Writing Liaison Committee Meeting

September 20, 2010 3-4

In attendance: Marcus Jaiclin, George Layng, Sonya Lawson, Marsha Marotta, Holly Noun, Nora Padykula, Chalet Seidel, Catherine Savini, Joe Shinn

Old Business:

- The committee voted to send the 2009-2010 Annual Report with one modification (asses to assess)

New Business:

- The committee discussed the following in relation to a possible WI course requirement:
  Catherine Savini explained the models for implementing WI courses: invite an expert in to conduct a 2-day workshop, faculty arrive with their writing assignments, the workshop focuses on assignment design, writing to learn, providing effective and efficient feedback, faculty who participate receive a stipend. Another model pairs faculty members with writing fellows.
- The committee also needs keep in mind the distinction between writing in the disciplines (learning to write in a specific discipline) and writing to learn (using writing to understand and apply concepts, using writing to digest reading assignments, using writing to think). Another distinction worth keeping in mind is the one between academic writing (which is either in a specific discipline or writing-to-learn assignments) and professional writing (the writing students will have to do in the world beyond the academy).
- The committee wrestled with the following questions regarding a WI-course and our immediate plan of action:
  - Should we pilot it or institutionalize it?
    - Drawbacks to institutionalizing it include: training a large number of faculty at once, the risk of forcing WI courses on departments rather than presenting it as an honor or an opportunity.
  - Should faculty be paired with “writing fellows.”
  - Which courses should be WI? Keeping in mind the “gap” that Holly Noun noted; between first year and upper-division courses students don’t have the opportunity to practice writing.
    - We discussed piloting WI courses in the Core. By requiring/piloting WI in the Core, we help fill the gap.
    - Complication: All changes to the core must go through governance [even if it’s the same course and course number just with a W next to it?]
  - How many WI courses do we need to institutionalize a requirement?
  - If we pilot WI courses, will students enroll if it’s not a requirement?
    - Consensus is that students will be attracted to smaller class sizes, but there’s concern that proficient writers will self-select for these course, and this will not provide us with an accurate assessment tool.
  - What incentives will we provide for professors to teach WI courses?
    - It was agreed the WI courses should be capped at a smaller size. But, there is concern over how to manage smaller class sizes; who will teach the extra classes?
Marsha pointed out that WSU does not have the funds to pay faculty members interested in teaching WI courses a stipend. It was discussed that many faculty members will also want to teach WI courses because it will enhance their promotional materials and/or because they are already teaching classes that are writing heavy.

- Sonya Lawson suggested that we take advantage of the upcoming NEASC review. (Sonya’s department recently discussed how the writing their students are doing meets the department’s stated outcomes.) Each department is required to conduct a self-study. We can offer to help departments gather the kind of data they need for NEASC.
- Members WLC can attend a chairs meeting to discuss the role of student writing in assessment.

Action items:

Catherine Savini will set up a meeting with Lisa Plantefaber to determine how the WLC can use writing to help departments meet the NEASC standards.

Catherine Savini will set up an appointment with Assessment committee to determine what they have accomplished thus far and what their agenda is in relation to NEASC.

Marsha Marotta will find us a student representative.

Next Meeting:

Monday, October 25, 3-4.

Respectfully Submitted by Catherine Savini