## CARNEGIE MELLON

# *Community* ThinkTank

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# WRITING SUPPORT AT CMU:

## How Perceptions Affect Resources

Findings—Fall 2009

**This Think Tank explores the following questions:**

- Do students understand the demands of intellectual work?

- Is writing just about technical skills?

- Why don't students seek writing support?

## THE CARNEGIE MELLON COMMUNITY THINK TANK

A community think tank gives structure to the dialogue of a community issue. In investigating writing support for students at Carnegie Mellon, our think tank compiled data about current writing support and resources, and conducted Critical Incident interviews that documented the experiences of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. These Findings are the culmination of our research, reflecting the local and situated knowledge gathered from the CMU community. Based on this interview data, we constructed a problem statement from which we developed the framework for a think tank dialogue, a real-life conversation that brought together multiple stakeholders in this writing problem. This document contains sample scenarios developed from our data, which helped frame the problem we discovered and supported the think tank dialogue. The Findings also include key decision points, moments where the writing problem is highlighted; from the discussion of these key moments emerged possible options and outcomes for addressing CMU's writing issues. We hope these findings will facilitate more dialogue about "the writing problem" and ultimately support effective action that is a response to CMU's unique writing culture.

## THE WRITING PROBLEM

While all community members agree that good written communication skills are essential for student success both in and outside the university, it seems that most students at CMU are not getting enough writing experience and support throughout all four years of their college experience. We found the role of community attitudes and perceptions about the writing process to be an important factor in this problem. For instance, while some first-year students do not always see the value of the first-year writing course because they do not see how to apply the writing methods they learn to their other coursework, many students realize the importance of developing their writing later in their academic career when they're faced with job, fellowship, and graduate school applications. Consequently, the professional writing courses offered by the English department have long waiting lists, and other staff members who work with student writing (such as the Scholarships and Fellowships office), feel over-burdened by the amount of writing support students need; at the same time, not enough students seem to take advantage of the writing support that is offered by peer tutoring in Academic Support Services and the Intercultural Communication Center.

In order to understand the ways perceptions interact with resources, our Think Tank opened the community dialogue with two questions: what are student perceptions of writing at CMU? And why don't more students use the writing support services that are available to them?

The interview data and Community Think Tank session uncovered the following issues about writing and writing support at CMU:

- Many CMU students do not get much practice with writing after their first-year writing course.

- Students sometimes struggle to see how to apply the methods they learn in the first-year writing course to their other coursework.

- Students who do not have a lot of writing experience throughout their time at CMU have a hard time writing scholarship, fellowship, and graduate school applications when it's time to leave CMU.

- The scholarships and fellowships office offers great support for students developing applications, but they are under-staffed and can only help a select number of students.

- Students tend to work on writing at the last minute and so feel there's limited time for getting help.

- Some students do not seek writing support because they perceive it as "remedial."

- When students do seek help they generally turn to people who they trust, like a former teacher.

- Writing instructors feel over-burdened by how much support they have to offer current and former students with their writing.

- The writing services offered through Academic Development report that they are most busy the night before a paper is due.

- The current writing services tend to focus on technical and structural issues more than on higher-order content issues or the development of a student's argument.

- Some students do not realize the importance of writing until later in their academic career. Consequently, the professional and technical writing courses offered by the English department have very long waiting lists.

Our Findings show that the CMU community needs to help students:

- Understand the structure of intellectual work
- Gain more writing experience beyond the first year
- Take control of their own writing processes

Critical incident interviews were conducted with students, faculty, staff, and administrators at CMU to learn more about their experiences and perceptions of writing and writing support. As a result of these interviews, three major issues developed: (1) students needed help seeing the structure of intellectual work, (2) students needed more writing experience and support beyond the first year, and (3) students needed to be put in control of their own writing processes. Using these common issues and the experiences that were described in interviews, we created this scenario that represents the complexity of the writing problem at CMU.

