

Self-Study Spring 2015
Department of Writing and Rhetoric
University of Rhode Island

I. Executive Summary

Our unit excels in the area of Institutional Effectiveness but needs to have more continuing faculty who contribute to our research and service missions. A high dependence on part-time instructors and one-year lecturers limits our ability to adjust our curriculum in response to emerging theories or technologies important to educating professional writers. While our BA is healthy with 87 majors, our curriculum needs to be revised and updated, and we need a new, sustainable plan for contributing to graduate education at URI.

As the fifth annual Central Data Report establishes (Appendix A), WRT makes enormous contributions to the General Education program at URI. Our courses are built from a foundation in rhetoric and the liberal arts—with an emphasis on good citizenship—and extend into critical uses of tools and technology. With plenty of drafting, reviewing, and revising, our small-class workshops are among the most important courses any URI student can take. Our faculty find it difficult, with our allotted resources, to achieve the following three areas of the College's Strategic Plan: *to enhance academic quality and value; to prepare students for a changing world; and to develop research and innovation.*

As we consider what manageable contributions we can continue to make to Gen Ed and to public engagement and outreach, we want to re-balance our priorities so that we can enhance our research profile and revise our undergraduate major.

II. Brief History of Department, including Mission Statement

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric (WRT) at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has a national reputation as a leader in rhetorical education, with one of the first independent writing departments and undergraduate B.A. degrees in the country. The program that would become the Department of Writing and Rhetoric has existed in various forms since the 1970s, first as an independent program called SCRATCH, and then as the College Writing Program (CWP) within the Department of English (1979). The Board of Governors for Higher Education approved proposals to make the CWP an independent academic unit (2003) and a freestanding department (2010). The undergraduate major in Writing and Rhetoric has existed since 2006, graduating its first three B.A.'s in 2008. In 2011, the Department became one of six academic units in the Harrington School of Communication and Media.

Currently, the Department offers both a B.A. and a minor in Writing and Rhetoric, with **83 majors** as of Fall 2014 and a **17:1 student-to-faculty ratio**. For the FY 2014-2015, the Department employed **6.66 tenure-track faculty, two continuing lecturers, and one temporary lecturer**. Beyond the major and minor, the department serves **nearly 2,000 students** each semester in ten different General Education courses and **over 300 students** per semester

through the Writing Center for one-on-one tutoring. Writing and Rhetoric also helps deliver an Early Credit High School Program (ECHSP), through which **over 500 Rhode Island high school students** each academic year earn college credit for a first-year composition course. At the graduate level, the Department has delivered a specialization in rhetoric and composition for students in the English MA and PhD programs since 1983.

Faculty in WRT are expected to teach nine credits a semester or the equivalent and to meet all departmental and institutional expectations for teaching, research, and service.

Data from the Provost’s website offer the following information for our department:

	WRT
Credit hours 2013-2014	11,738
Student faculty ratio 2013-2014	17.3
Credit Hours/FTE taught by tenure-track faculty	247 (15% of credit hours)
Credit Hours/FTE taught by lecturers	313 (13% of credit hours)
Credit Hours/FTE taught by part time faculty	543 (49% of credit hours)
Credit Hours/FTE taught by TAs	546 (23% of credit hours)

As of Spring 2015, the department has two full professors, two associate professors, two and a half assistant professors, and three lecturers. In Fall 2012, WRT had:

- 87 majors
- 2158 students enrolled in 92 sections of the department’s general education courses
- 252 students enrolled in 12 sections of Business Writing (WRT 227), which serves students enrolled in the College of Business
- 378 Rhode Island High schools in the department’s Early Credit High School Program
- 31 M.A. and Ph.D. students enrolled in seminars and supervised research credits
- 6 students working toward the graduate specialization in rhetoric and composition studies.

Writing and Rhetoric Mission Statement

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric embraces the collective goals of the University of Rhode Island and the College of Arts and Sciences, and endeavors to fulfill our function within their missions with the highest degree of:

- Rigor in the pursuit of teaching and scholarly excellence
- Responsible collaboration and appropriate interdisciplinary partnerships
- Respectful outreach with the university and extramural communities
- Responsiveness to changing conditions, and
- Programmatic and personal integrity.

Rhetoric’s crucial role in the construction, maintenance, and on-going revision of public life has been recognized for centuries. As part of the Liberal Arts and General Education Core, rhetoric and composition can guide students in recognizing, valuing, and understanding difference at the same time they work toward developing and expressing their own critical

stances. As an academic discipline, rhetoric and composition guides undergraduate and graduate students in understanding the complexities of language use. As a public practice, rhetoric and composition can be an empowering component of the university's and college's outreach arm. WRT faculty wholeheartedly strive to develop each of these programmatic components in response to ever-changing university, disciplinary, and societal conditions.

