Composing a Curricular Circle: A WAC Program/Writing Center Embedded in Business

Abby Dubisar, Miami University
Abstract: This program profile describes how a writing center embedded within a major school of business negotiates its unique positionality. Tracking both the successes and shortcomings of a writing initiative tasked with improving the school’s quality of writing, the profile offers a number of insights on both WAC and writing center work, including how to enact curricular change, encourage faculty to incorporate writing into their classes, maintain programmatic continuity with frequent turnover of graduate student administrators, and consult effectively with undergraduate students. Several sites of analysis are addressed, as the initiative seeks to remain committed to its mission while encountering various challenges.

Introduction

This program profile describes what we see as a unique position for a combined Writing Center/Writing Across the Curriculum program, one that is embedded in a business school. While previous scholarship explores the role of writing centers in business schools (Mackiewicz; Griffin; Kuiper and Thomas; Valentine), we offer an in-depth examination of a program at Miami University that runs a writing center as part of a broader WAC initiative, specific to the business school. In our program, WAC and writing center work run concurrently and the same staff is tasked with both sets of duties, which often overlap. Miami University’s Howe Writing Initiative (HWI) assists both business professors in the teaching of disciplinary writing and business students in acquiring a variety of academic and professional writing skills. The program began in 1997, when Kate Ronald was hired to fill a new, endowed professorship. [1] [note1] Funded by Miami alumni donors Roger and Joyce L. Howe, the HWI’s charge since its inception has been to “improve the quality of undergraduate writing” in Miami’s Farmer School of Business (FSB). [2] [note2] As the Roger and Joyce L. Howe Professor, half of Kate’s teaching load is assigned to consulting with Business faculty on integrating writing more fully into their curriculum. Graduate students Caroline Dadas, Abby Dubisar, and Denise Landrum-Geyer, who served as Kate’s Assistant Directors in this project for two years, each received a course release from English for ten hours of work per week in the FSB (sometimes working 20 hours and not teaching in English certain semesters). [3] [note3]

Collectively known as the HWI team, the four of us consult with business faculty about how (and why) to incorporate writing into their courses; we visit classes to determine what kinds of writing will best help students learn; we help faculty devise writing assignments that mirror actual business writing contexts; we give presentations in classes about rhetorical contexts and strategies; we run a writing center where we work with students; we prep materials for the website we’ve developed for faculty and students; and we talk to faculty formally, at workshops or committee meetings, and informally, in the hallways, faculty lounges, or on sidewalks between the Department of English and the School of Business.

In this program profile, we describe the various locations of our work as both a WAC program and as a writing center, moving in and out and around the classrooms, offices, and meeting rooms of the FSB. We hope to explain some of the benefits of our location in the heart of a particular discipline and to expose some of the drawbacks to such a close relationship between writing specialists from English and professionals in Business. As we explore three sites of our work in Business—consulting with students, working with Business faculty, and serving as administrators—we will demonstrate the unusual and useful outcomes of working within a particular division. Ultimately, we argue that a combined approach to WAC and writing center work within a disciplinary college, despite the risks and drawbacks of such a hybrid approach that we describe, benefits both writing studies scholars and the disciplinary faculty, administrators, and students with whom they work. As discipline-based writing centers and WAC initiatives proliferate the inevitability of such combined approaches increases.

Embedded Writing Support: Challenges and Possibilities

The most hopeful strategy we’ve adopted is to consider ourselves sometimes at the center, sometimes at the margins of a curricular circle, but always moving, hoping to create more circles, more connections. Even while the program is embedded in the business school, we’ve tried to avoid becoming static entities. Unlike most WAC consultants, who come into a department or school from the outside, stay awhile, and check back later, we live right with the colleagues we are trying to help. Unlike most writing centers, where students drop in, get advice, and return to classes, we consult and co-teach many classes with business faculty, we know their assignments intimately, and we get to know students as they move through the core business curriculum and into their major courses. In addition, Kate sits on several influential curriculum and assessment committees, so the HWI’s mission extends beyond pedagogy to administrative decisions. In other words, we circle around Business, moving from working with students to contacting instructors in order to improve assignments. We move into classes with presentations on rhetorical triangles and we circle back to assessment plans that insist audience and purpose must play a major role. We consult with groups of faculty responsible for whole programs and we argue for manageable class sizes in order to include writing in those programs. Sometimes we persuade; sometimes we don’t. We have an inside view, we think, that eludes most WAC programs and writing centers. Sometimes that’s a real benefit that we’d like to suggest to other programs. At other times, we have more cautionary tales to tell. [4] [note4]