**CHARACTERS:**

**Dylan**:     student in Engineering

**Maggie**:   student in CFA

**Tim**:       PhD student in English who teaches Interpretation & Argument (the first-year writing course)

**Annie**:     assistant director of scholarships and fellowships at CMU

## Scene 1:

*Maggie and Dylan are walking home from Interpretation & Argument class and they start talking about the paper that's due in two days.*

**Maggie:**    I haven't figured out how to write this paper yet and I have so much going on in studio. I wish I could meet our teacher for help, but I always have class during his office hours and he looked like he was in a rush to leave after class today.

**Dylan:**     Yeah, I went to get help from peer tutoring and they helped me with a lot of my typos and my commas and stuff. I feel pretty good about it.

**Maggie:**    How did you ever find time to go to peer tutoring? I have 60 hours of studio work a week.  I've never been good at English, and I'm having a hard time figuring out what to write. Do you think you did the assignment right?

**Dylan:**     I think so. I guess the tutor did tell me to check with the instructor about the content of my paper, but there's only so much time I can spend on this project, ya know?

*Two weeks later, Maggie and Dylan get their papers back from the teacher. Maggie earned a C and Dylan earned a B on the paper. Maggie isn't happy with the grade, but expected as much. Dylan is very disappointed because he worked pretty hard on this paper and expected an A.*

## Scene 2:

*Two years later. Neither Maggie nor Dylan has done much writing since Interpretation and Argument. Dylan has decided to apply for the prestigious Marshall fellowship to study in the UK. When he finishes a draft of his personal statement, he goes to visit Annie, assistant director of scholarships and fellowships at CMU.*

**Annie:**     Alright Dylan, I'm a little concerned that your research statement doesn't sound enough like you. It's clear to me that you understand a lot about engineering, but it sounds like I'm reading a textbook here. Why do you think this scholarship will help you in the future? What are your future goals?

**Dylan:**     *(taken aback by Annie's questions)* Well…umm…I know I want to be an engineer and I think that, uh, it's good to study abroad because it will make me more well-rounded.

**Annie:**     *(I feel bad for this kid, but I really don't want him to waste his time on this application.)* Ok, well at this point, Dylan, I have to be honest. This is a very competitive scholarship and I don't really think you're a viable candidate for this application, because it doesn't seem like you know how it's going to help you with your future goals. You should consider trying again next year or applying for something more suitable for your interests, like a CMU Summer Undergraduate Research grant.

**Dylan:**     *(I know that I'm a viable candidate and I do have good goals, it's just hard to explain on the spot.)* Ok, ummm, I guess I'll do that.

## Scene 3:

*Maggie needs help with a piece of writing and goes back to Tim, her former I&A teacher for help. Tim has been teaching a double load this semester while working on his dissertation. Maggie catches him between classes.*

**Maggie:**     Tim, I really need your help with something. I got arrested during the G-20 protests last weekend and now I need to write a statement about what really happened for the lawyer. I haven't had a writing class since freshman year and we never learned how to do anything like this in Interpretation & Argument. I have a draft with me, and I was really hoping you could take a look at it. I need to have it done by tomorrow!

**Tim:**     *(Tim hesitates, but sees how distraught she looks.)* Yeah, I'll look at it and email you some feedback tonight.

The Think Tank's findings are organized around three key "**decision points**," or points in the scenario when characters had to make difficult decisions about how to handle the writing problem they faced. These decision points correspond to three major themes that were analyzed by the participants: helping students see the structure of intellectual work, supporting writing experience beyond the first year, and putting students in control of their own writing processes. Each section offers a potential **story-behind-the story** and **rival interpretations** of the problem that encourage viewing the writing problem from multiple perspectives. Finally, based on the outcomes of the Community Think Tank session, below are some options for how to work on these issues.

