance for students and will eliminate pay for training consultants via the revenue-generating training model.
- Involving English Graduate Teaching Assistants in Writing Center training and consultations initiative will formalize a relationship between the Department of English and the Writing Center that will allow graduate teaching assistants to serve a given number of hours consulting with and learning from Writing Center clients.
- Annually, the Writing Center director will teach two classes for the Department of English, including the new class that is the linchpin of this innovative proposal.

- 6. Impact on course offerings and workload:** At present, proposed initiatives will only be feasible and sustainable if they can be supported by existing resources, including instructional capacity, faculty and staff time, and facilities. Will the proposed initiative streamline existing course or program offerings? Could the initiative help create more equitable and sustainable workload for faculty, for example, by reducing the need to offer under enrolled courses, reducing the frequency of course offerings or eliminating the need to teach some courses?

No additional resources are required to realize this proposal.

7. Additional Information: What additional information would you like to provide in support of this proposal?

8. Contact

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