We like to use the term “embedded” to describe our positionality, a term that affords us a rich historicity, drawn from another context. The descriptor “embedded” was often used to describe how, in the 2003 Iraq War, journalists gained unprecedented access to the military but were also subject to restrictions on the contents of their reporting. In other words, while being embedded can provide a truly inside view, it can also distort the effectiveness of the person(s) who agree to become so completely immersed in their reporting or, in our case, teaching and consulting. Since the rise of embedded journalism in the early 2000s, however, the act of embedding (and using the term “embedded”) has become an increasingly common practice in writing centers, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and writing-in-the-disciplines initiatives on U.S. college campuses, as evidenced by the “Embedded Tutors” page on the University of Central Florida’s Writing Across the Curriculum website, the embedded writing specialists program at Oakland University (Land), and Jo Mackiewicz’s 2011 Journal of Business and Technical Communication article “Relying on Writing Consultants: The Design of a WID Program for a College of Business.” [5] [note5] Even while use of the term “embedded” has become more common, however, there seems to be little discussion of the benefits and
The problems we seek to address in this profile, then, are multiple. Foremost, we worry that our embeddedness has led to a loss of perspective in discussions of writing with our business colleagues. We sometimes wonder if we are not pushing business faculty to incorporate writing into their classes—and improve already existing writing assignments—to the extent that we should. Instead of doing the hard work of helping business professors design new writing assignments, we worry that we have become content with helping students work with problematic assignments when they visit the writing center. We are, of course, sympathetic to the goals of business classes and to the professors and students here. Our FSB faculty colleagues are dedicated teachers, committed to the goals of critical thinking and multiple perspectives that the entire university shares, even if those goals are taught in the context of the ethics of marketing or accounting rather than rhetorical analysis. However, much like the critique of embedded journalists in the Iraq War being too close to the action to adopt a necessary critical perspective, we worry that we are “inbed” with Business, entrenched rather than leading change. Given our close working relationships with our business colleagues and students, we also remain concerned that we have too readily responded to their requests for increased writing center hours, particularly following the establishment of Business 102, a scenario we will later describe in detail. While we believe working with business students to be a central part of our initiative, we worry that the WAC aspect of the HWI has become eclipsed by the demands of our small writing center. For years we have responded to requests for increased writing center hours; we realize that because much of our energy is now directed toward consulting with students, we have far less time to meet with faculty and observe classes—practices we believe are critical to maintaining our WAC program. In this program profile, then, we also interrogate the sustainability of a combined writing center/WAC model, using our localized example to demonstrate how easily either the WAC aspect of an initiative or the writing center aspect can overshadow the other, while also recognizing that both missions depend on each other and mutually benefit from the dual nature of our work.

Our Location: Embeddedness as Rhetorical Grounding

Our discussion of embeddedness also reflects the rhetorically-grounded practices that we enact at the HWI. We view embeddedness as akin to rhetorical situatedness, or the ability to recognize one’s relationship to fellow stakeholders, historical precedents, kairotic opportunities, possible constraints, and other mitigating factors. As Ede and Lunsford have argued, enabling writing centers to “serve as catalysts for educational reform” requires that we, as directors and consultants, must “take all the advantage that [we] can of [our] Center’s multibordered, multi-positioned status at [our] institution. Be a briccaloer, trickster, inventor” (36). Our embedded position allows us to assume such roles, as we—depending on the rhetorical situation—challenge borders, occupy multiple locations, invent new ways of interacting with students and faculty, and even occupy the trickster position when necessary. Because we are already embedded in the FSB, we often gain an inside glimpse into recurring rhetorical situations before we ourselves enter, allowing us to adjust our position more easily; we are, in other words, afforded a historical perspective of the goings-on in the business school even when we must think on our feet in day-to-day dealings.

Rhetoric also lies at the heart of our advice about writing in a business context; we have succeeded, we think, with teaching students to consider audience, purpose, context, and tone in the process of writing reports, executive summaries, and memos. We have succeeded far less well with faculty, who, as we will show, have accepted the language of rhetoric but not easily brought it to bear on their own discipline or their pedagogy. And although our proximity to the business curriculum means that we have had real impact on its structure and content, we still worry that we give in too easily to business demands for efficiency, correctness, and concision. In many ways, the stories that we tell here attest to the ways in which we have tried to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders/audiences that construct our work as writing center administrators, tutors, classroom teachers, and colleagues.

Given our program’s rhetorical grounding, in this profile we use scholarship on location as a lens for examining the benefits and drawbacks of our embeddedness. As Keller & Weisser argue, “Nearly all of the conversations in composition studies involve place, space, and location, in one way or another” (1). In particular, we believe that their delineations of the terms space, place and location help us frame how the HWI as an embedded entity composes a curricular circle. According to Keller and Weisser, places are bounded areas, whether material or metaphorical. Space is a product of place—the activity of “making room” (4). To be located, then, is to be positioned in relation to another place. The HWI occupies a particular place, or a bounded area: our office, 3064 FSB, is comprised of three connected rooms—two of which we use for consultations and meetings, and the other that serves as Kate’s office. In addition to housing the business classes we serve, the building where our office is located also represents the site of the FSB administration, making it a locus of interaction among students, instructors, and administrators, all people who are necessary in helping us make space for writing throughout the business school curriculum.

