

PROGRAM PROPOSAL

ACADEMIC WRITING AT SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY

UPDATED SEP 25, 2019

PREPARED FOR: University Explorations Committee

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on behalf of the Department of Language Studies & the Arts



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Objective	
Goals	
Solution	
Project Outline	
Benefits of Proposed Program	4
Departmental Preparation	4
Proposed Course Goals	5
Prerequisite Guidance	5
Course Descriptions	6
Assignment Options for Course Outcomes	7
Instructor Support	13
Before Roll-out	
In Course Shell	
Throughout the Semester	
Implementation Timeline	14
Proposal Needs	14
Response to Prior Feedback	15
Department Votes	16

Executive Summary

OBJECTIVE

Writing classes at Saint Leo University need to be updated to reflect current research on the teaching of writing and to respond to current needs of students in all modalities and faculty in all departments. Our writing classes should reflect 21st-century approaches to, understandings of, and reliance on writing.

GOALS

The proposed program aims to do the following:

- Situate writing as a subject of study and a discipline with its own scholarship, not just a tool used in other disciplines
- Make writing instruction more consistent and reliable across the institution
- Rely on student interests and lived experiences as the driving forces behind learning and inquiry, making the course content responsive to students in any location served by SLU
- Use only texts available on the open web as course content, eliminating textbook costs
- Clarify what can reasonably be achieved with two classes of writing instruction to better align prerequisites across the institution
- Strengthen the academic support system for students and the pedagogical support system for instructors to support and encourage success
- Make the study of writing an integral component of studies in all disciplines and a core component of academic excellence

SOLUTION

This proposed program centers on a new rhetoric-based curriculum for our three existing foundational writing courses, plus support systems including training and instructional resources for teaching faculty. Ultimately, this program's success will lead to the formation of a writing-studies program, incorporating the existing professional-writing track of the English major.

PROJECT OUTLINE

Because the proposed writing program takes an approach to writing scholarship that differs from what we have been teaching for many years, a new curriculum for our foundations courses forms the core of the proposed program. Full implementation of this plan includes the following components:

- Revised writing foundations courses, emphasizing rhetorical flexibility and genuine academic inquiry
- Training for all writing instructors, ensuring comfort and competence with the new curriculum

- Revised placement exams that reflect the content of our foundational writing courses and accurately determine which course best matches each student's current abilities
- Reassessment of course pre-requisites across the catalog, ensuring alignment between course needs and what is offered by our writing courses
- Enhanced support for faculty during the roll-out, including liaisons at all learning centers and pedagogical resources such as pre-designed assignment sheets and sample student work to align expectations and assessment criteria
- Coordination with academic support services (such as the CAVE at University Campus) to ensure tutoring for student support aligns with in-class instruction
- Inclusion of foundational writing courses into Academic Excellence Day and other institutional programs designed to highlight academic achievement

While many of these tasks are in-progress or under development within the Department of Language Studies & the Arts, the implications of this transition reach all corners of Saint Leo. In short, this program proposal will change our conception of writing across the institution and require support from a number of stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation.

Benefits of Proposed Program

- Modernizes our foundational writing classes (built around rhetoric, not modes); clarifies our focus through assignment continuity and through new course prefix
- Draws on lived experience of on-campus, online, and center-based learners
- Gives students skills and vocabulary to better engage with writing they're asked to do (both in school and in their careers)
- Directly addresses external expectations while preserving focus on *writing* content
- Helps faculty and departments improve the efficacy of assignments and quality of results
- Establishes writing as an open, evolving, university-wide conversation
- Lays groundwork for future growth & development, including a university writing center, a "Writing in the Disciplines" program, senior portfolios, etc.
- Makes writing program at Saint Leo competitive, trendsetting, success-driven, and marketable
- Gets us ready for a writing center (improving student support and retention) and expansion to the PW track (securing additional enrollments)
- Allows for building 21st-century skills using digital products
- Employs OERs—including an in-house textbook—to reduce costs & dependence on publishers

