

Draft Resolution in Support of Writing in the Majors
(as approved by University Curriculum Committee 2/4/2010)

The University Writing Program Committee/Writing Initiative Task Force asks that the University Curriculum Committee approve the following:

Resolution:

The University Curriculum Committee recommends that the Senate endorse a writing-in-the-disciplines requirement so that significant writing instruction beyond the core curriculum is included in every major. Though a university-wide requirement, the specific ways that the requirement will be implemented will be designed by each program to meet the needs of their discipline following general principles developed by a faculty committee on writing. The plans for implementation will be reviewed and approved by this writing committee in concert with the University Curriculum Committee to ensure consistency to the principles.

Rationale:

Faculty members have long recognized that writing competency is important to the success of students, yet there is evidence that many of our students have had limited instruction in writing before entering Auburn and that many of our students do less writing and receive less instruction in writing than their peers at comparable universities. Similarly, faculty members understand that forms and practices of writing vary across different disciplines and in different contexts. Research in the field of writing studies has established that student learning can be enhanced with meaningful writing experiences, and that improvement in writing comes with opportunities to practice, receive feedback and revise under the direction of knowledgeable and experienced writers. However, unlike other universities, Auburn does not require specific writing instruction beyond the first-year composition sequence required in the core curriculum. As the Writing Initiative Task Force reported in 2008, there are many ways that students could be provided with meaningful instruction and significant opportunities to work on their writing but that these experiences need to fit with the requirements and practices of different disciplines. Thus, faculty in those disciplines, with appropriate support from the University Writing Program, are in the best position to determine what kinds of writing their students need to do and where in the curriculum writing experiences and instruction are most appropriate. Auburn University has already demonstrated a commitment to improving the written competency of our students through the expansion of the John C. H. Miller Writing Center. The University has included enhancing writing as one of the action plans in the Strategic Plan and has committed to providing support for faculty in the majors to develop appropriate curriculum, provide significant writing instruction, and assess the results of their efforts by establishing the Office of University Writing and hiring a director.

Implementation:

Spring term 2010: The Writing Initiative Task Force will request that the University Senate constitute a permanent committee, tentatively called the University Writing Program Committee (UWPC), to include faculty representatives from each School and College. This committee will establish principles to guide programs in articulating their plan for incorporating writing into their major. Such principles might include faculty instruction and feedback on written products, opportunities for students to revise these products, attention to developing written competency over time, systematic assessment of the plan with the intention to adjust the plan based on these assessments. Principles do not create a one-size-fits-all approach but ensure that writing instruction in the majors is visible, assessable, and achievable by the department given the number of majors they graduate and the resources they have available. Possible models for programs include (but are not limited to) creating new courses focused on writing in the discipline, incorporating writing instruction into existing courses, establishing or expanding a multi-semester portfolio that includes a variety of written products, linking writing instruction to field work or internships, or requiring a senior thesis or project.

Spring term 2010: The UWPC will develop the process for soliciting, reviewing and providing feedback on programmatic plans for incorporating writing in the every major.

Spring, summer and fall 2010: The University Writing Program will provide support to departments and individual faculty members as they consider possible plans, develop or revise curriculum to incorporate writing instruction, and assess written products to consider revisions.

September 2010: Review of plans will begin. Once the UWPC has approved a plan, it will be forwarded to the University Curriculum Committee for final authorization.

March 2011: Final plans ready for inclusion in Bulletin

Entering class of fall 2011: implementation of requirement

Fall 2011: Rotating review/revision schedule will be established by the UWPC