2009 Writing Across the Curriculum Survey on Second Level Writing Courses at Ohio State (Longer Version)

Introduction

During winter quarter 2009, the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW) surveyed faculty and instructors of second-level writing courses across the Columbus campus of Ohio State. We wanted to understand how instructors teach writing in these courses, what support for teaching instructors receive, and what challenges they continue to face with student learning. We specifically chose to study the second level writing (or 367) course because it is a crucial component of the university's general education course. In fact, with increasing numbers of students testing out of English 110, the required first-year writing course in the university, 367 is sometimes the only writing course that students may take. No one department or administrative unit directs the course, so the content, training, status of instructors, and support structures can vary greatly across the university. Given the unique position of 367 in the university, we felt that instructors, course directors, departments, and administrators would find information about the course useful for developing support structures or making use of existing ones within the university. The conversion to semesters offers an opportunity for departments to reevaluate how they support their instructors as they redesign curricula and consider how they will be staffing the courses.

Our survey was part of a larger IRB-exempted research project that included interviews of instructors, collected assignments and course materials, and student writing. Although we collected a range of data from these interviews and materials, this report primarily addresses instructors' responses to the survey, which consisted of 47 questions, including multiple choice, Likert scale, and open ended short answer questions. Many of the questions were adapted

from previous surveys done by the WAC program over the past two decades. The survey asked a wide range of questions so that we could continue to collect longitudinal data that provides a picture of how the course and its instructors have changed over time.

Initially, WAC emailed 381 instructors and faculty, whose names and email addresses we collected from OSU's master schedule between Autumn Quarter 2005 and Winter Quarter 2009. We received responses from 64 of the 381 instructors, and these 64 instructors represented 17 of the 26 departments teaching 367. Although the response rate relative to the number of instructors we contacted is admittedly low (17%), respondents' rank and range of departmental homes are strikingly proportional to that of the overall 367 teaching pool (a trend we discuss in more detail below). The low response rate is likely due to the length of the survey. Although we allowed participants to save their work and return, the survey still required a time investment from teachers and scholars with already busy schedules. We know that 23% of our invitees clicked through, so 6% abandoned the survey without completing it. In any case, such a low response rate makes it difficult to draw comparisons between groups of respondents or to make generalizations about departments when only one or a handful of instructors participated. For that reason, we reserve our comments to larger trends in all of the responses, among instructors of similar status (faculty, staff, and graduate instructors), and among disciplinary cohorts, such as the arts and humanities and natural and social sciences.

We've divided our discussion of the survey results into four major sections. First, we give an overview of instructors and support across departments. Next, we discuss the predominant assignments and pedagogical approaches instructors use in their 367 classes as well as instructors' impressions of how prepared 367 students are for the course. After this, we address instructors' comments on more specific pedagogical issues, such as plagiarism, technology in teaching, and the how well the needs of international students are met. We end our report by raising additional questions for further research and by commenting on resources available for departments and instructors to meet the needs voiced in the survey.

367 Across Departments

As we mentioned earlier, 367 has no central administrative unit, so departments approach the teaching and support of 367 classes differently. We know anecdotally, for instance, that while one department may staff 367 courses primarily with independent graduate instructors, others may have a faculty member as the primary instructor of record, aided by one or two GTAs. The kind of training, oversight and ongoing support across departments varies as well: instructors in some departments meet regularly with a faculty coordinator to develop or fine-tune assignments and instruction, while others are left to their own devices without any direct support.

Given what we already knew about how differently departments approach 367, we developed our survey with an eye toward understanding instructors' perspectives on the course----what kind of support they recognize as available to them and their perception of how effectively the support structures did, or did not, meet their needs for teaching.

Who Teaches 367?

367 is unique in both the range of departments that offer the course and the range of instructors who teach the course. At the time we ran this survey, 26 departments offered 367 courses. Two of these departments (Landscape Architecture and Natural Resources) offered a single cross-listed 367, and one department (German Languages and Literatures) offered two courses under different areas of study in the department----German 367 and Yiddish 367. For a updated list of second-level writing courses, see the first page of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) Course List.

Since Autumn 2005, the WAC program has kept a database of all second-level writing instructors, including their department and status (graduate, teaching staff, or faculty). Throughout this report, we refer to this database as the *pool* of 367 instructors. Below, we compare the pool of 367 instructors' departmental location and status or rank to those of the respondents.
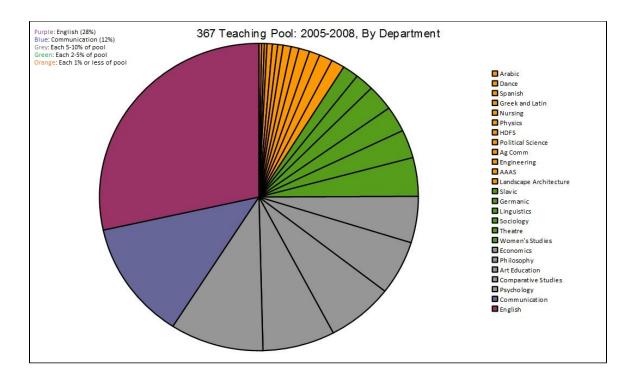
Percentage of Teaching Pool by Department

