

Minutes: Committee on Writing in the Disciplines/Writing Across the Curriculum

Queensborough Community College / CUNY

The Academic Senate Committee on WID/WAC met on 2/16/24 at 1:30 pm in person with an option for attending remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Committee Members in Attendance:

1. Michael DeMarco, Chair, Social Sciences (2024)
2. Adam Luedtke, Secretary, Social Sciences (2025)
3. Shenaz Ida, Nursing (2026)
4. Susan Lago, English (2026)
5. Nicole McClam, Health, Phys Ed, & Dance (2026)
6. Svjetlana Bukvich-Nichols, Music (2025)
6. David Pham, Mathematics & Computer Science (2025)
7. Angela Ridinger-Dotterman, English (2024)
8. Madeline Ruggiero, Library (2024)

Absent:

1. Kezia Prince, Student Representative
2. James Nichols, History, ON LEAVE (2024)

Liaisons in Attendance:

1. Arthur Corradetti, Dean for Institutional Effectiveness (President's Designee/Liaison to OAA)
2. Melissa Dennihy, English (HIP Co-Coordinator)
3. Monica Rossi-Miller, Foreign Languages & Literature (HIP Co-Coordinator)

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm

1. Approval of minutes from 5/12/23 and 9/20/23 meetings.

A. Approved by unanimous consent.

2. Approval of meeting agenda.

A. Approved by unanimous consent.

3. Continuing Business

A. Chair DeMarco welcomed everyone. Before moving to main business, we discussed the topic of AI, which perhaps has the biggest relative impact on WI classes compared to other classes. Chair DeMarco mentioned that the Faculty Senate wants to move forward with creating an AI policy, but they didn't want the issue to fall only on our shoulders, so they wanted to come out with some guidance of their own moving forward. Chair DeMarco sent out those documents to us. He expects that there'll be more developments this semester. As regards AI, we discussed and gave examples of its issues as regards student's using it in their writing. Susan brought up a shared concern about the push for upper-level classes to be online asynchronous. The use of AI can be fairly easy to detect on instinct, but not easy to prove, and this is especially true in online asynchronous classes where instructors have less context for judging the veracity and sources of students' work. Those 2 things are not in our best interest. If you're only shooting for a C or C-, AI can give you that in an online async, unfortunately. Monica mentioned that she went to an AI workshop run by CUNY this morning, open to the entire faculty, and learned about some professors who use ChatGPT actively. Then the workshop topic

covered writing intensive training, and it is worth considering that you could argue AI is not plagiarism because it's created, not copied. One faculty member she encountered is creating a portfolio about the influence of AI on the Humanities. Chair DeMarco and others generally agreed that there could be some benefit from AI in terms of a starting point for research, etc. and that either way, for better or worse, AI does have a disproportionate impact on WI.

B. WI Co-Coordinator's Update, Melissa & Monica. Monica: it's a new kind of semester, we have a substantially smaller number of faculty being certified for WI classes, we only have 3 this semester, we started with 10, but then the amount of work that is given to the faculty (creation of portfolio, working with fellow, meeting for the workshops), is kind of heavy for a lot of faculty. Only 3 stuck it out, so graduate fellows worked on other projects (one on AI in Humanities). We had a very hard time in the beginning because of the Brightspace transition, which will be a big issue in the future. We have different disciplines – one foreign language, one computer science, and one business that are getting certified to be able to teach WI. What is not clear, and what was also an issue previously, is whether or how much the chairs of each department make sure that whoever is teaching a WI course is actually certified, and how much is actually required. We've had faculty across the board get certified, we now have faculty certified to teach WI in Spanish (so it's not just English anymore). It is important to know what departments are doing – how strong is the push to be certified, what courses are being included, etc. Right now we are in the process of getting the portfolio from the faculty.

