

## A Proposal for a Writing Enhanced Curriculum: Revising the Stetson University Writing Requirement

### A. An Abbreviated History

In Spring 2015, the University General Education Committee (UGEC), working closely with the Writing Program, proposed to the University faculty a revision to the current writing requirement. That proposal - a package of five writing intensive courses to include FSEM, JSEM, and three additional writing intensive courses of the student's choice, **supported by investment in faculty development, an enhanced student support model, and a faculty oversight group**—was sent back to UGEC for the purpose of investigating a number of tricky data points:

- The potential impact on seats available in the first year
- The potential for increased course caps on other courses
- The impact on staffing across the Schools and College
- The calculations for total numbers of seats needed

In the summer and fall of 2015, UGEC and the Writing Program worked to identify numbers and develop answers, drawing on data from Institutional Research, Banner, and faculty interest surveys. During Fall 2015, UGEC sponsored a number of faculty forums to solicit input, feedback, and suggestions for improvement of the plan. This hard work has resulted in the final shape of this proposal.

### B. About the Revised Proposal

The original proposal required a combination of five (5) WI courses. However, faced with the moving target(s) of student enrollment, total enrollment goals, the numbers of courses carrying WI designation that also serve students not taking the course for WI credit, and other logistical elements, UGEC now offers this **revised proposal**. The support elements of the original proposal--**investment in faculty development, an enhanced student support model, and a faculty oversight group**—remain the same.

- i. The **revised proposal states that** all students at Stetson University must satisfy the **Writing Requirement**, which consists of four (4) approved courses, at least two of which must be from General Education (*See also iv. Proposed Catalog Description; v. Provisions*).
- ii. The term “writing intensive,” currently in wide use on campus, will be replaced where appropriate with “writing enhanced” (WE). This terminology more accurately captures not just the wide range of techniques in effective WI pedagogy but also the courses in which we prioritize student writing in a variety of ways (e.g. FSEMs, JSEMs, research proposal courses, methods courses, etc.). Courses whose primary content is the theory and practice of writing can also count toward the **Writing Requirement**.
- iii. The new **Writing Requirement** will be implemented in Fall 2016 and will be assessed in the 2020-2021 academic year (*See C.9.*). The **four year period** provides essential time:
  - to stabilize the student population
  - for that population to drive any new faculty hires
  - to identify trends and patterns in student desire for specific kinds of currently available WI courses and/or new eligible courses
  - for programs and departments to decide how best to accommodate those student choices and interests
  - for substantial investment in faculty development
  - for effective, faculty-led investigation of the effectiveness of the new requirement following a cohort of students from Fall 2016 for four years.

#### iv. Proposed Catalog Description of the **Writing Requirement**

*All students at Stetson University must satisfy the **Writing Requirement**, which consists of four (4) approved courses, at least two of which must be from General Education.*

- *Courses eligible to meet the **Writing Requirement** include:*
  - *WE designated courses<sup>#</sup>*
  - *FSEMs*
  - *JSEMs*
  - *Writing Courses\**
- *Students who expect to receive transfer, dual enrollment, AP, IB, or AICE credit for writing courses may transfer up to two (2) writing courses. The remaining courses must be completed at Stetson.*

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*Not for inclusion in the Catalog description:*

<sup>#</sup> *Any currently designated WI course will automatically become an approved WE course.*

\* *Courses whose focus is on the theory and practice of writing.*

*Note: ENGL 100 will count as one of the four required courses only if the grade earned is a C or above. Students placed in ENGL100 must complete the course during their first semester at Stetson. The course must be retaken if the grade earned is below a C.*

#### v. Provisions

##### a. Enrollment caps

FSEM and JSEM caps will remain at **16 students**. Caps on the other courses eligible for the **Writing Requirement** will be **18 students**. These caps will allow faculty the essential time to work most effectively on developing and strengthening student writing. It will be at the faculty member's discretion, in consultation with the department/program chair, to increase the cap on a course.