## DECISION POINT 1:

## HELPING STUDENTS SEE THE STRUCTURE OF INTELLECTUAL WORK

*In the scenario, both Dylan and Maggie have to decide how to best complete the writing assignment with the resources they think they have.*

### STORY BEHIND THE STORY:
What's going on behind the scenes?

Dylan is too busy to ask his teacher to meet with him the day before the paper is due to go over major content and structure areas, and he already spent a chunk of valuable time away from his other class work in peer tutoring. With the help of the tutor, he found and fixed a lot of errors, and at this point, he can't make more time for the project.

Maggie has been overwhelmed for weeks and has been putting off working on her paper because she is swamped with other work and confused by the assignment. Although it has been in the back of her mind since it was assigned, she feels that she's spinning her wheels. Now that the due date is so close, she's embarrassed to go to Tim and ask for more help.

## OPTIONS AND OUTCOMES

### OPTION 1: Helping students structure writing time.

### Seeking Rivals:

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| **A Peer Tutor says...** | When students only come to see me the night before a paper is due, it leaves me little time to do anything other than work on technical issues like grammar and punctuation. If we met earlier in the writing process, we'd be able to develop more of a relationship, and I would be able to better understand their needs and the demands of their assignments. |
| **A Student Says...** | Maybe my papers would be better if I started them long before the due date, but my computer science homework seems more important, and I usually need about 20 hours per week to get it done. I only seek out writing help when I have time. |
| **A First-year 76-101 Instructor says...** | I require multiple drafts for papers, but students don't start the draft 'til the night before, and they don't revise them until the night before the next draft is due. I don't know how to get my students to start writing earlier without requiring even more drafts and meetings and making a lot more work for myself in my already busy schedule. |

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| **The Think Tank says...** | From our interview data, we found that students often delay writing because they don't know when, where, or how to begin. Waiting until the last minute or the night before forces students to "simply get something on paper." This option instead encourages faculty, students, and Academic Support Services to collaborate in order to help students develop effective writing habits and recognize that writing is an on-going process that often involves multiple stages. By helping students understand the way written texts are created through multiple stages, we can demystify the writing process and help them understand the structure of real intellectual work. |

## OPTION 2: Giving additional training to peer writing tutors on how to help students with higher-order writing process issues.

### Seeking Rivals:

**A Peer Writing Tutor says...**

I'd be willing to get more training, but I'm not quite sure why it's necessary. I already have to do basic training in tutoring, and since I'm an English major I don't really see why I would need more training to help students. Also, I would need to be compensated for my time.

**A Peer Tutoring Coordinator says...**

We don't have a lot of money to support extra training for our peer tutors. In addition, there is the question of whether the current usage rates of the services justify spending money on more training for peer tutors.

**A Student says...**

This would make me more confident in seeking writing help from a peer tutor, but I feel more comfortable getting support from my teacher or someone I know better.

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**The Think Tank says...**

This option might put too much work on the peer writing tutors, but it gets at the need to reassess the kinds of writing support that are currently offered. Right now students report that peer tutors mostly give feedback on technical issues, whereas our research shows that students need help with the process of developing an argument. The scholarships office, for instance, finds that successful applicants work through 15–20 drafts of a personal statement with a staff member in order to fully develop their personal narratives and research statements. While most peer tutors might not be able to help students with 15–20 drafts of a paper, offering 'higher-level' support would hopefully encourage students to think about their writing as an on-going process.

## DECISION POINT 2:
## SUPPORTING WRITING EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE FIRST YEAR

*After two years without writing experience, Dylan must decide how to
represent himself and his intellectual work in a fellowship application.*

**STORY BEHIND THE STORY:**
What's going on behind the scenes?

Dylan is an excellent student with a good GPA and an impressive resume with extracurricular activities, service work, and research experience. His faculty mentor encourages him to apply for a prestigious fellowship, and Dyan feels confident that he can get it. He spends hours working on his personal statement, trying to explain the importance of his research and future life goals. He is surprised and disappointed when Annie reads it and doesn't think he is good candidate for the fellowship.

