History of the Writing Project

Northern Illinois University has had a long history of interest in the writing abilities of its students. From writing samples used to place students appropriately in their first college-level English courses, to the external review of dissertations, the university invests a significant amount of time and resources into the process of analyzing student writing. A number of current college committees have a direct interest in student writing abilities as well; among these are the University Assessment Panel (UAP), the General Education Committee (GEC), and the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee (WACC).

Junior-Level Writing Project (1999 through 2004)

One project that was established specifically to measure student writing ability was the Junior-Level Writing Project. The project began formally in 1999, and was first administered using a writing assessment tool developed by American College Testing (ACT). In 2000, the group of faculty and administration spearheading the project made the decision to administer future iterations of the project using an institutionally developed prompt rather than the generic prompt supplied in the standardized instrument. The prevailing thought was that students would prepare a better writing sample if the prompt had a universal theme that could evoke an invested personal response. The topic selected involved participants’ reasons for choosing their college major/degree. That prompt, with only minor modification/clarification was used until 2004.

The Junior-Level Writing Project was administered annually in the spring semester. Faculty volunteers were solicited by means of a call letter. Those agreeing to take part in the assessment were required to designate one 50-minute class period in which the assessment would be conducted. During that class session, materials were distributed, the prompt was read, and students were instructed to write for the remainder of the period. At the end of the session, materials were collected and returned to the university’s assessment coordinator. The writing samples were scored by personnel from the Department of English who were selected and trained by a scoring coordinator also from English. Scorers were given copies of the students’ writing samples with names, majors, and other pertinent information removed, which they scored using a standardized rubric. Each sample was read by two scorers; any discrepancies were resolved by a third reader. The quantitative scores were then collected and populated in a spreadsheet which was later transferred to the Office of Assessment Services (OAS), and score reports were issued, along with letters of score explanation, directly to the students. The scoring coordinator from the Department of English also evaluated the writing samples qualitatively; data were summarized in a series of written documents detailing common qualities and circumstances, as well as trends in writing content by major. When all of the information was received, the assessment coordinator produced a summary document to distribute to participating faculty and college and university administration.

In the first years of the Junior-Level Writing Project, faculty (and therefore student) participation was high. The results of these assessments consistently showed that students demonstrated a range of writing skills, with an average slightly below the desired criterion of 8 on a 12-point scale. Over the course of the project however, participation fell dramatically. In 2002, when the initial call letter was sent to faculty soliciting participation, there was a response rate of 0 percent. The OAS immediately began a calling campaign soliciting volunteers. The most common reasons given for non-participation in this project were the use of a class period for administering the assessment, and a lack of student engagement in the assignment. Based on this information, internal discussion of
alternative methods to assess writing skills and abilities began. By spring 2003, the Junior-Level Writing Project was offered only as a special administration to the College of Business, and was no longer offered campus-wide.

**University Writing Project: College of Business Pilot (2004 through 2006)**

As a result of on-going discussions and a search of the literature, it became evident that a redesign of the Junior-Level Writing Project was needed. The interest in students’ writing abilities was still present university-wide, but the need for more focused writing became evident. The ever present assessment question “What can the student DO?” became the central issue and was translated into the question of “Can NIU students write effectively and at the required level of proficiency for the positions they will obtain after graduation?” As the call for assessment at both state and federal levels continues to increase, this question has taken on greater meaning.

The Junior-Level Writing Project was redesigned into the University Writing Project which was piloted in spring 2004 and spring 2006. Working with faculty in the College of Business, the OAS engaged in a course-embedded writing assessment involving the review of required course assignments rather than a standardized writing prompt. The rationale for this pilot was rooted in the need to determine students’ ability to write effectively and proficiently in their majors. When students are engaged in course required writing projects for their major, they are more focused because their grades depend on the quality of the work they produce. Students’ ability to synthesize, express, and accurately apply the content they have learned in their courses has a direct relationship to their ability to produce and work in their field post-graduation. Hence, the students should be more engaged in the assessment. In addition, there is no need for faculty to dedicate a class period for the assessment because they are submitting pre-existing course-embedded assignments. Therefore, the revised assessment process addresses both student engagement and class time concerns previously raised by faculty.