Departmental Preparation

- Curriculum developed for three-course sequence based on student needs & faculty feedback
- Placement Exam being aligned to course outcomes, allowing us to test for whether students have the skills associated with each course
- Custom, student-generated textbook created for 121 & 122, filling a gap in available materials and giving us the flexibility to adapt as we grow and to improve institutional reputation with the potential for wider adoption
- Commitment to training, certifying, and supporting instructors at all locations
 - Training cohorts remain connected via MS Teams
 - Centers staffed with faculty liaisons throughout roll-out to facilitate communication
- Staffing increase underway; will continue as needed to meet anticipated increased demand for developmental course
- Course shells populated with sample student work to facilitate instruction and student confidence; samples will be updated as program develops

Proposed Course Goals

COURSE TITLE	EMPHASIS	GOAL
WRI 120: Improving College Writing	Expressive Competence	Write coherent sentences, paragraphs, and multi-paragraph texts around a single thesis.
WRI 121: Rhetoric and Writing Studies	Rhetorical Flexibility	Write according to situation & audience expectations, responding to document type & purpose.
WRI 122: Curiosity & Academic Inquiry	Intellectual Curiosity	Write supported results of discovery driven by individual, arguable research question.

Prerequisite Guidance

PRE-REQ OF	CAN EXPECT STUDENTS WHO CAN
WRI 120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct coherent complex sentences • Craft unified paragraphs with topic sentences and support • Build cohesive multi-paragraph documents
WRI 121	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to writing situations given an intended audience and specific type of document • Evaluate characteristics of writing sample with intent to mimic • Adjust tone, vocabulary, and assumptions of prior knowledge given exposure to a discipline's writing
WRI 122	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View learning as a self-driven process • Read documents as expressions of authors' perspective, open for debate • Identify appropriate sources given a specific need for information, once introduced to the relevant options
Sophomore Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think critically and consider multiple perspectives • Behave more maturely and responsibly • Adapt easily to college-level expectations <p>Many courses that currently require ENG 121 should use this prereq instead.</p>

Course Descriptions

CURRENT NAME	CURRENT CATALOG DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED NAME	PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION
ENG 002: Basic Composition Skills	Basic Composition Skills is designed to help students develop the writing skills they need to succeed in future college-level courses with heavy writing components. It builds upon the foundation of writing instruction provided in high-school classes and adds a specific focus on college-level writing and Saint Leo University's expectations for student writing skills.	WRI 120: Improving College Writing	Writing at the college level requires clarity, consistency, and concision, regardless of the length or complexity of the text. This course is designed to help students develop the writing skills they need to succeed in future college-level courses by strengthening students' writing skills at the sentence, paragraph and essay levels.
ENG 121: Academic Writing I	The techniques of effective writing, logical thinking, and intelligent reading, with special emphasis on expository writing. To ensure competence in oral communication, a speech component is included.	WRI 121: Rhetoric & Writing Studies	The way we write and the things we write adapt to the variety of situations in which we use writing. This course teaches students how to analyze and study writing, their writing processes, and the ways different groups of people use writing to get things done. Students will learn how to use language persuasively in various specific situations and in several ways, preparing them to use writing and rhetoric in college, in their careers, and their lives.
ENG 122: Academic Writing II	A continuation of ENG 121. Expository writing based on analytical study of literary genres and an introduction to the research process. To ensure competence in oral communications, a speech component is included.	WRI 122: Curiosity & Academic Inquiry	Research is at the core of academia, but it's also at the heart of everyday problem-solving. If you don't know how to do something, you identify a question, assess the quality of various resources, then draw conclusions from your findings to address your initial problem. The same overall process is used in academic research, although the steps look a little different. This course provides an introduction to the ways that curiosity and genuine inquiry drive academic research, and it shows how inquiry-driven research leads to various forms of writing, from research papers to articles in the popular press.

Assignment Options for Course Outcomes

WRI 121: Rhetoric and Writing Studies

1. **Describe the situations surrounding various kinds of writing** (WPA CT2), showing that you understand how authors write to meet a variety of goals at once. Along the way, you will **interpret** that writing **for intended and unintended meaning** (UE CT1).

Assignment Option: Rhetorical Analysis

Choose an online article and characterize (don't just name) its author. Then, using the sample texts in the Module as a model, tell the story about the text you chose: What made the author write it? How was the author involved in the situation? What did the author want to achieve? What did the author have to do to make the text "fit" where it appeared?

