

## Performing the Groundwork: Building a WEC/WAC Writing Program at The College of St. Scholastica

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**Abstract:** This program profile describes the efforts needed to develop a new writing program at a small college. The author explores how she cultivated relations with disciplinary faculty to collaboratively redefine a “problem” into an opportunity by adopting Krista Ratcliffe’s technique of rhetorical listening. She then outlines the Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) components of the writing program. Additionally, the author offers lessons learned about writing program development and building productive college-wide relationships as well as some precautions. Overall, the profile contributes to existing scholarship on small college writing programs by addressing issues of program development and explores the possibilities of rhetorical listening for writing program administrators.

In Fall 2010, I began a faculty position in the Department of English at the College of St. Scholastica (CSS)—a small, private, comprehensive regional college—as the only composition and rhetoric specialist. [{1} \[#note1\]](#) The college historically serves a small residential undergraduate population; however, throughout the 2000s, CSS undertook strategic initiatives to increase graduate, online, and extended sites of education with a focus on professional programs (including nursing, business and technology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and health information and informatics management). These initiatives proved successful, expanding existing programs and bringing new programs to the college. They also introduced a larger, more diverse student population, especially nontraditional and graduate students, [{2} \[#note2\]](#) as well as more faculty members, many of whom are part-time and contingent. [{3} \[#note3\]](#)

These programmatic changes, coupled with a rapid growth in student and faculty populations, led to an increase in faculty frustration with student writing and student frustration with faculty writing expectations, especially in the professional and graduate programs. A more diverse student population meant different levels of preparedness for undergraduate- and graduate-level writing; new graduate programs meant different kinds of writing at a higher level; and more part- and full-time faculty meant different levels of preparedness for and commitments to teaching at the college-level. Faculty anecdotally yet frequently reported to administration their frustrations with students’ writing abilities as well as their own lack of preparedness to assist students with writing. While CSS already provided student writing support in the form of a writing center, faculty wanted their own support for addressing student writing. They informally requested, over a period of several years, professional development and institutional support of some kind be provided without a clear idea of what this would look like.

My position was created with administrative approval in response to these faculty requests. So, when I started, my position included the standard 3-3 teaching load with the expectation that I would “work with adjuncts, the Director of the Writing Center, and other faculty to promote writing,” as outlined in

the job description. Essentially, I was a WPA with no program, no reassignment time, and no guidelines beyond working with others to promote writing. This was an exciting opportunity—with no program in place, I had freedom to develop a program that responded to the current context and faculty needs. This was also a challenge, given that this was my first academic position and there were no permanent or existing structures for faculty writing support.

In what follows, I describe my attempt to develop what William Condon and Carol Rutz identify as a “type one” or “foundational” writing program at a small, regional college.<sup>[4]</sup> [\[#note4\]](#) I collectively refer to and understand this work as “performing the groundwork” because establishing a writing program at an institution like mine is just as much—if not, at times, more—about how I do what I do (my performance) as it is about what I know (my expertise). More specifically, I explore how I built relations with disciplinary faculty and collaboratively worked with them to redefine “problems” into opportunities so that a writing program would be sustained and owned by the faculty. I then consider what this experience can teach us about early stages of writing program development, especially in relation to building and maintaining productive college-wide relationships. Overall, this program profile contributes to existing scholarship on small college writing programs by addressing issues of program development.

## **Building Relationships and Establishing Connections through Rhetorical Listening**

While I was hired with the expectation that I would teach 3-3 *and* work with faculty (both part- and full-time), I was able to negotiate a semester-long course reassignment for Fall 2011 with my department chair. For this reassignment, I was to develop a new mentoring system for English Department adjuncts and provide individual support for two new adjuncts since the department strongly desired a more structured system for overseeing adjunct faculty. This need, along with my previous experience mentoring Graduate Teaching Assistants at a large research university, allowed me to argue that to develop such a system and effectively carry it out, I needed reassignment time. To further justify the reassignment, I suggested that I also would meet with faculty members to gauge their interest in possible writing initiatives centered on faculty development. My chair—who was, overall, supportive of my efforts and wanted me to pursue writing initiatives (in part to raise the profile both of me as an untenured professor and the Department of English)—secured approval from the dean of the School of Arts and Letters (SAL) to fund the course reassignment. My work, then, would be housed in the Department of English with the support of SAL.

During the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters, I met with eleven departmental or program chairs as well as three departments during their monthly faculty meetings. I began by focusing my efforts within SAL (including Philosophy; Global, Cultural, and Language Studies; and History and Politics) but quickly expanded to departments and programs in other schools—especially those with high enrollments—based on suggestions from my chair (Education; Psychology and Sociology; Undergraduate Nursing; Post-Baccalaureate Nursing; Undergraduate Business and Technology, traditional and extended/online; and Graduate Business and Technology). Soon other departments and programs contacted me for meetings (Graduate Nursing; Physical Therapy; Occupational Therapy; and Health Information and Informatics Management).

Each of these meetings was a delicate rhetorical dance for me. I understood that most faculty at my college expect a relatively high level of autonomy in their teaching and resist standardization efforts, as is common at smaller teaching-oriented colleges (Falbo and Hesse), so I could not present myself as the expert who will tell them what to do and how to do it. Still, I knew that many faculty genuinely

wanted writing support but needed some direction for what that could look like. Given my training in writing program administration and my observations over my first year, I considered elements of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), including open workshops on writing topics as well as individualized faculty, department, and program support. I also was especially drawn to the Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) approach developed at the University of Minnesota. WEC combines elements of WAC and Writing in the Disciplines (WID), with composition and rhetoric specialists and disciplinary faculty working together to intentionally integrate discipline-relevant writing and writing instruction across the curriculum of a program or department (“FAQ”). They do so by engaging in a three-phase, recursive process in which a department or program creates, implements, and assesses a writing plan that “articulate[s] discipline-specific writing expectations, and plans for curricular integration of writing instruction, writing assessment, and instructional support” (“Process”).<sup>{5}</sup> [\[#note5\]](#) Even though WEC was developed within a large research university context, I believed it to be an especially good fit for faculty at CSS and the problems that they faced. Given the widespread and high levels of frustration regarding writing and the continued emphasis on developing new programs, I strongly believed that cultivating a culture of writing at the college was necessary but that faculty, not just me, needed both to support and also control this process. WEC, with its faculty-driven, individualized, and comprehensive approach to integrating writing across the curriculum within a department or program, met this charge.

During my meetings with faculty, then, I worked to learn more about what they wanted in terms of support while simultaneously campaigning for a culture of writing. To do so, I relied heavily on the technique of rhetorical listening, introduced by Krista Ratcliffe as a performance in which an individual adopts “a stance of openness...in relation to *any* person, text, or culture; its purpose is to cultivate conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication”(25). While Ratcliffe is particularly interested in “how rhetorical listening may be employed to hear people’s intersecting identifications with gender and race” (17), I suggest that rhetorical listening allows for Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) to hear people’s intersecting identifications with writing, their disciplines, and students. Moreover, this kind of listening, I argue, allows WPAs both to understand their colleagues’ “problems” and to collaboratively redefine those “problems” as opportunities. In this way, rhetorical listening allowed me to “perform the groundwork” while also shaping it.

