

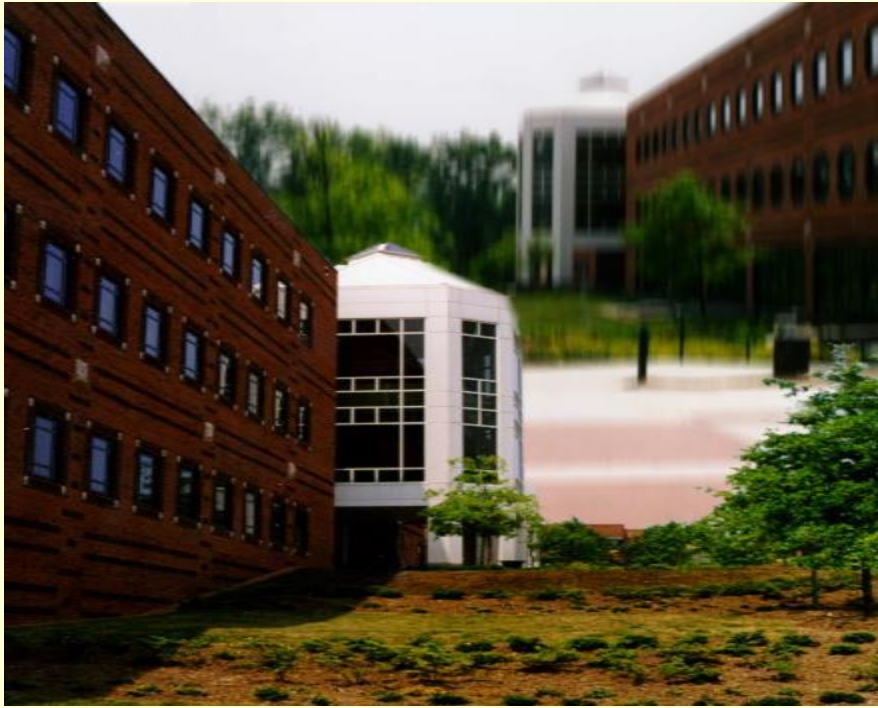
# Leveraging Demographics, Local History, and Community Outreach to Sustain WAC

Terry Myers Zawacki

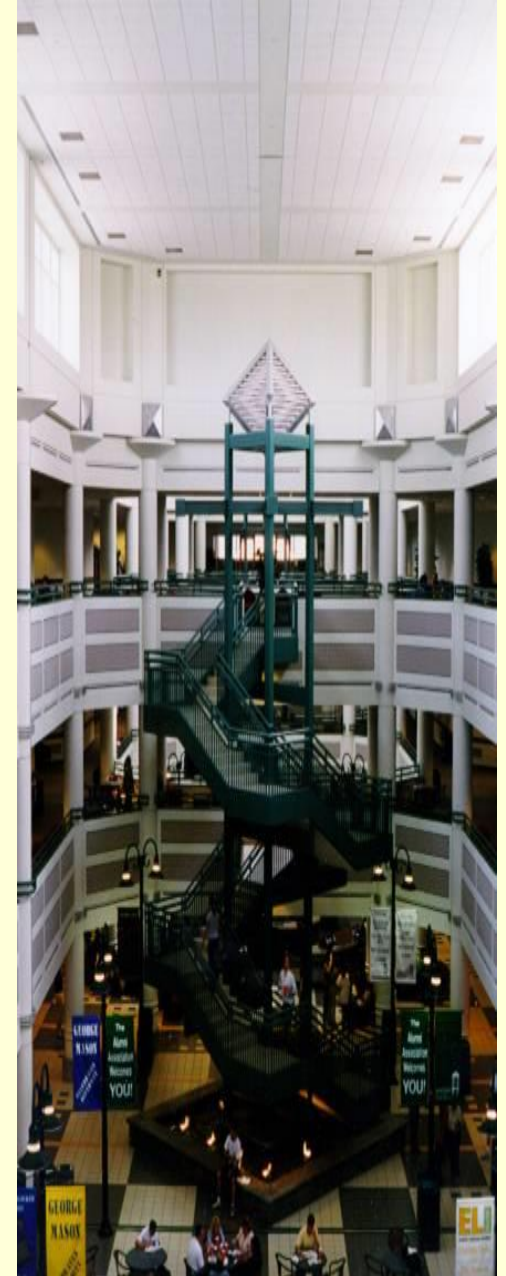


“Composition is structured by various kinds of places physical and imagined, ...both of which should be investigated, because places are imagined, arranged, represented, and distributed in discourse and texts.