Assignment Option: Literary Context Analysis

Select any poem or short story of interest and discuss how the author's experiences and contemporary culture influenced the content and form of the text. How does the author's background (and historical backdrop) shape the story? Why does the chosen publication venue help the author achieve the intended goal of the piece? Consider things like the level of expression inherent in the selected form.

2. **Write multiple drafts of a document** (WPA P1) that incorporate feedback from peers, illustrate the creation of new ideas, and show re-thinking of your existing ideas.

Assignment Option: Take Another Look, Through Someone Else's Eyes

Help two of your colleagues improve their writing by peer-reviewing their previous papers. Using the assignment sheet and sample papers as guides, show your peers how well (or not) they achieved the goals of the assignment. What did you notice that could be improved? What did they do well that will help them on the final draft? Be sure to look for opportunities for *revision*, not just *line-editing* corrections.

3. **Analyze the language and documents used by groups** of people to come together, establish their identity as a group, and achieve their combined goals (WPA RK2).

Assignment Option: Discourse Community Analysis

Choose any club or group you have been a part of in which that group works to achieve a specific goal—social groups of friends don't work. Then, using the sample texts in the Module as a model, identify how the six characteristics of discourse communities apply to that group. Were you a member of a discourse community?

Assignment Option: Aspiring Authors / Professional Writers Clubs

Are you a member of a writers club, a book club, the English Honor Society, or some similar group? Examine how that group functions. What texts do you use within the group in order to achieve your goals? How does writing help group members do the work of the group? Using

the sample texts in the Module as a model, identify how the six characteristics of discourse communities apply to that group. Were you a member of a discourse community?

4. **Characterize various document types** (WPA KC2 & KC3), known as genres, and identify trends and expectations in how those document types do the work—and reflect the thinking—of a writing community. This will help you **assess different points of view, assumptions, and/or arguments** (UE CT2).

Assignment Option: Genre Analysis

Choose a type of document used at school, in your workplace, or at a location you frequent. Collect at least three examples of that same kind of document (three store receipts, three report cards, three financial-aid forms, three sit-down chain restaurant menus, etc.). Then, using the sample texts in the Module as a model, analyze the genre you have selected. How does it reflect the thinking and goals of a specific discourse community? What does that kind of document assume about its readers, and who is excluded from using it?

Assignment Option: Literary Review Analysis

Find three or more examples of book reviews, abstracts, or proposals published in the same venue. What are the unwritten assumptions the authors of those texts make about their audience, and how are those assumptions evident in the form and character of the texts? Using the sample texts in the Module as models, analyze the documents you gathered. How do they collectively reflect the thinking and goals of literary studies? What does that kind of document assume about its readers, and who is excluded from using it?

5. Use rhetoric to create artifacts that **meet specific goals and address specific audiences** (WPA RK4) based on a variety of situations that call for writing. This will show your ability to **communicate effectively for a determined purpose** (UE CC2).

Assignment Option: The Same Coin

Find two online articles that express different perspectives on a single issue. Perform a rhetorical analysis on the documents to determine what each author wanted to accomplish. Then, in a short document intended for your colleagues, explain how the language used by each author indicates the authors' purposes. Explain your analysis sufficiently so your colleagues understand why each article was created.

Assignment Option: Literary Foes

Find two literary analysis pieces with differing interpretations of a single text. Perform a rhetorical analysis on the documents to determine what each author wanted to accomplish. Then, in a short document intended for your colleagues, explain how the language used by each author indicates the authors' purposes, assumptions, and position relative to the other. How do the authors indicate that their work is in conversation with the other one?

6. Create documents that incorporate the collaborative, socialized aspects of writing yet avoid plagiarism by appropriately **employing paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting** (WPA CT4) of credible sources. You will **decide** how to make those incorporations **using rigorous arguments based on criteria and evidence** (UE CT3).

Assignment Option: One More Voice

Using what you wrote for the previous Module as a starting point, add your voice to the conversation you found by creating a document appropriate for one of the articles' publication venues. What you write needs to fit that publication venue's expectations, for everything from appropriate language, perspective, argumentation, references, etc. Be sure to cite your sources in a manner appropriate for the document type.

7. Competently employ writing to **build expertise, navigate roles, and motivate others toward action** (WPA CT2).

Assignment Option: Portfolio + Cover Letter

Write a letter to your instructor explaining how the work you have done this semester provides evidence supporting your claim that you have achieved the outcomes of this course. Refer back to the course syllabus for a list of the outcomes.