Following Ratcliffe’s suggestions for rhetorical listening, I adopted a “stance of openness” and made productive identifications during my meetings with faculty to begin understanding their “problems.” I entered these meetings with the intention to gain and promote understanding, not simply promote my ideas for writing initiatives or myself. Understanding, Ratcliffe writes, “means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent”(28)—in other words, understanding “means identifying the various discourses embodied within each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how these discourses affect not only ourselves but others”(29). For me, this meant talking less and listening more. I would pose open-ended questions like: “Can you tell me about writing in your department?”; “What kinds of writing do students do in your program?”; “What kinds of problems does your department have with writing?”; and “What would you like your students to be able to do with writing?” It also meant that I first worked to ensure I understood their “problems” before correcting them or offering solutions. To do so, I would mirror back to them what I was hearing with comments like: “What I hear you saying is...”; “I understand that you are frustrated because...”; or “You find [fill in the blank] to be a problem because...”. During these moments, I often needed to temporarily silence the composition and rhetoric specialist in me who immediately wanted to correct what I perceived to be inaccurate and, at times, unhelpful characterizations of students, writing, and the teaching of writing or provide solutions for their “problems.”

Not providing my initial reactions or answers allowed me to analyze their “problems” in terms of cultural logics. To promote understanding, rhetorical listening also entails “analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which these claims function” (Ratcliffe 26). While a claim is “an assertion of a person’s thinking,” Ratcliffe explains, a cultural logic “is a belief system or shared way of reasoning within which a claim may function” (33). For example, many faculty members claimed that error was the most important and pressing student writing issue. This claim demonstrates a different cultural logic from my own; it primarily defines and evaluates writing in terms of “error” rather than rhetorical strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, while many faculty agreed that error was indeed *the problem* with student writing, they certainly did not agree about what constituted “error.” Error sometimes meant grammatical, punctuation, and mechanical errors or documentation system errors, but often it also meant lack of focus (in terms of content), development (in terms of relevant evidence and developed analysis), or clarity (in terms of organization and style). Parsing through cultural logics like these provided me with a sharper focus on what the “problem” was beyond what was occluded by the term “error.” I began to see instances where cultural logics regarding writing and the teaching of writing were limiting, like in the error example above, which, in turn, was causing frustration.

This is not to say that I hid my expertise and avoided any discussion of potentially limiting cultural logics. I would wait to do so, though, until I understood to some extent the “problem” and the cultural logics operating behind it. This usually meant I spent approximately 20-30 minutes (out of 60-75 minute meetings) simply listening and asking follow-up questions before I would start making identifications, another element of rhetorical listening. Creating productive identifications, Ratcliffe explains, is about locating places of common ground but also places of disagreement—that is commonalities and differences (32). It is from both the commonalities and differences that I sought to build relations with faculty so that we could collaboratively redefine their “problems” into opportunities.

Locating moments of common ground was relatively easy but not without its difficulties. The easy moments came primarily with broad issues, like our desire to help students become better writers, our belief that writing is important, or our understanding that students and faculty need writing support. The less easy moments came when discussing our interactions with students. For example, when faculty detailed frustrations with student writing, I would often comment, “It is frustrating for me too when...” or “I’ve encountered something similar in my classes.” My fear in these moments was that my identification would be perceived as agreeing with or condoning negative perceptions of students and their abilities, and some faculty’s follow-up comments suggested this was the case. When this would occur, I would clarify that I was identifying with the frustration or the experience, not the negative perception. While many of these commonalities could easily be assumed or go unnoticed, explicitly stating them emphasized that we were united in common pursuits. Simply acknowledging that I too get frustrated and encounter similar issues with student writing not only identified common ground but also validated their feelings and experiences. Doing so also positioned me as being with the faculty members, not against them. Establishing these kinds of connections and a collaborative relationship provided a foundation from which we could work together to realize the opportunity in front of us. At the same time, it garnered me faculty support.

Interestingly, identifying and articulating our differences (or where our cultural logics clashed) helped to further define our relationship as co-operative and collaborative. For example, most faculty members expressed to me that they were not writing teachers, so they simply could and should not teach writing in the classroom. Rather than force the idea that we all teach writing to some extent, I acknowledged our difference. I explained, yes, I am a writing teacher and they are not; but they can

support writing in their classrooms, and I can help them do so in ways with which they feel comfortable. For example, they could ask students to perform short, five-minute freewrites in class before discussions without grading them. Or they could ask students to perform a peer review with focused questions of a draft. Or they could ask students to submit paper proposals, outlines, or drafts directly to them without providing extensive feedback. Acknowledging differences like these and shifting my language accordingly (e.g. teaching writing to supporting writing) seemed to allay some concerns, which allowed us to start redefining the “problem.”

To do so, cultural logics that contributed to frustrations about writing and teaching writing were confronted and reframed. For instance, another common faculty belief was that writing and content are separate issues so any attention to writing means content is sacrificed. When this issue was raised, I acknowledged that they have a lot of content to cover and I understood their concerns; however, I explained that I find it more helpful to think of writing as enhancing and reinforcing content. I then provided examples like how identifying thesis statements in published articles helps students understand content as well as reinforce the purpose, placement, and structure of thesis statements in their own disciplines. Certainly I did not convince everyone that content and writing are not in opposition or that discussing writing gives access to talking about ways of knowing and doing in disciplinary ways, but this was not my primary goal. Instead, I simply wanted to highlight a difference and expose them to another cultural logic so that future work could build upon these redefinitions.

It was through this process of identification and redefinition that “problems” became opportunities. While I became increasingly convinced throughout these meetings that WEC would be an effective approach given the kinds “problems” faculty identified and the prominent cultural logics at work, I did not present it as the only option. Instead, when the conversation turned to how we could work together to address their “problems,” I presented faculty with options for faculty development and curricular support, including WAC and WEC. The distinction I provided was that WAC focuses its efforts on a wide audience to effect focused curricular changes, such as creating more effective writing assignments, while WEC, a new and innovative approach to WAC, focuses its efforts on one department or program to effect widespread curricular change.

Faculty responded most favorably to the WEC approach, evidenced by the chair of Undergraduate Business and Technology sending an email to his department following our meeting, expressing great interest in pursuing a WEC project, and the chair of Department of Graduate Nursing agreeing to pilot an initiative if the opportunity presented itself. The faculty’s responsiveness to WEC was fueled, I believe, by their desire for widespread change since they understood their “problems” to be multifaceted and prolific as well as by their interest in pursuing a new and innovative approach to WAC. During the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s, a now retired English Department member attempted to institute some WAC elements (mostly workshops) at CSS, but the only remnants of these efforts were a general aversion to the term “WAC” (many viewed it as “outdated”) and vague recollections of workshops. As a result, many faculty members saw WEC more than WAC as turning their “problems” into an opportunity.