##### a. Double-dipping

Currently, a WI course which also carries a General Education designation (e.g., a Knowledge Area course) is not eligible to count toward both the current writing requirement and the General Education requirement. Under the new **Writing Requirement**:

- A General Education course carrying the WE designation can count toward both that General Education requirement and the **Writing Requirement**
- A WE course in the Major can count toward both the Major requirement and the **Writing Requirement**
- A WE course, in some circumstances, may count toward a General Education requirement, a Major requirement, and the **Writing Requirement**

## C. Questions and Answers:

### 1. Why are we doing this?

#### Answer:

As a matter of **academic quality**, we know from 40 years of research into Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiatives that students who continually practice writing and communication skills across the curriculum are more likely to polish and retain those skills. Graduating students who are excellent communicators and thinkers is one of our highest priorities. We know from our own institutional data that **student writing produced in FSEM and JSEM courses meets or exceeds our assessment expectations at impressive rates**: 80% of sampled FSEM students and 90% of sampled students in JSEM. In contrast, however, we know from the same institutional data that ENGL 101 courses are substantially less effective, to such a degree that we should reconsider their place in our curriculum as the primary writing requirement. Accordingly, it makes sense to invest our resources in **advancing a writing enhanced curriculum**.

As a matter of **best practices**, we know from a 2012 survey of over 100 small colleges and universities in the United States that **nearly 85%** require guided and mentored writing experiences throughout the four years of an education. These institutions have explicitly rejected the “single course” inoculation method because it is ineffective and have replaced that limited educational requirement with a required sequence of courses in core areas and disciplinary concentrations. (See Gladstein and Regaignon, 2012). More specifically, research into our comparison schools (including Swarthmore, Elon, Puget Sound, Bowdoin, Drake, Furman, and Valparaiso) indicates a pattern that incorporates multiple writing experiences in multiple academic areas. **None of these require only a first year English course**, instead fostering a Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID) approach across important academic areas such as first year seminar, general education, mission-statement centered initiatives, and targeted disciplinary experiences.

Finally, when we look at **nationally recognized programs** of writing instruction, we see some of our peer schools in lists of excellent WID programs (*US News and World Reports*) and also in lists of exemplary college writing programs (CCCC’s Program Excellence Certificate). Stetson University could be on those lists. Indeed, Stetson University should be on those lists.

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#### The answers to questions #2, #3, #4 below:

- were derived using enrollment data from the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 (when available)
- are answered as though we implemented the new **Writing Requirement** in Fall 2015
- are based on a “worst case scenario” model, meaning the scenario that would result in our having to offer the most new courses

See **Appendices** for detailed data tables which support these answers.

2. What would have been the impact on available seats (outside the English Department) for incoming students this academic year had we eliminated ENGL101 & ENGL109? (Refer to Appendix A)

**Answer:**

In addition to the **450 seats that would have been offered by the English Department**, we would have had to add **381 new seats** (246 + 135, Appendix A, Table 1B, 1C, respectively) *at the 100 level outside of the English Department*.

Assuming these **381** students opted NOT to take a WE course, this number of seats translates to **17 additional sections** ( $381 \div 22$ ) of 100-level non-WE courses that we would have needed to offer over the academic year. (According to Institutional Research, the average size for all 100 level class sections in Fall 2015 was 22.1).

*Note: This academic year, 18 sections of ENGL101 and ENGL109 are being taught by adjunct faculty members (i.e, those teaching only 1 or 2 sections). If the new **Writing Requirement** had been implemented, these adjunct sections would have been eliminated and those funds would have been available to help support other departments.*

3. How many new **WE courses** (excluding FSEM & JSEM) would we have needed this year? (Refer to Appendix B)

**Answer:**

In fact, **no additional WE sections** would have been needed if students in the CAS and SOBA were to take only their two required WE courses beyond FSEM & JSEM and students in the SOM were to take only their three required WE courses beyond FSEM (Appendix B, Tables 2A.1, 2A.2).

BUT because some students will take more WE courses (e.g., because of an interest in the course content, or majoring in a department that offers many WE courses), we need to plan for more of them.

