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Writing Implementation Committee, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Writing committee minutes

9 October 2013

Present: Lynda Duke, Carole Myscofski, Emily Kelahan, Chris Sweet, Diego Mendez-Carbajo, Joel Haefner, Mary Ann Bushman

Convened: 4:04 p.m.

The committee briefly considered an application for a mini-grant to revise an assignment to integrate information literacy and writing, as per our Mellon grant guidelines. There was a discussion about flexibility in amounts paid to faculty members and librarians, with the consensus of the committee being to adhere to the published guidelines for the grant.

An extensive discussion of the data gathered from the last assessment of students papers (May 2013, of senior writing) ensued. Our initial reaction to the graphs derived from an Excel spreadsheet was disappointment; however, both Diego and Chris pointed out that the graphs were inconsistent and misleading. Diego suggested several analyses that would be more revealing, specifically a standard deviation analysis, comparing one paper in all dimensions, and regression analysis. He undertook to do these analyses (and, as of this writing, has indeed done so). Carole queried as to why the “Criteria Met” dimension was so high; others commented that that was a very specific dimension and so easy to score, that our students appear to be good at meeting the explicit expectations of the assignments, and that it spoke to the nature of the assignments themselves.

Mary Ann then broached the topic of other modes of assessment. Diego commented that the writing program scoring assessment is the longest-running assessment on campus, and a very successful model. We discussed the possibility of a portfolio system. Mary Ann reviewed an effort to establish formative portfolio assessment in the last decade; Joel described the Carleton portfolio system. Emily noted that portfolios are very inconsistent and that it is difficult to track a student’s trajectory with portfolios. She also suggested a possible link between academic advising and portfolio assessment. On a related note, Carole asked if our WAC model was gravitating towards senior seminars; Mary Ann responded that (given that 25% of our graduates are Business majors) most second WI courses are actually taken at the junior level.

The committee is close to finalizing the winners of the Best Gateway Essay contest; results should be out in the next week to 10 days.

Emily suggested a portfolio workshop.

Diego reminded the committee that we need to have a non-org to share the results of Mellon grants to departments to develop learning outcomes for writing and information literacy.

Adjourned 4:59 p.m.

Submitted by: J. Haefner