Of the 26 departments offering 367:

- 12 departments each have a group of instructors that only make up 1% or less of the pool; in these departments, the course is taught by a small number of regular faculty or lecturers (rarely including GTAs, except as assistants to a faculty member) once a quarter or even once a year. These departments provide the smallest numbers of instructors to the total 367 teaching pool and are represented by the color orange in the chart below.
- 6 departments each have a group of instructors that makes up 2-5% of the overall pool, including a group of GTAs as well as faculty or staff, offering a few sections of the course each quarter. These departments are represented by the color green below.
- 5 departments each have a group of instructors that makes up 5-10% of the total pool, with larger pools of graduate student instructors across different versions of a course offering several sections each quarter. These are represented in grey.
- Only 2 departments have a group of instructors that each make up more than 10% of the total pool we surveyed: Communication and English. English itself comprises nearly a third of the total pool. Both departments offer large numbers of sections each quarter, and instructors in both departments regularly move between a range of teaching opportunities in the department, resulting in high turnover in instructors from quarter to quarter.

Although not all departments were represented in our survey, the percentage of respondents from the range of departments was strikingly commensurable to their share of the teaching pool. Among respondents:

- 10% of respondents come from departments that make up 1% or less of the total pool. These departments (represented by orange in Figure 1) collectively make up 9% of the total pool.
- 16% of respondents come from departments that individually make up 2-5% of the total pool. These departments (represented by green in Figure 1) collectively make up 16 % of the total pool.
- 34% of respondents come from departments that that individually make up 5-10% of the total pool. These departments (represented by grey in Figure 1) collectively make up 30 % of the total pool.
- 11% of respondents come from Communication, which makes up 12% of the total pool (represented by blue in Figure 1).
- 30% of respondents come from English, which makes up 28% of the total pool (represented by red in Figure 1).
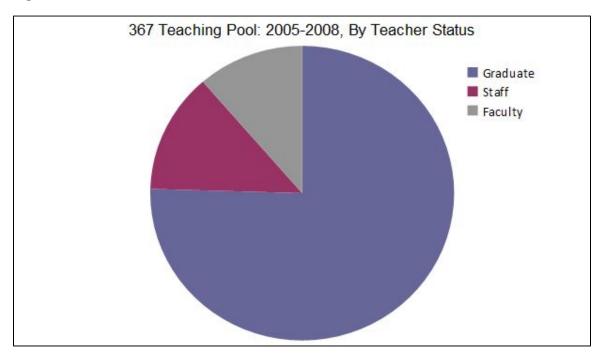
Figure 1

367 Teaching Pool: 2005-2008, By Department

Purple: English (28%)
Blue: Communication (12%)
Grey: Each 5-10% of pool
Green: Each 2-5% of pool
Orange: Each 1% or less of pool

Legend:
- Arabic
- Dance
- Spanish
- Greek and Latin
- Nursing
- Physics
- HDFS
- Political Science
- Ag Comm
- Engineering
- AAAS
- Landscape Architecture
- Slavic
- Germanic
- Linguistics
- Sociology
- Theatre
- Women's Studies
- Economics
- Philosophy
- Art Education
- Comparative Studies
- Psychology
- Communication
- English

Status and Rank of 367 Instructors

Of the total teaching pool, 75% are GTAs, 13% are teaching staff (including part time and full time lecturers), and 11% are faculty. The survey respondents nearly reflected this population (although faculty are over-represented in their responses by about 5% and GTAs are underrepresented by about the same amount). Of the total respondents, 71% were GTAs, 13% were staff, and 16% were faculty. Among the GTAs, 78% identified themselves as Ph.D. students, while 22% as Masters students. 70% of the faculty who responded identified themselves as senior faculty and 30% as junior faculty.

Figure 2

367 Teaching Pool: 2005-2008, By Teacher Status

Legend:
- Graduate
- Staff
- Faculty

Reported Teaching Experience of 367 Instructors

As part of the survey, we gathered data on how long 367 instructors had been teaching at the college-level and how long they had been teaching a 367 course.

- 63% of respondents had been teaching college-level courses for four years or more
- 19% had been teaching for more than 15 years
- 38% had been teaching at the college level for 3 or fewer years
- 13% had been teaching for less than one year

Fewer respondents had been teaching a 367 course for as long.

- 65% of the respondents had been teaching it for 3 or fewer years.
- 27% had been teaching it for less than a year.

The lecturers who completed the survey had the highest proportion of experienced instructors. All lecturers who responded had taught for 4 years or more, and three quarters of the lecturers who responded had taught for more than 8 years. This experience carried over into 367, with 75% teaching the course for four or more years, and only 25% of respondents teaching it for 3 or fewer years. Surprisingly, while 70% of faculty respondents reported teaching 15 or more years, 20% reported having taught at the college level for only 1-3 years. Several junior faculty, it seems, came to Ohio State with little or no teaching experience. This experience gap is also seen in how long faculty had been teaching 367. Half of the faculty had been teaching a 367 course for eight or more years, and 40% had been teaching it for one to three years (10% had taught it for 4-7 years). About half of the GTAs responding had been teaching for 3 years or less, while most of the other half had 4-7 years experience (only one GTA respondent had more than 7 years of college teaching experience).