Annie encounters many CMU students who feel qualified for fellowships. Because she can help only a few of the most promising applicants, she must be very selective, and this depends a great deal on an applicant's ability to articulate what personal stake they have in their discipline and research. To Annie, Dylan sounds like he's 'trying on adult clothes' in trying to talk about his research, and his own voice is lost in the writing.

## OPTIONS AND OUTCOMES

### OPTION 1: Providing more writing experience and support beyond the first-year writing course.

**Seeking Rivals:**

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| **A first-year student says...** | More writing? I'm done with writing, I passed Interpretation and Argument. How will this help me? |
| **A third-year student says...** | I wish someone would have forced me to take more writing classes earlier on.  I haven't had a writing class since 76-101, and now that I'm writing for scholarships and graduate school applications, I'm having a very difficult time.  My adviser suggested taking the professional writing course offered by the English department, but all the sections were full, and the wait-list was huge. Now what am I going to do? |
| **A non-English faculty member says...** | Some of my students have difficulty communicating their findings in the written form. They really need some help with citing references, fixing grammar errors, and making a coherent argument in their assignments. |
| **An administrator says...** | Adding extra courses seems like it would be expensive, and draw money and time away from the other things that the colleges want to do with upper-level students in our programs. |

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| **The Think Tank says...** | Our work shows that students need more opportunities to write and communicate about their work to audiences outside their discipline before they leave CMU. Adding additional writing courses may be costly, but the monetary costs far outweigh the benefits to our students. It seems important to note, however, that simply adding more writing courses is only one way to provide more writing experience for students—these courses need outside writing support, too. The experiences of the staff in the Scholarships and Fellowships office show that students need continued support outside of the classroom to help develop their writing for professional needs. |

**OPTION 2:** **Collaborating with the English department to provide an additional discipline-specific writing course to further develop the writing process and prepare students for the writing relevant to their field.**

## Seeking Rivals:

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| **An Economics Professor says...** | I don't know if I will have time to collaborate with the English department to teach writing to my students. However, I see the need for more specific instruction and would probably be willing to make this work. But I'm not sure all faculty members in all departments would be willing to make the same effort. |
| **An English Faculty member says...** | This is an interesting option, but it seems like it could put a lot of burden on English teachers to know the content or genre conventions of other disciplines. How would this collaboration really work? Would other professors be required to help teach the writing too? |
| **A Writing Program Director says...** | This option might work, but it will take coordination and cooperation. All the colleges will have to get on–board, which will require that instructors do more than acknowledge their students are having difficulty writing. This needs to be understood as a shared problem, and real effort in all disciplines must be made toward teaching writing. The English department, while it is willing to collaborate, cannot bear the burden in its entirety. |
| **An administrator says...** | This is great idea because it would build upon the writing skills learned in "Interpretation and Argument." Writing instruction that also combines the conventions of specific disciplines would help students develop the writing awareness they need for success in their future careers. |

| The Think Tank says... | This option tries to address the issue of discipline-specific writing. Many students don't see how the approaches to writing they learn in their writing courses can be applied to their own disciplines. There seems to be a need for the university to make these connections more obvious and explicit for students. It may be a good idea to look at successful models from other universities. For instance, the City University of New York recently implemented a discipline-specific Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar, and initial studies show that the program is having a positive impact on student retention. The program pairs a full-time faculty member outside of English with a writing instructor; last semester they offered 60 different topics. While this example deals specifically with a freshman writing program, we suggest it as a model for how collaborative work across departments can develop and enhance student writing—a model that we would like to see applied to work beyond the first year classroom. |
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## DECISION POINT 3:

## PUTTING STUDENTS IN CONTROL OF THEIR OWN WRITING PROCESSES

*Maggie has to decide where and how to get necessary writing support;*
*Tim has to decide whether or not he will sacrifice his own valuable time to help her.*

### STORY BEHIND THE STORY:
What's going on behind the scenes?

Even though he is overloaded with work, Tim feels responsible to help Maggie because she chose to come to him for help. According to our interview data, many first year writing instructors at CMU feel obligated to help all of their students (past and present), often thinking: "If I don't help them, who will?"