It is important to note that while I primarily provide successes above for illustrative purposes, I also made many missteps as I was negotiating cultural logics, similarities, and differences—it is a messy ideological and rhetorical business. Luckily, as Ratcliffe emphasizes, rhetorical listening “is not a quick fix nor a happy-ever-after solution; rather it is an ongoing process” (33). Despite its messiness, rhetorical listening proved to be one of the most active and powerful tactics while “performing the groundwork.” Listening cultivated co-operative and collaborative relationships with faculty in which we could redefine “problems” into opportunities. This kind of work is especially important at early stages of development since starting a program is not just about the program itself but about working

to identify and reshape the cultural logics operating within an institution, its programs, and its departments. Moreover, starting a successful program is not just about who you will be working with but who identifies with and supports the kind of work you are doing.

## **Piloting a WEC/WAC Writing Program**

Unbeknownst to me, the Department of Graduate Nursing (DGN) chair approached my chair during Fall 2011, shortly after our meeting, about undertaking a WEC project with me. Her enthusiasm convinced my chair and dean to extend my one-course reassignment into Spring 2012 to pilot a WEC initiative with the DGN with the agreement that I would also engage in a WAC initiative with other faculty. Together, they constitute the WEC/WAC Writing Program. Currently, this work (and my one-course reassignment) is approved on a semester-to-semester basis contingent upon faculty participation and the teaching needs of the English Department; thus far, I have been approved for the Spring 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013, and Fall 2013 semesters.

### **WEC Initiative**

The WEC initiative with the DGN formally spanned over three semesters (Spring 2012, Fall 2012, and Spring 2013) although the productive relationship continues to today. I modeled our work after the WEC project at the University of Minnesota (UMN), detailed above, embracing its underlying convictions and adopting its general framework—including the three-phase process and the creation of a writing plan. However, the WEC project at UMN operates within a large, research university context under its own budget and employs a variety of WEC personnel, including two co-principal investigators, two teaching consultants, an administrative coordinator, an external advisor, an external evaluator, a Campus Writing Board, and faculty liaisons (one per academic unit) (“People”). The WEC initiative at CSS operates within a small, regional college context with no funding beyond a tenuous single course-reassignment and has only me as WEC personnel. As such, I could provide no financial incentive or reassignment time for DGN faculty to participate in WEC, so much of the initial motivation for participation came from the department chair who initiated and supported the project. The remaining motivation came from faculty who were frustrated with student writing to a breaking point, desperate for assistance, and willing to try anything—an unfortunate yet opportune time for intervention. Obviously some elements of UMN’s model required adaptation, as I demonstrate below.

We undertook the first phase—“creating a writing plan”—over the course of Spring 2012, completing it at the beginning of Fall 2012. While neither the department nor I had available funds to secure a Faculty Liaison whose role is to coordinate WEC activity and draft the writing plan in the UMN model (“Create”), I worked closely with the chair and all other faculty members throughout this phase to collect and analyze data. UMN’s data collection process includes three online surveys (student, faculty/instructor, and professional affiliates) regarding discipline-specific writing and writing instruction, a collection and analysis of student writing samples, and four faculty meetings with WEC personnel focused on effectively integrating writing into the curriculum (“Create”). My modified data collection process included: 1) a collection and analysis of marked student writing samples, the corresponding assignments and rubrics, and the graduate program handbook; 2) an identification of core courses in the DGN for review; 3) a collection and analysis of syllabi and all writing assignments from identified courses; 4) individual interviews with faculty members ([Appendix 1 \[#appendix1\]](#)); and 5) three departmental meetings. The department chair and I strategically decided to limit our review of the curriculum to the fourteen core courses required of all students regardless of specialization that span over the entire course of the students’ education given our constrained resources and time limitations. However, while interviews are often more time intensive than surveys,

I chose to pursue interviews with faculty because in a small college context, personal communication and interaction is often preferred and expected. Additionally, I could continue to practice rhetorical listening, establishing relationships and redefining “problems.” My lack of data directly from students was an oversight, and one I will correct, most likely in the form of survey data, in future projects.

In terms of the departmental meetings, I met with the faculty for approximately the last hour of their scheduled three-hour monthly department meeting three times throughout the Spring 2012 semester. All eight full-time and one part-time faculty members were present (either in person or via phone) at each meeting. I had certain topics and ideas to raise at each meeting, so I came prepared with my own agenda, but I did not provide this to faculty nor did we necessarily follow it. While I “ran” this portion of the meeting, I considered my role to be one of listener and facilitator rather than speaker and leader.

These meetings proved instrumental in cultivating a co-operative performance of the groundwork not only between the faculty and me but also between the faculty members. During meetings, I could initiate dialogue, raising topics or issues that I identified during the data collection and analysis process. For example, at our first meeting, I discussed some of my initial findings based on the limited data that I had collected at that point, including the disconnect between detailed rubrics and student writing as well as a lack of student engagement in the writing process, but also encouraged them to see the positive work that they were already doing with students and writing. Additionally, these meetings allowed me to receive feedback from the faculty as a whole, keeping the work focused on their needs, their ideas, and their comfort levels. For instance, I noted that nearly every faculty member mentioned their disdain with discussion board posts during the interviews, but it was not until the departmental meeting at which I shared this observation that I came to better understand the sources of that disdain through discussion with the group—and, I think, they began to better understand their disdain as well—which allowed us to redefine this “problem” and develop a plan of action.

Additionally, these meetings allowed faculty to engage in dialogue *about writing* with each other. Sharing their experiences and writing expectations unveiled some similarities but also points of disagreement and inconsistency. The benefits of such dialogue were most visible when we created the “Writing Outcomes Statement for the Department of Graduate Nursing” so that we could then revise the core curriculum to work toward the outcomes ([Appendix 2 \[#appendix2\]](#)). At our first meeting, I provided guidelines for creating writing outcomes and examples ([Appendix 3 \[#appendix3\]](#)) and asked each faculty member to create her own informal writing outcomes statement for the DGN that outlined what writing skills and tasks graduates should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the program and email them to me. At our second meeting, I shared a draft of the writing outcomes statement that I created based on the faculty members’ responses and interviews. I briefly explained the outcomes, but the remainder of the conversation occurred between the faculty members, with them clarifying, questioning, and negotiating the assumptions, language, and priorities of the statement. With minimal intervention on my part, beyond serving as a facilitator when needed, they revised and approved the statement for use in both the BS to DNP and the Masters programs by the end of the meeting.

