# Writing Committee Annual Report, 2016-2017

## Membership

### Faculty Members

Sherrill Brown, Pharmacy 2016 - Chair  
Gallo, Jessica, C & I 2017  
Amy Ratto-Parks, English 2018  
Jody Pavilack, History 2018  
Bernadette Sweeney, Theatre 2018  
Tammie Slater-Smith, Missoula College 2018  
Celia Winkler, Sociology 2019 (fall-only)  
Erin Baucom, Mansfield Library 2019

Additional Representatives (Ex-Officio)  
Nathan Lindsay, Associate Provost  
Joe Hickman, Registrar  
Kelly Webster, Director, Writing Center  
Erin Wecker, Director, Composition Program

Grace Garner, Academic Advisor (Fall-only)

Charity Atteberry, Academic Advisor (Spring-only)

## Writing Center Annual Report

In accordance with the Committee’s charge to monitor the programs of the Writing Center, the committee was provided with the  [Writing Center’s annual report](https://umt.box.com/s/mwefmoiforxlmqbelvhtrhaso6ajm6ct) to review. The total number of student visits for the academic year was over 5,000. The Center experienced an 88% growth rate since 2008. Graduate students had the highest rate of increase for visits. This year’s report includes assessment of students writing / behavior after visiting the Writing Center. The Writing Center was awarded the Roving Griz Award from Disability Services for Students. The Roving Griz Award recognizes the commitment of staff and administrators to UM’s Quality of Worklife Initiative, which has the mission of creating and maintaining a work environment that allows faculty and staff to achieve the highest levels of satisfaction.

## Writing Course Review

The rolling review of Literature and Composition courses was suspended. Five new intermediate and 2 new advanced writing courses were approved. Review data for the intermediate writing courses was entered into a Qualtrics form for inclusion in the UPWA analysis.   
  
The Committee agreed to transition into a seven year review cycle to be consistent to the General Education Committee

## MUS Core Audit

BMGT 205 *Business Communication* and JOUR 270 *Reporting* were added to the MUS Core Oral/Writing Communication category as a result of the audit requested by OCHE.

## Revision to the Writing Transfer Appeal Procedure

The committee considered and approved the revised Transfer Appeal Procedure. The revision was sent back to committee by ECOS for additional editing. The final revision [Writing Course Exemption Appeal Guidelines](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/procedures/ASCRC_200/202%2050%205_WritingExemptionAppeal12-8-16.docx) was approved by the Faculty Senate on 12/8/16.

Writing Transfer Appeal  
The Appeal Workgroup considered and approved one transfer appeal this year.

Writing Placement Assessment  
In the past the placement assessment for incoming students was a 50-minute timed, hand written essay. In order to align the assessment process with the pedagogical outcomes of the WRIT program, the placement team piloted an untimed, Moodle-based, electronic assessment beginning in January 2016. Offered as an alternative to the handwritten essay, the electronic assessment is now offered almost monthly throughout the academic year. In January 2017, the writing placement assessment began a collaboration with Missoula College, Bitterroot College, and the duel enrollment program; the placement assessment now serves all regional students.

Writing Symposium   
The third annual Fall Writing Symposium was held on Wednesday, November 3. The Writing Symposium is an annual gathering designed to foster a constructive shared conversation about the teaching of writing across disciplines. Specifically, the topics of this year’s conversation were derived from the findings of the Spring 2016 University-wide Program-specific Assessment (UPWA) of Intermediate Writing Courses at the University of Montana. Analysis of the UPWA findings showed that students in Intermediate Writing Courses at UM struggled to express their ideas in an organized fashion. It also showed that students who revise their work submitted stronger writing samples.

Based on the UPWA findings, Symposium attendees were asked to reflect upon and discuss their difficulties, strategies, and successes with teaching revision and organization in their classes. There were 30 attendees this year. The group was comprised of a strong-cross section of writing instructors at UM; it included faculty, lecturers, staff, and graduate students from 19 different disciplines and programs (Anthropology, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, Pharmacy Practice, Biological Sciences, English, Health and Human Performance, Applied Arts and Sciences, Journalism, Writing Center, Liberal Studies, Intercollegiate Athletics, Economics, History, Forestry Management, African American Studies, Curriculum and Instruction, and Theater and Dance).

The beginning of the Symposium included a panel of students who talked about their experiences as writers at UM. The students shared their ideas about organization and revision in their writing, then took questions from the faculty. Afterward, faculty moved into breakout discussion groups in order to respond to questions raised in the panel and to explore their experiences teaching organization and revision.  At the end of the event, each group shared their favorite strategy for teaching writing and made a plan to compile resources for everyone to explore. Throughout the event assigned faculty members were recording notes about the discussion topics, questions, and strategies. A digested and edited compilation of these notes will be distributed to all attendees.

## 27 Credit Exemption Rule

The current 27 transfer credit rule which exempts students from the intermediate writing requirement was created in 2000-2001 when the general education requirements in the perspectives was 27 credits. Transfer students were required to complete all general education courses (?) except those transferring an approved lower-division general education requirement had only to complete the writing assessment and upper-division major writing requirement. The rule is outdated and lacks a logical rational because transfer students are not exempted from WRIT 101 and the intent of the writing program is for students to take the courses in sequence. There is a transfer placement exam in place for students who have not taken WRIT 101 or an equivalent course.   
  
Academic advisors were asked about the possibility of eliminating the 27 credit rule exception from intermediate writing and were in favor. The Writing Committee requested data on how exempted students performed on subsequent writing courses, but is still waiting for the data. There was concern that eliminating the rule would increase appeals.

