

# **Campus Writing and Speaking Program**

## **A National Leader in Cross-Curricular Innovation**

### **Program Mission and Activities**

#### **North Carolina State University**

The Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University has a double focus. The first is to work closely with the colleges as they devise and act on developing writing and speaking outcomes, implementation, and assessment plans. The second focus is on the campus as a whole. The Program offers workshops for faculty across the university on various topics related to writing and speaking. These two foci are driven by four overarching goals that connect our program to the campus and the community.

#### **Academic: Supporting active classrooms and re-energizing instruction**

Active learning research supports the connections between interactive classrooms and content learning; writing and speaking are often excellent venues for this connection. We believe that we have the opportunity to incorporate informal writing and speaking activities in classrooms across campus in order to improve teaching and learning. In working toward this goal, we are looking to improve the teaching and learning climate of the classroom so that faculty and students alike are actively interrogating content knowledge. To this end, the Campus Writing and Speaking Program has a goal to enable faculty to teach more effectively by

- engaging their students in writing and speaking practices,
- incorporating instructional strategies for active learning, and
- providing thoughtful feedback on writing and speaking performances.

#### **Professional: Preparing students to write and speak in increasingly complex settings**

Business leaders and industry representatives alike claim that many universities are doing excellent jobs training software engineers, statisticians, or accountants; but these graduates are lacking in the social, interpersonal, and writing skills they need to succeed in contemporary, diverse, and multi-technological workplaces. Our goal is to provide faculty with resources that support help prepare students to become proficient writers and speakers in their respective disciplines. To this end, the Program views writing and speaking as fundamental to development in three areas:

- learning course content as set forth in course objectives and outcomes;
- learning the ways of thinking that are shaped by the writing and speaking of the discipline; and
- learning the forms of communication appropriate to a professional field.

#### **Civic: Challenging students to become active voices in the community**

Liberal arts traditions often highlight the important role of writing and speaking in educating responsible public citizens. This goal is not one that is at the forefront of our design, implementation, and assessment. We do believe, though, that providing students with increased understanding of the ways in which language is rhetorical and social will challenge them to consider alternative contexts for engaging in strategic, responsible, and ethical communication.

#### **Programmatic: Supporting systematic and thoughtful consideration of curricular decisions**

The Campus Writing and Speaking Program is involved with departments across campus to support the careful consideration of writing and speaking goals, outcomes, and curricular

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decisions. Consultations with undergraduate coordinators and other faculty from selected departments aid in the ongoing cycle of curriculum development and assessment:

- identifying learning outcomes that may be demonstrated in the writing and speaking products of majors;
- creating implementation and assessment plans for evaluating those learning outcomes; and
- developing strategies for using the results of the assessment in program planning and improvement.

### **Scholarly: Interrogating theoretically complex ideas with programmatic research**

Although the academic, professional, civic, and programmatic goals translate into critical “services” to the campus and community, they are grounded in our program by scholarly inquiry in composition, communication, and teaching and learning. The Program is engaged in a variety of different scholarly endeavors such as conference presentations, publications, and empirical research that not only contributes to programmatic, formative and summative assessment, but also to scholarship in a number of different disciplines.

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There are five primary activities that support the overall objectives of the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University: faculty development, budgetary support for faculty, graduate consultants, outcomes assessment cycle, and student support.

**Faculty Development.** Faculty development activities include campus-wide workshops, department specific workshops, “theory into practice” informal discussions, individual consultations, faculty showcase, external consultants, and web-based support.

**Budgetary Support for faculty.** CWSP provides budgetary support for faculty in the form of \$4000 faculty grants for faculty wishing to redesign a course to focus on writing and speaking. Future support may include a faculty award, certificate program, and monetary rewards for course redesign.

**Graduate Consultants.** Trained graduate consultants work with faculty members for 20 hours per week to develop writing and speaking in their courses.

**Outcomes Assessment Cycle.** Colleges are scheduled on a 5-year plan to work with the CWSP in developing writing and speaking outcomes, implementation plans, and assessment plans.

**Undergraduate Support.** Plans are underway to coordinate all existing student support services into a new and expanded activities center that could involve satellite centers in different areas on campus.

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## **Rationale for Combined Program North Carolina State University**

The future success of many WAC programs today depends on a dedication to promoting speaking, as well as writing, across the curriculum. In addition, its participants need to pursue the unique opportunity WAC offers to conduct research, as peers, with colleagues in a variety of disciplines.

--Patricia A. Dunn, "Forgotten Elements in Writing Across the Curriculum"

The concept of the materiality of language presents us with an opportunity to change our writing classrooms into language classrooms.

--David Bleich, "Restealing Our Own Language"

### **Principles of Uniting Composition and Communication**

- The WAC movement had its roots in the British language-across-the-curriculum movement, but in the U.S. it has focused overwhelmingly on writing.
- The primacy of writing as a tool for learning (over speaking and other media) can be contested, especially in the context of all disciplines.
- Beliefs about "speaking" sometimes militate against viewing it as an already integrated medium in the teaching of writing; communication experts teach and conduct research on a variety of communicative situations, including small-group, consultative, collaborative, electronic, and consultative-presentational settings.
- In addition to their integrative uses in learning, writing and speaking are central to a wide range of occupations and disciplines, and industry leaders expect graduates to have expertise in both, along all dimensions.
- The recent popularity in composition of civic discourse, service learning, and other ideals of citizenship need to include speaking, in which preparation can be essential for a host of public contexts requiring citizen involvement.

### **Issues of Collaboration and Territoriality**

- Historically, composition and communication have a troubled relationship (see George and Trimbur).
- Current disciplinary and departmental configurations do not lend themselves to the prospect of a merger between two relatively autonomous fields in the near future, in spite of a few successful cases (e.g., Iowa State).
- Communication-across-the-curriculum programs offer the most reasonable and equitable beginnings of new disciplinary conversations between Composition and Communication.

### **The Changing Scene: Technology as Driving Force**

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- New technologies are creating natural bridges between composition and communication; both fields are interested in the impact of multi- and hypermedia on their respective dominant domains of research.
- The advent of rapid electronic communication, especially email, has created genres that share characteristics of speech and written text (see Bleich). As the boundaries between the two merge and blur, new intellectual connections arise between composition and communication in both practice and scholarship.
- Just as technology has increased the use of written text (for otherwise spoken text) in daily communication, voice pattern recognition technology and speech synthesizing will also create a fascinating merging of spoken and written discourse.

### **Toward a Context for Shared, Cross-Curricular Work**

- Many theoretical assumptions about active learning, collaboration, process, engagement, design, and the like are shared by WAC and CAC.
- In our collaboration running a cross-curricular writing and speaking program, we have found virtually no areas for faculty development—using informal speaking/writing to learn; developing tools for assessment; etc.—that do not lend themselves to full integration, regardless of the faculty being served.
- Discussions of new services have been invigorated by the union of the two fields. Ideas for research are made more exciting with the addition of new perspectives.

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