WRI 122: Curiosity and Academic Inquiry

1. **Articulate specific, arguable research questions** (WPA CT1), using appropriate materials considering the information cycle and evaluating how that cycle influences the credibility of sources.

Assignment Option: Brainstorming Audit

Identify a problem to be researched that a) you are concerned about; b) comes from your own experiences or observations; and c) relates to reading, writing, language, or literacy. Determine how and why you are interested in this problem, likely based on how it relates to your past experiences. Specify what you would like to learn about this problem, question, or experience. Bear in mind that your understanding should complicate, not simplify, the issue at hand. Explain why you would like to learn more about this issue. Document the authors from our in-class readings who relate to your problem or question.

Assignment Option: Literary Brainstorming

Select a poem or short story and identify a social/cultural problem or issue highlighted in the text. Determine how and why you are interested in this problem, likely based on how it relates to your lived experience. Specify what you would like to learn about this problem/question. Bear in mind that your understanding should complicate, not simplify, the issue at hand. Explain why you would like to learn more about this issue. Identify the authors from our in-class readings whose work relates to your problem or question.

2. Analyze how scholars and public figures express confidence when they **attempt to answer a question with a speculative best guess** (WPA P3). This will require you to **assess different points of view, assumptions, and/or arguments** (UE CT2).

Assignment Option: Field Survey

Begin exploring sources for your annotated bibliography by finding the existing conversation surrounding your selected topic. Find public and scholarly sources, and look for differences in the authors' approaches to stating their claims and expressing confidence. Create an informal report that shares with your classmates what you discover.

3. **Create an annotated bibliography following the guidelines of a specific citation system** (like MLA, APA, etc.) **and using the research-support resources offered by the university** (WPA KC6), such as the library's reference staff (available for all students), the CAVE (on campus), and/or the Florida Electronic Library's Ask a Librarian service (online). **Use both print and electronic resources for knowledge discovery, retrieval, and creation.**

Assignment Option: Annotated Bibliography

Create a correctly formatted list of at least twenty relevant, helpful sources, both popular and scholarly. This is far easier said than done; be sure to allow plenty of time to complete it. Then, create an annotation below each entry that justifies the entry's existence on your list by addressing the topic of each source, the author's qualifications, research methods used, and evidence used to support the author's claims.

4. **Synthesize a variety of sources** (WPA CT4) to examine and interpret the broader scholarly view of a topic. This will help you better **interpret texts for intended and unintended meaning** (UE CT1).

Assignment Option: Framing Synthesis

The Framing Synthesis combines the individual sources from your bibliography into a cohesive whole and demonstrates how together they shape or direct the question you are investigating. Present your understanding of the current state of the “conversation” you found while creating your annotated bibliography. *Synthesize* the various sources, rather than summarizing (which you did in your annotations). If certain sources stand out in your mind as being more important than others, be sure that comes across in your synthesis. Ultimately, this synthesis will show what you have learned through your research.

5. **Explain the purpose behind various citation practices and how each one reflects the priorities of a specific audience** (WPA KC6, RK2, CT2). Use that understanding to document and integrate sources in a variety of writing situations. This will show your ability to **use appropriate formatting when communicating** (UE CC3).

Assignment Option: Public Document Proposal (aka Literature as Lens)

Stakeholder Analysis: Identify the groups involved in the debate surrounding your research question. Explain how your answer to the question influences the experiences of those groups. Then, conduct a more focused analysis of one or two of those groups of stakeholders that you believe would best benefit from your research findings.

Genre Analysis: Consider the environment of the stakeholders you identified above. Analyze how writing works in that environment to help exchange or receive information. To avoid guessing, you likely need to conduct brief, informal interviews and collect samples of unfamiliar texts from members of your stakeholder group. This is an opportunity to “get your hands dirty” for your research. Then, write a brief analysis of their methods of written communication.

Citation Analysis: Looking specifically at how those who use the genre you identified cite their sources, write a brief analysis of the relevant citation methods in practice. Keep in mind that, unless you are analyzing an academic genre, the citation methods used will likely not be as explicit as something like a works-cited list or parenthetical references. Explain why the citation methods used are appropriate for the operation of the genre you have chosen. (See the paper you wrote in Module 5 of WRI 121 for an example of this kind of analysis.)