Our survey data suggests that although many 367 instructors have significant college-level teaching experience, quite a few do not, making support structures for new teachers a crucial need for many departments.

Cultures of Support

As the demographics of teachers of the second-level course vary by department, so do differences in the kinds of training and support that departments offer instructors. We know anecdotally from our work that some departments we work with offer frequent support for their 367 teachers. One department's faculty coordinator meets weekly with 367 GTAs to discuss curriculum and general classroom practice. The two faculty who teach lecture/recitation versions of 367 meet just as regularly with their GTAs. Others meet quarterly, once a year, or only offer an orientation session for new GTAs. GTAs may also participate in the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching's (UCAT) annual fall conference for new faculty and GTAs (at which the WAC program facilitates sessions on responding to student writing). However, some departments offer no oversight or training for 367 teachers. In order to get a sense of 367 instructors' perception of the support they received, our survey asked respondents to describe what kinds of support and oversight they received in their teaching and how prepared they felt to teach a writing course.

Overall, respondents described several forms of departmental support:

- 60% reported a required preliminary training workshop for new instructors
- 60% reported a faculty coordinator who provides both oversight and support to instructors
- 32% reported listservs or other online resources
- 17% reported optional quarterly meetings for professional development
- 11% reported required quarterly meetings for professional development

While 70% of instructors surveyed agreed somewhat, agreed, or strongly agreed that they had received adequate training to teach a writing course for their department, 30% reported that they did not feel prepared to teach the course. Faculty and staff lecturers were more likely to say they were more prepared than GTAs (75% and 85% versus 66%). Significantly, there was a wide variation from department to department on this question, ranging from as high as 100% to as low as 28% among departments who had four or more respondents.

While we did not ask respondents to describe what exactly they found helpful about these different kinds of support or what the support entailed, we did note a correlation between the type of support instructors received and whether the instructor felt adequately prepared to teach a writing course in their department. In general, most kinds of support correlated with 70% to 75% of instructors feeling prepared to teach 367.

- For respondents who identified the presence of a course coordinator (83% of respondents), 75% felt well prepared.
- For respondents who identified faculty coordinators (60% of respondents), 81% felt well prepared.
- For respondents who identified no support or oversight (11% of respondents), only 57% felt prepared. For respondents who identified as either lecturer or GTA and identified no support or oversight, only 33% felt prepared to teach 367.
- Faculty respondents felt equally prepared with or without access to resources or oversight; however, 25% of faculty respondents did not feel prepared to teach a writing course in their discipline.
- 60% of respondents identified some sort of required training before teaching; of those 60% of respondents, 86% felt prepared to teach a writing course in their department.
- 40% of respondents identified no required training before teaching; of those, only 45% felt prepared to teach a writing course.

Our results suggest that access to support and training is crucial for instructors to feel prepared to teach a writing course like 367. This access is particularly important for lecturers and GTAs, but also for faculty, given that a quarter of faculty felt unprepared to teach 367.

Discursive comments on the survey indicated that respondents found a variety of kinds of support helpful, including faculty teaching mentors, annual teaching lectures with outside speakers, and optional teaching courses that are hosted by the department. We have found anecdotally in our own work that instructors often feel that regular meetings to discuss challenges and successes in teaching help them keep their work fresh and effective. During interviews that were conducted in tandem with this survey, instructors also mentioned the teaching orientation hosted by the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) and pedagogy workshops facilitated by UCAT and WAC as helpful supports to their teaching experiences. A number of instructors interviewed reported feeling they were sent into the writing classroom without much preparation. For example, one interviewee, a GTA, stated, "I don't really get support from the department and... I don't get support from the university encouraging people to do this [teaching]. It's more like you have to do it on your own." This GTA pursued teaching support through UCAT rather than through their department. Thus, our respondents acknowledge that teaching support should be a campus-wide effort, not just the responsibility of the department. Both departments and the university, then, can contribute to supporting and training instructors so that they feel more prepared to teach writing in their departments.

Based on the responses to both the survey and interviews, it seems that by and large departments offer resources for teachers that 367 instructors find valuable. Nevertheless, we do see a need for departments to think about ways to enhance their support of 367 instructors, particularly of GTAs who have less experience teaching at the college level. Our respondents seemed to value the presence of a faculty coordinator and some initial training before entering the classroom. Faculty coordinators need not tackle this support on their own, since WAC and UCAT can provide advice on developing departmental support for teachers and facilitate training sessions for instructors. WAC has sponsored and will continue to sponsor a series of seminars, book groups, and other events especially for second-level writing teachers. These sessions offer continued support after initial training, and they help build a learning community of instructors who can share their experiences and challenges in the classroom. In our work, we have found that instructors appreciate the opportunity to discuss their teaching with colleagues, whether they are veterans or new to the classroom.