The following protocol was followed for the revised assessment process piloted in spring 2004 and spring 2006:

1) Writing samples to be scored were obtained from courses in the major (junior-level or above). The course instructors selected the writing sample to be scored.

2) Writing samples were obtained from work already required in the selected course; no new assignments were required.

3) As the writing sample came from course-embedded work, there was no need to use a class period for project administration.

4) Writing samples were collected from the selected course instructor; 2 copies were made and the originals were returned directly to the instructor by the participating department/college. There was no maximum number of pages for any one writing sample; a minimum of three pages of text was required. Copied results were transferred to the OAS; the course and college of origin were clearly identified by cover sheet on each set of samples. All returned writing samples continued to be used as a part of the course requirements/assignments.
5) Obtained samples were cleaned of identifying information by the OAS, and scored (as before) by trained scorers selected from the Department of English. Coordination of the training and scoring process was done by faculty selected from the Department of English. The existing assessment rubric (utilized for the Junior-Level Writing Project) continued to be used. Scores obtained from the quantitative scoring process were entered in a spreadsheet, and results were transferred to the OAS for analysis. The qualitative review of writing samples was discontinued.

6) Results were tabulated by department and college in aggregate format. No distribution of scoring was made to participating students, but students were made aware of their individual scores and provided with a certificate for their participation.

7) The departmental writing samples were solicited during the months of April/May, and were turned over to the scoring unit in late May. Results from the scoring process were completed and submitted to the OAS by July of 2004 and 2006.

8) The final report of the pilot project was completed each year in the fall, with presentation of the report to the participating colleges and the Department of English. The final report was also made available to the UAP and other NIU bodies as needed.

Campus-Wide University Writing Project (2007 and beyond)

After reviewing the results of the College of Business pilots of the University Writing Project, the General Education Committee decided that it would be beneficial to expand the project to the full NIU campus. The OAS expanded the 2007 University Writing Project to the whole campus with particular emphasis in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Health and Human Sciences, and Engineering and Engineering Technology. These colleges were contacted concerning plans for the 2007 University Writing Project in the fall of 2006. It was determined that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences would be recruited from each year and that recruitment from other colleges that administer undergraduate degree programs would rotate from year-to-year. Thus, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, along with two or three of the other five colleges, would be recruited for the University Writing Project each year.

The same protocol that was followed for the College of Business Pilot was also followed for spring 2007. In the Spring of 2008, again the same protocol was followed with the exception of distributing individual scores and certificates-of-participation to students. It was determined that informing students of their University Writing Project scores caused unnecessary concern over discrepancies in said scores and the grades the students were given by instructors.

Rubric Redesign

In the fall of 2007, The Department of English created a revised writing rubric with the intent of addressing writing styles more comprehensively. The revised rubric contained seven subscales to evaluate various writing styles more effectively and to identify areas of strength and weakness in student writing at the university, college, and course levels. The rubric was approved by faculty and administration within departments with more technical writing styles such as business, engineering, and math. The revised rubric was first implemented in the 2008 University Writing project (see Rubric on following page).
Department of English
General Writing Rubric

The following criteria describe writing that *Meets expectations*:

**Focus:**
The writing demonstrates adequate understanding of the writer’s task and establishes effective communicative intent.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Genre:**
The writing demonstrates satisfactory control of the conventions of the relevant discourse community.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Audience:**
The writing reflects consistent awareness of desired impact on audience and effectively appeals to audience expectations.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Organization:**
The writing demonstrates appropriate arrangement of material and provides sufficient material to satisfy expectations of readers.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Critical Thinking:**
The writing reflects adequate development, representation, and/or integration of ideas, experiences, or texts.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Writer’s Presence:**
The writing suggests an informed writer who establishes and maintains an appropriate voice, tone, and style.

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations

**Presentation:**
The writing shows control of sentence-level features of written language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage).

3     2     1
Exceeds expectations  Meets expectations  Doesn’t meet expectations
**Method**

Recruitment for the 2009 University Writing Project was campus-wide with particular emphasis on the Colleges of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Health and Human Sciences, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. These colleges were contacted concerning plans for the 2009 University Writing Project beginning in the fall of 2008. A total of 23 faculty and 493 students participated.