With the outcomes approved, I then compared via a color-coded chart the existing core course assignments to the newly created writing outcomes to highlight how and to what extent the curriculum is and is not meeting the outcomes ([Appendix 4 \[#appendix4\]](#)). This required creating an EXCEL spreadsheet in which I listed the courses on the vertical axis and the outcomes on the horizontal. I also color-coded to indicate the sequencing of courses in the curriculum (grey for first-year, pink for second, and green for third), and within those color-coded sections, I shaded to indicate

the sequence of courses within that specific year (summer, fall, and spring semesters).[{6} \[#note6\]](#)I then reviewed all of the collected assignments for each course, marking them for outcomes that they addressed, and inserted this data into the spreadsheet. With its completion, faculty reviewed it for any errors or oversights on my part. This chart proved immensely helpful as it provided the faculty and me with a visualization of the core course curriculum that easily and quickly exposed existing gaps and problems.[{7} \[#note7\]](#)

At the end of the Spring 2012 semester, I drafted a writing plan based on analysis of the collected data, feedback from faculty at departmental meetings, and a comparison of the core courses and their assignments to the newly created Writing Outcomes Statement. The plan outlined my major findings and offered five recommendations:

1. participate in a workshop on the marking and grading of student writing;
2. include direct instruction and support in academic writing in the core courses during the first year of the program;
3. integrate elements of the writing process and peer review throughout the curriculum;
4. restructure the use of discussion board posts and explore other electronic media for student interaction in all courses; and
5. incorporate more opportunities to practice reflective clinical practice throughout the curriculum.  
([Appendix 5 \[#appendix5\]](#))

With DGN faculty approval,[{8} \[#note8\]](#)we moved into the second phase—“implementing the writing plan”—in the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters, allotting two semesters for this work, like UMN, although we anticipate some work will be continued into later semesters (“Implement”). The faculty played a more active and central role during this phase and intentionally so. While the plan outlined recommendations, I crafted them to provide flexibility so that faculty determined how they would be enacted and, thus, maintained ownership of their curriculum. After reviewing the writing plan, faculty collaboratively decided at one of our meetings to address the recommendations 2, 3, 4, and 5 by revising the core courses. They did so for two reasons: faculty wanted to maintain and reinforce consistent writing expectations and activities throughout the program, and faculty primarily taught these courses from the same syllabus with the same textbooks and assignments with minor adjustments. During Fall 2012, faculty would revise the six first-year core courses; and during Spring 2013, faculty would revise the remaining core courses.

We undertook a similar process to revise all of the core courses during Fall 2012 and Spring 2013. Two faculty members, operating as a pair, were assigned to revise one of the core courses and were provided with some guidance for how they could revise the course to better meet the writing outcomes. The pairs met with me for one or two informal meetings to discuss course revisions. Since I met with every pair, I knew what revisions all the pairs were considering and could help facilitate cross-course connections. However, the pairs also directly spoke to each other throughout the revision process, making their own connections and revisions without my assistance. These collaborative pairings marked an important shift in the DGN’s course development process. Previously, an individual would develop and teach a course in isolation from others teaching different sections of the same course or, more commonly, one individual would develop a course and other faculty would then teach it from the same syllabus—in fact, most faculty taught courses that they had adopted rather than created. Instead, we sought to make course development more collaborative and to allow for more variation between instructors while still creating syllabi and assignments that all faculty could use.

The result of these collaborative pairings was a transformation of the core course curriculum ([Appendix 6 \[#appendix6\]](#)). The revisions are too numerous and nuanced to detail here, but some

examples include: 1) breaking larger papers into smaller assignments, like proposals, annotated bibliographies, thesis statements, outlines, and then final papers; 2) breaking larger papers into two or three smaller papers; 3) incorporating group writing opportunities; 4) providing modeling and opportunities to practice academic writing conventions; 5) establishing writing groups for peer review; 6) incorporating the use of journals for self-reflection; 7) incorporating the use of wikis and blogs for drafting, peer review, and revising; and 8) moving a course to a different place in the sequence. The revisions to the first-year core curriculum courses will be fully implemented in Summer 2013, revisions to the second-year core course in Summer 2014, and revision to third-year courses in Summer 2015, although many faculty are adopting and piloting the revisions earlier as time permits so that they can make adjustments before they go into full effect. In addition to this incredible amount of work, faculty also participated in a two-hour, hands-on workshop that I designed for them on assessing writing focused on marginal comments, end comments, error, and time management during the Fall 2012 semester. All of this is to say that undertaking this kind of work is a substantial time commitment from the faculty and me that would not have been possible without the leadership of the department chair and the dedication and overall good will of the faculty.

This WEC initiative, while not complete, has experienced some success. DGN faculty already informally report improvements in student writing, decreased stress regarding writing, and an improved understanding of the curriculum as a whole. The faculty's reliance on me has lessened and their confidence has increased throughout the implementation phase, and I imagine that I will serve more as a consultant when needed rather than a central figure in their writing plan in the future. I also believe this will hold true during the third phase—"assessing the writing plan"—as faculty assess their writing plan and make revisions as needed, but this will be determined at a later date. [\[9\]](#)  
[\[#note9\]](#)

## **WAC Initiative**

In addition to working one-on-one with the DGN to transform their curriculum and teaching practices, I engage in a WAC initiative in which I provide faculty development and curricular support to other departments, programs, and faculty across the college, primarily in the form of topical workshops and meetings. At present, I only provide workshops and other forms of support upon request from a department, program, or faculty member, and I then develop or tailor the support for that department, program, or individual. I have no formal system for such requests; instead, individuals send requests via email or approach me in-person based on either prior conversations with me or word-of-mouth from others. On average, I receive 1-2 requests per week for some kind of support that widely varies in terms of time and resource commitment.

Workshops have addressed particular topics of importance to a department or program, such as Assessing Writing and Developing Effective Writing Assignments, and have also served as more open-format Q&A sessions. Both full- and part-time faculty members of departments and programs from the main campus and extended sites attend either in-person or online. I hold these workshops both at the main campus and at extended sites, which require travel in addition to preparation. The individualized support I offer ranges from one-on-one meetings focused on specific topics or writing assignments to meetings with a few people regarding larger concerns, program development, and curricular change. For example, I met with a professor to discuss rubrics for two specific assignments, and I met with the Graduate Program Directors to discuss their concerns with writing at the graduate-level. These kinds of meetings occur upon request except in the case of English Department adjuncts who are required to work with me (as requested by the English Department chair) during their first

semester teaching at the college (on average we hire 1-3 new adjuncts per year). They are required to submit to me their syllabi for review and allow me to perform one in-class observation.

## **Learning from the Experience**

Since developing and undertaking these WEC and WAC initiatives, I have learned valuable lessons from both my successes and failures. Here I will outline six lessons that, I believe, will be most valuable for WPAs developing new programs within small colleges, but WPAs at larger institutions may also find value in them. I feel compelled to preface these lessons by echoing Julie Dyke Ford's sentiment regarding her own writing program initiatives at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology: "all of this stuff is a heck of a lot of work." While no WPA is a stranger to a lot of work, developing and piloting new initiatives certainly is a heck of a lot of work—it is time consuming, emotionally draining, intellectually challenging and, ultimately, risky. As such, I would advise untenured and new WPAs, like me, to approach initiatives cautiously and conservatively even when they are expected of the position.