6. **Reach conclusions that balance your thinking with ideas from others who have studied similar topics** (WPA CT4). Through researching, you will **support decisions using rigorous arguments based on criteria and evidence** (UE CT3).

Assignment Option: Public Audiences Document

Create a text (broadly defined—almost anything counts) that operates within the norms of the genre you selected. What you create should be able to reach your audience and convince them to do what you want them to do. Your genre analysis serves as a guideline for what to create here and for how your peer-review partners will assess its effectiveness and suitability. This assignment should feel more “real” and less academic than anything you’ve done previously, yet it should reflect your work, conclusions, and expertise just as much as your other assignments have.

7. **Document the collaborative, unscripted, recursive process of your own learning** (WPA P2, P4), which is different from a process of finding predetermined correct answers to straightforward questions.

Assignment Option: Portfolio Cover Letter

Step back from your assignments and look at the “big picture” of the course. Review the Course Syllabus to recall how your assignments were designed to fit together. Then, write a letter to your instructor asserting how well you achieved the course outcomes. The letter format affords more casual language than a traditional essay, but it constrains you to a smaller number of pages. Consider what you think is worth emphasizing about your experiences this term.

Instructor Support

Before Roll-out

Because the proposed curriculum is so different from what we've been using for decades, all instructors of the new course designs will be required to complete online training in Courses that provides an overview of the course content, examples of assignments, and explicit instruction on assessment. This training is required so we can ensure consistency of instruction and provide support for the challenge of a transition.

In Course Shell

All redesigned courses will include:

- Complete syllabus indicating objectives
- Full set of assignments, including assignment sheets and example solutions for students and instructors' guides with scoring rubrics, appropriate for various student audiences:
 - Campus/traditional age
 - Centers/working professionals
 - Online/independent, distributed workers

Throughout the Semester

Built in MS Teams, all instructors who complete the initial training course will be enrolled in a support group providing:

- Quick Q&A with colleagues
- Access to additional resources generated after course shells are finalized
- Space to share ideas and strategies for instruction/assessment

Additionally, a team of local liaisons will provide rapid, in-person assistance at all centers.

Implementation Timeline

DATE	TASK
Fall 2019	Course Development Details of course design and assignments completed after approval from department and curriculum/ue committees.
Spring 2020	Faculty Training Faculty training begins SP2 with on-campus sessions; targeting SU1 & SU2 for online course and in-person training at select centers.
Fall 2020	Rollout Phase 1 All ENG 002 courses transition to WRI 120, and all ENG 121 courses transition to WRI 121 this semester. ENG 122 courses offered as before.
Spring 2021	Rollout Phase 2 All ENG 122 courses transition to WRI 122, completing the curriculum change.
Fall 2021	Cross-Discipline Training Meet with other departments to clarify expectations and assist with design of writing assignments

Proposal Needs

NEED	COST	SOURCE	NEEDED BY
Development of Course Shells & RISE	Course Release	Committee	Fall 2, 2019
Faculty Development	TBD Stipend per Adjunct	TBD; exploring grants and our new QEP	Spring 2, 2020
Post-roll-out Support	TBD Stipend per Liaison	TBD; possibly QEP	Summer 1, 2020
Additional CAVE Staff + Training	CAVE tutor line(s)	CAVE; possibly QEP	Fall 2020
Revised Placement Exam	Already supported by department labor	Admissions + Department	Fall 2020
Student Samples for Assignemnts	Committee labor & student consent	Committee	Summer 2020

Response to Prior Feedback

Fall 2016

“Our department isn’t ready for this big of a change.”

We adjusted the course outcomes to better align with the current needs and abilities of Saint Leo’s students, especially those online and in centers, who make up the majority of our student body. We have also proposed a training course designed to ease instructors through the transition to a new curriculum.

Fall 2017

“This is too hard for our students.”

We revised the course outcomes again to 1) simplify the language, 2) integrate national standards, and 3) address the lived experience of our students in all modalities. We removed all reliance on academic journal articles as source material. We created a custom, open-access, student-authored textbook to help students learn the material. We piloted the revised curriculum to ensure students could successfully complete the assignments and demonstrate achievement.

Fall 2018

“This is too similar to the previous proposal.”