III. Brief summary of prior program review and actions

As a relatively new independent department, WRT is conducting its first Academic Program Review. (Please see Appendix B for the 2002 Self-Study we produced as part of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Relationship between English and Writing). We strive to meet the goals set out in the College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, 2011-2015: to enhance academic quality and value; to prepare students for a changing world; to develop research and innovation; to prepare global citizens; to ensure an equitable and inclusive campus; and to enhance institutional effectiveness.

IV. Brief description and summary of current state of degree programs (graduate, professional and undergraduate as appropriate)

Undergraduate Degree

Our BA in Writing and Rhetoric emphasizes rhetorical concepts, theories, and practices that offer a wide range of classroom and co-curricular opportunities. Learning outcomes for our major address rhetorical knowledge; process and collaboration; craft, genre and editing; textual production and delivery; and reflective learning. (Please see Appendix C for WRT's 2011-2012 report on Undergraduate Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.)

The 30-credit major requires five core courses ranging from the 200 to 400 levels as follows:

- WRT 201: Writing Argumentative and Persuasive Texts
- WRT 235: Writing in Electronic Environments
- WRT 360: Composing Processes and Canons of Rhetoric
- WRT 490: Writing and Rhetoric
- WRT 495: Capstone in Electronic Portfolios

Of the 30 total credits, at least 15 credits must be completed from writing courses at the 300-level or above. The major culminates in WRT 495, a capstone course in which students design a digital or electronic portfolio for academic and non-academic audiences.

WRT courses emphasize a rhetorical approach to writing in which students consider audience/readers, purpose, and context at all stages of the drafting process. Students produce writing for a variety of audiences, purposes, and genres. Additionally, many WRT courses are graded on a portfolio system that emphasizes choice, variety, and reflection. Students in all

courses are required to engage in multiple drafting and peer reviewing—a process that emphasizes revision and influences students to become more autonomous learners.

Our WRT Production Lab, housed in Roosevelt 318-320, provides our majors as well as Gen Ed students and other non-majors with opportunities for out-of-class technology. The Lab offers a number of resources and serves approximately 300 students who enroll in lab-fee courses each semester; additionally, the lab hosts instruction for the major's capstone ePortfolio course. The WRT Production Lab holds 18 iMac and PC desktops that may be used on-site. These desktops are installed with a variety of software tools including Final Cut Pro, Adobe Creative Suite, and Camtasia. For independent projects, students may also check out equipment including laptop computers, iPads, digital cameras, video, and voice recorders. Finally, the lab accommodates instructors looking for assistance in course site building and enhancing electronic resources, and provides one-on-one training sessions.

Graduate specialization (for MA and PhD in English)

Since 1983, The Department of Writing and Rhetoric (or its programmatic antecedent) has delivered graduate courses and mentoring for a specialization in rhetoric and composition within the English Department's M.A. and Ph.D. programs. The 2014-2015 catalog currently lists a total of six graduate courses for students in the specialization of rhetoric and composition studies.

Because it is not **our** degree program, our significant energies to deliver the WRT graduate specialization are invisible within the university's accounting systems (e.g., the Central Data Report), and, 11 years after the separation from English, our participation in the English M.A. and Ph.D. programs is no longer viable. Thus, the department recently voted, after much discussion, to cease admissions to the specialization, effective October 1, 2014. We are committed to providing courses and support for current graduate students and are in the process of discussing whether/how/when to propose a new graduate degree program. (See more details in "Service to Graduate Education" below.)

V. Brief description and summary of current research programs

Our faculty publish widely and consistently in prominent journals in rhetoric and composition, journals in related fields, journals in other fields, and edited collections. In the biennial Chair Survey of the Academic Program Review (reported April 2014 for the academic year 2012-2013), our faculty published six articles in peer-reviewed journals and gave 21 peer-reviewed presentations at national and international conferences. Over the past six years (2009-2014), our faculty published 23 peer-reviewed articles and 4 book chapters in edited collections and delivered 36 peer-reviewed presentations at national and international conferences.

Our faculty present regularly at CCCC and RSA, as well as at other conferences such as NCA, the Thomas R. Watson Conference, Feminisms and Rhetorics, and Computers and Writing. Faculty research interests vary widely and range from writing as a mind-body practice to computational rhetoric to place-based writing.

Dr. Bob Schwegler came to URI in 1978 as a specialist in composition theory, research, and pedagogy. His research areas include research on error in student writing, archival research and maintenance (as head of the department sponsored National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric), social dimensions of writing, and composition pedagogy, and eye-tracker research on writing. He is the coeditor of *Coming of Age: The Advanced Curriculum in Writing* (Boynton/Cook, 2000) (Winner, Best Book Award, National Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2001). He is also the author or co-author of eight textbooks in rhetoric and composition including *Patterns of Exposition* (12 editions), and *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers* (6 editions). His articles have appeared in *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, and *Writing Program Administration*, among others.