How Writing is Taught

In surveying 367 instructors, we wanted to get an idea of common assignments instructors gave to students and in what ways they taught writing similarly. Given the lack of centralized control over 367, course content can vary

based on department or even instructors, depending on the flexibility of course policies in the department. Our survey asked participants to identify how much of their course involved writing and writing instruction, and gave them an opportunity to list their assignments. We also asked participants to identify what approaches to teaching writing they used, and rate those they found most effective.

Kinds of Assignments

Instructors who responded to the survey generally made sure that most of their students' work was written. 57% of instructors reported that <u>all</u> of their assignments involved some kind of writing, and only 11% reported that half or less of assignments involved writing. More graduate students had all of their assignments written (62%) than lecturers (50%) or faculty (44%), and fewer graduate students reported only half or less of their assignments involving writing (8%) than faculty (22%). No lecturers reported that only half or less of their assignments involving writing.

In our survey, 58 respondents answered an open-ended question that asked them to list the kinds of writing assignments they gave to students. This resulted in a variety of responses, some more detailed than others. Assignments were often categorized by generic terms like "research paper" or "critical analysis" and usually did not elaborate on the kinds of intellectual work students were to do in their writing. Although respondents often used similar language to describe assignments, research indicates that instructors often mean very different things when they use the same terms, such as "analysis" or "reflection" (see, for example, Thaiss and Zawacki 2006). However, we were still able to code the responses for distinctive themes to offer a broad picture of the kinds of writing our respondents assign their students.

Many of the comments suggested that instructors framed their students writing as a recursive, reflective process, as they talked about staging larger projects with shorter assignments that allowed students to practice important critical thinking skills, reflect on their research progress, and get feedback at different stages from peers as well as the instructors.

- 23 respondents mentioned informal in-class activities or homework.
- 18 respondents mentioned some form or process of research.
- 9 respondents described or alluded to a staged drafting and research process, mentioning assignment sequences or a sequence of peer and teacher feedback
- 6 respondents identified annotated bibliographies, abstracts or literature reviews as assignments they asked students to complete.
- 9 respondents also mentioned assigning their students process-oriented, more informal, or reflective writing.

Other comments discussed ways of engaging students with the central ideas and texts informing a course, in some cases connecting concepts to their personal experience or current events.

- 24 respondents described assignments that engaged students with source materials or readings, using formats such as critical responses, summaries, and abstracts.
- 12 respondents identified assignments that asked students to connect the concepts they were studying in class to their personal lives, to take an individual or creative stand on an issue, or to reflect on the research and writing process. One instructor explained, "Most of my assignments ask students to apply course concepts to their lives or to current events. They are expected to explain the course concept, and to be able to demonstrate how the concept (or concepts) can be used to understand human behavior."
- 9 instructors mentioned assignments that asked students to use writing to engage with specific disciplinary concepts or ways of thinking.

Another set of responses framed writing assignments in ways that asked students to think about writing for audiences other than the instructor and contexts outside of the classroom.

- 12 instructors described writing assignments that involved attempting to be persuasive or to keep a particular audience or variety of audiences in mind.
- 4 instructors mentioned writing assignments in professional genres like letters, proposals, and job materials.

Several comments suggested that some instructors did not just assess revised written texts. 11 instructors mentioned that they gave students quizzes and exams on course material. (note: we did not ask what form these quizzes or exams took, whether these tests involved writing or if they were multiple choice exams.)

This range of assignments, including research-based writing and reflective writing, implies that 367 courses have used writing to teach students a wide range of critical thinking habits, and that instructors did not limit the course to traditional, essay-oriented writing. Additionally, respondents reported assigning projects in different modes and media formats as well.

- 10 respondents noted that they asked students to give oral presentations.
- 7 respondents described online assignments, such as blogs or Carmen forum postings.
- 6 respondents mentioned digital media projects such as audio essays, PowerPoint presentations, images, or even video documentaries.

Overall, the kinds of writing assignments that instructors give to students are in correlation with General Education Curriculum (GEC) learning objectives. These requirements ask that students apply basic skills in expository writing, demonstrate critical thinking through writing and oral expression and retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively. For our respondents, 'expository writing' seemed to be thesis-based essay, often involving research as well as using evidence to support a central claim. We would like to do more research to unpack what instructors consider to be 'expository writing,' particularly to what extent instructors consider this to be a general academic activity, and to what extent it is defined by instructors' disciplinary habits of inquiry.

Teaching Strategies

Along with asking what kinds of assignments instructors gave, we wanted to get a sense of how they approached the teaching of writing in 367. The survey responses give a broad, if limited, picture of the pedagogical strategies that instructors use in their classrooms.