We revised the course outcomes yet again, changed all selected readings for all modules, and created new assignment options for each module.

Fall 2019

“This doesn’t allow us to use literature.”

We added additional assignment options (see attached pages) that explicitly utilize literature as a source for all modules that draw on outside materials.

“These classes don’t teach students how to analyze literature.”

We adapted assignment options to give students the opportunity to examine how literary analysis functions in the world, going beyond the production of these documents into their practical use. While our current design for 121 provides limited literary sources, it does not provide any foundation for literary analysis as this proposal does. See 121.4 (“Literary Review Analysis”) and 121.5 (“Literary Foes”) for examples.

The job of an academic writing course is to prepare students for broader, more diverse writing situations than merely literary analysis. That content belongs in a literature class, not a writing class.

“This is too prescriptive; it tells us what to teach and how to teach it.”

All course designs prescribe their outcomes. Many other courses dictate which texts must be used; this proposal allows flexibility in source material, drawing from faculty interests while maintaining a focus on the course outcomes. Also, we added the word “option” for each suggested assignment for clarity.

Department Votes

Detracting Faculty Comment:

No on separating out WRI designation as a set of courses distinct from the rest of the department's work. ENG is a wide umbrella designator. It must stay. No one is asking remedial or first-year Math (and other departments) to change their course rubric indicators. At a time when this department needs more unity, this act would be divisive. Students understand that it's an ENG course. The course doesn't have to sell itself. It's a required part of the general education service courses that ENG faculty teach, just as is the case in the vast majority of other institutions. I'm not convinced that students need a Rhetoric course or one that helps them to learn "how to analyze and react to changing writing expectations." at this point. Non-majors and undeclared alike all need remedial language skills and remedial writing skills. I am still convinced that they do need to write for "survival" in college, and, in this case, that means Academic Writing, as opposed to Creative Writing, Technical Writing, or Writing for Writing's sake. We have courses for those other disciplines. There are countless textbooks designed for "Academic Writing" and there are countless competitors using the time-honored method of teaching Academic Writing to their students. We depend on transfer students. There's a good case to be made, from a business sense, that this course should match what the vast majority of our competitors are doing. When the department struggles to staff adjunct instructors to teach the first-year writing program/sequence of courses, there's not a good case to have to train them to this very different approach to teaching the course when compared to the ones they are undoubtedly teaching at our competitors. When no viable plan for training, including funding, has been nailed down or guaranteed even before this course is approved, it makes little sense to have a new program that can't be implemented as proposed. Quite frankly, this course is a good fit for a different program at a different institution. It's not a good fit for Saint Leo University's program. Over and over, the faculty have brought this up in various meetings, and no moves to accommodate what the department would like to see in the course, as a whole, have been incorporated. This proposal represents the vision of one person; it does not represent the views of the majority of the qualified, full-time department members who regularly teach the course this one proposes to replace. Over and over again, the same proposal has made an attempt to get vetted through the department and time and time again, the department has rejected it. No version that truly recognizes their objections has emerged. This course will introduce chaos to the department responsible for it, not unity. As a result, this will not serve SLU students well. For these reasons, and more, I must regrettably vote no to this proposal, a project that has been ongoing with no results for years.

Response:

- Other departments are not changing their course rubrics because the courses are already properly labeled. Remedial math (the example above) is a math course. In the case of our Foundations writing courses, the ENG rubric suggests the wrong field of study, and students are surprised when they learn the class is not based on literary response.
- The commenter refers to these courses as "general education service courses," which they are not. These courses teach students content: the discourse of writing studies.