Our office, the actual place where we do most of our consulting, is designed with conversation in mind. The focal point of the room is a single table in the middle of the room where we conduct student consultations. As evidence of how our multiple circles of activity overlap, we also consult with FSB instructors at this same table; this is an activity that, we hope, eventually influences students in the sense that they will be the recipients of the writing assignments. Even when we have multiple consultations and move into an adjoining room, all discussion is easily audible to anyone in the office, leading to many productive interchanges among the various people who are present on any given time. In this sense, the fact that we are located in close proximity to business students, to the administration of the school (whose offices are right down the hall), and to each other, helps us establish a collaborative atmosphere where our interactions with all parties inform one another. Our office uses the intimacy of a small place to foster a space for conversation, unlike the tendency for many offices to “cubical off” interaction among its occupants.

We offer students approximately twenty hours per week in which they can visit the HWI office with an assignment. Through extensive advertising on campus, we have encouraged students to schedule appointments via email, after which we enter the appointments in Google Calendar so that all team members have access to the appointment data. While we ask students to indicate what assignment they will be working on, we primarily do so for our own sense of which courses are assigning writing. All HWI team members have received similar training, consisting of an orientation session at the beginning of his/her tenure (where they are introduced to common business jargon, among other concerns) and a considerable shadowing period that lasts for the first few weeks of a team member’s appointment. During this time, new members become familiar with a variety of assignments and get acclimated to reading kinds of writing that likely differ significantly from what they have come to know in the English Department. While this training takes an “on-the-job” form, we argue that our expertise stems primarily from our understanding of rhetoric. Once we learn the essentials of common business genres, we can effectively assess whether a student is meeting the demands of a particular assignment and the audience(s) indicated in that assignment.

In addition to consulting sessions, HWI team members also spend a significant amount of time in classrooms and talking with faculty about their
assignments. While a team member spends anywhere from 10-20 hours per week in the HWI, some of that time will be spent preparing for and delivering presentations to various business classes about how to approach writing assignments. The number of these visits varies widely per semester, and we have even felt conflicted about their effectiveness, as we discuss later. We also occasionally reach out to a professor whose student has come to the writing center and who could benefit from a discussion about the goals for a writing assignment. Additionally, some professors come to us asking to have a conversation about constructing or refining an assignment. While these conversations in/beyond our office take a variety of forms, in a sense we are always engaging in a common endeavor: asking FSB students, instructors, and administrators to locate themselves in relation to rhetoric and writing.

Circling the Center: Interaction with Students

Business students visit the HWI office for many of the same reasons that prompt students to visit any writing center. Some have a rough draft of an assignment that they would like to share with us. Others, unsure of how to begin their assignment, ask for our help in brainstorming. Still others are repeat visitors, coming in several times over the course of an assignment to fine-tune their writing. Regardless of where students are in their writing process, the HWI team encourages them to visit for a consultation. Because of our embeddedness, some students expect that HWI consultants are experts on business communication, an expectation that we find illustrative of widespread student perception that there are "correct" ways to approach their writing assignments and that we are privy to those ways. As mentioned previously, because our expertise stems from our understanding of how to read, analyze, and respond to rhetorical situations, we do not advertise ourselves as business experts. Rather, we are writing experts who can help students communicate their understanding of business-related concepts more effectively. Positioning ourselves as writing and rhetoric experts allows us to hold students accountable for what they are learning in their business classes while still being able to guide them in their understanding of how rhetoric is constitutive of how work gets done in the business world. What often reinforces this point the most is the feedback that we give students (either orally or in written form), which focuses on audience, purpose, and constraints, for example, instead of on business-related concepts. In the course of reviewing many business assignments on a regular basis, we do, however, develop a familiarity with some business principles; for this reason, we feel comfortable in telling students that the HWI can provide more specialized guidance than students may receive at the university-wide writing center. Although we hold approximately 20 student consultation hours per week in our office, the HWI's work ranges across multiple locations—our office, in classrooms, and in the hallways of the FSB—a reality that, we believe, allows us to adapt business genres to a particular rhetorical situation. In this way, while we incorporate a business-oriented discourse, we also temper it by tapping into a discourse of earnings with which they are already familiar, and then we proceed into a discussion about the importance of context and situation. We offer Aristotle's rhetorical triangle as a tool to help students think through all the aspects of a communicative event, emphasizing that they must always adapt business genres to a particular rhetorical situation. In this way, while we incorporate a business-oriented discourse, we also temper it by introducing rhetorical concepts such as constraints, writer ethos, and kairos. Business students have continued to use the rhetorical triangle as a heuristic throughout many of their classes, and we have even heard from one professor whose classes we visit that he frequently finds it written on the side of their exams. Although we struggle with the boundaries and tensions that present themselves as a result of our joint appointments in English and the School of Business, we also view small victories like the one above as evidence that spatial shifts can occur.

The diffuse nature of our work creates a different dynamic from writing centers that primarily focus on student consultations. Although our interactions with students reflect current writing center practice and theory, unlike many writing centers, meeting with students does not define our work (although, as we describe later, the writing center has come to be the dominant aspect of the HWI). Student consultations exist among a larger framework of support that the HWI provides to the FSB. Our movement between the co-centric circles of the classroom and our office "place" always runs the risk of losing students along.
the way. But the locations that we inhabit also provide a safe space for both faculty and students to talk about writing: a space embedded within the Business school but outside of its often competitive and high stakes classrooms, offices, and agendas.