While the 367 instructors who participated in the survey gave assignments that involved a lot of writing, they spent comparatively little time in class on writing. Nearly 70% of those surveyed spent less than a third of time in class on activities related to writing. This finding indicates that much of class time is spent on content-oriented issues distinguished from writing. This finding also suggests that a lot of discipline-specific work takes place in 367 classes, particularly in discussion, as instructors help students understand how to read disciplinary texts, how to construct compelling arguments using disciplinary methodologies, and how to communicate disciplinary knowledge effectively. Figuring out how discussion works in different classes will tell us a lot about how 367 teachers prepare their students to write.

According to our survey, most writing instruction occurs through out-of-class activities or feedback, built into some recursive process of drafting and revising.

- 98% of instructors use feedback on student's writing to teach students about writing.
- 90% of instructors use some form of peer response to teach writing.
- 87% of instructors use drafting to teach writing.

We asked participants to list the top four most successful methods they use to teach writing. Here are the top three mentioned for each choice.

For the top choice:

- 30 instructors (about half of the sample) listed comments on drafts.
- 11 instructors listed rubrics
- 11 instructors listed comments in class

For the second choice

- 13 instructors listed comments on drafts
- 12 instructors mentioned handouts of various kinds (including assignment prompts and writing guides compiled by the instructor)
- 10 instructors listed oral comments in class

For the third choice:

- 14 instructors mentioned handouts
- 12 instructors mentioned oral comments in class
- 8 instructors listed rubrics

For fourth choice:

- 18 instructors mentioned the syllabus
- 7 instructors mentioned rubrics
- 6 instructors mentioned handouts

Though these choices continue suggest a process-oriented approach to writing in the classroom, the choices here also seem to reflect instructor-oriented strategies, where teachers are the dominant source of information, as opposed to more collaborative, student-oriented strategies. For instance, one notable absence from the top four choices of writing instruction methods is peer review. Although 90% of instructors mentioned peer review as a method they used, only one mentioned it as a technique that they saw as one of the most effective in the class. Anecdotally, we've heard from both students and teachers that they often find peer review ineffective, especially when the feedback being given by students is perceived as less effective or valuable than that of the instructors. While instructors can and should be as experts in their fields a central source of information, model, and guide for students, current learning theory suggests that student-oriented and collaborative learning can, if framed effectively, can be as or more effective as teacher-oriented instruction (Ambrose et al. 2010).

That instructor feedback is a central mode of writing instruction is important. When effective, it allows instructors to give targeted, individualized instruction to students as they develop as writers over a quarter. However, if not framed carefully, feedback can be detrimental to students; if done inefficiently, it can be overwhelming to instructors. A number of studies address the role of feedback in learning, both from the perspective of writing studies (see Bean 2011 for an overview) and more generally from the perspective of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Students respond best to feedback when it is based on clear standards of practice, when it is carefully balanced and directed, and tied into opportunities for group and peer evaluation (See Ambrose et al. 2010). Both UCAT and WAC offer regular workshops on effective and efficient strategies for process-oriented teaching and giving feedback, and consultants from both programs can offer advice to individual instructors about particular strategies for their classrooms.

Students' Strengths and Challenges

We asked participants in a series of open-ended questions to see how instructors perceived the strengths and weaknesses of students entering their classes. Responses to these questions varied greatly, and respondents valued different criteria and often seemed to define terms very differently than other respondents. In some instances, the same number of instructors who identified some issue as a strength would identify the same issue as something students often lacked. Such polarized opinions are not surprising given that writing research confirms that instructors approach students' writing with different expectations (Lunsford and Connors 1993).

Fifty four respondents identified strengths students had coming into their classes, although 11 respondents either qualified their praise with issues students had trouble with or complained that students entered their courses with few if any strengths. We cross-referenced those responses with the challenges. 58 respondents in the survey noted issues that students needed more practice working on (four more than responded to the previous question about student strengths).

A significant number of responses noted that they felt students were at least moderately prepared to write for their classes. There was a recognition, however, that the preparation of students varied so widely that they found it hard to generalize about their strengths and challenges.

- 13 respondents said that students came in with at least the basic skills they needed to do well in the class. As one instructor noted, students have a "sense of what it means to write an essay."

- 9 respondents referred to variation among students or a range of strengths, writing that there was too wide a variation among students to identify strengths or identified a range of strengths different students might have. Indeed, one of the instructors explained that "one of the most challenging parts of my job is tailoring instruction to the needs of each individual student and presenting general information that will be useful to everyone."

Quite a few instructors addressed how students were prepared or not to handle the structure and process of thesis-oriented academic essays.

- 22 respondents identified organization or the ability to structure their writing as a strength
- 24 respondents identified organization or the ability to structure writing as a challenge for students
- 6 respondents noted students' ability to construct a thesis for their papers as a strength. "Students generally have a working knowledge of the notion of a thesis statement or argument," one instructor explained.
- 12 respondents identified difficulties writing theses. Of these 12, several mentioned originality or the ability to "take risks" in their writing. One instructor said of these issues that students "need to produce more persuasive arguments: theses that are well developed and well defended with evidence and logic. They are not so good at taking risks in their writing."
- 5 respondents also noted that students' understanding of structure was often limited to the five-paragraph format (or that students seemed to 'prefer' that format), and suggested that this limited students in their ability to be flexible in organizing their ideas. One instructor lamented that many students have "been drilled into submission by the 5-paragraph essay."