## **Invest Time in Building Relationships and Establishing Connections**

The time I spent listening and talking to people proved invaluable as I "performed the groundwork" for the WEC/WAC initiatives. It allowed me to understand the context, the faculty, and their needs as well as build relations between the field of composition and rhetoric and other disciplines. I discussed with faculty the ways in which writing and the teaching of writing connected our disciplines, as I illustrate above. Demonstrating these kinds of relations while also acknowledging the differences helped me to build trust and forge strong, co-operative relationships with disciplinary faculty. Building these kinds of relations and relationships, however, takes time and is often not recognized as "work" when you do it well. Rarely are such connections established during one meeting, but rather they develop over several meetings and informal conversations. I also found that you cannot force connections; instead, they must seem like a natural part or outgrowth of the conversation. Moreover, this kind of work is ongoing, a cyclical process of establishing relations, reinforcing relations, and building new relations. All of this is time-consuming, hard, and seemingly endless work but worth the investment, especially at small colleges where "WPAs depend more on persuasion through a strong ethos" than "fiat" (Hesse 43). Without a sense of connection between faculty members and me, both the WEC and WAC initiatives would not have gotten off the ground.

## **Listen More**

By investing time in building relations, I discovered what should be obvious: people want to be listened to, heard, and understood. It is especially easy to forget how powerful a simple "I understand your frustration" is when building support for initiatives and feeling the need to sell them. But, as I quickly learned, I did not need to sell initiatives to faculty—I needed their buy-in, a subtle yet important difference. To earn buy-in, I needed to talk at people less and listen to them more to engage in productive dialogues and create initiatives that responded to their needs. As I suggest above, this is not to say that WPAs should take a passive role; listening, especially rhetorical listening, requires continuous engagement, rhetorical sensitivity, and rhetorical negotiation. The processes of identifying, analyzing, and working to redefine cultural logics and creating identifications through both similarities and differences is draining, difficult work, but again, my experience suggests that it is worth the effort. It helps WPAs gain an understanding of the contexts in which they work and people with whom they work, which increases their ability to redefine "problems" as opportunities and to gain faculty buy-in for initiatives.

## **Recognize Your Limitations and the Program's Limitations**

Piloting a writing program at a small college as the only composition and rhetoric specialist impressed upon me the importance of setting reasonable expectations of yourself and a writing program from the start. As Judith Hebb notes, when faculty and administrators view you as *the* “local writing expert on campus,” they look to you for guidance on any number of writing concerns and ask you to contribute to wide variety of activities and committees (104). While wanting to be helpful in interactions like these (both for the benefit of initiatives and your own tenure), I found it equally important to be honest about my and a writing program's limitations. I could not present a writing program or myself as saviors who could alone fix the problems at the college, as many believed or maybe just hoped. I learned to reframe interactions to highlight what I can help faculty achieve, keeping agency with them. For example, when one department asked me to develop a graduate-level writing course for them, I agreed to develop outcomes and an outline for the course together and then serve as a resource as they developed daily activities and assignments.

When starting a program reliant upon faculty support, setting reasonable boundaries and expectations can be difficult. However, without them, a WPA might experience success at first, but the success will diminish and the possibility for disappointment will increase as writing concerns and problems linger and a WPA's workload and expectations become excessive and unreasonable. This is especially true for WAC work that spans multiple departments, programs, and faculty and tends to have a singular, short-term focus. In comparison, WEC work is more easily contained since you are working with one department and its impact is more pronounced given the prolonged and intensive nature of the work.

## **Learn How to Say “Not Now”**

The most valuable phrase I learned to say was “not now.” Again, I acknowledge that this is difficult to say when developing a program reliant upon faculty support. The tendency is to say yes to everything and find a way to make it work. I resisted this impulse and learned to say “not now” for two reasons: first, I needed to keep my WPA workload manageable to protect myself as an untenured faculty member, and second, faculty interest, not just contact hours, demonstrates a need for a program. “Not now” allows me to limit my WPA work within a semester, although it still amounts to more than one-course reassignment, without the guilt of saying “No.” “Not now” also allows me to keep an open-line of communication with faculty members without discouraging them from future inquiries. When I tell a faculty member, “not now,” I briefly explain my full schedule; provide a possible time in the future, offer an alternative or partial assistance, or I agree to follow-up with them at a future date; and close by expressing my enthusiasm for working with them in the near future and encouraging them to contact me if anything changes. Faculty requests only have increased since Fall 2011, and most seem understanding and willing to join the queue, so I do not believe “not now” and setting limitations to my WPA work have damaged either the WEC or WAC initiatives. Rather, an active interest and future appointments, along with positive responses to contact hours, help to demonstrate the need for a writing program.

## **Document Everything, Always**

When I began my WPA work in Fall 2011, I documented every meeting to prove that I deserved the course reassignment. During Spring 2012, I inconsistently documented my work because no one questioned the course reassignment. My understanding of documentation changed, however, as I undertook the WEC and WAC initiatives and looked to secure more stability and resources for them. I

came to view documentation as not simply proof for my chair that I earned a course reassignment; more importantly, it was evidence for a much larger audience, including higher administration, that a writing program is worth an investment. If the program was to transition from a pilot into a program with resources to support it, I needed data to support my arguments. During Fall 2012, then, I began to document everything related to my WPA work regardless of the length or formality. Whether I was attending a formal meeting, responding to an email request, performing research, or even if someone stopped me in the hall with a question, I would document the date, the time, the name(s), the nature of the work, and the content as soon as possible. While it can feel trivial documenting a five-minute email response, all the short, informal interactions over a semester go unnoticed. Additionally, I documented when I was unable to fulfill requests and needed to postpone them due to an already full schedule.

## **Work with Administrators Early in the Process and Throughout It**

Not working with higher administration earlier in the process was one of my biggest oversights. I initially focused on faculty because I thought that if I gained faculty support, administrative support simply would follow. While the two are related to some extent, I did not adequately recognize or engage the cultural logics of higher administration—that is, while I spent time analyzing cultural logics of faculty and making identifications with them, I did not do so with higher administration primarily because, coming from a large research institution for graduate study, I did not realize that direct interaction with higher administration at smaller colleges not only is possible but probable. While I was “performing the groundwork” with faculty, I should have been undertaking a similar process with different members of higher administration. I also initially focused on faculty because I thought that senior faculty vocalizing their support directly to higher administration would be more persuasive than anything from an untenured, junior faculty member. After receiving some feedback on this approach, I learned, however, that having several individuals directly contact higher administration could be perceived as an annoyance or, even worse, as merely complaining. A more effective strategy for demonstrating the need for a writing program to higher administration is to submit reports with much supporting data (the more numbers, the better) and to arrange meetings to discuss the reports.

