

Interdisciplinarity@WMU- Phase One planning Template

Duplicate Submission

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 proposed Writing Institute will optimize collaboration between Western Michigan University's Department of English and the Writing Center to increase

- graduate and undergraduate student engagement with writing and understanding of discipline-specific rhetoric and writing strategies
- writing instruction opportunities and approaches for all students
- writing pedagogy development opportunities for interested faculty

The new interdisciplinary initiative will operate on the following agreements:

- Annually, the Writing Center director will teach two writing classes for the Department of English, including a three-hour class required of undergraduates who want to consult in the Writing Center and of graduate students who will be assigned to consult in the Writing Center. This instructional agreement will help alleviate instructional shortages for two program areas in English. It will result in a net increase of approximately \$20,000 of revenue (cost savings plus tuition monies).
- Department of English Graduate Assistants will have the opportunity to be assigned weekly work hours in the Writing Center as part of their assistantship. These assignments will help to alleviate staffing shortages in the Writing Center.
- The Writing Center will maintain its current annual assistance budget devoted to hourly salaries of student and professional consultants (currently, in Covid-reduction figures, approximately \$45K), the budget for the director's salary and benefits, and the budget for equipment and operating expenses.
- Potential might also exist for trained faculty, including those in the Department of English, to receive workload assignments or courtesy appointments consulting with the Writing Center.

These efforts will result in additional quality writing instruction, including individual/group consultations, tailored writing resources, original discipline-specific presentations, class-based tutoring, and/or discipline-specific writing instructor collaborations.

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 tutors for their undergraduate students, would reconceptualize their line-item expenses for writing tutors 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?

Attracting New Potential Students

Beyond the undergraduate and graduate students who enroll in the 5000-level "Writing Center Theory and Strategies" course, it will be opened to K-12 teachers as well as to workplace managers. Such a class can help teachers and managers learn to assist writers more effectively while also serving university students. The current Writing Center director has experience training teachers and training workplace managers.

Enhancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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

Writing centers have a long history of strong social justice, equity, and inclusion, as most began to help all writers recognize their abilities as well as gain strategies about effective, audience-focused texts. The Western Michigan University Writing Center is no exception. We have helped students recognize the consistent, socially constructed grammar and meaning-making practices of African American discourse as well as the power of that discourse. We have helped students who struggle with English correctness overcome writing anxiety by using play theory and practice to help them succeed on standardized writing tests and class essay exams. We have revealed to first-generation student writers performance aspects of academic discourse, and so diminishing the power of systemic language biases.

The Department of English's first-year writing program curriculum focuses on student success, as well as equity and equality as major components of its curriculum. Its curriculum engages these diversity, equity, and inclusion through these lenses in writing. First-year writing students grapple with complex and multifaceted real world problems to understand how information and perspective can be mobilized to 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 regional and national levels 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:

1. Involve English Graduate Teaching Assistant in Writing Center Consultations. This initiative would formalize a relationship in which graduate teaching assistants would serve a given number of hours consulting with visitors to the Writing Center.
2. Cover Instructional Costs for Two English Classes. 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.
3. Establish a Revenue-Generating Training Model. As explained below, the Writing Institute initiative will add more quality hours of writing assistance for students and will eliminate pay for training consultants.

Revenue-Generating Consultant Training Model Explained

The Writing Institute interdisciplinary initiative will allow the training of Writing Center consultants to move from an expense category to a revenue-generating category by offering a 5000-level "Writing Center Theory and Strategies" class through the English Department. This course will replace the Writing Center's current semester-long training program that requires trainees to be hired and paid.

As a result of offering a course, Western Michigan University's Writing Center will receive an additional 24 hours of consultation per student enrolled in the class. Beyond these additional support hours, the course-based training model will provide a better training experience for new consultants, and will allow Writing Center staff a better means of judging potential consultant quality.

Should graduate students enroll in the class, they will receive consultant experiences that will enhance their CVs. Faculty from across the university will be able to collaborate with class students on writing pedagogy improvement projects and to take the class.

- 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; however, the proposal will impact teaching, learning, and curricula at Western Michigan University.

Anticipated Teaching, Learning, and Curricula Impact

The impact on teaching, learning, and curricula will be evident within the first year of the Writing Institute initiative. Students will receive increased writing instruction by way of English Department courses and Writing Center consultations.

Graduate assistants will increase their understanding of writing as a rhetorical process that can differ for each individual. They will learn to ask questions to discern how each writer understands and negotiates their given writing situation. With an increased understanding of how writers approach assignments and writing situations, graduate assistants will write more nuanced writing assignments and will enhance writing conferences, commenting, and grading, all of which will improve undergraduate student learning as well as the graduate assistants' knowledge of writing pedagogy and writers' thinking.

Faculty who voluntarily collaborate with the Writing Institute by connecting on projects will share insights about student writers as well as about their discipline discourse. Many faculty will also experience growth in writing pedagogy and writing insights via a "trickle-up" process from collaboration with graduate students and the Writing Center director. Faculty will also develop a better understanding of how students read assignments and, if needed, will learn effective commenting, grading, and writing conferencing strategies.

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

The programs and individuals involved in this proposal are looking forward to its implementation!

We have developed this table to illustrate where cost savings will be found in a new, revenue-generating training model:

Current WMU Writing Center Training Module

Activity	Supervisor/Mentor	Total Hours
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12 Training Meetings	Director & Assistant Director	24 hours
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3 hourly consultations + 3 20-min. debriefings	Assistant Director	Experienced Consultants
	Director	
	4 hours	

Co-consulting (collaborating with experienced consultant in sessions)	Assistant Director	Experienced Consultants
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Director 5 to 20 hours based on new consultant's and director's agreement consultant is ready to help WMU writers independently

Total Hours of Training Per Consultant = 33 to 48 hours

Current 33-hour training x \$12 per hour costs = \$396 per staff member

Current 48-hour training x \$12 per hour costs = \$576 per staff member

8. Contact

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