Circles of Influence: Faculty Relationships

The HWI’s earliest work consisted not of student conferences but of faculty consultations, a practice we maintain. We aid faculty as they develop writing assignments and grading rubrics to fit course goals, brainstorming with them as they think through assignment ideas and draft the prompt that will later come back to us in their students’ hands. We often co-teach with faculty, coming in when they introduce a writing assignment to students and talking with students about what it means to write in a business context. These classroom visits emphasize the relationship we have with business faculty and let students know that these faculty members see writing as an integral part of their course experience—that writing is indeed already embedded in the FSB’s curriculum.

Faculty in the department of Decision Sciences (DSC)-Management Information Systems (MIS) were among the earliest members of the Farmer School of Business to work with us in the HWI, a relationship that first began in the 2001-2002 school year. All students in the FSB are required to take MIS 235 as one of their core courses. In this course, students learn to use programs such as Microsoft Excel or Structured Query Language (SQL) in order to analyze the tangible effects (like the monetary bottom line) and intangible effects (like the effect of implementing a new system on employee morale and efficiency) of different business decisions, which they must then be able to translate into a variety of common business genres for a variety of audiences. In other words, students in MIS 235 must view the impact of technologies on businesses rhetorically: Who will this decision affect? When will this effect become evident? Why will this effect impact the business in question? What decision should I make based on this information? How will I convey this information to somebody else?

One MIS 235 instructor has worked with the HWI since he first taught MIS 235 in 2005. When he began teaching MIS 235, the instructor provided short, ½ page assignment prompts to his students in which he provided vague directions such as “Charts should be easy to read with clear titles, labels of axis, and legends,” along with questions for students to answer. Students were not given any kind of rhetorical situation in which to frame their project, nor were they advised as to appropriate genres with which to deliver their information. After working with the HWI, the instructor developed lengthier prompts that created specific rhetorical situations for students to work within. For example, in the “SQL Email Homework” assignment, students are told that they are writing a last-minute email to “Pat Lafontaine,” the manager of a fictional mug company who must provide some additional information about the company’s recent sales and employee activities to his supervisors in an important meeting. Not only are audience, purpose, and genre concerns outlined, students are also implicated as writers in this situation: “Mr. Lafontaine is trusting that your answers are accurate and complete.” Rather than giving students questions to answer individually, the instructor has created a situation in which students must analyze the information in order to make recommendations based on their research, suggestions which will have consequences for Northwinds Mug Co. In addition to working with this instructor on developing more comprehensive assignments, the HWI teams visit every section of his MIS course at least once a semester to discuss business writing and rhetorical situations with him and his students. (To view examples of the handouts we use in class presentations [for MIS 235 and other classes], please visit the “Resources” page of the HWI website: http://www.fsb.miamioh.edu/programs/howe-writing-initiative/resources [http://www.fsb.miamioh.edu/programs/howe-writing-initiative/resources]).

While we appreciate the opportunity to visit courses such as MIS 235, we repeat ourselves each semester in all of the sections we visit: We provide students (and their instructor) with a basic introduction to business writing practices and rhetorical strategies in these classroom visits, an introduction that we can rarely complicate or discuss with students as they progress through the FSB curriculum. The HWI usually presents in 200-level introductory courses, which are populated by sophomores and juniors; we have little interaction with seniors as they complete their capstone course projects. While we have attempted to reach out to upper-level courses to in order to work with students close to graduation, the common perception within the FSB is that our concerns are more appropriate to include in 100-, 200-, and sometimes 300- level courses as introductory concepts. The HWI has become so embedded in the introductory business curriculum that we have few opportunities to go beyond a basic discussion of the rhetorical triangle into more complicated discussions of rhetorical ideas such as kairos, or the ways in which genres function as sites of activity, especially in business settings; business faculty see these terms as something “English-related,” outside of their specialty. Despite our best efforts, this is an area of the School of Business where we may have become too entrenched, an area where our embeddedness may be too stationary (perhaps even stagnant?). While integrating discussions of rhetoric and writing into lower-level classes allows us to provide a foundation on which to build, it is possible that these discussions have become associated with “introductory” knowledge that need not be taken up in upper-level courses. which allows faculty to cordon off rhetorical vocabulary as something the HWI introduces to students before they become familiar with “real” business terms. Because we co-teach with business faculty, we are able to bring rhetoric into their classrooms; by the same token, however, faculty see no need to discuss those terms once we leave, as they have not been integrated into business school vocabulary as fully as we would like. Our work is seen more as a bridge that can lead students to business discourse rather than an expansion of how students and faculty might discuss business concerns in the classroom together.