*Writing Sample Collection and Scoring Process*

The protocol for the 2009 University Writing Project was similar to the revised assessment process used in the College of Business Pilot (see above) with a few changes to facilitate streamlining. The final protocol for the 2009 University Writing project was as follows:

Writing samples were solicited from junior-level and above courses within various majors during the end of fall 2008 and beginning of spring 2009 semesters.

1) Course instructors selected the course-embedded writing samples to submit and be scored. The maximum number of pages for any one writing sample is ten pages; a minimum of three pages of text is required.

2) Since the writing samples were already required for the course, no new assignments were required and no class periods were used for the project.

3) At the end of the semester for which an instructor agreed to participate (fall 2008 or spring 2009), writing samples were collected electronically or . Electronic copies were collected through email and CD-ROM. When hard copies were collected, instructors generally collected two paper copies from students (one copy the instructor kept for course grading and one copy the instructor submitted for the University Writing Project).

4) Writing samples were cleaned of identifying information by the OAS. ‘Cleaning’ removed student name, z-ID, course, instructor, and any comments from instructor scoring. Writing samples were given a code number for future referencing.

5) Writing samples were transferred to the scoring coordinator from the Department of English and scored by trained scorers. The Department of English General Writing Rubric, redesigned in 2007, was used for a second year. Two independent scorers evaluated each paper, providing each paper with two scores (1-3). Scores obtained from this quantitative scoring process were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and transferred to the OAS for analysis in May 2009.
**Analysis**

During the scoring process, two independent scorers evaluated each paper, providing each paper with two scores (1 to 3, based on the scoring rubric) for each of the seven subscales: focus, genre, audience, organization, critical thinking, writer’s presence, and presentation. The two scores were summed for each subscale, which provided each paper with seven subscale scores, and one computed average score, between 2 and 6. Scores of 2, 4, and 6 indicated the writing ‘did not meet’, ‘met’, or ‘exceeded’ expectations, respectively. Results were analyzed by course, department, college, and entire sample.

Additional data were gathered from Registration and Records in the spring of 2009 in order to determine whether cumulative grade point average (GPA), Spring 2009 term GPA, ACT composite score (ACT), ACT English score (ACT English), and most recent English course grade predicted student performance on the University Writing Project. Data were also collected regarding students’ majors to determine if students who were writing for a class in their major, when compared to those writing for a class outside their major, would achieve higher UWP scores. Finally, data regarding attendance to the University Writing Center were collected and analyzed. University Writing Center data were used to determine if Writing Center attendance predicted students’ University Writing Project scores, and if group differences existed between those who attended and those who did not attend the University Writing Center.
Results

Descriptive statistics examining students’ overall and subscale performance on the 2009 University Writing Project at the university, college, and course levels were computed. A frequency distribution graphing students’ overall performance on the 2009 University Writing Project can be found in Figure 1. Combined scores from the two raters could range from 2 to 6; with scores of 2, 4, and 6 indicating the writing ‘did not meet,’ ‘met,’ or ‘exceeded’ expectations, respectively. The mean score for all students (N = 493) was 4.14 with a standard deviation of .905. A score of 4 or better, indicating writing expectations were met, was achieved by approximately 77 percent of the students who participated. Figures displaying frequency distributions separately by college and course levels can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

![Figure 1: Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores](image)


The mean score was also calculated for each of the colleges (see Figure 2) and courses (see Appendix C). Students in the College of Business had a mean score of 4.00 (N = 10) with a standard deviation of .471. A score of 4 or better, indicating writing expectations were met, was achieved by 90 percent of the students who participated from this college. The College of Engineering and Engineering Technology had a mean score of 3.88 (N = 16) with a standard deviation of 1.025. Sixty-nine percent of the students from the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology achieved a score of 4 or better. The College of Health and Human Sciences had a mean score of 4.17 (N = 126) with a standard deviation of .859. Seventy-nine percent of these students achieved a score of 4 or better. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences had a mean score of 4.15 (N = 341) and standard deviation of .926. A score of 4 or better was met by 76 percent of the students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
The University Writing Project rubric allows for subscale distinctions to determine areas of strength and weakness within the writing samples. Seven subscales are identified: Focus, Genre, Audience, Organization, Critical Thinking, Writer's Presence, and Presentation. Expanded explanations of each subscale can be found in the Methods section of this report. The mean score for each subscale was calculated at the university (see Figure 3), college (see Figure 4), and course levels (see Appendix D). Subscale score distributions by college can be viewed in Appendix E.