- ◆ Suggesting a need for “remedial language skills and remedial writing skills” suggests a distrust of student abilities and an ignorance of the literature; teaching remedial language skills does not work (Rhodes, 2007; Truscott, 2008; Hartwell, 1985; Hunter & Wallace, 1995; Martinsen, 2000; Harris, 1962), and teaching remedial writing skills or a generic “academic writing” is not possible (Wardle, 2009; Rounsaville, 2012; Russell, 1997; Berkenkotter, 1993; Devitt, 1993; Clark, 2011). Just as our sports program cannot create a “ball handling skills” class to prepare students for any potential athletic skill set, we cannot create a “basic writing skills” class that gives students a skill set applicable in all situations (Russell, 1997). This point was made in the Composition Committee in the 2014–15 school year, while this commenter was still a member.
- ◆ The “time-honored method of teaching Academic Writing” is essentially a curriculum that is 40 years out of date and fails to incorporate current disciplinary thinking or best practices in the teaching of writing. The “countless competitors” to which this commenter refers are those who still house writing in an English department, as opposed to a rhetoric, writing, or composition department that acknowledges the difference in expertise.
- ◆ The commenter’s point about the business sense of asking adjuncts to re-train when moving from our competitors is valid. Anyone trained at USF, UCF, FSU, or UF will already understand this proposed curriculum and instead have to be retrained to teach our current courses because they have not kept up with progress in the field.
- ◆ The lack of secured funding is suggested as a problem; however, discussions about funding with the Chair and Dean ended with a charge to get departmental approval first before requesting funds—this commenter’s complaint is a catch-22 that I attempted to resolve thanks to his previous feedback.
- ◆ “No moves to accommodate what the department would like to see in the course, as a whole, have been incorporated.” This is patently false. As demonstrated in the “Response to Feedback” section above, this proposal has been revised four times to accommodate requests from the department.
- ◆ “This proposal represents the vision of one person; it does not represent the views of the majority of the qualified, full-time department members who regularly teach the course this one proposes to replace.” This is incorrect in multiple ways. First, the Composition Committee, which has driven the design of each proposal across five years, has included no fewer than ten members of the department, ensuring this proposal represents a variety of perspectives and not “the vision of one person.” Furthermore, the full-time department members referred to by this commenter are not as qualified as he suggests. Within our department, only two full-time members have graduate training in composition education; this commenter is not one of those two.
- ◆ “No version [of a proposal] that truly recognizes their objections has emerged.” This is patently incorrect, as evidenced in the “Response to Prior Feedback” section above.
- ◆ “This will not serve SLU students well.” This is patently incorrect. Our proposal has been specifically designed to provide students with the training and skills they need to be successful. This commenter’s objections are designed to serve established faculty, not students.

Detracting Faculty Comment:

This proposal is essentially the same one that was rejected previously. I'm not sure why fundamental changes haven't been made to it given its lack of success years before and the lack of support from the department itself. Given that lack of support, I am puzzled that the faculty who teach this course were not asked explicitly--what do you think we need? I don't agree with the warrant of the argument of the proposal. I don't think 121 should merely be a service class teaching students how to write in other disciplines. I see it as an opportunity to empower writers. Nor do I believe that the ways (plural on purpose) the class is being taught now fail at calling attention to rhetorical situation. All assignments in all of my classes (and I believe my colleagues') point to purpose and audience explicitly. This can be done easily--and already is. I don't see how the assignments listed are engaging either, nor do I see much academic rigor in, for example, creating a bookmark. When our colleagues say our students can write, do they mean can't write in their disciplines? Have data been collected that support that conclusion? Lastly, the training necessary for this proposal seems impractical and expensive. I agree there are issues with how the class is set up in the master syllabus, and there should be changes. Teaching in rhetorical modes is not the way to go. But I don't think this is the solution.

Response:

- Saying that "this proposal is essentially the same one that was rejected previously" suggests this reviewer has not read the current proposal, as it includes completely re-written outcomes, modules, and assignments as the previous iteration.
- The commenter wonders why "faculty who teach this course were not asked explicitly" what we need, which suggests the commenter did not contribute to the Composition Committee in any of its iterations (even though four literature and two professional-writing faculty have been among its members over time). Furthermore, because this course affects the entire institution, I have met with department chairs across all colleges and representatives of campus, center, and online education, to ensure this course meets the specific needs of Saint Leo's entire student body, not the desires of a select few faculty.
- "When our colleagues say our students can write, do they mean can't write in their disciplines? Have data been collected that support that conclusion?" Yes and yes, respectively (Clark, 2011; Wardle, 2009; Wardle, 2007; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Devitt, 1993; McCarthy, 1987).

Detracting Faculty Comment:

I have met with Chantelle to speak about this already, but I am casting a NO vote because I believe these courses are far too rigid and specific and don't allow faculty members to teach them to the best of their abilities. This should be a bread-and-butter course that any English faculty member could easily teach (and probably has taught for over a decade), and it's best if they can play to their strengths and teach the course a little differently, whether they come from a background in creative writing, literature, or rhetoric & composition. I also disagree with the absence of literature (and I define "literature" broadly) in these courses.

