
Faculty Voices on Writing Across the Curriculum

Editors' note: These responses and comments from faculty were culled from a series of interviews conducted by the Writing Across the Curriculum Task Force on Assessment this past year. While obviously not a comprehensive listing of faculty opinions, it is representative of the comments submitted during the assessment process. For an in-depth look at the assessment, see Dennise Bartelo and Mary-Lou Hinman, "Faculty Evaluation of Writing Across the Curriculum at Plymouth State College," 1990.

Describe your current attitude toward a Writing Across the Curriculum Program. Has it changed?

In response, faculty frequently expressed a new or continued appreciation of Writing Across the Curriculum:

I always thought it was a wonderful idea, but I was skeptical about its practicality. Now I'm able to see how much Writing Across the Curriculum has accomplished.

My attitude has changed from "I wonder what it is" to "this is neat stuff" to "this is really working."

I'm a believer. . . . It is accomplishing its goal. I'm seeing better writing from students.

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I'm much more positive now. At first I thought students weren't ready for this. The workshop. . . conveyed the idea that people cared and were doing positive things.

Only a handful of respondents voiced skepticism:

Initially I was very interested. In the last year I've become less interested. I don't find any evidence that it's being encouraged by anyone but me.

I have the feeling the Writing Across the Curriculum movement is an effort to get an improved curriculum on the backs of the faculty.

Many interviewees expressed a new awareness in their attitude about writing as a tool for learning in their courses and outlined ways in which they had integrated more writing into their classes:

It's important to have students think. [But] before I came to Plymouth, I hadn't thought about [using] Writing Across the Curriculum techniques.

Writing Across the Curriculum has had a wonderful effect on my teaching and relationship to students. I got started on a different style of teaching—it was revolutionary for me. It makes teaching more interesting, and I've begun to think about writing in a different way.

How important is Writing Across the Curriculum for Plymouth State College?

Faculty responses generally emphasized the importance of the program in terms of student success and the mission of the college:

It's incredibly important [because] students come here with poor writing skills.

We have an obligation to see that students leave here with solid writing skills.

It provides continuity. . . . The chances of a student taking a course without writing are less now.

Nothing else is happening on campus that can compare in importance.

Some faculty reported increased student comfort with writing:

Our students will behave differently. In getting them to write and talk, they begin to take themselves seriously and admire themselves.

Freshmen I saw were getting worse and worse. [Now] I do see a change. I use *Writing Across the Curriculum* techniques and they help students think logically. . . and gain communication skills.

Maybe students are writing more clearly.

Some faculty mentioned the influence of *Writing Across the Curriculum* on collegiality and stressed the need to keep the program as a college priority:

[*Writing Across the Curriculum* is] important for my classes and valuable for the college because it provides training, support, and encouragement for faculty.

It has started people talking about their teaching. It's improved classroom teaching techniques.

Writing Across the Curriculum is important for Plymouth State College and every college. The program itself brings attention to the value of writing in all disciplines. It is

a kind of "consciousness raising."

The program is important only if it accomplishes something.

In what ways have you and your students benefited from the implementation of Writing Across the Curriculum at Plymouth State?

Faculty most frequently mentioned motivation, interest in writing, and improvement of skills when they discussed benefits to students:

Students are more aware of their language. Some you'll never reach, but the majority recognize the importance of it.

It allows students to shine in different ways. . . and to express what they know in a less stressful way.

Students get hit with writing so much, they don't consider it an onerous task. That is the biggest impact. Writing is not the shock for them it was ten years ago. Also, their skills are getting much better.

Colleagues saw the most benefit to themselves in the introduction of new practical teaching and learning techniques:

After the workshop, I took others' ideas and incorporated them into my own course.

It provided me with a way to facilitate class discussion. It gave me an alternative way of assessing where students are with course material.

It encourages me to see student progress, and I *do* see progress.

I have benefited immensely as a new instructor talking to other instructors.

I have a greater level of understanding of my students and a greater appreciation of students' abilities.

Do you have other suggestions, comments or ideas?

New faculty should be required to go to the workshops.

It's up to the individual instructor, but it should be encouraged.

I wish there were a way to persuade people to include more writing in their classes.

Teachers should not be mandated to do something. Show by example.

Keep an on-going bibliography in all disciplines. Send new faculty the bibliography.

More faculty need to share what they do in W-courses. Pool ideas and exercises that have worked.

Publish a newsletter of Writing Across the Curriculum ideas, or send anecdotal reports, descriptions, blurbs to "Speare Points" to tell what faculty are doing.

The workshops and the journal are helpful. Continue to make the workshops available.

Spotlight the program with a contest for students.

Smaller classes are needed so we can concentrate on writing.

Provide a list of courses ("W" and other) where Writing Across the Curriculum is done.

More grammar should be taught.

We need to include part-time people who mostly deal with freshmen.

Continue the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee and program, so we don't lose the network.

Writing Across the Curriculum opened a whole new world to me and my students.

Class size is a problem. We need assistants to help with the sheer volume.

We should be doing a lot more. Student skills reflect on the college. *But how do we lighten the load?*

I'm not using it as much as I could, but colleagues have helped me by sharing ideas.

We need to keep it going. We're ahead of other schools.

I am very pleased at the openness and approach of Writing Across the Curriculum. The college needs to keep it up.

Regular articles in the *Clock* are important. They show writing can be fun.

It's great. I have begun to see the faculty in a different light.

Keep doing it!