ASCRC requested that the committee investigate a mechanism that allowed students to test out of the requirement if the rule is eliminated.

Mandate from OCHE  
Deputy Commissioner Cech sent a message to Interim Provost Edmond indicating UM is in violation of BOR policy 301.5.5 which requires that courses determined to be equivalent shall be accepted as if the course had been taken at the receiving campus. In particular this means students who are transferring a course from in-state that is an intermediate writing course at UM will not be required to submit additional documentation to demonstrate the course met the requirement. The Writing Committee sent a communication to advisors, admissions, and affected departments informing them of the mandate. There were questions regarding whether this affected current transfer students, how this would be enforced, and whether it would apply to out-of-state transfer students.

LIT 110 Transfers Chair Brown met with the Director of Literature, Professor Baker, to discuss the problematic nature of the intermediate writing designation for LIT 110 due to common course numbering. It would not be feasible for the department to change the course to 200-level because of the way it falls within the major. The course is a good entry for students into the Literature program and the intermediate writing status draws students to the course. However, it is problematic now that students transferring from other MUS institutions with the course will get intermediate writing credit. The Literature program is open to changes in this course and is considering its options for the 2018-2019 AY.

## Plagiarism Discussion

The Committee discussed the need for improving campus information regarding plagiarism. Some possibilities include offering plagiarism workshops, creating a chart similar to SKC’s that identifies the different levels of plagiarism and the consequence / remediation that includes links to resources. Professor Ratto-Parks sent the link to a [chart](mailto:http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2014/09/16/did-i-plagiarize-the-types-and-severity-of-plagiarism-violations/) used in WRIT courses. There is a plagiarism policy in the student conduct code and the Writing Center has resources. Students need to hear a consistent message from faculty. More communication is needed to ensure everyone has the same understanding.

## Consistent Language

A workgroup reviewed the various Writing Committee documents and forms available online for consistency and needed edits.

Accreditation Report / Visit  
The committee was asked to review the draft accreditation report and provide feedback. It met with the accreditation visitors on May 1st to discuss writing assessment.

## University –wide Program-level Assessment (UPWA) Data from Intermediate Writing Course Review General Findings: 2016

These findings outline trends in the *initial* Intermediate Writing Course submissions; i.e., they do not reflect the quality of the course submissions after having been revised in response to Writing Committee concerns and questions. Only five courses were submitted for the 2016 Intermediate College Writing Course designation review process. These were all new classes requesting the Writing Course designation. Overall, a majority of these courses met the requirements for approval when initially reviewed. Only a small number of course submissions needed revision to meet the Intermediate College Writing Course criteria.

#### Strengths

* 100% included the Intermediate College Writing Course learning outcomes on the course syllabus.
* 100% met the minimum requirement of 16 pages of writing
* 100% based at least 50% of the course grade on writing assignments
* 80% provided students with an opportunity to formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing, and demonstrated the instructional support that would be used to support students in formulating and expressing opinions.
* 80% demonstrated that students would be challenged to synthesize new concepts and demonstrated the instructional support that would be used to support students in synthesizing new concepts.
* 80% showed opportunities for multiple revisions.
* 100% required students to begin using discipline-specific writing conventions and showed instructional support to help students recognize that conventions vary with discipline.
* 80% promoted and valued student awareness of writing conventions, including mechanics, grammar, punctuation and spelling with demonstration of instructional support to help students meet this objective.

#### Areas for Improvement

* 100% required that students consider purpose and audience when writing; however, 40% did not outline instructional support used to help students understand different purposes and genres.
* 100% provides opportunities for students to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively; however, 60% failed to demonstrate how students would be supported in their effort to become information literate.

### **Data from scored papers – spring 2016**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Spring 2016 Data Comparison | |  |  |
| **Score Point** | **% of total sample** | **GPA** | **% Credit Completion** |
| 1-1.5 | 14.58% | 2.94 | 86.51% |
| 2-2.5 | 49.30% | 3.18 | 87.81% |
| 3 | 24.30% | 3.39 | 93.67% |
| 3.5-4 | 8.30% | 3.79 | 95.56% |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Path INTO Spring 2016 IW Course | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Score point** | **101** | **AP credit** | **Transfer Credit** |
| 1-1.5 | 81% | 4.70% | 14.30% |
| 2-2.5 | 57.80% | 9.80% | 32.40% |
| 3 | 51.40% | 25.71% | 20% |
| 3.5-4 | 58.30% | 33.30% | 8.30% |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Writing Courses BEFORE Spring 2016 IW | | | | | | | | | |  | | | |  |
| \* intermediate or advanced courses for which they were awards credit | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | |  | | |  | |  | | | |  |
| **Score point** | **1 course** | | **2 courses** | | | **3 courses** | | | **4 courses** | | |
| 1-1.5 | 39.10% | | 8.70% | | | 0% | | | 0% | | |
| 2-2.5 | 31% | | 14.10% | | | 4.20% | | | 0% | | |
| 3 | 34.30% | | 17.10% | | | 8.60% | | | 0% | | |
| 3.5-4 | 25% | | 25% | | | 25% | | | 25% | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |  | | | |  | |

### Writing Assessment Workshop (Formerly Retreat)

The annual Writing Assessment Workshop was held on Friday, April 21 in the Canyon Club at Washington Grizzly Stadium.

Throughout the day we had 38 people reading student essays. The 38 readers were comprised of faculty, staff, and graduate students from 21 different programs at UM as well as 5 teachers from local and regional high schools who teach AP, IB, and duel enrollment courses.

On Wednesday, May 3, we hosted a small group assessment event for readers with a rich background in writing assessment.