This issue at a Glance:
- Writing Center Services 1
- May Workshop 1
- Preventing Plagiarism 2
- Real-World Writing 2

Faculty Support

Keep in mind that the NIU Writing Center in Stevenson South, Lower Level, may be your best friend in helping you to get quality writing from your students. Writing Center staff all emphasize the importance of revision on two levels:

Higher-Order Concerns:
- Addressing the assignment
- Developing a thesis
- Supporting arguments
- Demonstrating appropriate levels of critical thinking
- Organizing logically
- Showing awareness of the reader(s)

Later-Order Concerns:
- Checking punctuation
- Correcting spelling
- Completing sentences
- Revising word order
- Improving grammar
- Citing Sources

Today might be the ideal time to call the Writing Center at 753-6636, to invite a staff member to visit your class and explain what services are available to them.

2nd Writing-in-the-Major Workshop Planned

Illinois employers are constantly pressuring NIU faculty to help students develop their writing skills.

To facilitate this goal, the 2nd annual Writing-in-the-Major Workshop takes place, May 26-27. Faculty will have an opportunity to enjoy participating in activities with colleagues that provide ideas on:

- How to motivate critical thinking through writing
- How to use writing technologies to the best advantage
- How to design effective writing assignments
- How to give feedback to students that balances content and correctness
- How to manage the paper load efficiently
- How to create rubrics that enable students to grasp what you want them to accomplish

What identifies a “writing-in-the-major” course? It’s a course designed and taught by full-time professorial and instructional faculty.

It includes several assignments complex enough to require multiple drafting. It incorporates teacher and peer feedback, Writing Center visits, revision, and editing. A writing-in-the-major course distributes writing throughout the semester, rather than concentrating writing at the end. It emphasizes that writing assignments constitute at least 30% of the course grade.

Last year, faculty from Anthropology, Art Education, Communications Studies, Educational Psychology and Foundations, Management, Nursing, Engineering and Engineering Technology participated. Many formed ongoing links between their courses and the Writing Center as they continued consultation with the Writing Across the Curriculum Program.

Workshop participants found that the lively exchange energized their desire to rethink and revise their approaches to teaching. They discovered ways to motivate their students—and equally important—to get reacquainted with their own “writing selves.” The workshop gave them the incentive to share and discuss pedagogical concerns they shared in common.

How do faculty join up? Participants choose a course that they want to reinforce “writing in the major” in their disciplinary area. They create a facsimile of the following application:

Application, Writing-in-the-Major Workshop

1. What is the course you want to transform into a writing-in-the-major course—and what kinds of writing do you currently include in the course?
2. How do you expect students to benefit from your transformation of this course?
3. How do you expect your department curriculum to benefit from your transformation of this course?
4. Briefly explain what particular priorities you have for this course’s transformation in terms of promoting critical thinking, designing assignments, providing feedback, managing paper load, assessing students’ written work—or other issues concerning instruction in writing.

Faculty signature

Department Chair’s signature

College Dean’s signature

Date

NOTE: Attach a copy of the course’s current syllabus.

After completing the application and obtaining signatures, faculty send the application to Brad Peters, WAC Coordinator, Reavis Hall 215 by the May 2 deadline. Participants who complete the workshop receive a letter of confirmation that they can use for annual review, promotion and tenure.

Wrap up this academic year by planning for the next! Faculty can go to <http://www.engl.niu.edu/wac/mayworkshop.html> or call 753-6718 for more information.

Editor: Brad Peters, WAC Coordinator
753-6718 <bpeters@niu.edu>
New Statement Helps Professors Deal with Plagiarism

With the Internet providing so many resources, plagiarism has become a significant concern to faculty. The National Council of Writing Program Administrators has developed a useful statement on plagiarism that advises faculty in all disciplines how to lessen its occurrence.

The WPA encourages professors to define plagiarism consistently for students. Its statement says: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.”

The WPA statement also outlines and elaborates upon best practices that help prevent plagiarism. Consider the following abbreviated, adapted guidelines:

- **Explain plagiarism and develop clear policies:** talk about implications; include a policy in the course syllabus; establish a form of university response
- **Improve the design and sequence of assignments:** design assignments that require depth of exploration; start discussing writing topics early; consider establishing a course theme that generates specific questions; support each step of the research process; make the research process and use of technology visible; teach citation conventions of different written formats

International students may have particular problems with plagiarism because their own cultures do not expect writers to cite sources when they integrate them in a written assignment. Partnering with the NIU Writing Center in Stevenson Towers South (lower level) can help, because Writing Center staff are trained to work with students in developing correct and ethical use of sources.

Go to [http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/](http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/) to read the WPA statement in full.

Teaching Writing with a Real-World Appeal

Many NIU professors know that students’ strongest written work emerges when they design assignments that have applicability to real-world writing tasks. Such assignments teach students to write rhetorically, encouraging them to:

- Develop a professional ethos, tone, and ethical practice
- Adapt language to multiple readers, rather than the professor only
- Imagine a complex professional context shaped by many competing interests and influences
- Deal with a challenging situation that calls for critical analysis and thinking
- Clarify the purpose for communicating in writing
- Treat the topic in an organized, knowledgeable manner, progressing through many stages and formats

For instance:

**Jule Scarborough** asks students in Tech 394 to read extensively on project management and then develop a manual to accompany a hands-on engineering project that engineering professionals will critique.

**Julie Robertson** requires students in NURS 571 to drive through communities in teams, assess the community’s health-care delivery system using a “windshield survey,” and develop a nursing evaluation-plan from their findings.

**Gerald Aase** challenges students in OMIS 223 to do two kinds of statistical analysis of a bowling alley’s business over several years, so that teams can then write a letter in support of the bowling alley owner’s application for a bank loan to upgrade facilities.

**Instructors of ENGL 102-103** train students to write several essays that are competitively judged, selected, and then published in the annually updated textbook that the students actually use for the course.

Assignments that have a real-world, rhetorical appeal accordingly position writing not merely as “mastery of content,” but as a necessary, professional practice. Students acquire a stronger incentive for doing careful research, planning, multiple drafting, seeking feedback, and editing, before they turn in their finished documents.