Competence in mechanical and stylistic issues was also a divided issue among the instructors who responded.

- 19 respondents said that students had a basic foundation of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. A veteran teacher noted that "OSU students seem to be able (and this is more true in the past ten or so years than it used to be) to write with a minimum of actual errors. They seem to have a general sense of what a sentence, paragraph, [and] essay should look like."
- However, 23 respondents identified grammar, punctuation, and mechanics as a challenge for students.
- 5 respondents said students had the ability to write in an appropriate style or used appropriate language or tone for their writing; some identified students as having an understanding of a general "academic style."
- 13 respondents referred to challenges in style, vocabulary, and rhetorical conventions. One instructor, for instance, noted that students lacked "the ability to adjust genre/register conventions to a given purpose," that students needed "clearer ideas of what conventions are in a given situation."
- One instructor seemed to recognize the difficulty students had with the nature of academic dialogue: "positioning yourself in relationship to other people's ideas and arguments is a fairly complex move that requires more confidence than many students have in their own ideas."

A handful of instructors noted that students were able to engage with their reading and course concepts in creative and personal ways, though a greater number of instructors expressed frustration with critical thinking, analysis, and research.

- 7 respondents noted that students were able to take a strong personal stance in their writing, or express their ideas creatively.
- 4 respondents noted that students came into their classes with the ability to be engaged with the material they were writing about or had an intellectual curiosity.
- 4 respondents noted that students were adept at conducting research, and three noted that students were good critical readers.
- 14 respondents mentioned difficulties with citation, sourcing, and research

- 13 respondents identified difficulties with analysis and critical thinking

Our survey results demonstrate that respondents have radically different perspectives on students' strengths and challenges. These differences, we would argue, are likely informed by the varying individual and disciplinary preferences that instructors have for student writing. Research in writing studies suggests that students find it helpful when instructors articulate their expectations in ways that highlight the conventions for writing in a particular disciplinary context.These conventions may seem obvious to instructors, but novices in the field often do not notice or understand them. When they do notice them, they sometimes view them as the arbitrary whims of the instructor (Thaiss and Zawacki 2006). Highlighting disciplinary conventions teaches students that writing is not a one-size-fits-all exercise.

Another issue to consider is that many students come into 367 classes with widely different experiences with academic writing. Part of this diversity relates to their primary and secondary educational background in language arts. Increasingly, however, there is variation in what preparation students had at the college level. Not all students entering Ohio State's second-level writing course have taken the university's first year writing course in English. As a result of the state's policies on credit transferability and on streamlining curricula, many students are coming to Ohio State with credit from other institutions or having tested out of the first year writing course (and in some cases even the second-level course). These students lack the common experience provided by the nationally recognized first year writing program in English, and do not have the grounding of a writing course rooted in Ohio State's particular curricular goals. Students entering 367 without a college-level writing course or with very different experiences in preliminary college writing may need different kinds of support to meet the different expectations of their instructors here.

Once again, instructors need not deal with the challenge of articulating expectations and disciplinary conventions alone. The WAC program can work with instructors to address any of these issues effectively in the classroom, and CSTW's Writing Center can provide one-on-one support for student writers as they grapple with the challenge of writing in college.

Areas of Concern

In addition to asking general questions about writing instruction and student writers, we also wanted to survey instructors on several key issues of debate in writing studies, specifically plagiarism, technology use, and international student writers.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a controversial and challenging issue that many in writing studies have recently addressed (for a useful overview of current research, see Halasek 2011).

67% of respondents reported that plagiarism was a problem in their second-level writing classes. However, most respondents (73%) felt that their students took the issue seriously. While two-thirds saw plagiarism as an issue in their classes, fewer reported getting training to recognize and deal with plagiarism. Only 47% reported getting training at the department level, and 34% reported getting it at the campus-wide level. Nevertheless, nearly all instructors said they knew what to do if they caught a student plagiarizing (95%), and put a statement about plagiarism on their syllabus (98%).

Recent research reveals the complexity of defining, identifying, and responding to plagiarism. A number of studies reveal the extent to which students find the different rationales behind citing sources in their papers confusing, that for them including sources is more of a formal exercise meant to complete an assignment than a sustained engagement in an academic conversation (See The Citation Project). Additionally, research has shown that overly punitive practices can gloss over a range of challenges that many students struggle with, whether they intend to deceive or not.

Engaging students in academic discourse that moves them beyond thinking about a formal task and toward an understanding of our most central values about how scholars produce knowledge is key to addressing plagiarism. WAC and UCAT have collaborated on regularly offered workshops that discuss these issues and offer instructors strategies to help students understand what is at stake when they engage in an academic conversation in writing. Both units have also worked with the Committee on Academic Misconduct to develop programs for both students and instructors to address plagiarism broadly throughout the curriculum.