C. Recertification. What Chair DeMarco did last semester is break down every department/major and who is certified, who were asked to be recertified, who did not respond, etc. A question that came up from Monica, Shenaz, and others was: Is there an actual formal mandate that faculty previously certified must be recertified? That is, is there a requirement for recertification from either CUNY or QCC? Monica and others were under the impression that yes, there is a requirement, and that 5 years you need to be recertified. That's what many of us did ourselves. One thing Chair DeMarco has heard back from faculty we asked to get re-certified is: "I didn't know I needed to do that." But it's not overly burdensome, some of us have done it, but by having a recertification requirement in there makes our job very difficult if not impossible, because then the question is, if they don't comply, are they uncertified and can no longer teach WI? We want to make sure we have the instructors available, and they've already done it once, what should be the best practices here? Perhaps we should just send them the info and not require them to submit documents? Analogy to Continuing Education: they force them to do it, but it may not be very effective, if it's just cursory. We don't want that to happen, but we also don't want to have a shortage of instructors on hand. Breaking it down by departments, there are huge gaps. Our goal is 50% compliance. Not a lofty goal. Artie answered the question about recertification requirements by mentioning that the only place where recertification is talked about is in the charges to the committee. That faculty are trained, and that we will recertify. Only in the last 5 years have we tried to address it. There is no mandate, there is no formal requirement. All we've been able to do is communicate with chairs and recommend that WI instructors be recertification-compliant. The administration makes it very clear, though, that it's ultimately up to the chair. It's an integrity issue for the college, that people may not meet these basic needs (send your syllabus, etc). What we should possibly try (and tell the Senate) about the seriousness of this issue: what are we going to do about it? The Faculty Senate voted to make this a graduation requirement, so we require this of students, but how do we ensure that's really happening? The recertification process is the absolute bare minimum verification that that's happening. There's very little assessment or evidence, but I think we all agree that this is very important to address. Now, with the help of Academic Affairs, we could try something new, and make sure the Senate is aware, maybe in a report, or a special report to the Senate, of the gravitas of this situation. Chair DeMarco agreed, and brought up questions instructors ask him around the Syllabus – they should have everything they need to be recertified. How do we determine that the students are actually getting the positive experiences they need from WI? Assessment?. We get feedback individually that it works, but nothing systematic. Monica agreed. The coordinators of training have very little idea of what happens after. What are the chairs' approaches, what are faculty actually required to do? Several issues: most of

the students don't know about WI or know about the requirements, and they register unknowingly. A lot of departments, like Humanities, might be used to teaching classes that are WI-"ish" without it being deemed that. But the thing is it's a whole pedagogy, it's not just about how many pages a final paper is, it's the whole range: scaffolding, low stakes, etc. There has been a push to get faculty to recertify, but not all courses are suitable for WI, and we have no control over what individual departments do. Also, 400 level classes are taught with a lot of written assignments in them, and they might need to be certified or acknowledged as WI for certain purposes. Also, we don't know if the WI designations are shown to students, how much transparency there is, can they actually see the range of possible WI courses they can/must take? And we have no control over what a certified faculty member actually does – do they actually use the assignment, the syllabus, the pedagogy, etc? Svetlana added that going forward one of the issues is how to assess what is happening with people that are certified. Are they doing what we expect them to do? Instead of some huge assessment project, maybe we can start with something smaller. Like instructors providing an artifact at the end of the semester? Now, the question is who will bear the burden of the work? Would it be the professors, the departments? A peer in one's department might look at this and say it complies. So we have to figure out who does this work and who is competent enough to assess whether a class works and does what we expect it to do. We need to have some proof on the ground. Chair DeMarco agreed and added that one positive is it moves us from asking for materials to having some kind of proof. David asked whether it is possible that once you're certified, can you just attend a refresher type thing, something like that. Maybe the WI coordinators could visit departments during their Department meeting and remind people of that. And just point out how easy it is. What are we going to do about recertification this semester? Chair DeMarco said we have consistently sent out about 50, do we shoot for that, more, less, and we aim for a return of maybe 30? Artie asked how many are left un-recertified. Chair DeMarco said it's hundreds. One suggestion was to send it to everybody, see what happens, and then put that in the report. We have made repeated efforts, etc but given that we don't get the compliance, put in the report that the Senate has demanded this but we can't mandate anything, so how can we do this more successfully? If they see the whole scope of the problem, maybe that might initiate some action. It's no more work to send it out to 200 or however many, and you're probably not going to get a large return. Regarding the report to the Senate, we discussed how recertification became the baseline idea for "encouraging" but really that's all we could do because it came down to the chairs. Regarding Svetlana's idea, there was agreement that it's a good one, and that we might want to finish this first (big recertification push and informing Senate) and then do that. We would have to think through carefully what kind of assessment we would want to do. What is the value-added of WI? Can we measure it in an outcome? And then measure that outcome? We could survey students.

4. New Business: Let's have one more meeting this Semester.

5. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Luedtke, Secretary, Committee on WID/WAC