What’s more, the faculty we do work with rely on us semester after semester, rather than attempting their own presentations of business writing and rhetoric in their classes. Although we have worked with the instructor described above for many years, even co-hosting a workshop for new MIS 235 faculty with him, he still calls on the HWI to visit his students every semester rather than discussing writing and rhetoric with his students himself. The HWI has credibility as a team of writing experts in the FSB; faculty request our presence in their classrooms to reinforce the importance of writing to their students, even as we suggest that instructors are equipped to be writing experts for their students without our physical presence in class. We often have difficulty convincing faculty of their own expertise as writers; many business faculty have more experience with specific business genres and rhetorical situations than we do, yet they do not see how they can enter the writing space we’ve created in the Farmer School of Business in order to talk to their own students about writing. This case concerns us as an example of moving from being “embedded” in the FSB to “indeb” with our business colleagues: We give into FSB professors’ perceptions that discussing and assigning writing falls under the purview of the writing experts in the building.

Until faculty see themselves as able to teach writing and rhetoric, we cannot help them complicate their assignments or discuss writing pedagogy with them easily. Because the HWI is a small initiative within a larger program (the Farmer School of Business houses approximately one-third of all undergraduate students at MU, about 5,000 students), we cannot extend our efforts or develop new conversations about writing until our faculty allies begin to take over basic writing instruction in their own business courses. The HWI won’t stop offering assistance to faculty who take over the teaching of writing in their courses; instead, we will be able to expand our services and begin new conversations about writing with new business faculty.

The HWI encourages all faculty to contact us for classroom visits—we send out emails at the beginning of each semester to reassert our presence in the
business school, and we often remind faculty of our services when we see them around the building. When we begin to suggest to instructors that they take over writing and rhetoric instruction in the classroom, we can send a contradictory message, especially to new faculty: “we’re here to help you, but can you do it yourself?” Additionally, perhaps some of our repeat business from faculty comes from a sense of guilt they have if we don’t visit their classrooms; because we are so embedded in the FSB, our physical (and internet) presence reminds business faculty that they should incorporate more writing assignments in their courses, a nagging presence that can be partly assuaged when we are invited to talk about writing in their classes. The HWI is obviously implicated in the reliance faculty now have on us as writing experts in the School of Business, even while we try to expand our circle(s) of influence in different directions. In other words, we work to find a way to remain embedded (and mobile) in the School of Business without becoming entrenched (and immobile).

**Circling or Being Circled? Working with Administration**

According to David Russell in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History*, during the 1920s only a few American business schools had their own English departments but “such that do are very pleased with the results” (as cited in Bossard 128). The HWI is not a separate department within the FSB. We are not an independent entity. We are more connected to the work of the business school and our identity is more fluid. We are an “initiative,” a label that gives us the ability to be strategically ambiguous in our placement, aligning ourselves with various types of pedagogical work for different ends at different times. The ways we circle through and around conversations among business students, faculty, and administrators are noteworthy in the ways they position us as both outsiders and insiders, giving us privileged access to administrative processes yet at times making it clear that our power, connected to writing and rhetoric, can only take us so far. This is the mobility we want to maintain as an embedded program.

We utilize relationships with FSB administrators to listen, to negotiate authority, to help bring in writing and rhetoric where they might be absent, and to consult on curricular change. A major moment for us, which distinguishes the essential nature of relationships with administrators (specifically those engaged with the curriculum, finances, and academic affairs) on an ongoing and reciprocal basis, is the proposition, planning, and implementation of two introductory courses, Business (BUS) 101: Foundations of Business Decision Making (3 credits) and 102: Writing for Business Decision Making (1 credit). Through this process, discussed below, we learned that while our program is embedded, we must still maintain transparency and retain independence within the Farmer School of Business. We have learned from working with these courses, as they have been formulated and reformulated over a number of years, the importance of being accessible to administrators, inviting them into our space, being clear about what we do, and building relationships with them that make use of our authority as writing specialists, teachers, and designers of curricula. We had the best of hopes for these courses and what they could bring to students; they intended to introduce students to stakeholder theory, which in our terms meant students would come to understand rhetorical situations more deeply and could analyze contexts more critically.

As we discuss below, despite the successes we can measure in how BUS 101 and 102 have facilitated conversations with administrators and faculty about teaching writing, it is fair to consider these courses’ lifecycles relatively unsuccessful at this point (see Appendix 1 for the original course goals of BUS 102, the one-credit writing course. See Appendix 2 for the front matter of the original BUS 102 instructor’s guide).

How did we arrive at this place in our work with administration and what have we learned that helps us be more reflective? At what point did our theory of embeddedness break down in this rhetorical situation?

In 2003, the FSB dean tasked the Undergraduate Program Development Committee (UPDC), to which Kate had been appointed, to study and report back on “integrating” the school’s undergraduate curriculum. Such integration intended to create horizontal interaction between the school’s various departments (as opposed to vertical and separate “silos”) and to help students learn about business by focusing on processes rather than functions. From our perspective then, how to enable integration was clear: integration equaled writing. A focus on writing could productively bring the various departments together, demanding that students communicate their understanding through the composition of recommendations, proposals, and arguments; this focus could also help faculty “integrating” the school’s undergraduate curriculum. Such integration intended to create horizontal interaction between the school’s various departments (as opposed to vertical and separate “silos”).