Dr. Nedra Reynolds came to URI in 1991 as a specialist in discourse theory. Her research areas include feminist rhetorical theory, composition theory and pedagogy, writing portfolios, and online peer review. She is the author of *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) as well as *Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students*, and *Portfolio Teaching: A Guide for Instructors* (3rd editions, Bedford St. Martin's 2014). She co-edits *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* (5th, 6th, and 7th editions). Her articles have appeared in *Rhetoric Review*, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Writing Program Administration*, *Pedagogy* and a number of edited collections.

Dr. Jeremiah Dyehouse joined Writing and Rhetoric in 2004. His research interests include writing theory, American Pragmatism, the writing major, and the rhetoric of technology. He is currently at work on a book-length study of the American Pragmatist John Dewey's thinking about writing. A regular presenter at the Conference on College Composition and Communication and at Rhetoric Society of America meetings, his articles have appeared in *College English*, *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*.

Dr. Kim Hensley Owens joined Writing and Rhetoric in 2007. Her research interests include rhetorics of health and medicine, intersections and interactions of bodies with technology, pedagogy, and bicultural literacies. Southern Illinois University Press will publish her book, *Writing Childbirth: Rhetorical Agency in Labor and Online* in 2015. Hensley Owens' *Written Communication* article, "Confronting Rhetorical Disability: A Critical Analysis of Women's Birth Plans" won the SAGE 2010 Editor's Choice New Scholar Award. She has also published articles in *Computers and Composition*, *Enculturation*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Pedagogy*, *JAC*, and *Composition Studies*, as well as chapters in edited collections.

Dr. Caroline Gottschalk Druschke joined the department in 2011 as an Assistant Professor in Community-Based and Interdisciplinary Writing, and began a joint appointment in the Department of Natural Resources Science in fall 2014. Her research and teaching interests span community-based writing, scientific writing, environmental communication, and public engagement with natural resources management. Druschke received a research fellowship from the US Environmental Protection Agency to study restoration manager perspectives on public engagement, and was recently awarded \$888,740 in funding from the National Park Service to work on communication research and outreach materials. She submitted \$10.6M in grant

proposals in the last year (all under review), and has 13 career publications (in journals such as *Reflections: A Journal of Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing, and Service Learning, Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture, and Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*), and 31 national and international presentations since joining the URI faculty.

Dr. Lehua Ledbetter joined the Department in 2014 as an Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric (Multimodal Composing). Ledbetter completed her PhD in Rhetoric and Writing with a concentration in Digital Rhetoric and Professional Writing at Michigan State University in May of 2014. Her areas of interest include professional and technical writing, feminist rhetorics, cultural rhetorics, digital identity, and women's entrepreneurial activities. Ledbetter regularly presents her work at the CCCC, Computers and Writing, and Rhetoric Society of America conferences. Her collaborative book chapter in the edited collection *Cultures of Copyright* was released December 2014. She has a chapter forthcoming in the edited collection *Literacy in Practice*. At Michigan State, she published a coauthored article in *Currents in Teaching and Learning*.

Dr. Ryan Omizo joined the Department in 2014 as an Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric (Multimodal Composing). Omizo completed his PhD in English with an emphasis on Rhetoric, Composition, and New Media from The Ohio State University in 2012. His research areas include professional and technical communication, digital rhetorics, and computational approaches to rhetorical analysis. In 2015, he will hold two workshops on computational research methodologies at ATTW 2015 and the 2015 RSA Summer Institute series with William Hart-Davidson of Michigan State University. His chapter in the collection *The Rhetoric of Participation* is forthcoming from the Computers and Composition Digital Press. At Ohio State, Omizo published an article for a special issue of *Enculturation* focused on online video.

For current *curriculum vitae* for all of our continuing faculty members, including Genoa Shepley, Helen O'Grady, and Heather Johnson, see Appendix D.

VI. Brief description and summary of current service and public engagement programs

Our commitment to service within the university and the outside community is extensive. In addition to offering an innovative B.A. in Writing and Rhetoric that prepares students to write professionally, WRT also delivers writing instruction in the form of ten different General Education courses (for ECw). In fact, much of our curriculum has been developed for the needs (including accreditation) of other colleges or departments, with the result that Writing and Rhetoric is often recognized and characterized as a service department. Even though a number of other departments benefit from our efforts, many of them remain undocumented in the Central Data Reports or by other measures. This section provides an overview of the students and degree programs to which WRT contributes directly.

Service to General Education

We offer ten different courses for General Education (ECw) as well as two Honors sections of first-year WRT courses. Of those ten General Education courses, one course is required specifically for majors in the College of Business (WRT 227). Figure 1 shows the department's

General Education course enrollments by seats for Fall 2012 (our example semester for this self-study). WRT 104 is Writing to Inform and Explain; WRT 106 is Introduction to Research Writing; WRT 201 is Writing Argumentative and Persuasive Texts; WRT 227 is Business Communications; WRT 235 is Writing in Electronic Environments; WRT 302 is Writing Culture; WRT 303 is Public Writing; WRT 304 is Writing for Community Service; WRT 305 is Travel Writing, and WRT 333 is Scientific and Technical Writing.