Technology

The survey asked several series of questions about instructors use of digital media and technology, including how technology has affected respondents' teaching and research, how courses in their disciplines should prepare students to think about and use technology, and whether instructors assign technology oriented projects to their students. A few respondents reported that the phrase digital media and technology was unclear, so responses to the survey may have been affected by this confusion. In asking about digital media and technology, we were looking for a sense of how emerging digital technology was affecting how instructors conducted and communicated their research and writing, and in turn, how they taught their students this work. We were also curious whether instructors asked students to compose in media other than printed text, including images, audio, video, and other media.

78% of respondents agreed that courses in their disciplines should provide students with the capacity to use technology, and 90% of respondents felt they should help students to think critically about technology. All of the faculty who responded agreed to both statements. Instructors from arts and humanities disciplines tended to be slightly more concerned than instructors from the social and natural sciences about students learning to use (80 versus 73) and think about (91 versus 87) technology.

Although respondents felt that courses in their disciplines should help students learn to use and think about technology, they tended to feel that technology had little effect on what they taught. 46% of all survey participants felt that technology had little or no effect on their curricular goals, 36% felt it had a moderate impact, and only 18% saw it having a big or very big effect. Likewise, 39% of all respondents saw technology as having little or no effect on what they assigned their students, 41% saw a moderate effect, and 20% saw a big or very big effect. Responses did vary significantly by disciplines. Respondents from the arts and humanities were much more likely to see an effect on their curricular goals (24% little or no effect/48% moderate/27% big or very big) and assignments (30%/40%/30%) than those from the social and natural sciences (82%/17%/0% for curricular goals, 56%/39%/4% for assignments). Respondents, however, did see a greater effect that technology had on the methods they used to teach. A plurality (43%) saw technology having a big or very big effect on their teaching methods. This was slightly greater among arts and humanities instructors (46%) than social and natural science instructors (39%).

We asked several questions about how technology affected research in respondents disciplines. Respondents from the arts and humanities were much more likely to see technology having a moderate to very big effect on what constituted research in their disciplines (69%) than those in the social and natural sciences (35%). However, a strong majority of all respondents (59%) saw technology as having a big or very big effect on the way they researched.This was the case with both arts and humanities instructors (62%) and social and natural science instructors (56%).

Twenty one participants responded to a question asking them to describe projects which asked students to compose in media other than printed text. More multi-modal projects were described by respondents from the arts and humanities (16). Most of these (9) came from English, which houses the Digital Media Project, a program that offers pedagogical and technical support for innovative classroom work, including a coterie of 367 instructors who have piloted digital media oriented second level writing courses.

Powerpoint was mentioned nine times, as were audio production using software like Audacity (a free, open source audio editing program) and video. Eight instructors noted incorporating images drawn by hand or developed using programs like Photoshop. Several responses mentioned giving students the option of creating "alternate" approaches to assignments, or giving students the ability to decide what approach to an assignment would be appropriate for a particular audience. One instructor explained that the "use of different media is always an option

that my students can consider, after a conversation with me about how it will be the best way to present the information they'd like to communicate."

Given that a large percentage of instructors advocate teaching students to use technology critically, instructors have an opportunity to consider how to articulate for students the connections between technology and research in their disciplines. Teaching support units also have an opportunity to create spaces for instructors to discuss how to teach, use, and discuss the use of technology in discipline-specific ways. Additionally, instructors might make use of the various programs at CSTW, UCAT, and Learning Technology, which offer workshops on technology and teaching, and can collaborate to help teachers grapple with the role of technology in their students' learning.

Multilingual Students

We asked instructors how well the university met the needs of international and multilingual students. Nearly half (49%) of instructors were neutral about the question, 34% said not so well or poorly, and just 17% felt the university served international students' needs well.

Seven out of eighteen respondents provided additional comments about their struggles teaching multilingual students. One respondent noted the difficulty of evaluating international students according to the same criteria as native-speaking students, expressing the opinion that many would fail if she or he did. Several stated that they had not received enough training to work with international students, and they did not know where to turn for help, except for the Writing Center or occasional WAC/UCAT workshops on helping international students with writing. One instructor, who identified as an international student, cited his or her own difficult experience adapting to writing in American university contexts and finding help with writing during the first year in the U.S.

While the challenges international students face are complex, instructors who are untrained in ESL teaching strategies can consider various ways of helping them learn to write effectively in American university contexts. The documentary Writing Across Borders, developed by the Oregon State University writing program, argues that international students come to American Universities with very different educational experiences, and that when instructors becoming more aware of the often unstated cultural assumptions behind writing in American higher education. This documentary is used in regular workshops sponsored by WAC and UCAT, and is a helpful starting point for teachers looking for advice in helping international students to write (See also Fishman and McCarthy 2002).