By engaging with administrators and gaining recognition as a member of the FSB dedicated to undergraduate education and faculty advancement, we have been invited to participate in such curricular initiatives. Being a part of the UPDC made visible and valued how a writing specialist can contribute to change that has the potential to affect all areas of the school. It is extremely unique that a member of the English Department faculty, despite being embedded in the business school, is invited to serve on FSB committees, especially those that make core and influential decisions such as curricular changes. For us to sit on such committees widens our circle of influence. When writing specialists step out of the writing center and extend their reach to curricular change, all members involved in the collaborative transaction have the potential to benefit and re-affirm the embedded nature of the program.

Beyond the goal of an increased understanding of writing and rhetoric as a mode of integration, other hopes were layered onto BUS 101 and 102 as well, defined both by others and us. Those of us at the HWI hoped that students would learn the basics of rhetoric in these first-year classes, which would allow us to facilitate more specific and advanced discussions of rhetoric when presenting in classes in the future and in working with students one-on-one. What’s more, we could advocate to faculty the importance of their understanding and use of the rhetorical terms introduced in BUS 101 and 102 in upper-level classes, giving faculty the agency to discuss concepts that had previously been considered HWI territory. Administrators intended the courses to serve as the beginning point of integration for the undergraduate curriculum, giving them the ability to argue to outside program review boards that from the start of their academic careers, undergraduates were learning in an integrated environment. While those of us working at the HWI imagined these goals could conflict at times, we had faith that our collaborations with business faculty and administrators were not superficial and would lead to productive courses for students. We saw the development of the courses as a way to get more writing into the curriculum, our ultimate goal. Outlined below, this goal was ultimately subverted by faculty members and administrators working without our input.

Several years later, our reflection on the reality of these courses is not entirely optimistic. Yes, BUS 101 and 102 are currently being taught, but the intentions of those who initially conceptualized the courses, both HWI staff members and some FSB faculty, and the ways in which their ideas are being carried out are far different from the initial design. The courses were not funded as promised by upper administration; the money conversation became one that only administrators engaged in together, behind closed doors and among themselves. Related to these funding issues, BUS 101 has been designed for at least 60 students per section and is taught by tenure-track FSB faculty or full-time FSB instructors—some to a greater or lesser degree resisting this course assignment. During a BUS 101 planning meeting (and on a day when Kate could not attend the meeting), these faculty members decided they could not use writing in this course, a choice that immediately became shocking news to those who had designed the course initially. As this sequence of events unfolded, conversations in the HWI circled back to discussing our interactions with faculty members and the broad continuum that WAC work often highlights, ranging
from some instructors who consult with us and value writing in their courses to those who are disinterested or see writing as “not their job.” These faculty members who removed writing from BUS 101 were not among those who initially designed the course and worked with us. [7] These instructors instead developed a set of Power Point slides which they used as course content. Furthermore, as planning took place for the implementation of BUS 102 as a one-credit course, and money for the program remained absent, options for staffing the courses looked grim. The position was advertised to recruit individuals with Master’s degrees in English, Business, or related fields, who would teach nine sections a semester, with twenty students in each section. [8] FSB faculty assigned to teach 101 were not directly involved in this hiring process, as Kate reviewed applications and interviewed candidates with the FSB’s Associate Dean for Curriculum.

Ideally, those sections would be tied to BUS 101 sections, with “course content” shared between the courses. An early planning memo from November 2008, written by Kate and the HWI staff and addressed to the Associate Dean for Curriculum, imagined the courses’ relationship to one another as wholly intertwined, a four-hour course that connected course content with writing instruction. HWI staff wrote:

We believe that the best design for this course would be to combine 101 and 102. We are not altogether confident that a one-hour course taught by untenured faculty will receive the sort of attention from students required to fulfill the goals of the course as currently designed. Effective writing instruction would require scaffolded assignments that lead from small exercises to larger projects that would help students “write to learn” the concepts of the course in addition to “learning to write” the basic forms of business communication. A separation of the course would lose that important “writing to learn” component. The current exams are largely content driven and writing assignments directly tied to the course would increase the level of engagement with the learning outcomes originally designed for this course.

In reality the less desirable outcome outlined in the memo came to fruition. The two courses have become separate ventures over the last several years, with three dedicated FSB faculty members soldiering on teaching lecture-based sections of 101 with 250 students and minimal—if any—writing assignments, and more and more part-time instructors and graduate students from English teaching 102. Students take the courses during the same term, but 101 instructors do not meet regularly with 102 instructors and course content is not shared in a substantial way.

That said, despite the fact that the combining the courses was not implemented on the level we initially desired, individual faculty members have taken the initiative to combine course content. Abby’s notes from a meeting with 102 instructors while she was also teaching 102 during its second year of implementation state, “We are all for increased connection between 101 and 102. 102 students have complained about/expressed desire about the degree to which the classes are connected. The students want them to relate to one another more.” The notes describe how one 102 and one 101 instructor were collaborating to teach their courses in sync and how the 101 instructor, a senior faculty member, held the responsibility of selling other 101 faculty members on taking up the extra, yet very important, work of collaborating with the 102 instructors. This “bottom up” collaboration is heartening and provides an alternative way to imagine curricular reform.