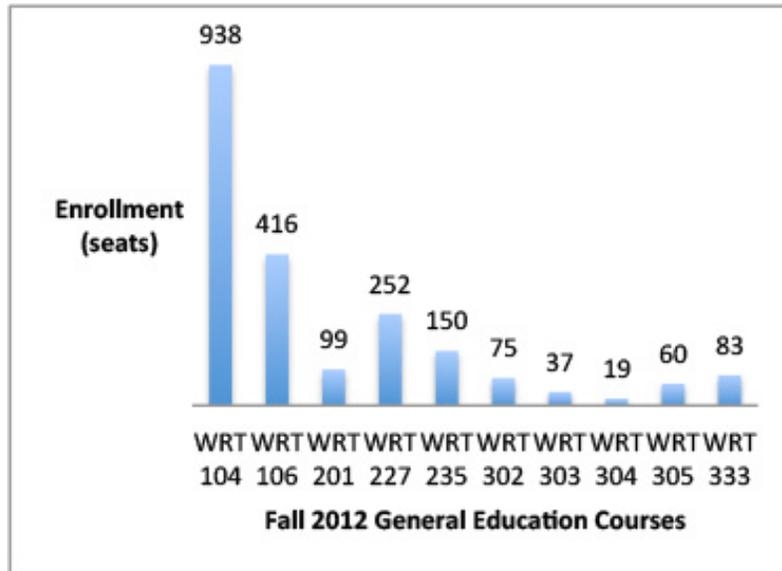


Figure 1. Fall 2012 Enrollments (seats) in General Education Courses.

The vast majority of students enrolled in WRT courses are enrolled in them for General Education credit (for Fall 2012, 97% of students enrolled in all WRT courses were taking Gen Ed courses).

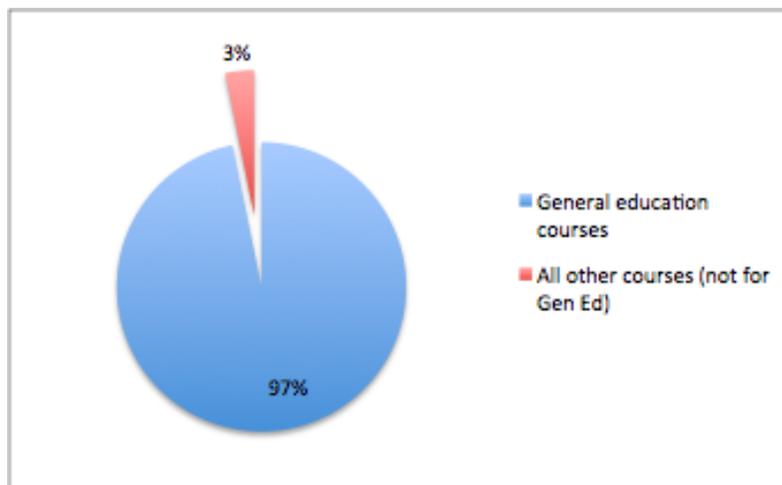


Figure 2. Fall 2012 Enrollments, General Education courses versus all other courses (not for Gen Ed)

Service to Other Majors and Writers Across the Curriculum

As Figure 2 illustrates, since the inception of the College Writing Program in 1979, writing faculty have been asked to develop and deliver courses that serve other colleges and departments at URI. The department offers WRT 100 for the Talent Development program while WRT 331 is required for all Public Relations majors, and WRT 306 was designed as an elective for students in the health fields. In fact, several undergraduate programs at URI require or recommend our courses: Communicative Disorders and Computer Science require WRT 201. WRT 333 is a requirement for the B.S. in Marine Affairs as well as for the Organizational Analysis Option of the B.S. in Sociology. In addition, WRT 333 is the required General Education (ECw) course for Civil Engineering. WRT 333 is also a recommended elective for the Computer Science B.A., for the Psychology B.S., and for the Public Relations B.A. Many of these courses were approved specially for General Education credit—so that majors could meet their Gen Ed requirement in a course that is focused on the special needs of these colleges and departments. The most notable example of this service is WRT 227, Business Communications (10.1 sections per semester based on course offerings from Fall 2010 to Spring 2015).

For English Education students WRT faculty teach WRT 435/ EDC 435, The Teaching of Composition, for approximately 22 K-12 preservice teachers each fall. This is the only course those teachers take in the teaching of writing, and our only chance to affect how the teaching of writing at the secondary level, in particular, might articulate with and draw from the field of rhetoric and composition.

Because our unit values teaching and has such dedicated and innovative teachers, the URI Honors Program has depended heavily on WRT continuing faculty (tenure-track and lecturers) to deliver Honors' courses. Each fall semester since 2003, one section per year of HPR 112 (Honors Study in Writing) has been taught by WRT faculty, including Heather Johnson, Libby Miles, and Kim Hensley Owens. Our faculty also teach HPR 326 (Honors Tutorial in Writing).