Facing an unfamiliar and difficult writing task with real-life, out-of-the-classroom consequences, Maggie returns to a writing supporter she knows and trusts. While she may not have done well in his class, and this writing task has nothing to do with Shakespeare, Tim is the person she most associates with writing. She doesn't feel comfortable asking a peer tutor for help, especially in for this kind of writing situation.

## OPTIONS AND OUTCOMES

**OPTION 1: Teaching students how to become more aware of the writing process; this option moves beyond teaching genre conventions (resumes, cover letters) to teaching the transferable, meta-cognitive skills that facilitate thinking about writing as a process.**

## Seeking Rivals:

**A student says...**

I'm going to need to write resumes and cover letters in the future, and my other professors sure aren't going to tell me how to do that. How does the writing we're doing in 76-101 connect to other kinds of writing? Maybe if my teachers told me exactly what I was supposed to be getting out of the writing assignments to use elsewhere, the tasks would seem more meaningful.

**A 101 Instructor says...**

Assignments in 101 are designed to be meaningful writing tasks. They're designed to teach students how to understand and employ basic rhetorical moves central to academic argumentation. They are meant to facilitate awareness of an issue, so that students can say: "Here's one way people have looked at this, and here's another way people have looked at this; here's how I'm suggesting we look at it." This method of analyzing and utilizing arguments is transferable to other types of writing.

**The Think Tank says...**

In 76-101 and elsewhere, teachers should try to teach students how take control of their writing in varying situations and contexts. While this may involve explicit instruction describing how assignments will be useful in the future, this option points more toward facilitating awareness of how the writing process transfers from one situation to another. What we discovered in our interviews is that while 76-101 assumes argument as the basis for all academic conversation, many students and faculty in other disciplines see their work as "recording facts," not "making arguments." This difference in perception makes it especially difficult for students to see the relevance of their work in 101 to the work they do elsewhere. In teaching meta-cognitive approaches to writing, we encourage students to become aware of their own unique writing processes so that they can approach various, often disparate, writing tasks with confidence.

## OPTION 2: Creating a collaborative writing space on campus where students can connect with other writers and writing mentors.

### Seeking Rivals:

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| **A student says...** | When I need help with writing, I go to people I trust like my 76-101 instructor or a friend that has helped me in the past. I only feel comfortable sharing my writing with people I already know. If I could work with someone on a regular basis, I would be more willing to spend more time on my writing; maybe I could learn how to develop this 'writing process' my English teachers keep talking about. |
| **A graduate student says...** | There was a writing center at my undergraduate institution that helped me with my writing. I was a bit disappointed when I came to CMU and realized that there wasn't a writing center. I haven't really found any peers to work with me on my writing outside class. |
| **A English student says...** | I write papers all the time, but sometimes I need help fleshing out ideas and focusing my arguments. I also feel extremely vulnerable when I share my writing because many of my friends are good writers and I'm worried they will judge my mistakes. I could get help from my instructors, but I know they're busy, and I don't want to bother them. Most of the time I keep my writing to myself. |
| **An administrator says...** | I am aware that writing is important but I am not sure if this space is necessary. Academic development has spaces for students to collaborate and work on their essays. I would have to be convinced that a writing specific space would be additionally beneficial to students. |
| **The Think Tank says...** | Our interviews showed that many students (including graduate students) need a collaborative environment that fosters trust in order to make themselves vulnerable to writing criticism and support. By creating a place for all students to do writing work—a place where the writing process is actively modeled—we can provide a space where students can establish working relationships with other writers. And by creating a space where both graduate and undergraduate students work together on writing, we can hopefully remove the "remedial" stigma some students attach to writing support, and encourage students to take control of their writing so that they can feel more confident approaching new writing situations. |