The administrative oversight of the courses resides in Kate’s hands, with the assistance of a veteran HWI TA, an additional graduate student from English who also teaches 102 and holds an administrative appointment, working with 102 faculty to provide support and minimal faculty development. [9] This TA position is situated somewhat problematically, however, as the 102 instructors are all further along in their careers and are in some ways being supervised by a graduate student, not an ideal nor sustainable arrangement, but a cheap one the FSB is willing to fund. The HWI has taken on the role of coordinating BUS 102 faculty (who in order to be full-time must teach nine sections of the one-hour course), writing assignments together, designing assessment rubrics, and advising each other on how to manage an unmanageable number of students in a writing course that should, of course, be a three-hour class. Kate schedules the courses and acts as the instructors’ main supervisor, adding to her administrative duties with no additional compensation or support beyond the additional English TA.

In Writing in the Academic Disciplines, Russell indicated that often when English departments were asked to staff business writing courses, if the English departments would staff them at all, this teaching was often assigned to “low-ranking or part-time faculty…often women” (128). Because three full-time instructors (all women) have been hired to teach BUS 102, we in the HWI worry that we have simply reinscribed historical trends, once again moving from begin embedded to “inbed” with business school administrators.

Even though it may have seemed that our presence at the HWI was influential in bringing innovative pedagogies and ways to understand rhetoric as already present in business communication situations, we are looking at a situation where writing and rhetoric have again been outsourced, and to some of the lowest paid and most marginalized instructors. While the HWI continues to work toward new curricular arrangements and better configurations for the instructors of BUS 102, we remain deeply aware of the ethically problematic foundations of this course. That said, since Kate has been positioned as the leader of 102 and supervises its instructors, and as more and more sections are needed and thus staffed by graduate students from English, our influence increases since members of our team engage FSB students during their first semester of coursework and we have control over the curriculum, which we continually revise and develop by asking 102 instructors for feedback at staff meetings throughout the year, sharing assignment prompts and class activity ideas that get implemented in curricular materials, and providing ongoing support for instructors by helping them provide feedback on writing with effective and efficient strategies. Furthermore, one HWI TA regularly meets with the Associate Dean for Curriculum to provide regular updates on how 102 is going. (See Appendix 1 for the original course goals of BUS 102, the one-credit writing course. See Appendix 2 for the front matter of the original BUS 102 instructor’s guide).

Evolving and Widening Circles of Influence

Another factor to consider in terms of our evolving roles is that Caroline, Abby, and Denise were all graduate students during the time described in this piece, and all have since moved on to tenure-track jobs at other institutions. While serious efforts were made at the HWI to establish a sense of continuity—we always left notes and files for our successors, met with them as a group at the end of the school year, and staggered the hiring so that at least one graduate student returned the following year—a steady cycle of new members left gaps in follow-through. In particular, we believe that this situation harmed the WAC aspect of our work the most, considering that effective WAC work depends so heavily on personal relationships. By contrast, as we’ve described earlier, our writing center business grew each year, suggesting that the effective writing center practice that we passed down each year to new HWI team members has been implemented in curricular materials, and providing ongoing support for instructors by helping them provide feedback on writing with effective and efficient strategies. Furthermore, one HWI TA regularly meets with the Associate Dean for Curriculum to provide regular updates on how 102 is going. (See Appendix 1 for the original course goals of BUS 102, the one-credit writing course. See Appendix 2 for the front matter of the original BUS 102 instructor’s guide).
And so the curricular circle widens, not only for those of us who have moved to different institutions, but also for the work of the HWI. The HWI remains embedded in the Farmer School of Business and, like the reporters from the front, we worry that these stories and reports may be little more than spinning in circles. At the same time, however, we work always to understand our own complex positionalities. What would we change if we could do it all over again? We still believe that our greatest positive influence to integrate writing into the business curriculum comes through work with faculty. They have the opportunity to use writing in meaningful ways in their classes, demonstrating for their students that writing matters—that writing in the business world matters. The data gathered from a longitudinal study of FSB students, however, suggests that our collaborations with faculty have not yielded as much influence as our writing center work. Entitled the “Class of 2012 Study,” the HWI annually interviewed students who began as Freshmen in 2008—the same year that BUS 102 was implemented—to gain a sense of writing’s role in their education as FSB students (see Appendix 3 (appendix3)). As a result of this study, we know that our most productive interactions happen with students, many of whom come to us repeatedly and request our expertise more than faculty members or administrators.