Keller and Weisser. “Introduction” *The Locations of Composition*



However, it should not be forgotten that physical places themselves contribute to these activities of imagining, arranging, representing and distributing.” --Keller & Weisser



# Place and the scene of WAC, physical and imagined:

“George Mason University is an **innovative, entrepreneurial** institution with **global distinction** in a range of academic fields.

Located in **the heart of Northern Virginia’s technology corridor near Washington, D.C.**, Mason prepares its students to succeed in the work force and to meet the needs of the region **and the world.**” (from Mason website)

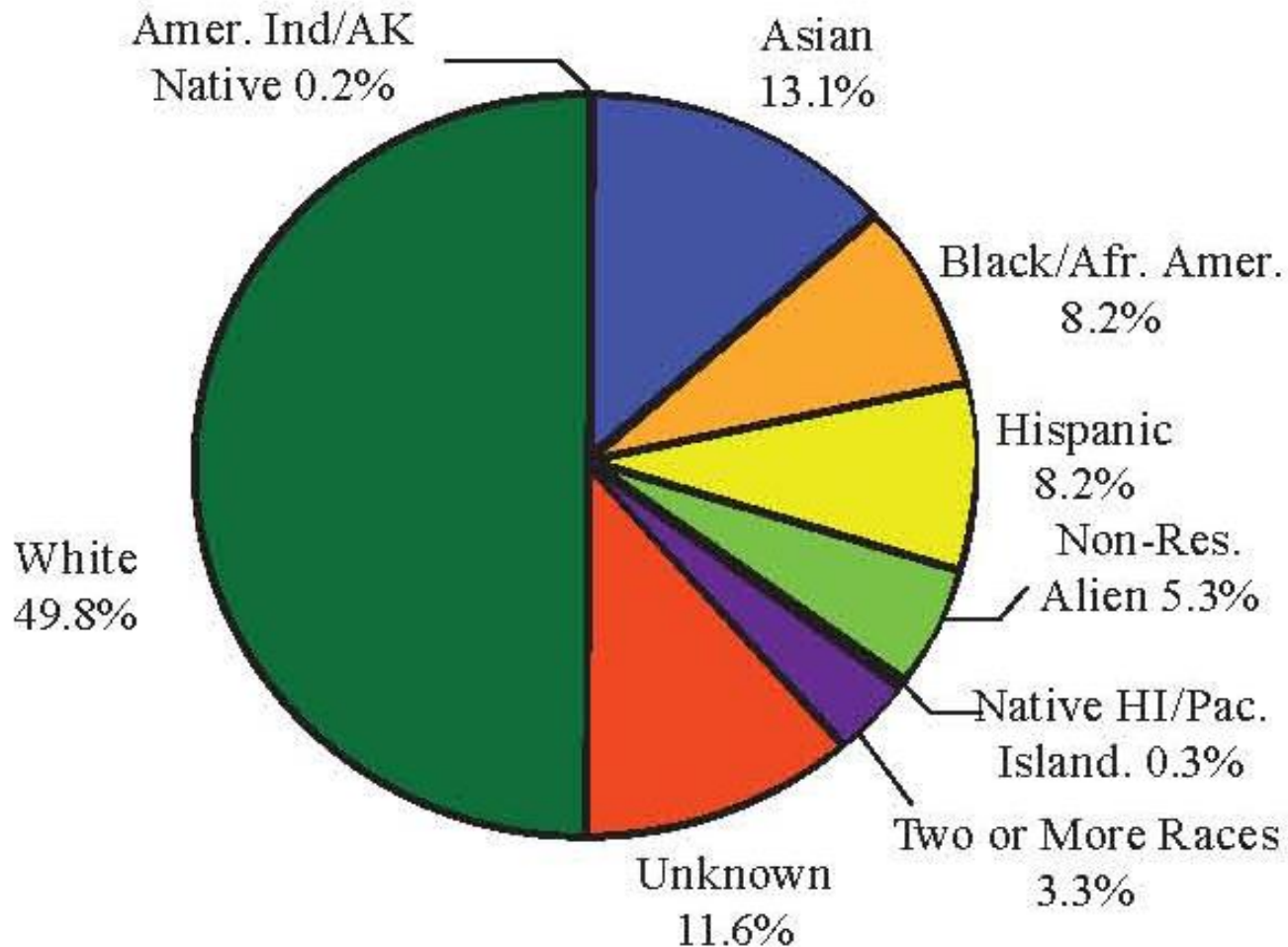
# Institutional History & Demographics

- 1955: No. Virginia branch of Univ of Virginia
- 1972: Independent George Mason University
- Distributed university with three campuses
- 33,300 students, almost half of undergrads are transfer
- 201 degree program  
77 undergrad, 86 masters, 37 doctoral, 1 JD