Note. \( N = 493 \).
**Focus:** The writing demonstrates adequate understanding of the writer’s task and establishes effective communicative intent.

**Genre:** The writing demonstrates satisfactory control of the conventions of the relevant discourse community.

**Audience:** The writing reflects consistent awareness of desired impact on audience and effectively appeals to audience expectations.

**Organization:** The writing demonstrates appropriate arrangement of material and provides sufficient material to satisfy expectations of readers.

**Critical Thinking:** The writing reflects adequate development, representation, and/or integration of ideas, experiences, or texts.

**Writer’s Presence:** The writing suggests an informed writer who establishes and maintains an appropriate voice, tone, and style.

**Presentation:** The writing shows control of sentence-level features of written language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage).
Based on the university-level subscale analyses (see Figure 3), all subscales except Presentation met the level of expectancy (i.e., a score of 4 or more). Scores on the Presentation subscale were below expected writing standards. Presentation is represented by basic features of written language such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage. At the college-level (see Figure 4), Presentation was similarly low, as it was not met in all four participating colleges. The Focus and Writer’s Presence subscales tended to be the highest, as they met expectations in all four colleges. The course-level data can be found in Appendix D. This data can be used to inform future writing assignments within individual courses. For example, if a course scored particularly low in Presentation or Critical Thinking, course assignments could be adapted to put additional emphasis on such areas of writing.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using SPSS to determine if the mean scores in any of the colleges were significantly different from one another. Results showed that the colleges did not significantly differ, $F(3, 489) = .607, p = .611$, with mean writing project scores ranging from 3.88 to 4.17.

Using data collected from Registration and Records, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether cumulative grade point average (GPA), Spring 2009 term GPA, ACT composite score (ACT), ACT English score (ACT English), and most recent English course grade predicted students’ performance on the University Writing Project. Twenty-four three participants, of the total 493 University Writing Project sample, had scores for all five predictors (GPA, Spring 2009 term GPA, ACT, ACT English, and last English grade) supplied by Registration and Records and were thus included in the analyses. In prior years, GPA, ACT, and last English grade were found to predict University Writing Project scores. However, in the most recent (2008) University Writing Project, only GPA and ACT were significant predictors of University Writing Projects scores. This year, GPA, ACT, and last English grade were examined again and Spring 2009 term GPA and ACT English scores were added to the model. Since new, more specific predictor variables were added (Spring 2009 term GPA and ACT English score), we did not hypothesize which variables would be most predictive of UWP scores and allowed SPSS to find the most parsimonious set of predictors by utilizing a stepwise regression procedure.

The stepwise multiple regression revealed significant results with Spring 2009 term GPA and English ACT scores predicting University Writing Project scores, $F(2, 200) = 28.716, p = .000$. No other variables were significant (See Table 1). The two significant predictors accounted for approximately 22 percent of the variance in the scores. Specifically, Spring 2009 term GPA accounted for 18 percent of the variability, while ACT English scores accounted for 4 percent of the variability. These results suggest that higher Spring 2009 term GPA and ACT English scores were associated with higher scores on the University Writing Project.

New to the University Writing Project this year are data regarding participants’ college major and attendance at the University Writing Center. It was hypothesized that participants who were writing for a class in their major, compared to those writing for a class not in their major, would achieve higher UWP scores. No specific hypotheses were developed regarding University Writing Center attendance.
Table 1

Summary of Stepwise Regression Model for Predicting University Writing Project Scores (N=203)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2009 term GPA</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>5.587*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT English</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>3.248*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last English Grade</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Composite</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative GPA</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>1.132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. R² = .217 for Spring 2009 term GPA and ACT English combined; *p<.001, two-tailed; ns = non-significant.

To test for group differences between those writing for a class in their major (N = 359) versus not in their major (N = 100), an independent samples t-test was conducted with Major as the grouping variable and mean UWP scores and the seven subscale scores as the test variables. The t-test revealed no significant differences between the groups on any of the eight test variables (focus, genre, audience, organization, critical thinking, writer’s presence, presentation, or mean paper score). Thus, participants who were writing for a class in their major versus not in their major did not appear to write differently.