If each student were to take **one more WE course than is required by the new Writing Requirement**, then

- **25 new WE sections** would have been needed this academic year *if we had accepted ENGL transfer credit*, as prescribed in the proposal (Appendix B, Table 2B.2)
- **33 new WE sections** would have been needed this year, *if we had not accepted ENGL transfer credit* (Appendix B, Table 2B.1)

**Bottom Line for Seat Impact:**

Had we implemented the new **Writing Requirement** this academic year, we would have needed **42 new sections (17 sections of non-WE courses** (from #2 above) this year and **25 sections of WE courses over time** (from #3 above, *if we had accepted ENGL transfer credit*). This number assumes, however, no overlap in these new sections. That is, the final ‘real’ number of new sections would have depended on how many of the new WE sections were also designated as meeting a General Education requirement (e.g., a course in one of our Knowledge Areas). If some of those new WE sections also

carried a General Education designation then the total number of new sections we would have needed would have been less than 42.

**4. Where might these WE sections come from? (Refer to Appendix C)**

**Answer:**

In the CAS and SOBA, **25 departments or programs do not currently offer a WI course** (Appendix C, Table 3). A comparable number is harder to calculate in the SOM as there are no departments or programs. For some departments or programs, offering a WE course may not be reasonable but for others, the addition of a WE course or changing an existing course into a WE course may indeed be possible and beneficial. (Certainly, departments or programs currently offering WI sections are welcome to offer another.)

**5. How are students placed into ENGL 100? And why will this course count toward the Writing Requirement?**

**Answer:**

Students are placed into ENGL 100 with SAT-V scores of 420 or lower or ACT-English scores of 16 or lower. Approximately 40-45 students per year take ENGL 100 during the Fall semester, concurrently with their FSEM.

Already among our weaker students and facing additional pressures to succeed as a result, **these students are currently forced to use one of their electives on a course we require them to take.** This is unfair. These students should be able to count this essential course toward the graduation requirement because to not do so imposes an arbitrary expectation on an already at-risk population. They must pass this course, however, with a C or better for it to count toward the **Writing Requirement.**

**6. Will some 100 and 200 level courses in English focus primarily on writing?**

**Answer:**

Yes. Although the English Department has been reluctant to plan courses ahead of the formal decision to enact this proposal, it expects to continue to offer several writing courses—courses **whose primary content is the theory and practice of writing.** The Department already offers a series of such courses at the 100- and 200- level. In addition, the English Department will offer 100- and 200-level courses (or a limited set of courses with multiple sections) meeting General Education requirements and bearing the WE designation, including WE courses focusing on writing, literature, creative writing, and cultural studies.

**7. Will programs and departments be forced to develop WE courses?**

**Answer.**

No. Staying consistent with earlier versions of the writing requirement proposal, departments are strongly encouraged to develop WE courses where appropriate, but faculty and departments make those decisions.

## 8. Who will oversee and coordinate this work?

### Answer:

The writing curriculum at Stetson should always be a joint, coordinated effort, and the best configuration to ensure that writing instruction remains vital and forward-thinking is a team of interested, invested, motivated faculty. Once the new **Writing Requirement** is approved and implemented, the work of guiding, supporting, and maintaining the quality of Stetson's writing instruction will be the task of a faculty-led group, presumably headed (at least initially) by the Writing Program Director in collaboration with disciplinary faculty, members of GEAC and UGEC, and other invested faculty.

## 9. How will we know that this new requirement is an improvement?

### Answer:

Like any sound assessment program, assessing WE courses and their impacts is a team effort: faculty will collaborate across our disciplines to identify quality benchmarks and to develop methods to see that we achieve them. While GEAC should continue to orchestrate General Education writing assessment, departments and programs with WE courses should consider how best to decide what goals are desirable and how to achieve them. These tasks should be coordinated by the faculty oversight group. Working together and coordinating results will reveal the effect of our collective efforts at graduating students who will be clear and effective writers and thinkers.