With these lessons learned, I look forward to seeing how the WEC/WAC writing program develops at CSS. In Fall 2013, I began a WEC project with two of the Graduate Programs in the School of Business Technology as well as continue to follow-up with the DGN. Other departments and program have expressed interest in WEC work while others and individual faculty continue to contact me for WAC work. Additionally, efforts to formalize a writing program and secure resources for it—moving it from a type 1, foundational program, into a type 2, established program (Condon and Rutz)—are underway. A Writing Task Force (of which I was co-chair), charged to create a comprehensive plan for improving student writing at the college, issued a report in which it offered recommendations for 1) professional development, 2) curricular considerations, and 3) student support. While several recommendations were made within each of these sections, the task force put forward to the Vice President of Academic Affairs as its highest priority the creation of a writing program focused on professional development. The initial response to this recommendation indicated that internal funding was not available for such an undertaking but recognized the need for such a program. However, recently, a grant, initiated by the Associate Vice-President for College Advancement, to provide two-three years of funding to formally establish a writing program was developed and submitted.

While the outcome of the grant remains unknown as does the future of a writing program at CSS, I remain cautiously optimistic. Faculty support and desire for a writing program remain strong as does

the need; administrative support is growing; and my enthusiasm and commitment continues. Regardless of how the program evolves, what I hope my profile has highlighted is the value of “performing the groundwork” in ways that develop co-operative and collaborative relationships with disciplinary faculty that work to redefine “problems.” Creating this kind of co-performance of the groundwork allows WPAs to create opportunities for interventions and cultivates faculty ownership of a writing program. And it is on this kind of foundation that a writing program at a small college can be built.

## Appendices

1. [Appendix 1: Interview Questions Addressed at Individual Faculty Meetings \[#appendix1\]](#)
2. [Appendix 2: Writing Outcomes Statement for the Department of Graduate Nursing \[#appendix2\]](#)
3. [Appendix 3: Directions and Examples of Writing Outcomes Provided to Faculty \[#appendix3\]](#)
4. Appendix 4: Comparison of Writing Outcomes and Core Course Assignments
  - a. [Part 1 \[St Scholastica Appendix 4 Part 1.pdf\]](#) (PDF)
  - b. [Part 2 \[St Scholastica Appendix 4 Part 2.pdf\]](#) (PDF)
5. [Appendix 5: Writing Plan for the Department of Graduate Nursing \[#appendix5\]](#)
6. Appendix 6: Comparison of Writing Outcomes and Revised Core Course Assignments
  - a. [Part 1 \[St Scholastica Appendix 6 Part 1.pdf\]](#) (PDF)
  - b. [Part 2 \[St Scholastica Appendix 6 Part 2.pdf\]](#) (PDF)

### Appendix 1: Interview Questions Addressed at Individual Faculty Meetings

1. What role should writing play in the Department of Graduate Nursing?
2. What are your expectations of the writing abilities of the students at the beginning of the graduate program?
3. What are your expectations of the writing abilities of the students at the end of the graduate program?
4. What problems or concerns do you often see in student writing?
5. Tell me about the types of writing students do in your classes.
6. What assignments would you like to change or have the student’s work look different? What changes would you like to see?
7. Is there anything you would like to add?

### Appendix 2: Writing Outcomes Statement for the Department of Graduate Nursing

By the end of the MS program, students should be able to successfully perform 1-5.

By the end of the DNP program, students should be able to successfully perform 1-6.

1. Analyze and synthesize multiple scientific and scholarly sources from nursing and related disciplines to create a comprehensive review of the literature
  - a. Locate appropriate literature related to an identified topic
  - b. Interpret and evaluate demanding scientific and scholarly readings
  - c. Create clear, concise, and logical summaries of sources
  - d. Establish connections between the sources, identifying similarities and differences, to present a coherent overview of an identified topic

2. Identify a clear purpose for a writing task and demonstrate it with evidence and analysis
  - a. Develop a clear thesis statement that identifies a discernible purpose
  - b. Effectively integrate appropriate and relevant evidence from scientific and scholarly sources into writing with a balanced use of direct quotation, summary, paraphrasing
  - c. Analyze evidence to demonstrate its significance and relevance to the thesis statement
3. Engage in reflective clinical practice
  - a. Critically reflect on one's evolving role while transitioning from RN to APN/DNP
  - b. Describe, explore, and self-critique the processes involved in independent, clinical decision-making
  - c. Apply scientific and scholarly research to clinical practice
4. Engage in all aspects of writing processes including invention, research, drafting, sharing with others, revising in response to feedback, proofreading, and editing.
  - a. Develop ideas through interaction with others
  - b. Give and receive critical responses to writing
  - c. Critique their own writing in order to revise both global (organization, development, focus, etc.) and local (grammar, usage, format, etc.) concerns
5. Demonstrate academic and disciplinary writing conventions
  - a. Demonstrate mastery of Standardized Edited English
  - b. Properly and responsibly use APA style with no error
  - c. Create paragraphs that have a singular and developed focus
  - d. Demonstrate a logical organization in which paragraphs and sections are explicitly related to each other and remain focused on a purpose
  - e. Compose concise and precise prose
6. Propose, plan, implement, and evaluate an applied research project
  - a. Analyze a current clinical practice to identify a problem and explore that problem in a review of the literature
  - b. Design, describe, and carry out an applied research project that uses appropriate research methods
  - c. Analyze and evaluate a project's data and results to establish their significance

## **Appendix 3: Directions and Examples of Writing Outcomes Provided to Faculty**

### **Writing Outcomes Statement for Graduate Nursing**

By the end of the BS to DNP Graduate Nursing Program, students should be able to do the following with and in writing:

1. Aim for 6-7 outcomes but create as many as you believe necessary.

**Please email me your outcomes by Monday, March 5th.** Once I have received all of them, I will compile them and create a draft of a Writing Outcomes Statement for Graduate Nursing.

### **Instructions for Developing Writing Outcomes**

Adapted from: [http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page\\_id=37](http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page_id=37) [[http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page\\_id=37](http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page_id=37)]

Writing outcomes should promote competencies that align with the following guidelines:

- Students will demonstrate in writing their ability to locate, analyze, evaluate, summarize, integrate, synthesize, and cite information and ideas from sources and modes of inquiry typically used in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession of their major.
- Students will be able to present specialized content in an effective manner appropriate to practitioners in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession and to convey complex content to a more general audience of non-specialists.

### **Undergraduate nursing examples:**

From: <http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/undergrad/cwb/documents/nursing-spr2011.pdf>  
[\[http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/undergrad/cwb/documents/nursing-spr2011.pdf\]](http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/undergrad/cwb/documents/nursing-spr2011.pdf)

- Reflect on one's own beliefs, values and knowledge as it relates to practice.
- Reflect on one's evolving identity as a nurse.
- Use APA formatting and citations appropriately and reflectively.
- Synthesize evidence in scientific, scholarly writing.
- Articulate the value of pursuing practice excellence, lifelong learning, and professional engagement to foster professional growth and development.
- Apply knowledge from various sources to assess patient and form plan of care including appropriate nursing diagnosis.
- Synthesize information from various sources and practice to assure knowledge and skill attainment.
- Apply knowledge from various sources to patient/ clinical situations to assess patient and form appropriate plan of care.
- Apply critical lenses when interpreting data and provide rationale and evidence for solutions.
- Demonstrate depth and a clear expression of ideas. Writing is logical with good flow, internal consistency.