Based on our research, we found that perceptions of writing and writing support (as remedial, time-consuming, etc.) affect how students use writing resources. Some of these perceptions seem to create real barriers for students who need writing support; therefore, changing these perceptions is an important way to address "the writing problem." One way to do this is to help students see the structure of intellectual work—the collaborative stages that are necessary to produce academic writing. In order to model this intellectual work, we need to provide writing experience beyond the first year so that students see the way writing and writers develop over time. In addition, while CMU has writing resources available, our research indicates that students don't always know how or when to use them effectively. Teaching students how to take advantage of writing resources can put them in control of their own writing processes; this may involve helpings students discover which resources will be most effective for them as individual writers. Through this process, CMU may find that more writing resources are needed to accommodate the diversity of undergraduate, graduate, and multilingual writers at CMU.

## A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

### PEER INSTITUTIONS

All thirteen of Carnegie Mellon's peer institutions, including MIT, Duke, and Stanford, have more than one required writing course for students and writing centers designed specifically to support student writing needs.

### COST TO EMPLOYERS TO ADDRESS COLLEGE GRADUATE HIRES' WRITING AND COMMUNICATION DEFICIENCIES:

According to the National Commission on Writing (2004, 2005) Sixty-four major American corporations, who employ nearly 4 million people, and 49 of the 50 state governments, who employ nearly 3 million people, have estimated that they spend $3.1 billion and $2.5 million, respectively, to address college graduate hires' deficiencies in writing and communication (From proposal to Address the Writing and Communication Needs of Carnegie Mellon Students)

## A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE OF WRITING INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT AT CMU

### CMU currently requires a one semester first-year writing course for all students:

**76–101, Interpretation and Argument:** a research-based First-Year English course structured to introduce students to an inductive process for writing an argument from sources. The course assumes that reading and writing are inseparable practices for reasonable, academic authoring. In the course, students are exposed to a variety of different texts, both fiction and nonfiction, so that they can explore and critically evaluate a single issue from multiple perspectives. They are taught to summarize and analyze arguments within that issue so that they may contribute an argument of their own. The course is also geared toward helping students understand the requirements of college-level writing. Students should also learn to be reflective and strategic with their composing processes as they plan, write, and revise their own texts. Ultimately, the course provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and strategic methods for analyzing and producing texts within the context of an academic community. (Undergraduate Course Descriptions 2009-2010)

## In addition to the required first-year writing course, the English Department offers the following writing courses:

76-100, Reading and Writing for an Academic Context: Some non-native English speakers, after taking a writing assessment exam, are required to take 76-100. This is a reading and writing course for students who are not native speakers of English. Students who identify themselves as those who speak English as a second or third language are eligible to take the class. It is designed as a prerequisite for 76-101 and focuses on reading in English for comprehension and application of key concepts for writing summaries and short position papers. Available only to undergraduate students.

76-270, Writing for the Professions: this course is a writing course specifically designed for students in all majors other than English. The course is appropriate for students in all CMU colleges, has no writing prerequisites, and assumes that students may not have much college-level writing instruction past their freshman year. The basic idea of the course is to give students experience in developing the writing skills they will be expected to have as they make the transition from student to professional. The course covers resume writing, proposal writing, writing instructions, the difference between writing for general and specific audiences, and analysis of visual aids in various texts. The course requires that students work both independently and in groups. (Undergraduate Course Descriptions 2009-2010). Notes: This course is only available to undergraduate students and is extremely popular. Three to four sections are available each semester, but class routinely has a very long waiting list (70 plus students). The English department does not have the funding to add more sections.

Other Writing Instruction Options: Outside of the English Department, Computer Science and Economic students can take a technical writing course in their home department and a communications course is available for Tepper and Heinz graduate students. These courses are only available to students within the department or program. In other departments, some upper-level discipline-specific courses may be available, but they are optional and not always offered.

### WRITING SUPPORT RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO CMU STUDENTS

**Academic Development** offers a range of academic support services including peer-tutoring in writing. Tutoring is available in both walk-in and standing appointment formats. Walk-in tutoring is available at two locations, Sunday through Thursday, from 8:30 to 11:00 pm.

