

THE WAC PROGRAM

The University of Richmond's Writing Across the Curriculum Program was founded in 1991 in response to growing awareness that student writing skills relate closely to student learning.

The WAC Program recognizes that strong writing skills are vital, if not essential, to every academic discipline and employment market. The program recognizes that the writing process can be a *means*, as well as a *measure*, of learning. The program personnel also acknowledge the practical difficulties of teaching and offer ways to expand student learning through writing without increasing the time and effort faculty must spend grading.

The WAC Program seeks to benefit both teachers and students through a variety of training, assistance, and experience. Chief among these, the Writing Fellows Program.

THE WRITING FELLOWS

PROFESSOR

STUDENTS

WRITING FELLOWS

Writing Fellows are undergraduate students who have completed a course in composition theory and pedagogy and an internship in the University's [Writing Center](#). They are hired and supervised by the WAC staff. Normally, two Writing Fellows will be assigned to work with a specific course and section.

The fellows will meet with you to discuss your aims in writing assignments, will receive rough drafts of those assignments from your students, and will respond to those drafts in written comments and through conferences. Writing Fellows focus on issues of logic, development, and organization. They neither proofread, revise, nor grade drafts.

TEACHING IN WAC

The Writing Fellows Program provides faculty with training in write-to-learn activities and current composition pedagogy. In two orientation sessions, WAC staff provide assistance in reconsidering syllabi and assignments. Writing assignments might be revised to more effectively measure student comprehension, more effectively use your time, and take full advantage of the opportunities provided by Writing Fellows.

A "1-big-paper" humanities course might be revised to include short writing assignments during the semester, as well one or two larger comprehensive essays. Shorter writing assignments allow you to keep tabs on comprehension without being swamped with paper while also allowing students to wrestle with issues of compression and concision. When practicing these skills in longer essays, the students often develop more sophisticated treatment of their material.

In a science course in which writing may have been assessed primarily in terms of content, the intervention of trained writing fellows might add a consciousness of the historical and necessary conventions of writing in that discipline.

ASSESSMENT

The WAC Program has conducted three assessments of the Writing Fellows Program based upon surveys collected from participating faculty, students, and Writing Fellows.

*Faculty report receiving better, more developed writing in their classes. They find that improved writing skills have been paralleled by more sophisticated class discussion and comprehension.

*Students report making substantive revisions as a result of conferences with Writing Fellows, receiving better grades, and gaining a better mastery of both writing skills and course content.

*Writing Fellows report positive results from involvement in the Program. Fellows receive a small stipend for each semester of work. In addition, they gain valuable and unique experience in writing instruction. Writing Fellows who have graduated have experienced consistent success entering graduate programs and the job market. Those fellows who have gone on to graduate study have often been awarded first-year teaching assistantships.

Faculty orientation to the WAC Program is conducted on an on-going basis, usually the semester before a faculty member is assigned writing fellows. Nominations for writing fellows are accepted in the fall or spring semesters; students are then invited to apply to the program in the spring. Successful applicants enroll in English 376 ([Composition Theory & Pedagogy](#)) the following fall, and can begin following upon completion of this course.

If you would like further information about the WAC Program and using Writing Fellows in your classes, or if you would like to nominate a student to the Writing Fellows program, please contact Joe Essid, WAC Program Director (x8935, jessid@richmond.edu), or visit the WAC website (<http://www.richmond.edu/~wac/>).



Teaching in the WAC Program