See also <http://sa-assessment.uoregon.edu/Resources/WritingStudentLearningOutcomes.aspx>  
[\[http://sa-assessment.uoregon.edu/Resources/WritingStudentLearningOutcomes.aspx\]](http://sa-assessment.uoregon.edu/Resources/WritingStudentLearningOutcomes.aspx) and  
<http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/HowToWriteObjectivesOutcomes.pdf>  
[\[http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/HowToWriteObjectivesOutcomes.pdf\]](http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/HowToWriteObjectivesOutcomes.pdf) for more instruction regarding the creation of outcomes.

## **Appendix 5: Writing Plan for the Department of Graduate Nursing**

### **Purpose**

This document outlines the major findings regarding the Department of Graduate Nursing's current implementation of writing into their curriculum and suggests recommendations that seek to increase the presence and relevance of writing as well as purposefully sequence writing tasks within their curriculum.

### **Background**

Faced with increasing frustration over teaching writing and the quality of student writing, the Department of Graduate Nursing, under the leadership of Dr. Sally Fauchald as chair, elected to

partake in a pilot program based on the Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC) model at the beginning of the spring 2012 semester. Their participation in the program will continue into the spring 2013 semester.

In this pilot program, faculty within a department or program work with a trained composition and rhetoric faculty member, Dr. Heather Bastian, to review and evaluate current writing instruction in their curriculum in order to revise it to better meet the department's and students' needs. Throughout this process, Bastian works collaboratively with faculty to facilitate the effective integration of writing into their curriculum. The goal of this process is create a curriculum that works to increase students' awareness of the importance of writing within their disciplines and students' discipline-specific writing abilities.

## **Methods**

During the spring 2012 semester, the Department of Graduate Nursing Faculty and Bastian undertook the review and evaluation of current writing instruction within their BS to DNP program. This process began with a review of selected marked student papers, the corresponding assignments or rubrics, and the graduate program handbook by Bastian; an identification of courses for review by Fauchald; and a collection of syllabi and writing assignments for identified courses by Fauchald and Bastian. Faculty members were asked to email Bastian a draft of a writing outcomes statement for the Graduate Nursing programs. Additionally, Bastian individually interviewed faculty members to supplement the collection of written documents.

Based on this collected data, Bastian created a Writing Outcomes Statement for the Graduate Nursing Programs that faculty revised and approved for use in both the BS to DNP and the Masters program.

With the Writing Outcomes Statement approved for use, Bastian paired the existing courses and their assignments (the curriculum) in the BS to DNP program to the newly created writing outcomes to determine how and to what extent the curriculum currently is and is not meeting the writing outcomes

## **Findings and Recommendations**

These findings are drawn from the analysis of the collected materials outlined above under "Methods." The recommendations are based on elements of composition and rhetorical theory and practice as well as the needs and resources of the Department of Graduate Nursing.

### **Faculty Recommendation:**

#### **Finding 1**

Faculty members indicated that they spend a significant amount of time commenting on, marking, and grading student writing. My review of marked student work confirmed that faculty members do spend a significant portion of time on student papers with comments and corrections occurring numerous times on each page. My review also revealed that the majority of comments and corrections centered on APA format and grammatical errors (often the same errors repeatedly corrected within the same paper and, at times, across multiple papers from the same student) with relatively few comments engaging the papers' content.

Additionally, nearly all faculty members reported feeling overwhelmed when commenting on, marking, or grading student writing. Many stated that they did not believe that they were productively or efficiently using their time when commenting on student writing. Others indicated that they felt uncomfortable commenting and grading student writing in general and needed some direction and instruction.

#### **Recommendation 1**

A workshop on the marking and grading of student writing would benefit the nursing faculty. This workshop would introduce faculty to commenting and marking strategies, including marginal comments, end comments, and minimal marking, as well as time management techniques. Adopting these strategies and techniques would assist in decreasing the time that faculty spend commenting on student work while increasing the value and productivity of the time that is spent and the comments that are made. After the workshop, faculty can elect to work one-on-one with Bastian to receive feedback that is tailored to their concerns and practices.

### **Curricular Recommendations**

#### **Finding 2**

The comparison of the curriculum to writing outcomes showed that nearly all courses ask students to meet writing outcomes 1. Analyze and synthesize multiple scientific and scholarly sources from nursing and related disciplines to create a comprehensive review of the literature and 2. Identify a clear purpose for a writing task and demonstrate that purpose with evidence and analysis as well as their sub-outcomes. However, students appear to be provided with little to no instruction in terms of how to meet outcomes 1 and 2.

During their first year of study, students are expected to already be able to perform outcomes 1 and 2 with some proficiency without any direct instruction in them. In an ideal world, this would be the case. But, as many faculty indicated, several students struggle to meet outcomes 1 and 2 during their first years of study and throughout subsequent years. Given the population and nature of the program (with the majority of students returning to academia after several years in professional settings and others maintaining full- or part-time professional positions while in the program), this is a common situation.

#### **Recommendation 2**

During their first year of study, students need more support and direct instruction in meeting outcomes 1 and 2. Doing so will provide a foundation and practice in academic writing for those who need it most and a refresher for those who might need it less. Assignments during this first year can be broken down into separate assignments that provide more direct practice in academic writing skills. For example, students can be required to submit research questions, annotated lists of research articles, or thesis statements before writing their final papers.

#### **Finding 3**

The comparison of the curriculum and writing outcomes revealed that the current curriculum does not address writing outcomes 4. Engage in all aspects of the writing process or 4c. Critique their own

writing in order to revise both global and local concerns. Students are not asked or required to show evidence of researching, drafting, revising, proofreading, or editing as they prepare for significant papers or projects in the courses. Additionally, the curriculum does not appear to show or teach students how to engage in the writing process or critique their own writing. The comparison also revealed that writing outcomes 4a. Develop ideas through interaction with others and 4b. Give and receive critical responses to writing are currently being met only through discussion board posts where students respond to other students' ideas but not necessarily their writing.

This suggests that students may not be regularly engaging in the writing process or with others as writers before submitting final papers and projects throughout their course of study. Neglecting to engage the writing process can negatively affect the quality of final papers both in terms of content and writing as well as the development of students as writers.

### **Recommendation 3**

The writing process should play a more active and visible role throughout the curriculum. Courses undertaken during year 1 of the program would most explicitly incorporate and require elements of the writing process (such as outlining, drafting, summarizing research articles, and revising) with less explicit and fewer requirements during years 2 and 3. Minimally, requiring students to compose and post drafts (with drafts carrying credit or a grade or affecting the grade of the final project) before submitting final projects in all courses would encourage more developed and careful writing.

The curriculum should also require students to more frequently engage each other as writers outside of blackboard posts. Doing so puts the responsibility for improving their writing onto the students and alleviates faculty time spent responding to student writing. The development of writing groups where students are required to read and respond to each other's drafts (with each response carrying credit or grade) within courses is one option.