Data regarding the number of University Writing Center attendances were gathered for the 2004-2005 through 2008-2009 academic years. Since University Writing Center attendance is sometimes required by lower-level English courses, and we were interested in students who voluntarily attended the University Writing Center (rather than those who attended as a course requirement), only attendance data from the past two years (2007-2008 and 2008-2009) were analyzed. These data were analyzed in two ways: first, a simple linear regression was conducted to determine whether the number of University Writing Center attendances predicted students’ University Writing Project total scores. Second, an independent samples t-test was analyzed to determine if group differences existed between participants who attended versus participants who did not attend the University Writing Center. Within the t-test, University Writing Center attendance was used as the grouping variable with mean University Writing Project scores, the seven subscale scores, 2009 Spring term GPA, 2009 Spring cumulative GPA, ACT composite, and ACT English scores used as the test variables.

The simple linear regression revealed that University Writing Center attendances significantly predicted University Writing Project scores, F(1, 491) = 5.369, p = .021. However, the correlation between the two variables was negative (r = -.104, p = .010); meaning that more University Writing
Center attendances predicted lower University Writing Project scores. The discussion section will address this finding in detail; however it seems likely that students who voluntarily attended the University Writing Center during the past two years were aware of their lower writing abilities and thus sought assistance at the University Writing Center to ameliorate their deficiencies. A scatter-plot presenting the relationship between total University Writing Center attendances and University Writing Project scores is presented in Figure 5.

To test for group differences between those who attended the University Writing Center versus those who did not attend the University Writing Center, an independent sample t-test was analyzed with University Writing Center attendance as the grouping variable and mean UWP scores, the seven subscale scores, 2009 Spring term GPA, 2009 Spring cumulative GPA, ACT composite, and ACT English scores as the test variables. The t-test revealed significant differences between groups on presentation, $t(1, 491) = 2.164, p = .031$, and ACT Composite scores, $t(1, 281) = 2.041, p = .042$, with writer’s presence approaching significance, $t(1, 491) = 1.959, p = .051$. The mean presentation scores were 3.73 and 3.46 for those who ‘didn’t attend’ and ‘attended’ the University Writing Center, respectively. The mean ACT Composite scores were 22.86 and 21.65 for those who ‘didn’t attend’ and ‘attended’ the University Writing Center, respectively. Finally, the mean writer’s presence scores were 4.28 and 4.03 for those who ‘didn’t attend’ and ‘attended’ the University Writing Center, respectively.
Discussion

This is the third year the University Writing Project has sampled course-embedded writing assignments from the full NIU campus and the second year that the streamlined University Writing Project Rubric (which includes subscales) was used. As in the past, a team of trained scorers from the Department of English were enlisted to evaluate the 493 student writings using the streamlined rubric.

The results of the 2009 University Writing Project assessment indicate that although most students are demonstrating a writing ability at the designated standard, many are not, and there is much room for improvement in students’ writing abilities. Specifically, improvement in writing ability needs strengthening in the area of writing presentation (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage); as all four colleges failed to meet expectations in presentation. Although the average scores across the university on the remaining six subscales (Focus, Genre, Audience, Organization, Critical Thinking, and Writer’s Presence) met expectations, none of the subscales exceeded expectations, and only two subscales (focus and writer’s presence) met expectations in all four colleges. These results suggest there is room for progress in all subscale areas.

For the second year, the course-level subscale data strengthened our understanding of NIU student writing. It is the course-level data that can help modify, shape, and improve student learning at NIU. In essence, examining the strengths and weaknesses of students’ writing in an individual course can inform future writing assignments within that course, closing the assessment loop by using data to guide practice (see Appendix D). Thus, it is the hope that the University Writing Project will inform educators within specific departments (or colleges) of areas where course assignments can be adapted to promote higher writing expectations. As an example, a course where students scored particularly low in ‘organization’, ‘critical thinking’, and ‘presentation’ could require future papers to (1) be organized in an outline-fashion with headings - or - include an introduction, body, and conclusion, (2) include the student’s own reflection of the course material - or - integrate course material into his/her own ideas and experiences, and (3) be free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, specifying that such errors will decrease the student’s paper grade.

