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Writing Implementation Committee, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Writing Committee Minutes 11.4.2014

Present: Karen Schmidt, Illaria Ossella-Durbal, Carole Myscowski, Lynda Duke, Chris Sweet, Diego Mendez-Carbajo, Mary Ann Bushman, Joel Haefner

Convened at: 4:03 p.m.

Joel circulated a report generated by the Writing Center's new appointment software, which provided some interesting statistics about usage of the Center thus far in the semester. The statistics indicate a 50% increase in appointments over last year, attributable probably both to the new software and to the Writing Center's new location in Ames Library. The most frequent users by far were freshmen with Gateway assignments; and while the bulk of the Center's clients speak English as a first language, fully a quarter of all users list Chinese as their home language.

The committee then went into executive session to consider an application for the position of Writing Director, which Mary Ann will vacate in January.

After executive session, the committee posed some general questions about the position and about the Writing Program. Lynda Duke indicated there would be a budget line under the auspices of the Mellon Center for the Writing Program and that there would be some professional development money for the Director. Mary Ann pointed out that there should be clarification about the term of the Directorship, and whether it is renewable.

Mary Ann then asked the committee to brainstorm on possible future directions for the Writing Program, as a catalyst for the incoming Director.

Diego pointed out that the Writing Program could and should speak to different disciplines on campus about sustaining a practical and affordable quantitative outcomes-based assessment plan.

Mary Ann suggested the new Director, and the committee, look at general education courses with both seniors and freshman, and that faculty conduct a blind evaluation of their papers, to demonstrate the value-added dimension of writing instruction at IWU. Carole added that WGS 101 would be an ideal candidate for such a blind evaluation, since it attracts the range of classes.

Diego also urged a small-scale portfolio assessment, perhaps incrementally evolving into something larger.

Joel suggested we revisit the possibility of electronic portfolios, not only as programmatic assessment but also individual assessment, and not only formative but normative as well. He also suggested that such a portfolio might be used for post-graduation career purposes, and that evidence of oral communication skills could easily be included in an electronic portfolio. Diego, Karen, and others pointed out that this might match well with a recently-initiated Teagle grant.

Joel also commented that in addition to the faculty development events which we already offer the Writing Program seek more student-based events and programs to promote a culture of

writing on campus. Chris noted letter writing campaigns and other writing associated with social justice; Mary Ann mentioned grant writing seminars and poetry slams as current writing-centered events, and suggested that we might have to think about how to present/package these efforts, along with new events, to students and the IWU community at large.

The committee then went into executive session to consider an application for a course revision grant under the soon-to-expire Mellon grant.

The executive session was followed by a brief discussion of the Mellon grant, particularly bringing in outside speakers.

The meeting ended with a brief discussion of the number of Writing Intensive seats available for sophomores (thinking of the transcript requirement that students must take one WI course before the end of their sophomore year); Mary Ann noted that we were probably somewhat short of seats for lower-level WI courses, but that it was difficult to quantify because the schedule was finalized so late.

Adjourned at: 5:04 p.m.

Submitted by: J. Haefner