**www.cmu.edu/academic-development**

**Intercultural Communication Center (ICC)** at CMU provides academic support to both undergraduate and graduate nonnative English speakers. Services include tutoring in speaking, fluency, listening comprehension, and grammar, as well as a writing clinic which helps students develop writing skills by working on specific academic assignments one-one-one with a tutor. In the 2008/2009 school year, the ICC served (instructional and assessment) 865 students, totaling 12336.5 hours. Writing Clinic (2008/2009): 154 Students, 785 Clinic hours. **www.cmu.edu/icc/**

**Fellowship and Scholarships Office (FSO)** at CMU only offers writing help to enrolled undergraduate students for their applications. In the past they have helped graduate students; however, because of staffing issues, they can only provide support for graduate student Fulbright applicants. FSO will help "read over" essays for FSO supported scholarships, but they specifically advise students to consult with a faculty member for assistance in preparing essays for scholarship applications. Additionally, the office is understaffed to meet the needs of all students who may need help with this type of writing.                                        **www.cmu.edu/fso/**

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FACULTY AND STAFF

**Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence** at CMU distills the research on learning for faculty and graduate students and collaborates with them to design and implement meaningful educational experiences. They believe that combining the science and art of teaching empowers colleagues to create the conditions for students to learn and, through this learning, transform their world.

**Writing Resources for teachers**:
  http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/writing/

# PAST PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING CMU'S WRITING PROGRAM

In the past, proposals to address student writing and communication needs have used a three-pronged developmental approach:

1. Develop a University Writing Program that will strengthen the structure of the First-Year Writing Program and increase course offerings so that all students can take courses in professional writing, discipline specific writing, or other writing-intensive courses.

2. Create a Writing and Communication Center with communication specialists who can support the unique needs of the specific colleges

3. Expand CMU's writing requirement over time (ten-year goal), so that CMU's writing program is similar to peer institutions: at least one more course beyond 76-101, discipline specific courses, and/or professional writing courses.

## COST OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAM

**Phase One**: Meeting National Standards for Class Size

  Total Program Budget Less University's Current Contribution: $1,335,276

**Phase Two:** Matching Peer Institutions for Writing Course Options

  Total Program Budget: $2,150,344

**Phase Three:** Providing Faculty Support for Teaching Discipline-Specific Writing

2 Instructional Staff: $148, 596

**Writing and Communication Center**

Total Center Budget: $477, 605

**Total for all three phases and Center:**

$4,111,821 (not including start-up costs)

# NATIONAL ACADEMIC WRITING MOVEMENTS

**Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)** refers specifically to the pedagogical and curricular attention to writing occurring in university subject matter classes other than those offered by composition or writing programs (most often housed in the English Department). The movement provided systematic encouragement, institutional support, and educational knowledge to increase the amount and quality of writing occurring in such courses as history, science, mathematics and sociology. […] There have been many approaches to the kinds of writing encouraged, the kind of support offered, and the knowledge thought useful to student and teacher—but they were all directed to classrooms other than the writing or composition classes. (Bazerman et al 9)

**Writing in the Disciplines (WID)**, although often associated with Writing Across the Curriculum, is distinct from WAC. WID refers to both a research movement to understand what writing actually occurs in the different disciplinary areas and a curricular reform movement to offer disciplinary related writing instruction but within a program designed for that purpose (whether university-wide or departmentally located). (Bazerman et al 10)

# WRITING AT PEER INSTITUTIONS

### STANFORD UNIVERSITY:

The Stanford Writing and Rhetoric Requirement includes courses at three levels. It is designed to provide a coordinated approach that's responsive to how students mature as writers, researchers and presenters during their undergraduate years.

At each level, students are given opportunities to develop greater sophistication in conducting inquiry and producing scholarly work in progressively more specific disciplinary contexts.