Part of our service to all students at URI includes the Writing Center. At any stage of the writing process, students can visit the campus Writing Center in Roosevelt 408. Originally part of the English department before the 2003 separation, the URI Writing Center has a long history of providing one-on-one tutorials with graduate teaching assistants and trained undergraduate tutors. In 2013-14 the Writing Center saw a total of 732 unique students for a total of 1,267 appointments (see Appendix E for Writing Center data).

For several years, our Writing Center was directed by a full-time faculty member for a one-course equivalent. However, demands on faculty time (first-year writing, advising, assessment, our graduate specialization) and the dean's increased scrutiny of course releases made it difficult to justify pulling full-time faculty out of upper-division and graduate courses to oversee the Writing Center, a job that is being done at many universities with a full-time staff director. As we wait for the second consecutive academic year for a full-time staff director position to be approved, the Writing Center is being directed by a graduate TA. This situation is untenable because our graduate students do not have the institutional authority to work directly with faculty, nor can they access or allocate funds or make other professional or administrative decisions. To resolve this problem, WRT has recently collaborated with University College and the Academic Enhancement Center to propose a Professional Staff Director position for the Writing Center (see Appendix E). This proposal is designed to shift more responsibility and

resources for supporting all writers at URI away from a small department, which simply lacks the personnel to give this valuable resource its full attention (for more information and a comparison to other Writing Centers, see Appendix E).

We also serve writers at URI in the form of workshops planned and delivered by WRT faculty. In Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, Druschke co-designed and co-taught two day-long scientific writing workshops for graduate students in the College of Environmental and Life Sciences. In 2010-2011, Dyehouse co-led a Graduate Student Writing Seminar Series for students in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences. Even without a formal Writing Across the Curriculum initiative, our faculty, lecturers, and graduate students have volunteered to do countless workshops and presentations for programs or departments who request our assistance with writing instruction.

Service to Graduate Education

For over 30 years, WRT faculty have offered a significant service—mostly unrecognized by institutional measures—to the English MA and PhD programs. At the request of the Graduate School, a specialization in Rhetoric and Composition studies was formalized in 1983 as part of the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English. Although our work as Major Professors and graduate committee members does not show up in the Central Data Report for WRT, our faculty have devoted huge blocks of time to teaching, mentoring, and training English graduate students. For example, from 2009-10 to 2014-15, our graduate faculty have directed **561 credits of WRT 699**, Doctoral Dissertation Research. Also, since 2009, we have **graduated 15 students** with degrees in English but with coursework and dissertations in rhetoric and composition studies. Four more students will defend Spring 2015, and an additional nine are finishing coursework or are engaged in the exam and dissertation process.

Connected to this service to the graduate specialization, WRT has offered for 30 years a zero-credit seminar for all of the Graduate Teaching Assistants in English (in both the literature and writing specializations). WRT 999 (Methods of Teaching Writing) begins with a 3-day workshop the week before classes begin and continues with weekly meetings throughout the semester as well as class visits by the mentor/faculty member.

Our recent Ph.D. graduates from within the Rhetoric and Composition specialization have accepted tenure-track positions at, for example, California Polytechnic State University, Colorado State University, California State University at Northridge, James Madison University, University of Wisconsin-Superior, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Worcester State University. Despite these successes with Ph.D. placements, however, trying to deliver a degree program that belongs to another department has been challenging. WRT's graduate faculty is not large enough to support an independent graduate program, nor can we expect it to become large enough. Our requests for more staff support and two additional TA lines in order to build the specialization were not met, and with consistently low enrollments in our WRT graduate courses (see Figure 3), WRT faculty have had to concede that admitting only one or two new students a year with funding is an unsustainable model.

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S	F	S		
WRT 512	10		6				6		9		5		10		4		9		7					4		
WRT 524			6						9							9						12				5
WRT 645		10		9		4		7		4		6				6		10		10	9	7			4	
WRT 647						4					8				5				7					7		

Figure 3. WRT Graduate Enrollments, 2003-2014 (blank spaces mean the course was not offered)

In addition, with the departure of Associate Professor Libby Miles, who had served as our Director of Graduate Studies and had worked with more doctoral students in recent years than any other member of the URI humanities faculty, the workload for remaining graduate faculty has increased substantially. With increasing expectations for faculty generally—assessment, outreach, service, and grant-supported research—we suspect that it will be best for us to serve (more effectively and energetically) our undergraduate majors and General Education students. Effective October 1, 2014, we have ceased to admit any new students to our specialization. Those who apply to URI for the specialization for 2015-16 are being informed that the specialization is no longer available. We have pledged to finish the degree programs that our current students have started, and we have asked English and the Graduate School to honor all TA lines previously committed to these students.