## 10. What are the next steps?

### Answer:

- **Augment Faculty Development**

The faculty development component is critical to support faculty in acquiring the understanding and comfort level necessary to teach with WE pedagogy. Faculty would be offered regular and proactive mentoring, training, and support for responding to student writing, teaching for transfer of concepts and skills, strategies for sequencing assignments, and ongoing discussion and development of writing enhanced courses. Resident experts, invited speakers, and workshop leaders will form a corps of support structures for faculty to continue to grow in their fields and as part of Stetson's body of teacher/scholars. **These support plans will begin in Spring 2016.**

- **Initiate the Writing Fellows Program**

The Writing Center, as the primary resource for student writing at Stetson, is currently developing a Writing Fellows program. Writing Fellows are advanced students who are "assigned" to specific courses to support writing instruction. Currently, 14 students have registered for **ENGL324-Peer Tutoring in Writing** in Spring 2016 to prepare for becoming a Writing Fellow. Faculty and Fellows work collaboratively on the goals and stages of writing assignments and feedback/support. The Fellows program will be coordinated through the Writing Center and will be under the joint leadership of the Writing Center Director and the Writing Program Director. BIOL courses already employ this model, known as SPIs, which research shows is highly effective. (See Brown, Tufts, Barnard, DePaul; among our peer schools, Williams, Swarthmore, and Bowdoin also offer successful Writing Fellows Programs.)

- Additional General Education courses and additional non-General Education courses will need WE designations to allow students sufficient options to suit their interests and needs.  
Faculty and departments could first look to courses already on the books that focus on disciplinary or departmental expectations; second, faculty and departments could identify courses that are reasonably easy to convert to WE. Courses with caps at or below 20, courses that already rely on writing to demonstrate student learning, courses that involve students in revising in their own or another language, and courses that involve written communication are good candidates for conversion.
- A plan, a calendar, and a group committed to ensuring and maintaining academic quality in WE courses will need to be developed.

## Timeline for Implementation

### Spring 2016: Preparation

- Identify and approve essential courses for WE conversion and/or creation
- Identify membership and charge of faculty leadership/governance group
- Ensure faculty preparedness
- Publicity and outreach for new and current students
- Coordination with Advising, Admissions, and Registrar
- Targeted and effective matching of Writing Fellows with faculty

### Year One: AY 2016-2017:

#### Fall 2016

- Implementation of new requirement (*For entering class only*)
- Pre-fall workshop for interested faculty and ongoing opportunities
- Launch of Writing Fellows embedded in select courses
- Any necessary adjustment of degree audits and policies for current students
- New faculty governance group begins oversight and planning work
- Ongoing development of WE courses and faculty support

#### Spring 2017

- Identify viable and effective assessment process
- Ongoing development of WE courses

### Year Two: AY 2017-2018

- Decide on areas of curriculum to study for effectiveness
- Ongoing course development and faculty support

### Year Three: AY 2018-2019

- Report on effectiveness and reflect on areas to improve
- Ongoing development of WE courses and faculty support

### Year Four: AY 2019-2020

- Ongoing development of WE courses and faculty support

### Year Five: AY 2020-2021

- Faculty-led investigation of the effectiveness of the new requirement following a cohort of students from the Fall 2016 semester will be conducted.



**Appendix A:** How the answer to question #2 was derived.

**Assumption:** Beyond the seats offered by the English Department, students opt to take non-WE courses in other disciplines at the 100 level.

**Table 1A. Number of seats** (outside of the English Department) in 100-level, non-WE courses we would have needed for our incoming students this year if ENGL 101 & 109 had been eliminated.

FYI: Number of incoming first year students ( <i>Fall 2015</i> )	983
Number of seats for 101 & 109 ( <i>Fall 15 &amp; Spring 16</i> ) $355 + 441$ <i>So, this number is the number of seats we would have needed to find:</i>	796
Number of seats that would have been offered by English Department:	450
<b>Number 100 level, non WE seats we would have needed this year :</b> <i>(assuming all the new seats in new English Department courses were occupied)</i>	<b>346</b>

**Table 1B. Number of additional 100-level, non-WE seats** (beyond what was available to use) we would have had to create outside of the English Department.

