

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) / Writing in the Disciplines (WID)

Introduction and Key Concepts¹

- WAC's evolution is linked to the changing place of writing in the educational system.
- Faculty dialogue is the crux of WAC's success.
- "Writing to learn" and "writing to communicate" are complementary, not opposing, goals.

Pedagogical Applications²

- Faculty collaboration (Writing Consultants and Team Teaching)
- Writing Center (Peer Tutors, TAs, Faculty)
 - Non-evaluative, supporting environment
 - Raises awareness of WAC on campus

Historical Timeline of WAC/WID -- 1870s to the Present³

1870s

Written papers and exams replace oral exams and recitations. Secondary and higher education organized by divisions into disciplines.

1890s

Progressive education movement is born. Most reformers fought the dominance of the disciplines. **John Dewey**, however, did not promote the fight against the disciplines; he believed in the importance of disciplinary knowledge along with language instruction.

1900

Two major views of writing emerge: "Elementary transcription skills unrelated to disciplinary activity," and "A belletristic art, the product of genius of inspiration rather than the mundane social and professional activity of the disciplines." However, most of the writing actually done by students and professionals fell somewhere in the middle.

1940s

Objective tests replace written exams. Disciplinary specialization marginalizes writing, which is based on the "skills model" (any training past the elementary level is remedial).

1947-1964

Prose Improvement Committee organizes at the University of California at Berkeley.

1960s

Fundamental shifts occur in higher education as enrollment increases and previously excluded populations attend college via open enrolment.

1966

Dartmouth Seminar promotes experience-centered "awareness" over disciplinary knowledge. Many future WAC leaders attend and bring ideas to U.S.

1972

Kenneth Bruffee's program of undergraduate peer tutoring begins at Brooklyn College. A writing lab is staffed with peer tutors from many disciplines.

1974

Results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress test spawns demand for writing education reform. British research is modeled, including **James Britton's** classification of discourse (transactional, expressive, and poetic).

1975

Barbara Walvoord's faculty seminars, at Central College, receive federal funding. These seminars aim to increase inter-disciplinary dialogue.

1977

Elaine Maimon (Beaver College) and **Toby Fulwiler** (Michigan Tech) launch writing workshops, and soon the "grassroots pedagogical reform movement" spreads to colleges across nation.

1980s

WAC continues despite budget cuts; cooperative relationships among the disciplines are key.

1990s - present

Technological advances such as multimedia composing expand definition of "writing." Interdisciplinary specialties make general disciplinary distinctions inaccurate. Service learning, which grew up at the same time as WAC (since the 1970s), links community service with writing; students can go beyond writing about their service and do service with their writing. "Writing in the Course" (WIC) may be more appropriate than "WID"; frees courses of disciplinary definitions and gives each individual class more autonomy. Differences between school and community blur. WAC will not die but rather adapt to societal needs.⁴

Bibliography

- Barnett, Robert W. and Jacob S. Blumner, ed. Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Building Interdisciplinary Partnerships. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Bazerman, Charles. "What Written Knowledge Does: Three Examples of Academic Discourse." Landmark Essays on Writing Across the Curriculum. Ed. Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994. 159-188.
- Harris, Muriel. "The Writing Center and Tutoring in WAC Programs." Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs. Ed. Susan H. McLeod and Margot Soven. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992. 154-174.
- Herrington, Anne and Charles Moran, ed. Genre Across the Curriculum. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005.
- Jolliffe, David A. "Writing Across the Curriculum and Service Learning." WAC for the New Millennium. Ed. Susan H. McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. 86-108.
- Kuriloff, Peshe C. "The Writing Consultant: Collaboration and Team Teaching." Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs. Ed. Susan H. McLeod and Margot Soven. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992. 12-31.
- McLeod, Susan. "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum." A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001. 149-164.
- McLeod, Susan, ed. Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1988.
- McLeod, Susan H. and Eric Miraglia. "Writing Across the Curriculum in a Time of Change." WAC for the New Millennium. Ed. Susan H. McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. 1-27.
- Russell, David R. "American Origins of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement." Landmark Essays on Writing Across the Curriculum. Ed. Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994. 3-22.
- Segall, Mary T. and Robert A. Smart, ed. Direct from the Disciplines: Writing Across the Curriculum. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 2005.
- Thaiss, Christopher. "Theory in WAC: Where Have We Been, Where Are We Going?" WAC for the New Millennium. Ed. Susan H. McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. 299-325.
- Walvoord, Barbara E. "Getting Started." Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs. Ed. Susan H. McLeod and Margot Soven. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992. 12-31.

Notes

1--For further discussion: "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum," Susan McLeod.

2--For additional pedagogical applications and suggestions: "The Writing Center and Tutoring in WAC Programs," Muriel Harris, and "The Writing Consultant: Collaboration and Team Teaching," Peshe C. Kuriloff.

3--For in-depth history: "American Origins of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement," David R. Russell.

4--For service learning: "Writing Across the Curriculum and Service Learning," David A. Jolliffe.