As the university considers how to internationalize its curriculum in response to its strategic plan, the role of writing and cross-cultural communication should be a central issue instructors should consider as they teach. Effectively engaging Ohio State's students in an internationalized curriculum involves preparing students to learn and communicate across cultural boundaries, as well as providing support for students coming to our campus from abroad as they learn to navigate American higher education. CSTW already provides central support for international students, as they make up the largest percentage of the Writing Center's clientele. The WAC program has also worked closely with instructors across campus as they deal with the challenges of teaching students who are sometimes as unfamiliar with American modes of college education as they are with the conventions of spoken and written academic language. Internationalizing the curriculum will need to involve a wider discussion about cross-cultural teaching and learning, and CSTW is prepared to work with stakeholders from across the university such as the First Year Writing program and the ESL Composition/American Language programs to address these needs.

Summary of Recommendations

One of the central findings of the survey was the fact that GTAs (who make up 75% of those teaching 367) report feeling more prepared to teach the course in correlation with receiving particular kinds of support. Support includes, for example, having a faculty supervisor overseeing their work and coordinating support for their teaching and

receiving preliminary training to prepare them for teaching. WAC, UCAT, and other teaching support units on campus can supplement the faculty supervisor and departmental training, working either with departmental groups, or directly with individual instructors.

While many of the findings of this study suggest there is a need for increased support for the second-level writing course throughout the university and in the various departments, there are resources currently available to all teachers. If you are interested in finding more effective ways to teach or use writing in your classroom, you can make use of any of the following resources:

1. If you are a faculty advisor unsure about how to prepare 367 instructors for the classroom, request a workshop from WAC for your department. If you are a graduate instructor who thinks a WAC workshop would supplement your training, talk with your faculty supervisor or department chair about scheduling one.
2. If you are unsure how to approach a challenging writing issue with your students, set up a consultation with a member of the WAC team to develop assignments and/or in-class activities, or work with the WAC team on an in-class collaboration for your students.
3. If you want to explore issues related to teaching with instructors from across the university, attend workshops offered by WAC, UCAT, or the Digital Union

The semester conversion offers an opportunity for departments and individual instructors to re-explore the role of writing in their teaching. As departments and individual instructors re-design their syllabi, there are three issues in particular we think they might consider:

1. **How writing engages students in disciplinary ways of thinking.** The process of writing is not just a mode for communication, but a way for writers to work out their ideas. Disciplinary academic genres reflect particular processes of inquiry. Furthermore, a discipline's values about how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and evaluated are intimately tied up with its conventions for writing. Students can practice these disciplinary habits of thought using informal writing activities throughout a semester.
2. **How students engage in a staged process of composing.** Most instructors who responded to our survey involved their students in a drafting process. As central as this is to what scholars consider to be good pedagogy, instructors also might think about shorter assignments or activities that allow students to practice crucial habits of inquiry and writing informally before they complete a draft.
3. **How they might engage with different kinds of audiences.** The assignments that instructors described seemed to be generic academic papers with unspecified audiences, where students see the instructor as the central audience for their writing. Giving students a specific audience and context for their writing helps students better frame their arguments, and also helps them transfer their writing skills from one class to another as well as into their civic and professional lives (Beaufort 2007).

When writing instruction is wedded with disciplinary ways of thinking in these ways, writing ceases to be an "extra" topic that teachers need to spend time on, but instead becomes a tool that is thoroughly connected to how students learn to create knowledge in the field.

Areas for Further Study

The broad scope of this survey did not lend itself to more in-depth analysis about a range of central issues crucial to understanding how 367 instructors at Ohio State teach writing. A direct analysis of assignments, for instance, would help us understand how instructors conceive "expository writing," as well as how they balance broad GEC learning outcomes with more discipline-specific learning goals.

We could also examine more closely how instructors interpret the GEC outcomes and how they see themselves preparing students to meet those goals. As the state university system aligns the curricula of Ohio's higher education institutions and as Ohio State converts its terms to semesters, what can second-level instructors expect out of their incoming students? How do they transfer what they learned in English 110 (or if they don't take 110 through transfer credit, wherever their initial training in college writing was) to their 367 classes?

The survey suggested that very little time in class was spent discussing writing in itself, though we suspect that there is a deeper connection (or perhaps rather a disconnect) between classroom activities and students' writing practices. How, as we suggested above, do students transfer the modes of thinking modeled and practiced in class discussion to their invention, research, and writing processes? These questions also point to many of the issues scholars are raising about plagiarism and even information literacy. How do teachers envision their students' engagement with sources in writing, not just in formal terms (whether they use MLA or APA formatting), but how students are expected to position their ideas in relation to others. In turn, how do *students* envision this activity? Do they see it as an engaged intellectual exercise, or is it merely a treasure hunt to complete an assignment? What kinds of projects and scaffolding for research projects invite deeper engagement?

Much could be said, as well, about how changing media and social technologies are affecting the kinds of composing students will have to do in their professional, personal, and civic work. How will our approach to writing instruction have to change to prepare students for these emerging media contexts? How might we adjust our view of what "expository writing" entails?

The WAC program is continuing to conduct research on these issues and will report on them to the university community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: WAC Survey Questions, Winter 2009

PDF Copy of WAC Survey Questions