Number of seats we would have needed outside the English Department (from Table 1A):	346
Number of <b>USABLE</b> GEN ED seats in courses at the 100 level (Fall 2015) <i>(excluding ENGL100, 101, 109)</i>	100
Number of <b>USEABLE GEN</b> seats in courses at the 100 level (SPRING 15, <b>assumed</b> ) <i>(excluding ENGL100, 101, 109)</i>	0
<b>Number of additional seats in 100 level, non-WE courses that would have been needed in other disciplines:</b>	<b>246</b>

**Table 1C. Number of additional seats we would have needed if caps in current WI courses were reduced to 18.**

Number of seats above cap of 18 in WI courses in Fall 2015	71
Number of seats above a cap of 18 in WI courses in Spring 2015	64
<b>Number of additional seats in 100 level, non-WE courses that would have been needed in other disciplines:</b>	<b>135</b>

**Appendix B:** How the answer to question #3 was derived.

**Assumptions:** Students in the SOBA and CAS take both an FSEM & JSEM; Students in the SOM take only an FSEM. Student enrollment will be 3100 students.

**Table 2A.1** Additional **WE seats** we would have needed to offer (*if we did NOT include transfer credits and we assume each student takes only 2 WE courses*).

Number of WE courses per student (EXCL FSEM & JSEM)	2
Number of undergraduates	3100
So, WE seats needed over 4 years	6200
WE seats needed <i>per year</i> $[(3100*2)/4]$	1550
+ <i>additional number</i> of WE seats needed for 176 SOM majors (because no JSEM) per year $[(176 *1)/4]$	44
<b>TOTAL number of WE seats we need to offer per year:</b>	<b>1594</b>
Number of additional WE seats accommodated by ENGL Dept	450
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>FALL 15</b>	688
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>SPRING 16</b>	687
<b>Total WE seats that were available to use this year :</b>	<b>1825</b>
<b>Number of additional WE seats needed:</b>	<b>*0</b>
	* over by 231 seats

**Table 2A.2** Additional **WE seats** we would have needed to offer (*if we did include transfer credits and we assume each student takes only 2 WE courses*)

Number of WE courses per student (EXCL FSEM & JSEM)	2
Number of undergraduates	3100
Number of WE seats needed over 4 years	6200
<i>Number of seats of ENGL credit transferred in (FALL2015)</i>	543
So, WE seats we need to offer over 4 years	5657
WE seats needed <i>per year</i> $[(5657)/4]$	1414
+ <i>additional number</i> of WE seats needed for 176 SOM majors (because of no JSEM) per year $[(176 *1)/4]$	44
<b>TOTAL number of WE seats we need to offer per year:</b>	<b>1458</b>
Number of additional WE seats accommodated by ENGL Dept	450
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>FALL 15</b>	688
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>SPRING 16</b>	687
<b>Total WE seats that were available to use this year :</b>	<b>1825</b>
<b>Number of additional WE seats needed:</b>	<b>*0</b>
	* over by 367 seats

**Table 2B.1** Additional **WE seats** we would have needed to offer (*if we did NOT include ENGL transfer credits and we assume each student takes 3 WE courses*).

Number of WE courses per student (EXCL FSEM & JSEM)	3
Number of undergraduates	3100
So, WE seats needed over 4 years	9300
WE seats needed <u>per year</u> [(3100*3)/4]	2325
+ <i>additional number</i> of WE seats needed for 176 SOM majors (because no JSEM) per year [(176 *2)/4]	88
<b>TOTAL number of WE seats we need to offer per year:</b>	<b>2414</b>
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>FALL 15</b>	688
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>SPRING 16</b>	687
Number of seats to be accommodated by 22 sections in ENGL Dept	450
<b>Total WE seats that were available to use this year:</b>	<b>1825</b>
<b>Number of additional WE seats needed:</b>	<b>589</b>
<b>Number of additional WE courses needed @ cap of 18</b>	<b>33</b>

**Table 2B.2** Additional **WE seats** we would have needed to offer (*if we did include transfer credits and we assume each student takes 3 WE courses*).