# George Mason Student Demographics

From Factbook 2011-2012

**Fig. 4.3 By Ethnicity**



# WAC Program History/Demographics

- 1990: WAC Program established/directed by Chris Thaiss until 1998
- 1998-2012: Directed by Terry Myers Zawacki
- WAC Program oversees designated WI courses in all undergraduate programs, some of which infuse writing in all courses to fulfill the WI requirement.

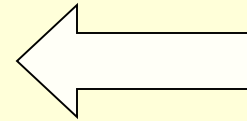
“Rather than being one definite sort of thing ... a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: **places not only are, they happen.**”

Edward Casey *“How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena”* in *Senses of Place*.



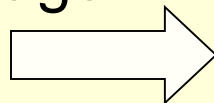


Official logo and tagline



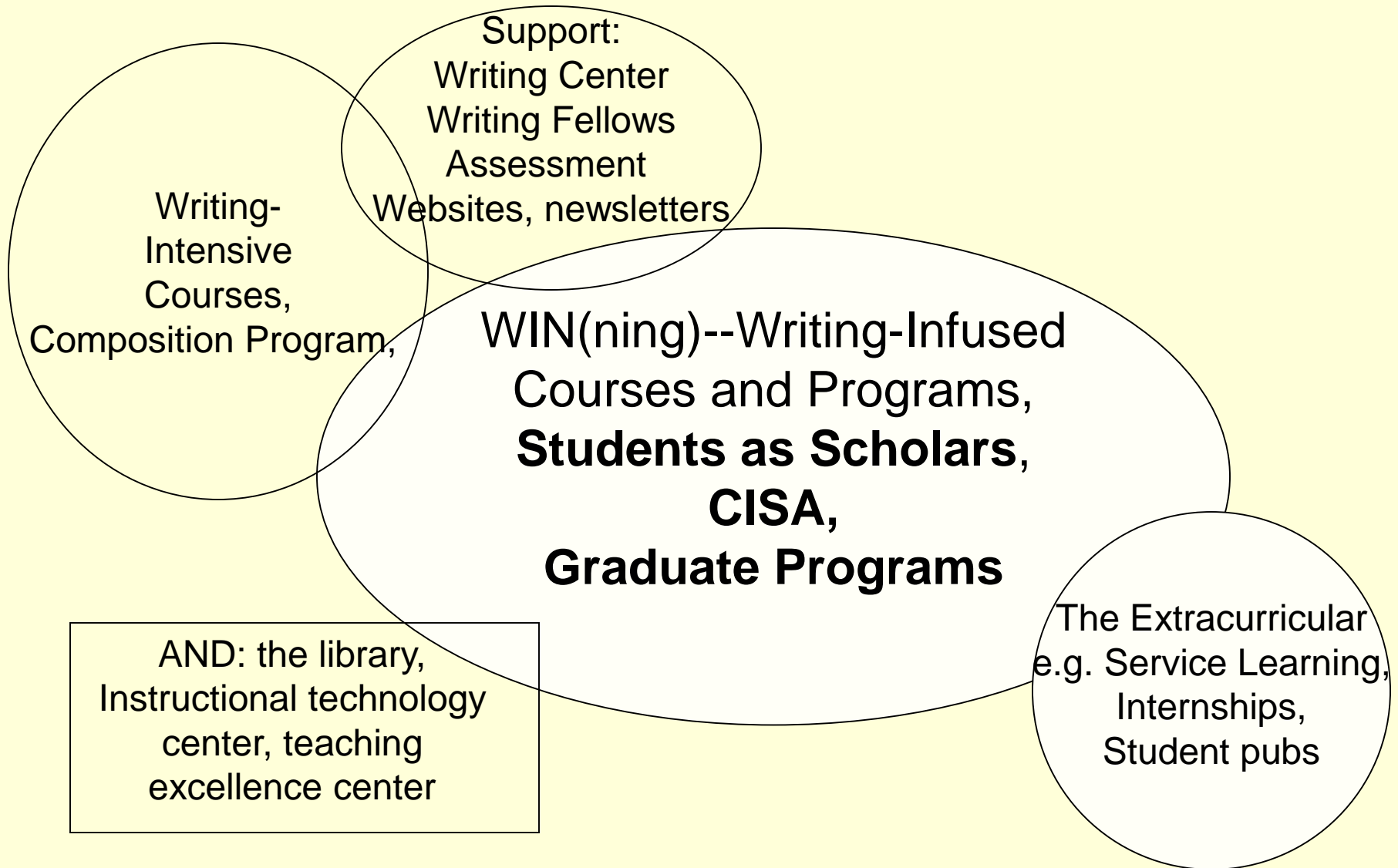
WHERE INNOVATION IS TRADITION

Image on home page  
of WAC website



*A Fairfax campus landmark: [George Mason](#),  
writer of the Virginia Declaration of Rights,  
a model for the Bill of Rights.*

# Where WAC Happens at Mason



# Leveraging Place to Sustain WAC (or) Where Innovation is Tradition--"Dive in or die"

- Students as Scholars (QEP)
- Globalization: Center for International Student Access (CISA) and Global University Consortium
- Expanding WAC to Writing in Graduate School

# Students as Scholars QEP Initiative and the WAC WIN(ning Initiative (Track B Grants)

- Attention to scaffolding research/writing tasks with descriptions of the base-line writing skills students will learn/should have learned as they move from course to course across the program curriculum
- Explicitly articulated expectations/outcomes for student learning/writing
- A plan for and commitment to assessing students' growth as learners/writers and/or student writing competence in the course and the curriculum
- Faculty development in teaching/teaching with writing
- Students' accomplishments as writers recognized through research symposia/writing awards and/or other means best suited to individual programs





# CISA

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCESS



# WAC and Action Research

- WAC and L2 Writing/Writers (ongoing with Anna Habib and others)



<http://writtenaccents.gmu.edu>

- WAC and Graduate Dissertation Writers (just begun, with Paul Rogers)

# Research on dissertation writers (with Paul Rogers)

Understanding the local ecology/“warming up the system”:

