

THE HENDRIX COLLEGE WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM

PROGRAM EXPLANATIONS

The two-tier Hendrix College Writing Requirement grew out of the faculty's conviction that students need more systematic instruction and practice in writing than they could receive by completing the freshman composition course. Moreover, research has shown that even competent writers must practice their skills over the years and in different contexts or else lose some of their competence.

The LEVEL II (Writing Intensive Course) requirement provides an opportunity for students to focus their attention on modes of writing unique to the various academic disciplines. These Writing Intensive (WI) courses incorporate aspects of stylistics, critical thinking, and disciplinary content. But if students, both skilled and unskilled, are to make real progress with their writing, they need to apply analytical attention to their writing processes. Few can do this well on their own. For students to make serious improvements in their writing skills, they must have more than rigorous assignments, tough grading policies, and comprehensive professorial comments on returned papers; they must know how to analyze strengths and weaknesses in their writing processes--not the products, but the processes--and they must know strategies for improving those processes. Thus, the faculty who teach WI courses are those persons conversant with content and process, with course material and writing theory. These faculty can help our students unite and differentiate content and process.

In 1989 when the faculty passed the Curriculum Committee proposal to add WI courses to the curriculum as a graduation requirement, the following guidelines were adopted:

- a) WI courses will be at the sophomore level or above;
- b) WI courses may be used to meet other departmental, area, or general education requirements as appropriate;
- c) WI courses should have no more than twenty (20) students; exceptions to this limit will be considered by the WAC Director;
- d) WI courses must include a minimum of three (3) writing assignments; students should be assigned papers of substantial length (5 pages or more), as appropriate to learning the conventions and practices of the discipline;
- e) WI courses may require a variety of writing forms, including formal essays, mathematical proofs, short philosophical arguments, research papers, essay examinations, and so forth;
- f) Regardless of the type of writing required, the writing process must be ongoing throughout the term--that is, students must periodically turn in drafts, receive written and oral feedback from the instructor, and have the opportunity to revise their work;
- g) WI credit will be based on each instructor's reading of his or her student's portfolio; each portfolio will be read holistically;
- h) WI credit is earned only with the successful submission of the required writing and only when that writing shows the student to be proficient in writing;
- i) Enrollment in and completion of a WI course will not automatically guarantee receipt of WI (LEVEL II) credit;
- j) Failure to receive WI credit for any course will not be recorded on

- the student's transcript;
- k) The 'degree of proficiency' needed to receive WI credit will be based on those traits of successful writing listed in " Expectations for the Writing Intensive Courses," borrowed (with permission) from Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame.

THE PORTFOLIO

Ideally, the portfolio should contain the following:

- a) a paper from any point in the semester and its revised version;
- b) a paper from near the end of the term, unrevised;
- c) an in-class writing sample, i.e., essay examination, lab report, and so forth.

Faculty may modify these suggestions as long as the "coaching" of the writing process is ongoing and the student presents a minimum of three writing assignments, one of which must be at least five (5) pages.

LEVEL II CREDIT

As with our "Credit Only" courses, students enrolled in a WI course must tell the instructor that they wish to receive WI credit for the course and must do so early in the term. Students must not wait until the middle of the term to make the declaration. Doing so will not give the instructor ample opportunity to coach the writing process, a requirement for WI course credit. In fact, students should make the WI commitment during the first week of the term.

We want to encourage our students to complete at least one WI course in their major. Moreover, we want to encourage them to complete the WI course in the junior or senior year. The space between completing the LEVEL I requirement and enrolling for the LEVEL II requirement should give them an opportunity to develop their writing skills, to acquire content in their discipline, and to develop stronger motivation for writing well in their discipline. Of course, as stated in the catalog, a student may complete LEVEL II any term after having completed LEVEL I.

Faculty members should submit the names of students receiving WI credit to the Registrar at the end of each term. No student should receive WI credit without having received LEVEL I credit in a previous term or school year.

LEVEL II must be earned at Hendrix College; transfer courses and AP courses do not meet the LEVEL II requirement.