Final Report from the Committee Reviewing Writing in the Baccalaureate Core

Overview

Purpose: Evaluate the effectiveness of writing within the Baccalaureate Core.

Problems Identified

1. Curriculum and Communication
   - Curriculum needs to be more uniform.
   - Information about expectations and results needs to be better communicated.

2. Resources and Management
   - Class sizes need to be better tracked and managed.
   - There are not enough extended writing assignments (i.e. more than 4 pages).

3. Student Support
   - Low-achieving students need more support.
   - Students overall need more practice with writing.

Sources of Information

- National Survey of Student Engagement Consortium for the Study of Writing in College
- Preliminary Findings for the Committee Reviewing Writing in the Baccalaureate Core
- OSU faculty survey and focus group data
- Comparative institutional data

Results of Analysis

Strengths

- Faculty priorities are aligned with national expectations for writing.
- The current writing curriculum within the Bacc Core has several strengths.

Weaknesses

- Undergraduate writing at OSU needs improvement.
- The major areas of complaint about student writing are behavioral issues (e.g. lack of engagement, academic dishonesty, etc).
- Writing assignments within Bacc Core courses are not sufficient.
- Faculty are not taking advantage of tools related to the writing process.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Make sure that curriculum is uniform across sections and give advisors more information.
- Establish clearer expectations for writing in Synthesis courses.
- Introduce a model of Faculty Writing Advocates.
- Offer training on writing pedagogies to departmental units.
- Pilot a “stretch model” 100-level writing class for students with additional needs.
- Add and Information Literacy course to the Baccalaureate Core.

Potential Benefits

- Establish clearer, more uniform curriculum.
Create means of managing the newly aligned curriculum.
Maintain ongoing awareness of the importance of writing (i.e. build a *culture of writing*).
Improve students’ written communication skills and their success as graduates.

**Summary of Recommendations**

Based on the needs outlined above, the committee recommends focusing improvement efforts on four general areas:
- Faculty, Student, and University Involvement
- Clarity of Expectations
- Quality of Assignments
- Effective Evaluation of Student Work

I. Faculty, Student, and University Involvement

Develop a “culture of writing” at OSU by:
1. Providing students with clear guidelines, sufficient practice, and adequate resources.
2. Communicating clear expectations so that faculty can develop quality assignments.
3. Demonstrating administrative commitment through public announcements about the importance of writing and through allotting resources to writing initiatives.

II. Clarity of Expectations

1. Update Synthesis requirements: minimum word count, required revision, class cap.
   - Include writing in new Synthesis course assessment.
   - Communicate Synthesis requirements to faculty.
2. Update Writing II curriculum to ensure uniform outcomes and curriculum.
   - Provide advisors with a means of guided students into appropriate WR II courses.
3. Establish a Writing Advocate model in order to provide faculty leadership related to writing in each academic unit.

III. Quality of Assignments

1. Require writing assignments of adequate length.
   - Create a minimum word count for Synthesis courses.
   - Create a reasonable cap for Synthesis courses, such that writing can be taught.
2. Provide faculty development in order to ensure that assignments use the writing process. Possible models include Faculty Writing Advocates, new faculty mentoring, faculty pairs, and departmental professional development.
   - Writing process assignments should include drafting, feedback, and revision.

IV. Effective Evaluation of Student Work
1. Improve coordination between writing classes and DAS in order to support students.
2. Pilot a “stretch class” model in order to better support students who struggle with writing.
3. Create a database of students support resources related to writing.
4. Add an “Information Literacy” course to the Baccalaureate Core.
5. Develop departmental rubrics (in additional to existing departmental writing handbooks).