Response:

It appears this commenter has not read the current proposal or the “Response to Prior Feedback” documentation above, which was included with the proposal. Literature assignment options have been explicitly incorporated to demonstrate for our faculty how they could have easily changed the proposed assignments to teach to their strengths. Indeed, faculty were invited three times to provide suggestions for incorporating literature, and they failed to respond in all cases. Thus, the alternative assignment suggestions were created for them.

Furthermore, as with any other course and master syllabus, the outcomes are mandated, but the assignments and the day-to-day instruction of the course are entirely at the instructor’s discretion. And lastly, suggesting that it’s better to teach the same thing we’ve been teaching “for over a decade” suggests an ignorance of current thinking in the field of writing studies. If our courses haven’t changed in over a decade, we are (at best) preparing our students for the world of 2008.

Detracting Faculty Comment:

Here are just some sample concerns. I'm highlighting the most obvious ones. 1-A textbook authored by an instructor can present some issues. Considering this addition at the last minute give us no time to look into it. There is a wealth of open resources, so why narrow it to only one perspective, the instructor's one? 2-The language use in the modules is opaque. Why not state clearly what is expected, using elegant yet lucid language? 3-All instructors need training to teach this course. Why is this necessary? This is preposterous. Has the instructor thoroughly (and humbly) considered the logistics of it? Is this the best use of resources (responsible stewardship)? This proposal has been around for at least 4 years and has always been the starting point for any program at the expense of asking faculty what works for them. Why are we still looking for more of the same?

Response:

1. The textbook is *edited* by an instructor; it is authored by Saint Leo students. While the commenter is absolutely right to be wary of potential issues, this book is a living document that we will continue to revise to suit the changing needs of our students, program, and institution. I am confident that future dialogue will be able to assuage these concerns.
2. I believe the language to be clear and succinct, but further refinement is entirely possible given more-specific feedback.
3. “Need” is a strong word. We want to provide training to all instructors because of the significant change this course entails. Those who have taught with Saint Leo for years will benefit from a self-paced course introducing them to the changes, the new content, and the resources available to help them teach it. Those who are new to Saint Leo will benefit from an orientation to the content, regardless of their training and prior experience. As for logistics and resources, both have been considered. The course will be offered online, using existing infrastructure available through CTLE, and we believe seeking funding through our WAC initiative reinforces the importance of writing instruction for the whole institution.
4. Stating that “this proposal has been around for at least four years” is patently false—evidenced by the “Response to Prior Feedback” section above—as is the claim that faculty have not been asked for their input.

Favorable Faculty Comments:

- ◆ This is the most important aspect of this proposal: that the courses address how "our students end up ill-prepared, unclear how they could succeed in a writing course only to struggle with writing in another course."

It's important that these new courses provide a broad "foundational" set of skills ("how to analyze and react to changing writing expectations"), rather than the narrowly focused approach of the current set.

- ◆ I fully support this proposal because it effectively incorporates UE learning outcomes, aligns with national standards for this discipline, and equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to write successfully in whatever major they choose.
- ◆ This course revision will 1) move Saint Leo's writing curriculum into the 21st century, 2) align our courses with national standards, and 3) prepare our students for future writing tasks both in and beyond the university. We need this change.
- ◆ This proposal takes into account the national standards for writing that are desperately needed at Saint Leo. National standards serve students in a variety of ways. First, they bring a level of excellence to the university that shows our students a path to success. Second, these standards demonstrate that we as a faculty understand the level of excellence required by national organizations devoted to this practice. Finally, it prepares our students for work beyond Saint Leo in ways our current introductory writing courses do not do.

I would like to add that the committee that has worked on this project has repeatedly answered the concerns of the faculty in a way that has been responsive to the unique needs of Saint Leo as well as adhering to our core values. Every step has been respectful and with an integrity toward truly excellent courses. These courses are a significant step forward in becoming the kind of university outlined in the Renaissance 2021 plan, and if we want to become the number one Catholic university in the United States, as Dr. Senese has mentioned several times, we cannot ignore the precedent set for us by national organizations concerned with foundational writing courses simply because it's too much work for us to be retrained.