

## Spring 2018 WRIT Faculty Survey

In May 2018, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Director Becky Fremo distributed a survey to faculty teaching WRIT/D courses during the spring semester. This report summarizes the findings from that survey and the key findings and recommendations from the WAC director. It also indicates how the survey data will be used to improve student learning.

### I. Survey Goals

First, the survey was designed to discern faculty perceptions of the following:

- A. How generally well-prepared students were for WRIT course writing tasks post-FTS;
- B. How well students could demonstrate competence in the key learning outcomes of all WRIT courses post-FTS
- C. The five most important writing skills deemed necessary for success in their current WRIT course.

Second, the survey asked faculty to describe:

- D. The writing skills or tasks that students seemed best able to demonstrate;
- E. The writing skills or tasks that students seemed to be challenged by.

Finally, the survey considered general perceptions of Writing Center (WC) services and whether WRIT syllabi mentioned the WC or Carly Overfelt (Multilingual and Intercultural Programs).

### II. Survey Distribution and Respondents

In May of 2018, Fremo invited all faculty members teaching the fifty-eight WRIT sections that were offered in Spring, 2018 to take the survey. The faculty represented approximately 20 departments<sup>1</sup>. Twenty-seven faculty responded for a 47% response rate. Some of those faculty may have taught more than one section; they were not instructed to fill out a separate survey for each section taught.

Type of Course	Number of Responses
WRITI 100 Level (Not FTS)	3
WRITI 200 Level	4
WRITD 200 Level	4
WRITD 300 Level	16
Total Responses	27

### III. Results

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<sup>1</sup> Note that courses with different prefixes were offered by the same department; i.e. RUS and SPA were counted as representing MLC.

### A. Faculty Perceptions of Students' Preparation for WRIT Courses Post-FTS

Faculty first responded to six statements on a seven-point scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree). A majority of faculty chose one of the top three categories for all six statements.

Statement: Most students enrolled in my current WRIT course. . .	Percentage of WRITI Faculty Responding Strongly Agree, Agree, or Somewhat Agree	Percentage of WRITD Faculty Responding Strongly Agree, Agree, or Somewhat Agree
seemed well prepared for the academic writing tasks that my class required.	86%	90%
seemed to understand the concept of rhetorical situation: the relationship among purpose, audience, and context.	83%	80%
could either use or describe their own invention strategies (these might include brainstorming, outlining, free writing, or other planning strategies)	83%	85%
could develop and organize a first draft successfully.	83%	80%
could revise their work with feedback from me and/ or their peers.	83%	85%
The majority of students in my WRIT class could edit and polish their writing in order to produce clear, generally readable texts containing few errors that interfered with my ability to read and understand their work.	100%	90%

When we isolate “Strongly Agree and Agree” responses, we see more of a gap between WRIT I courses and WRIT D courses. Note that 80% of the WRIT D courses represented in the survey data were taught at the 300 level.

Statement: Most students enrolled in my current WRIT course. . .	Percentage of <b>WRIT I</b> Faculty Responding Strongly Agree or Agree	Percentage of <b>WRIT D</b> Faculty Responding Strongly Agree or Agree
seemed well prepared for the academic writing tasks that my class required.	43%	60%
seemed to understand the concept of rhetorical situation: the relationship among purpose, audience, and context.	33%	60%
could either use or describe their own invention strategies (these might include brainstorming, outlining, free writing, or other planning strategies)	33%	55%
could develop and organize a first draft successfully.	50%	60%
could revise their work with feedback from me and/ or their peers.	67%	75%
The majority of students in my WRIT class could edit and polish their writing in order to produce clear, generally readable texts containing few errors that interfered with my ability to read and understand their work.	50%	70%

**B. Faculty Perceptions of Writing Skills Necessary for Success in WRIT Courses Post-FTS**

Faculty were also asked to rank a set of skills according to how important they were to succeed in their WRIT courses. Note that Fremo developed this list of skills (options) based upon her assessment of what students need to develop in order for the four shared WRIT Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to be achieved. (As a result, there is no language about disciplinary conventions.)

While faculty in both WRIT and WRITD courses prioritized some skills, such as writing a thesis-driven argument, they differed on others, such as the importance of summarizing texts accurately and using writing to reflect on assumptions, values and beliefs.