Most students fulfill the WR 1 requirement by taking a first-year, four-unit course centered on analysis and research-based arguments. Most students fulfill the second level requirement by taking a course focused on writing, research and oral presentation before the end of their sophomore year. The Writing in the Major requirement constitutes the third University writing requirement for undergraduates. It is usually completed by students in their junior or senior years.

WIM courses provide students with systematic opportunities to develop writing skills in the context of their chosen major fields. It begins the process of learning to write effectively in discipline-specific formats and styles.

<div align="right">http://ual.stanford.edu/AP/univ_req/PWR/Req.html#first</div>

## CORNELL UNIVERSITY:

The John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines at Cornell University supports writing seminars and writing intensive courses in a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and at all levels of undergraduate education; it also engages in a variety of outreach activities.

The Knight Institute coordinates the First-Year Writing Seminar Program, which serves the majority of first-year students at Cornell. It also has developed advanced writing initiatives: it coordinates Writing in the Majors, an upper-level program, and supports English 2880/2890: Expository Writing. The Knight Institute is also home to the Writing Workshop, which offers tutorial writing classes and tutoring services. In all, more than thirty-five academic departments and programs offer courses associated with the Knight Institute's programs.

<div align="right">http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/</div>

## DUKE UNIVERSITY:

Writing and research are the cornerstones of the Duke undergraduate curriculum. The Thompson Writing Program (TWP) helps students develop as writers from their first through senior years at Duke, and supports faculty who teach writing in a wide range of courses across the curriculum.

All entering undergraduates must complete Writing 20 in their first year at Duke. Writing 20, "Academic Writing" is an intense introduction to critical thinking and writing; it teaches students how to argue creatively in response to the work of other scholars and intellectuals. Each section of Writing 20 has a distinctive theme chosen by its instructor. Sections are capped at 12 students and taught by faculty who have studied a wide range of disciplines--from biology and engineering to political science and sociology to literature and philosophy and history--and who have also undergone special training in the teaching of writing

Writing in the Disciplines (WID) is an approach to helping students grow as writers while at the same time using writing as a means for helping students understand the ideas, theories and ways of knowing intrinsic to a course and its discipline.

All students in Trinity College must also take two writing-designated courses in the disciplines. WID courses are designed and taught by faculty in all the various departments at Duke. Such courses build on the skills developed in Writing 20 in order to offer students a more specific sense of how to write in particular fields of study.

<div align="right">http://uwp.duke.edu/about/index.html</div>

## PRINT RESOURCES:

Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. The state of writing instruction in America's schools: What existing data tell us. Albany, NY: Center on English Learning & Achievement University, 2006.

Bazerman, Charles et al. Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press and WAC Clearinghouse, 2005.

Beaufort, A. College Writing and Beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2007.

Bruce, Shanti and Ben Rafoth. ESL Writiers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2004. Print

Gillespie, Paula and Neal Lerner. The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring. 2nd Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. Print

Learner, Neal. The Idea of a Writing Laboratory. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009.

Murphy, Christina and Steve Sherwood. The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors. 3rd Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2008. Print.

Tingle, Nick. Self-Development and College Writing. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004. Print

Villanueva, Victor. Cross-Talk in Comp Theory. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers English, 2003. Print

## ONLINE RESOURCES:

National Commission on Writing. (2004). Writing: A ticket to work…or a ticket out: A survey of business leaders. http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf.

National Commission on Writing. (2005). Writing: A powerful message from state government. http://www.writingcommission.org/prd_downlowds/writingcom/powerful-message-from-state.pdf.

## Writing Resources at Peer Institutions Online:

Hume Writing Center at Stanford University: http://hwc.stanford.edu/

Writing Workshop at Cornell: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/workshop/workshop.htm

Writing Studio at Duke University: http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/

Starting a writing center: http://writingcenters.org/resources/starting-a-writing-center/

National Writing Project: http://www.nwp.org/

Purdue's Online Writing Lab: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/