Number of WE courses per student (EXCL FSEM & JSEM)	3
Number of undergraduates	3100
Number of WE seats needed over 4 years	9300
<i>Number of seats of ENGL courses transferred in (FALL2015)</i>	<i>543</i>
So, WE seats we need to offer over 4 years	8757
WE seats needed <u>per year</u> [(8757/4)]	2189
+ <i>additional number</i> of WE seats needed for 176 SOM majors (because of no JSEM) per year [(176 *2)/4]	88
<b>TOTAL number of WE seats we need to offer per year:</b>	<b>2277</b>
Number of additional WE seats accommodated by ENGL Dept	450
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>FALL 15</b>	688
Number of seats for WI Courses in <b>SPRING 16</b>	687
<b>Total WE seats that were available to use this year:</b>	<b>1825</b>
<b>Number of additional WE seats needed:</b>	<b>452</b>
<b>Number of additional WE courses needed @ cap of 18</b>	<b>25</b>

### Appendix C: Data for Question #4

**Table 3.** Departments/Programs/ or Majors (SOM) not currently offering a WI course.

<b>Departments/Programs NOT currently offering a WI course:</b>	
In School of Business Administration	9
In College of Arts & Sciences	16
In School of Music (# of Majors in SOM)	7

### Approval Dates of the Writing Proposal

Provost – Beth Paul-December 17, 2015

SACS confirms that Writing Proposal needs no further approval – February 3, 2016

University Faculty Approved – December 4, 2016

UCCAP – Approved – December 4, 2016-Dr. Stuart Michelson

UGEC-Dr. Camille King-proposal passed-November 18, 2015

### Process for approval of the Writing Proposal

- November 20, 2015 - Writing Proposal was discussed at the University faculty meeting.
- November 19, 2015 - Writing Proposal was available to the full faculty for review
- November 18, 2015 - UGEC Approved the Writing Proposal
- November 11, 2015 - Dr. Camille King presented the reworked Writing Proposal to the UCCAP Steering Committee for review.
- October 28, 2015 - Dr. Camille King reported to UGEC the information she received at the Information Sessions. She and Dr. O'Neill used this information to rework the proposal again. .
- October 21, 2015 - Dr. Camille King presented Writing Proposal to the UCCAP Steering Committee for review
- September/October, 2015 - Dr. Camille King and Dr. Megan O'Neill held five Writing Proposal Information Sessions
- August 26, 2015 - Dr. Camille King and Dr. Megan O'Neill presented the data they had collected to address some of the unresolved issues that arose at the February 27, 2015 University Faculty Meeting .
- March 13, 2015 - Writing Proposal discussed at University Faculty Meeting. The faculty asked that the proposal be sent back to committee to address unanswered questions.

- March 9-13, 2015 – Dr. Camille King and Dr. Megan O’Neill were available in Faculty Lounge to answer questions about the Writing Proposal
- February 27, 2015 - UCCAP approved Writing Proposal
- February 20, 2015 - Dr. Camille King presented Writing Proposal to the UCCAP Steering Committee for review
- Fall 2014 - Writing Proposal Reworked
- April 28, 2014 – UGEC defeated Writing Proposal
- November 18, 2013 - Dr. Megan O’Neill presents original Writing Proposal to UGEC

**From:** John Pearson

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 03, 2016 1:48 PM

**To:** Lisa Guenther

**Subject:** curriculum

Lisa,

Rick doubled checked with SACS, and the writing requirement does not need further SACS approval. I spend my house with Beth reviewing the budgets, so I did not have time to go over the curricula and policies that are pending, but I did remind her of them. I will pursue this again tomorrow.

John

On Dec 17, 2015, at 07:57, John Pearson <[jpearson@stetson.edu](mailto:jpearson@stetson.edu)> wrote:

Lisa & Stuart,

The Provost has signed the following:

1. Trauma Counseling Certificate Program Credit Proposal
2. Revisions in the Department of Environmental Science Studies
3. Course Exclusion Proposal with Honors Sanction
4. Revisions to the Writing Requirement / Proposal for a Writing Enhanced Curriculum