

UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION #XXI-M16

Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee Motion on the Writing Program and Committee

1. Motion presenter: Scott Smith, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate discussion: 5/1/2017, 5/8/2017

3. Rationale: A self-study of the UNH Writing Program was submitted on March 3, 2016. An external review of the writing program was submitted on June 28, 2016. In it, the reviewers praised UNH's "enviable commitment to writing," but also noted tension as to who "owned" the Writing Program and what body would have the rights and responsibility to enact change. In particular, the external review noted:

- an inconsistency in familiarity with the Writing Intensive requirement, the max capacity for WI courses, and the process to create WI courses.
- a proliferation of WI courses, especially at the upper level
- a lack of training for instructors teaching WI; some faculty "did not even know the course that they were assigned to teach had previously been approved as a WI course."
- the Writing Committee's (hereafter WC) lack of power to enact change or monitor the quality of writing courses; the reviewers implicitly suggest that this concern came from members of the WC, whether past or present, a fact that will become important below.
- A lack of "ownership" of WI courses at the college or departmental level; specifically, the reviewers note a lack of coherence or consistency across WI courses, and further detect a tension between WI courses and the larger goals of the university.

The Academic Affairs Committee was charged with studying the reports and making recommendations, which follow below; a contextualized discussion that led to them can be found in the accompanying AAC report dated April 27, 2017.

1. Under the new NEASC accreditation standards, departments will be required to address "educational effectiveness" (Standard 8, pp. 24-25). Each department will therefore be prompted to review its effectiveness in implementing the goals of the Writing Program. We charge the shepherds of the NEASC process with communicating with departments the need to reflect on their approaches to WI and Writing across the Curriculum in their program reports.

2. The CEITL organizational structure, under which the Writing Program is planned to reside, must provide adequate resources to provide faculty assistance and guidance to ensure a smoother and more effective implementation of our writing goals. Whether it should remain in this structure is to be reconsidered next year (see below, #5).

3. Even with the above recommendations, there must be a method to ensure accountability and a mechanism to eliminate WI courses that do not meet the requirements. As for the latter, we recommend a mandated sunset period, whereby every five years a department has to review and resubmit courses, with syllabi, that are to maintain the WI designation. Both the colleges and the WC would thus act in an *advisory capacity* to ensure that WI courses continue to meet the high standards of UNH's writing program. Courses not resubmitted would lose the WI

designation.¹ We feel that the original language of the charter (AAC Report p. 4) indicates such a review is warranted. A year of preparation will be warranted to ensure a smooth process; we therefore propose to begin in AY18–19.

4. Training for new faculty should include a segment on the Writing Program, its goals, Writing across the Curriculum, and Writing Intensive courses. Faculty teaching a WI intensive course for the first time should be strongly encouraged to undergo WI training, whether in the form of the many workshops offered by the Writing Program but unexploited by most faculty, or in an online training video.

5. The Faculty Senate should consider bringing the Writing Committee under its purview by making the Writing Committee a Faculty Senate Committee, similar to the Discovery Committee. Because this report comes at year's end, we believe it would be in the best interest of all to charge the Agenda Committee next year (AY17–18) with the task of examining the possibility.

4. Motion: The Faculty Senate endorses the above recommendations and authorizes the Chair to forward them to the appropriate administrators for consideration.

5. Senate action: Motion passed with 60 votes in favor, 1 vote opposed, and 1 abstention.

6. Senate chair's signature: 

Forwarded to the following on May 9, 2017

President Mark Huddleston

Provost Nancy Targett

P.T. Vasudevan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Ed Mueller, Director, University Writing Programs

All deans

All department chairs

¹ So as not to overwhelm either colleges or the Writing Program, a review of courses will somehow have to be staggered somehow so that 1/5 of courses would be subject to resubmission each year.