Public Engagement or Outreach Programs

WRT offers innovative 300-level courses through public engagement and outreach programs, and we help to deliver a Dual Credit Enrollment Program at over 30 area high schools. As part of our commitment to community service learning, we deliver two WRT courses directly targeted to that goal: WRT 304, Writing for Community Service and WRT 303, Public Writing. Our recently approved WRT 388X, Proposal Writing for Clients, offers students a “real-world” experience of responding to a Request for Proposals with the guidance of a writing instructor as well as a representative from the client (for example, GTECH in Providence).

Our course in Writing for Community Service has partnered with 30 non-profit organizations over the last five years. WRT 304 combines classroom-based lessons in rhetoric and writing with 30 hours of community-based work with a non-profit organization and culminates in a writing project that fills an identified need for each student’s community partner. Student projects have included, among other things, press releases for a popular farmers’ market, a resident handbook for a community women’s shelter, recruitment fliers for a tutoring program, and a redesigned web site for an urban soup kitchen.

WRT classes have also engaged with community partners through independent projects in WRT 385, Field Experience in Writing Rhode Island, and WRT 391, Independent Study. WRT 385 students have worked on proposal writing with a solar energy firm and prepared outreach materials for the National Park Service. A student in 391 is working in Spring 2015 to conduct archival research and write documentary narrative about historical mill villages in New England for NOAA's Restoration Center.

As a contribution to college preparation for all Rhode Island high school students, the department has offered an Early Credit High School Program since the 1970s—a Dual Enrollment program with credit transferable to many institutions. Seniors in over 25 high schools across Rhode Island take WRT 104, taught by specially trained high school English teachers and delivered in the high school setting within the regular school day. Upon completion, students receive a URI transcript. Teachers receive a one-on-one orientation to the course and training in specific classroom strategies. (Note: In 2013, the College of Arts and Sciences transferred a full-time lecturer position for a coordinator of the ECHSP to the College of Continuing Education.)

Service to the University

In addition to extensive teaching and service demands within our department, our faculty have been incredibly good citizens of the university, with several taking on demanding, time-intensive leadership roles. For example, in the past six years:

- Kim Hensley Owens has chaired the Academic Standards and Calendar Committee since 2012, shepherding major proposals like the J-Term and a new separate calendar for fully-online accelerated programs;
- Nedra Reynolds serves as Department Chair as well as Chair of the Teaching Effectiveness Committee while serving on the search committees for new assistant directors of the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and the HSCM Steering Committee; she has also served on as Acting Assistant Director of the Instructional Development Program;
- Libby Miles served as Writing Center director for 8 years and as department chair for 3; she served on the Graduate Council as well as the Learning Outcomes Oversight Committee; she led several assessment initiatives and trainings, and co-authored the new General Education Writing Rubric with graduate students.
- Jeremiah Dyehouse served as the Writing Center director for 8 years; he also served as interim Director of Graduate Studies in Rhetoric and Composition and as a member of the Faculty Senate's Library Committee.
- Dyehouse, Reynolds, Schwegler, and Miles have all served as Faculty Senators.
- Caroline Gottschalk Druschke has served on university search committees and university-wide committees for the creation of a B.A. in Environmental Studies and a M.A. in Environmental Communication.
- Bob Schwegler has served as Director of Graduate Studies in Rhetoric and Composition and on the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee.

VII. Institutional Effectiveness

In fiscal year 2013, the total personnel expenses of the Department of Writing and Rhetoric were \$1,185,275. According to data from the URI Office of the Provost, the department taught 11,425 credit hours during the corresponding academic year. Using the formula employed by the University in its “unit performance matrix” (i.e. personnel costs/credit hours), the cost per credit hour for the department was, therefore, \$103.74. According to the most recent data available (AY 10-11), the cost per credit hour for A&S was \$220.00, over twice the WRT cost. A visual representation of this relationship is provided in Figure 4.

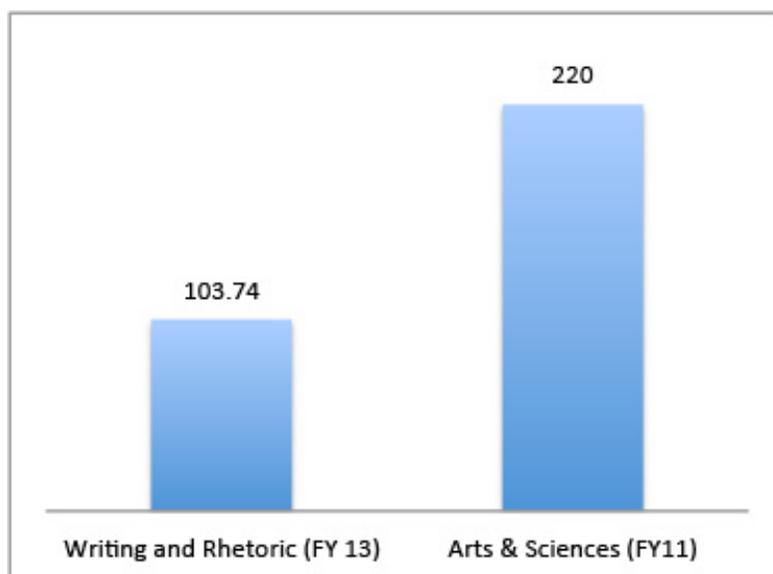


Figure 4. Cost Per Credit Hour, Writing and Rhetoric Department (2013) compared to cost per credit hour for College of Arts and Sciences (2011).