Data from Registration and Records was used to determine whether cumulative grade point average (GPA), Spring 2009 term GPA, ACT composite score (ACT), ACT English score (ACT English), and last English course grade predicted student performance on the University Writing Project. These variables included three that had been used in previous years, GPA, ACT and last English grade, and two new predictor variables, Spring 2009 term GPA and ACT English. A stepwise multiple regression demonstrated that the two new variables were the only significant variables in the predictor set; accounting for 22 percent of the variance in the University Writing Project scores. The finding that ACT English scores were significant in this analysis and composite ACT scores were not indicates that the ACT English subscore is the better predictor of student writing abilities as they enter and prepare to graduate from college. The finding that Spring 2009 term GPA was predictive of University Writing Project scores indicates that current academic performance is strongly associated with writing abilities, more so than past (cumulative) academic performance. The

---

1 It is important to note that there is great variability in subscores across the four colleges. Thus, any conclusion drawn from these results must be tempered with the caveat that the college samples were not randomly selected and, in some cases, may be too small to draw any sound conclusions. Nevertheless, the data point to areas of potential writing challenges for students that colleges may wish to explore further.
three non-significant variables (GPA, ACT, and last English grade) may be too comprehensive or chronologically distant to have an impact on current writing abilities.

It was expected that individuals writing within their own major would be more proficient in writing than those writing for a course not in their major, evidenced by higher University Writing Project scores. The finding to the contrary, that their scores did not differ, was initially surprising. It was thought that students would need to adjust their writing skills to match the particular writing style practiced within their major fields, thus achieving higher scores than their non-major classmates. However, the non-significant result suggests that strong writing skills translate across majors even when the style of writing differs. This is worthy of further analysis in future years.

Analyses on attendance data from the University Writing Center indicated that students who attended the University Writing Center during the past two years had lower ACT Composite scores upon admission to NIU and currently have more difficulty with sentence-level features of written language such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage (as indicated by significantly lower scores on the presentation subscale of the UWP). Students who attend the University Writing Center may also have more difficulty establishing themselves as informed writers who are able to maintain an appropriate voice, tone, and style (as indicated by writer’s presence subscale scores approaching significance). It is quite likely that students who voluntarily attended the University Writing Center during the past two years were aware of their lower writing abilities and thus sought assistance at the University Writing Center to address these shortcomings.

As a final note, it is important that the results from the 2009 University Writing Project be examined, considered, and integrated into future writing assignments across the NIU campus. We encourage educators to adapt course assignments based on the UWP results and to raise writing expectations in subscale areas that students’ abilities are lacking. For suggestions on how to utilize any data presented within this report, feel free to contact the Office of Assessment Services.

A call for participation in the 2010 University Writing Project will be issued by the OAS in Fall 2009. In an effort to further increase participation in the University Writing Project by faculty and students across campus, the call for participation will be posted in the Northern Today and on the OAS website. Direct calls will be made to faculty members across campus to increase involvement in the upcoming assessment. In keeping with the assessment cycle, greater emphasis will be placed on recruiting participation from the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Education, Visual and Performing Arts and Business in Spring 2010.
APPENDIX A: College-Level Frequencies of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

**College of Business**

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4  
Std. Dev. = 0.471  
N = 10

**College of Engineering & Engineering Technology**

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.88  
Std. Dev. = 1.025  
N = 16
College of Health & Human Sciences
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Frequency

Cumulative Paper Score

Mean = 4.17
Std. Dev. = .859
N = 126

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Frequency

Cumulative Paper Score

Mean = 4.15
Std. Dev. = .926
N = 341
APPENDIX B: Course-Level Frequencies of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

AHL 344
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.93
Std. Dev. = .799
N = 15

AHRS 493
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.27
Std. Dev. = .631
N = 22
ANTH 444
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.27
Std. Dev. = 1.272
N = 11

BIOS 442
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.91
Std. Dev. = 0.75
N = 22
**COMD 326A**

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

- Mean = 4.23
- Std. Dev. = 0.751
- N = 46

**ENGL 330**

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

- Mean = 4.32
- Std. Dev. = 1.02
- N = 28
ENGL 471, Fall 08

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 3.83
Std. Dev. = 1.169
N = 6

FCNS 280

Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.29
Std. Dev. = 1.36
N = 7
FCNS 445
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.32
Std. Dev. = 1.157
N = 19

