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Writing Implementation Committee, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Writing Committee Minutes 1.25.2012

Present: Mary Ann Bushman, Diego Mendez-Carabajo, Carmela Ferradans, Chris Sweet, Joel Haefner

Convened at: 4:05 p.m.

First agenda item was to discuss ways to spend the extended Mellon grant.

Mary Ann suggested stipends for departments to construct rubrics or learning outcomes statements for their majors, and, linked to this, stipends for assessing student writing within their majors.

Diego commented that Econ was assessing student papers in June, and asked whether grant money could be used for this.

A brief discussion of the Barbara Fister and Randy Helmsley workshops followed.

Diego suggested bringing in speakers for workshops with divisions.

Carmela said that the best discussions, she found, were with other IWU faculty during the workshops. She suggested one on one counseling for teachers of writing, and that future workshops be practical and hands-on.

Mary Ann wondered about bringing Chris Anson back.

Diego suggested a small conference with local SLACs (Knox, Augustana, etc.); Joel pointed out that the Mellon Foundation did not like to see grant money spent on conferences. Mary Ann suggested bringing in pairs of faculty (one teacher, one librarian) from local SLACs to discuss what they do at their schools.

Diego suggested funding different ways of “publishing” student writing. Carmela added that she had Diego come to her GW to discuss writing in the social sciences, and suggested a “Writing Brigade” of qualified faculty to talk about writing in the social sciences, humanities, arts, etc. Joel added that another idea was to have such “division writing experts” also address writing center tutors, faculty, etc.

Chris urged us to renew CD grants for faculty-librarian pairings, and to expand our grants for teaching portfolios. Mary Ann commented that the teaching portfolios were a good deal of work, and should be recompensed more.

Mary Ann announced that she and Joel would be meeting with Jonathon soon to plan a rollout for the grant. She would like to have a sense of where we want to be at the end of the three-year grant period, and that we should put some money into developing senior seminars, and that we should move beyond the research paper.

Chris suggested we bring Andrew Asher back to help develop portfolio assessment of the connection between writing and information fluency.

Diego pointed out the growing presence of international faculty teaching writing, and suggested that some money address this fact.

Carmela suggested some workshops or grants for developing assignments using technology.

Mary Ann turned the discussion to the second agenda item, whether the Writing Committee should be elected or appointed. She expressed some reluctance to make the committee elected. Carmela added that if elected the committee might not be representative. Chris, on the other hand, indicated that if the committee were to take on the evaluation of syllabi and other evaluation and assessment duties it would have more credibility as an elected committee.

On agenda item three, a written policy for handling students who fail Gateway, there was general discussion but no final decision. The committee expressed general support for the idea that those who fail Gateway be required to take it the next semester, even if that entailed sophomores in fall Gateway classes.

A few final ideas were floated, including having some campus-wide event for National Writing Day (from Joel) and some kind of Gateway follow-through for the Summer Reading Program (from Carmela).

The meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Submitted by: J. Haefner