- Initial contact with doctoral program directors
- Survey diss writers—206 respondents thus far
- Interviews with dissertation supervisors—6 thus far
- Focus groups with students and faculty—  
not yet begun

“Such thinking [about location and rhetorical contexts] also helps foreground awareness of the possibilities and limitations created by location, how social control or power is ‘structured’ by the design and maintenance of ...institutional space, and how often power differentials among various social actors are naturalized or held ‘in place’.”

*Vanderberg and Clary-Lemon “Looking for Location Where It Can’t Be Found”*



# What's held in place at our globalized university:

Expectations for standard academic writing in English for multilingual students generally hold, whether they are resident or international, undergraduate or graduate.

Even as Mason welcomes as its sixth president Dr. Angel Cabrera, a native of Madrid, Spain, and a “recognized global leader and educator.”

# Sustaining WAC: Mapping the WAC Terrain

- Creating WAC archives
- Undertaking comprehensive review and assessment of WAC activities
- Writing formal job descriptions for WAC director and assistant director

# Sustaining WAC Programs:

Programs with “Staying Power” included:

- More curricular elements
- More assessment
- Faculty support and strong leadership

*(McLeod and Miraglia “Whither WAC”)*

“Symbiosis with Institution’s Mission and Linkages with Other Programs”

*(Townsend “WAC Program Vulnerability and What to Do About It”)*

“Dive in or die”

*(Walvoord “The Future of WAC”)*

“...places add to the nature of the projects. That is, projects not only require place in the sense that they need a place to occur, but the place becomes an active agent in the project and thereby affects it.”

Sack qtd in Keller and Weisser “Introduction” *The Locations of Composition*

“Composition studies may be a discipline that includes places such as classrooms, writing centers, public spheres, and rhetorical topoi, for example, but studying these places ...

is a matter of studying how these places are located: how they relate to other places inside and outside the discipline, how our activities carve out new spaces from these places, and how these places allow us to alter, change, position, reposition, and move through our scholarly work and practices.”

Keller and Weisser. “Introduction” *The Locations of Composition*