Figure 4 may not provide an ideal comparison, but it appears that the Department of Writing and Rhetoric is a highly efficient unit with costs per credit hour well below the college norm—a result of depending heavily on low-paid part-time instructors. A lack of resources to pay part-timers for professional development is among the reasons for high turnover among part-time instructors and puts more of a burden on faculty responsible for interviewing, hiring, training, and mentoring new hires. Figure 5 depicts a disturbing upward trend between 2008 and 2012 in the number of upper division credit hours in Writing and Rhetoric that have been taught by part-time faculty who are, quite often, not specialists in our field.

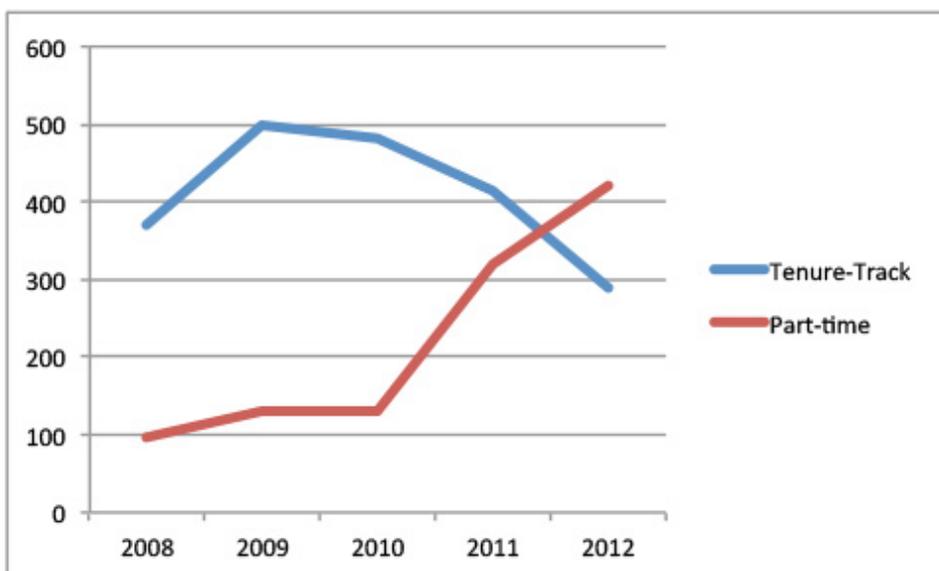


Figure 5. Upper Division Credit Hours Taught by Tenure-track and Part-time Faculty

VIII. Future Plans

Hire more continuing faculty

The results of this Self-Study highlight the institutional effectiveness of WRT; however, our low cost to the university is achieved by a high dependence on part-time instructors, and this model has become fraught with problems. First, our learning outcome assessments have demonstrated that relying so heavily on part-time instructors negatively affects student learning. Second, many of these part-time instructors are not qualified to teach above the 100-level, which does not match up with the growing demand for more advanced and more specialized writing courses. As we continue to develop new courses along the lines of WRT 332 (Technical Writing); WRT 334X (Science Writing); and WRT 388X (Proposal Writing for Clients), we have a critical need for faculty with PhDs and/or training in rhetoric and composition. Finally, given the steady increase in service and assessment work (like this self-study, for example) required by the university, the state, and/or accreditation agencies, continuing faculty are simply not replaceable by part-timers. In the past several years at URI, the service expectations for some faculty have exploded, as numerous new committees have been established.¹

In the main, tenure-track faculty perform this service work, yet our department has lost

¹ An incomplete list includes the Joint Committee on Online and Distance Learning; the Joint Classroom Steering Committee; the UCGE Subcommittee on Assessment of General Education; the Academic Program Review Committee; the Joint Committee on Academic Planning; the Learning Outcomes Assessment Oversight Committee; the URI Work-Life Committee; the Administration and Management Review Committee; the Global Education Steering Committee; the Committee on Reshaping Health Education, Research & Outreach at URI; and the Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force. This list does not include, of course, all of the college and department assessment committees as well as numerous search committees for faculty and administrators.

continuing faculty in recent years. In Fall 2007, WRT had 9 tenure-track faculty. In 2008, Sue Vaughn retired, and in 2010, Celest Martin, a tenured faculty member, left the department. In 2011, Linda Shamoon retired. In the fall of 2011, Caroline Gottschalk Druschke joined the department as a new assistant professor, and the department then had 7 tenure-track faculty. In 2013, Mike Pennell, a tenured associate professor, left the university. In 2014, Caroline Gottschalk Druschke began splitting her appointment between Writing and Rhetoric and Natural Resources Science. In 2014, Ryan Omizo and Lehua Ledbetter joined the faculty, bringing our tenure-track faculty numbers up to 7.5, but in January 2015, associate professor Libby Miles left the university, dropping that number back down to 6.5. Libby’s departure, to accept a position directing a new writing program at the University of Vermont, highlights a demand across the country for experienced writing program administrators. As more institutions increase their writing requirements or do more to prepare college graduates as good writers, writing and rhetoric specialists are extraordinarily valuable.