FCNS 464
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.87
Std. Dev. = 834
N = 15
MGMT 346
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4
Std. Dev. = .471
N = 10

PHIL 322
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.41
Std. Dev. = 1.01
N = 27
PHIL 336
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.24
Std. Dev. = 1.044
N = 21

POLS 322
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.76
Std. Dev. = 0.714
N = 36
PSYC 372: Section 3
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.27
Std. Dev. = 1.151
N = 26

PSYC 372: Section 4
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.12
Std. Dev. = .928
N = 17
PSYC 412, Fall 08
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.5
Std. Dev. = .745
N = 28

PSYC 464, Fall 08
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.96
Std. Dev. = .808
N = 27
PSYC 474
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.03
Std. Dev. = 0.785
N = 35

TECH 434
Frequency of 2009 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 3.88
Std. Dev. = 1.025
N = 10
APPENDIX C: Mean Course-Level University Writing Project Scores

Mean 2009 University Writing Project Scores by Course

![Bar chart showing mean scores by course](chart.png)
APPENDIX D: Mean 2009 UWP Subscales Scores by Course, Organized by College

Business

[Bar chart showing mean subscale scores for MGMT 346 (N=10)]

Engineering and Engineering Technology

[Bar chart showing mean subscale scores for TECH 434 (N=16)]
Health & Human Sciences (continued)

![Graph showing mean subscale scores for FCNS 445 and FCNS 454](image)

Liberal Arts & Sciences

![Graph showing mean subscale scores for ANTH 444 and BIOS 442](image)
APPENDIX E: Subscale Score Distributions by College

College of Business

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>2 - Doesn't Meet</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 - Meets</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6 - Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer's Presence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

College of Business (N=10)
College of Engineering and Engineering Technology

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

- 2: Doesn't Meet
- 3
- 4: Meets
- 5
- 6: Exceeds

College of Engineering & Engineering Technology (N=16)
Distribution of Scores by Subscale

College of Health & Human Sciences (N=126)
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

% of total scores

2 - Doesn't Meet  3
4 - Meets  5
6 - Exceeds

Focus Genre Audience Organization Critical Thinking Writer's Presence Presentation

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (N=341)
APPENDIX F: University Writing Project Guidelines

Introduction:
The University Writing Project (UWP) (formerly known as the Junior-Level Writing Project) was established in the mid-1990s to specifically measure the writing ability of NIU undergraduate students. The UWP has evolved into a course-embedded assessment of students’ written assignments. The Office of Assessment Services (OAS) invites faculty from across the campus to participate in the project each year by submitting completed course assignments to the OAS for review by faculty from the Department of English using a standardized assessment rubric.

Benefits of the UWP to Faculty and Students:
The benefits of the UWP are numerous:

1) Faculty members have ongoing input into the writing assessments. The course instructors who participate in the UWP will select the writing sample to be scored.

2) Faculty members are not asked to assign additional written coursework or give up valuable class time to participate in the UWP. Writing samples are obtained from work already required in the selected courses and, as the writing sample will come from course-embedded work, there will be no need to use a class period for project administration.

3) Faculty members will receive valuable feedback on the writing abilities of their students. Samples will be scored by trained scorers selected from the Department of English and results will be tabulated by department and college in aggregate format by the OAS. These data may be used for ongoing program assessment and will contribute to the assessment of general education at NIU.

Faculty Participation:

Faculty choosing to participate in the UWP must agree to the following:

1. Faculty members will send a list of students’ names and Z-IDs for each participating course to the OAS by February 19, 2010. These will be kept confidential.
2. Faculty members will send the instructions for the course assignment selected to the OAS to be shared with the English faculty evaluating the writing assignments by February 19, 2010. The maximum number of pages for any one writing sample is ten pages; a minimum of three pages of text is required.
3. Faculty members will send the student writing samples to the OAS no later than May 3, 2010 (these may be sent electronically or by hard copy).
4. Faculty will inform their students that course assignments will be submitted to the OAS for institutional, college, and program assessment.
5. Faculty will inform their students that the results of their individual assessments will remain confidential by the OAS and will not be shared with faculty, college administrators, or any other parties. Aggregated results will be made publicly available.

For more information, please contact Carolinda Douglass in the Office of Assessment Services at 753-7120 or by email at cdoug@niu.edu