### **Finding 4**

All but one faculty member expressed concern with the use and quality of discussion board posts (DBPs). Concerns included the quality of student writing in the posts, the lack of student engagement with the prompts and with each other, the quality of student responses to each other's posts, the unclear purpose or role of DBPs within courses and the program, and the heavy reliance on DBPs as part of the curriculum. Many also indicated that DBPs are not achieving or encouraging interaction between students even though this is touted as one of their primary purposes.

The comparison of curriculum to writing outcomes confirms that DBPs do take on the bulk of student work and interaction throughout the program. A review of discussion board post assignment sheets also reveals that DBPs serve a limited and formal purpose: students are generally expected to post "mini-academic papers" and respond to two other students. DBPs also do not appear to directly contribute to final projects.

### **Recommendation 4**

Extending the uses of DBPs and restructuring the role that DBPs play in the program would benefit faculty and students. Currently the use of DBPs is fairly narrow and requires formal academic conventions. DBPs can also serve less formal purposes, allowing students to interact with each other and explore ideas in less structured ways. They can be used to engage the writing process, especially

at early stages when students are developing topics, collecting research, and developing outlines. Larger final projects can also be broken down into smaller DBPs. In short, DBPs can serve more purposes, especially as places of exploration, and be less formal in terms of APA format and other academic conventions.

DBPs also do not need to play as prominent a role within courses. The curriculum would benefit from creating different kinds of assignments outside of DBPs that encourage student interaction, as discussed in the previous recommendation. Experimentation with other mediums, such as blogs, wikis, and journals on Blackboard or Google docs and sites, is another option for encouraging more productive student engagement with course material and each other.

#### **Finding 5**

The comparison of the curriculum to the writing outcomes indicated a minimal presence of outcome 3. Engage in reflective clinical practice. More specifically, outcome 3a. Critically reflect on one's evolving role while transitioning from RN to APN/DNP only appears in NSG8000: Leadership in Healthcare during the first summer of study. Outcome 3b. Describe, explore, and self-critique the processes involved in independent, clinical decision-making plays a slightly more prominent role than 3a. in the curriculum. However, outcome 3b. is most present during the first year with four courses addressing it and then its presence decreases during the second and third years of study with two courses and then one course addressing it, respectively.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Reflective clinical practice, especially self-reflection and self-critique, should be more consistently incorporated throughout the curriculum so that students can meet writing outcome 3. Journaling is a practice that encourages self-reflection and would help students engage in reflective clinical practice. A journal requirement that is incorporated into all or select courses and that carries between courses would help students engage in reflective clinical practice and allow them to chart their development throughout the program. Similarly, a separate and required self-reflection component could accompany the final applied research projects.

#### **Conclusion**

During the fall 2012 and spring 2013 semesters, the Graduate Nursing Faculty and Bastian will work together to implement the recommendations listed above or adapt the recommendations so that they best serve the faculty, students, and program.

#### **Notes**

1. Being the lone composition and rhetoric specialist at a small college is not unusual, nor is it unusual for the lone composition and rhetoric specialist to act as the writing program administrator (WPA) and/or the writing center director (WCD) at a small college (Amarose; Hebb; Gladstein and Regaigon; Jones; and Taylor). ([Return to text. \[#note1\\_ref\]](#))
2. Since 1997, the traditional undergraduate population increased from 1,383 students to 2,088 (gain of 705); the traditional graduate population decreased from 647 to 230 (loss of 417); the non-traditional undergraduate population increased from 0 to 789 (gain of 789); and the non-traditional graduate population increased from 0-1,037 (gain of 1,037). Since 2006, however,

the traditional undergraduate and graduate populations decreased, while the non-traditional undergraduate and graduate populations increased quite rapidly. The traditional undergraduate population decreased from 2138 to 2088 (loss of 50) and the traditional graduate population decreased from 567-230 (loss of 337). The non-traditional populations increased from 515 to 789 undergraduates (gain of 274) and 89 to 1,037 graduates (gain of 943). Combined, this is an addition of 1,222 non-traditional students in the past six years (“Fall Enrollments, 1997-2012”).

([Return to text. \[#note2\\_ref\]](#))

3. Information regarding both full-time and part-time faculty populations was only available from 2002-2011. In 2002, the college employed 118 full-time and 122 part-time faculty members (240 total). In 2011, the college employed 181 full-time and 190 part-time faculty members (371 total). Over the past ten years, then, the faculty population increased by approximately 54.5% with the addition of 131 faculty members, 63 full-time and 68 part-time (“Faculty Numbers from 1993-2011”). ([Return to text. \[#note3\\_ref\]](#))
4. William Condon and Carol Rutz in “A Taxonomy of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Evolving to Serve a Broader Agenda” identify four types of writing programs—Type 1: Foundational; Type 2: Established; Type 3: Integrated; and Type 4: Institutional Change Agent—and outline the characteristics of each type. ([Return to text. \[#note4\\_ref\]](#))
5. Please refer to <http://www.wec.umn.edu/> [<http://www.wec.umn.edu/>] for fuller details regarding the WEC project at UMN. ([Return to text. \[#note5\\_ref\]](#))
6. One point of clarification: students attend the DGN programs on a full-time (FT) or part-time (PT) basis, with FT students projected to complete the program in three years and PT students in four, which affects when they take some core courses. For example, both FT and PT students take NSG 6605: Theorizing Nursing Practice during the summer session of the first-year in the program, while FT students take NSG 8470: Health Program Evaluation during the summer of the first-year and PT students take it during the summer of the second-year. To avoid confusion and simplify the chart for easy reference, I placed courses in the EXCEL chart and color-coded them based on their earliest appearance in the curriculum but also indicated in writing when it appeared in the FT and PT sequence. For example, NSG 8470: Health Program Evaluation appears in the first-year core course sequence and is color-coded light grey for summer year 1, but I also indicate in writing that it is taught “Summer Year 1/Year 2,” “PT: Summer Year 2” and “FT: Summer Year 3.” ([Return to text. \[#note6\\_ref\]](#))
7. Faculty noted that they found the chart to be “impressive,” especially its color coordination and my EXCEL abilities. Attention to these details and demonstrating my ability to work with a program (EXCEL) often considered outside of the scope of the Humanities seemed to lend to my credibility. ([Return to text. \[#note7\\_ref\]](#))
8. At UMN, faculty “submit their completed Plans to the Campus Writing Board, an all-faculty board charged with approving Writing Plans and WI course proposals” (“Create”). With no such board in place and little chance of such a board existing at a small college, I relied on the faculty within the department to approve the plan without the assistance of outside evaluators. The use of outside evaluators in some altered form may be revisited in the future. ([Return to text. \[#note8\\_ref\]](#))
9. At UMN, faculty during the third phase resubmit their writing plans to the Campus Writing Board for approval and then move back into the implementation phase (“Assess”). Again, the chance of such a board existing at CSS is unlikely, so faculty assume primary responsibility for implementation, evaluation, and revision of the writing plan. ([Return to text. \[#note9\\_ref\]](#))

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