Now, with only 6.5 tenure-track faculty members, we are significantly less well-positioned to meet the demands put on our department, particularly because three of our faculty are untenured assistants whose contributions to service are necessarily limited. At the same time, the 4 lecturer positions that College Writing Program was given in 2003-04 have been slipping away. This year, we have three lecturers, but one of them is one-year only, and we never know—until May—if our lecturers will be renewed, making Fall teaching assignments difficult.

Figure 6, which depicts FTE faculty between Fall 2008 and Fall 2013, tells a similar story with slightly different data points. Between Fall 2008 and Fall 2013, the department’s tenure track FTEs shrank from 9.00 to 7.00.

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
Tenure-track FTE	9.00	8.00	7.00	8.00	8.00	7.00
Lecturers FTE	2.00	3.00	4.00	6.00	4.00	5.00
Part-time Faculty FTE	13.38	11.00	12.67	9.25	12.67	12.75
Graduate Assistants FTE	2.75	4.50	3.00	5.25	3.50	3.50
Total FTE	27.13	26.50	26.67	28.5	28.17	28.25

Figure 6. Instructional Faculty FTE Fall 2008-Fall 2012

Produce more research

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric would welcome the opportunity to do fewer things better. In particular, department members plan to produce more research. More than in other disciplines, academic specialists in writing and rhetoric struggle to balance scholarly activity with teaching and administration, yet in writing and rhetoric, as in other disciplines, keeping active as scholars is critical to maintaining productivity in all professional areas.

In accounting for and analyzing our research productivity, junior faculty in WRT have produced more research than senior faculty. Because the burdens of university and departmental service have weighed more heavily on senior faculty, this should not be a surprise, especially when mentoring doctoral students and seeing their placement in tenure-track positions can detract from a faculty member's research productivity. (In our field, where grant-funded research is scarce, doctoral students need considerable coaching on projects that may or may not connect with faculty members' areas of expertise and typically do not contribute to faculty research profiles.)

We believe that URI boasts an especially talented and accomplished group of rhetoric and composition researchers in its tenure-track faculty members (based on our placement of graduate students, our range of publications, and our national reputation in the field). We are committed to improving our research and publication record going forward by:

- Not placing service ahead of research in our priorities
- Improving departmental research culture and
- Turning more conference papers into publications.

Learn more about our majors and revise our curriculum

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric is the “client” for Assistant Professor Hollie Smith’s PRS 441 course in Spring 2015, Public Relations Practices. Students will be researching *why* students choose WRT as a major, *when* they choose it, and *how* our department can be more responsive to students’ needs through curricular reform or other changes.

Responses to an anonymous survey of all faculty, conducted as part of this Self-Study process, showed strong agreement that we want to devote more time to curricular changes that would better meet the needs of our major and students across the university who need considerable practice in writing for different audiences and situations. Since the major was approved nearly ten years ago, we have not made any substantial changes to the requirements.

Reconsider where we belong

Faculty in Writing and Rhetoric have devoted considerable time and energy to the Harrington School of Communication and Media (HSCM), but our role in the Harrington School does not seem distinct or essential, and we have been frustrated by the extra layer of bureaucracy it has added to the regular business of running an efficient academic unit. Ten years after the proposal was first developed and three years after the first Founding Director was put in place, our department sees little progress on structural matters and remains unclear about the intellectual vision or purpose of the HSCM or its distinctive benefits to our unit. While we welcome opportunities to collaborate with other departments on course designs or research opportunities, it’s difficult to conclude that we are “better off” with the HSCM than we would be without it.

Deliberate whether (and how) to resume educating graduate students

Although our work with graduate students has never taken place in the context of our own graduate program, our faculty has had remarkable success in placing its PhD students in tenure-

track positions. We wonder: Should we resume graduate education? If so, how? And under what conditions?

Look forward

As a result of this Self Study process, Writing and Rhetoric faculty have reflected on all we've accomplished since the establishment of our BA. We have served the University with dedication and innovation: in Gen Ed, in Honors, in the major, and in the English graduate program. We look forward to a time when we can hire lecturers on multiple-year contracts and otherwise professionalize and support our teaching staff more responsibly. We hope that this report will encourage URI's administrators to recognize our value as researchers and our ability to help URI put *writing* at the center of *learning*.