Skill	Percentage of WRITI Faculty Ranking Skill in Top Two	Percentage of WRITD Faculty Ranking Skill in Top Two
Summarizing a text or multiple texts accurately.	8.33%	20%
Writing a thesis driven argument paper.	25%	35%
Analyzing the purpose, audience, and context and adapting writing to meet different needs (adapting their writing for a new audience, for instance).	25%	20%
Reflecting on their own assumptions, values and beliefs in writing, either in response to reading an assigned text or another academic experience.	16.67%	2.5%
Learning multiple strategies for invention (planning), drafting, revising, and editing their own work.	25%	22.5%

**C. Faculty Perceptions of the Strengths and Challenges of WRIT Students (patterns from short answers):**

- a. Skills that most students demonstrated well:
  1. WRITI (5 respondents): Tasks related to the writing process itself, including revising with assistance of feedback and/ or peer review and outlining. In addition, two instructors mentioned using evidence to support writing.
  2. WRITD: (17 respondents): Writing a diverse range of genres (often discipline-specific, and discipline mentioned in response) and adapting to the needs of different audiences (rhetorical skills); planning, developing, drafting and revising their own work (process-based skills). A few mentioned using evidence to support an argument.
- b. Skills that most students seemed to struggle with or demonstrate less proficiently:
  1. Most WRIT faculty seemed concerned on some level with argumentation itself. WRITI faculty emphasized tasks related to developing a thesis or substantiating claims; WRITD faculty emphasized tasks related to reading, understanding, processing, or synthesizing information

**IV. Implications and Next Steps**

## **A. Key Findings**

- a. A majority of faculty at least "somewhat agree" that students are prepared for the writing tasks they face post-FTS.
- b. Faculty believe that students are coming into WRITD (200 and 300 level) courses slightly more prepared to perform the required writing tasks than they are coming into WRITI (100 and 200 level) courses.
- c. WRITD faculty perceive students better able to work with existing drafts (revision; polishing) than to prepare to write or develop drafts (reading, invention, brainstorming, planning and organizing, etc.)
- d. A majority of faculty agree that learning to write a thesis-driven argument paper is a priority, necessary for student success in WRIT courses post-FTS. WRITD respondents are slightly more convinced of this than WRITI respondents, but for each group of instructors, this indicated the value shared by the largest percentage of faculty (60%).
- e. Nearly half of WRIT faculty agree that students must both understand and use a multi-stage writing process (invention, drafting, revising, and editing) and rhetorical awareness (purpose, audience, context) in order to succeed in WRIT courses post-FTS.
- f. Generally speaking, WRIT faculty find students best able to utilize a multi-stage writing process and demonstrate understanding of rhetorical situation.
- g. WRIT faculty believe that students struggle with argumentative writing skills, but WRITD faculty articulate this most clearly in terms of how students read, analyze, summarize, and synthesize what they learn via that reading into their own argumentative work.
- h. There are some WRIT faculty that believe students struggle with sentence level work, including grammar, mechanics, and citation formats.

## **B. Recommendations**

- a. FTS should continue to work in developing flexible writing processes and rhetorical awareness. writing process that students use to develop original arguments, which demonstrate their rhetorical awareness.
- b. Develop more of an emphasis on reading, summarizing, and analyzing the arguments of other writers in FTS, and use those reading experiences as the foundation for developing thesis-driven argumentative writing.
- c. Develop faculty workshop or materials designed to help instructors work with students at the sentence level, or—better—to help students work with one another and/ or Writing Center staff members.

## **C. Next Steps**

- a. This data will be used to inform upcoming discussions about and faculty development around Writing Across the Curriculum. Specifically:
  - i. It will inform the June 2018 First Term Seminar Writing Refresher Workshop led by WAC Director Becky Fremo.

- ii. It will inform the Summer 2018 FTS Writing Working group as they create shared resources for writing in FTS.
- iii. It will inform W-PAC, the FTS Advisory Committee, and the Curriculum Committee as they consider:
  - 1. Possible new WAC Outcomes.
  - 2. Faculty development about writing in the new general education curriculum.
  - 3. First-term seminar guidelines about writing.
  - 4. Faculty development around WRIT courses, particularly WRIT courses.

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Executive Summary Created by Sarah Ruble, Faculty Assessment Director from a full report created by Becky Fremo, WAC Director. Key Findings and Recommendations are excerpts from the fuller WAC report.