Our most notable ongoing challenge, then, is that the FSB faculty and administrators—the stakeholders who we believe possess the greatest influence in endorsing writing as a priority—have not more fully integrated writing into the curriculum or culture of the FSB. Regardless, we remain encouraged by students’ willingness to seek us out and their trust in our expertise. Our biggest impact comes from working with students who want to work with us more, as many have requested BUS 102 be a three-hour course instead of just a one-hour course. Even while our embeddedness may not have wholly persuaded faculty and administrators to recognize the importance of writing, it has served us in reaching students, who join the conversation about the importance of writing with these requests. We still have persuasive work to do, clearly. We are hopeful that as FSB administrative turnover provides new leadership we will have new opportunities to be persuasive. One strategy we plan to enact and recommend for others in our situation is meeting new faculty members and administrators as soon as they join the institution, including asking for time to speak at a new faculty and staff orientation for FSB employees and taking the time to stop by faculty offices during office hours to begin establishing a relationship. We plan to do more of these meetings in pairs to teams to represent ourselves as a business writing community and to alleviate the loss of relationships that turnover can cause. Just as we teach students in tutorials and presentations, establishing relationships with our co-workers at the FSB can effectively translate into long-term networks and a collegial environment in which we are regularly consulted by FSB administrators and faculty members, not left out of meetings and decisions about writing.

For now, we work to revise the vision we have for ourselves as an embedded program: how will the WAC part of our work evolve in order to continue encouraging curricular change? How can we continue to impact institutional attitudes toward writing when we know we will always have plenty of writing center work to do with students? How can we maintain our working relationships with students as allies and writing experts and still take full advantage of being an embedded program? How might we design new research projects to provide us with data that informs future curricular decisions?

For those of us who have left to work at other institutions, we have further reflections and challenges as we fulfill the duties of our new tenure-track jobs. In her position, Caroline has participated in a new summer initiative entitled, Teaching in English: An International Faculty Advancement Program. As part of the initiative, Caroline teaches the writing seminar to faculty from China, Austria, and Russia, a teaching experience that draws on some of the experiences that she gained at the HWI. Because class sizes are kept to under ten people, Caroline finds that she can do a lot of the one-on-one writing consulting that she learned as an HWI consultant. In particular, she enjoys the opportunity to work with second language learners—an increasing population during her final years at the HWI.

Abby currently teaches a Business Communication course and developed her design of the three-hour course from the foundation of BUS 102. She also advises Rhetoric and Professional Communication PhD students researching WAC courses and Business Writing pedagogy issues, including research projects that collect instructor interviews to better understand the assumptions instructors make about students’ experiences with professional communication and business contexts. In these advising contexts, she continually reinscribes conversations and topics first initiated at the HWI, helping graduate students strategize how to most effectively work with faculty members concerned with business communication, both within English and Business, and beyond.

Denise coordinates a writing center in addition to her duties as an Assistant Professor of English. In this position, Denise works to expand the center’s services, focusing on interactions with faculty members across campus. Building on her work at the HWI that focused on working with faculty regarding teaching, she now holds consultations with faculty on their own writing projects and discusses writing assignment options with instructors looking to incorporate writing assignments into their courses. As part of the campus WAC committee, she works with two colleagues to survey and interview faculty across campus to better understand faculty attitudes about student writing and incorporating writing into their classes. Though many faculty members on campus are interested in this initiative, the WAC movement is facing an uphill battle due to budget constraints and faculty workloads, reiterating some of the budget-based resistance experienced at the HWI.

Therefore, as members of the HWI team, our contribution to the Farmer School of Business and our reflections about our influence and accomplishments will never be just about our institution. Of course, we must also consider how we can carry this reflection into our work in other circles of writing center professionals. The HWI is a program that relies on embeddedness, and we must be forthright with ourselves, our colleagues in business, and other writing center professionals about the ways in which being embedded has both helped and hindered the work we do. Being embedded allows for the development of complex relationships with colleagues, students, staff, and administrators in business, but it also leaves us, as writing experts, in danger of becoming so much a part of the School of Business that we are no longer able to effectively lobby for more integration of writing instruction. On the other hand, recognizing and reflecting on our embeddedness allows us to look for places within the FSB where we might strengthen our relationships or develop new alliances. Being embedded requires vigilance and ongoing reflection, which is important in any writing center or writing-across-the-curriculum program. The difference, though, is that this reflection keeps us from becoming stagnant. Reflecting on the historical moment we describe here pushes us forward to re-configure our embedded position, which we can also carry into other opportunities we face.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Business 102
Writing for Business Decision Making

Fall 2008
Welcome to Business 102! This course offers students interested in joining the Farmer School of Business and/or pursuing a career in business an introduction to several key forms of business writing. Together, we will work to determine not only the generic conventions for a series of business documents; we will also attend to the methods and practices of studying genre with the goal of being able to identify and reproduce new business writing genres on our own.

Or, in the clear, concise style of business memo, we will
- analyze some writing samples
- identify patterns of meaning, form, and style
- assess the rhetorical effectiveness of these documents (with regard to our purposes)
- practice creating our own versions

Course philosophy and goals.

This section of the course uses a rhetorical perspective, which means that we will always consider the relationships between rhetorical elements (writer, subject, purpose, context, audience, language and power) as well as their roles in the choices we make as writers. We will ask ourselves how, what, and especially why we write and use language in particular ways in business documents.

In addition, this course will emphasize two basic tenets of writing. First, we will focus on the process of writing rather than on the end product alone by incorporating exercises in planning, drafting, and revising. Second, we will remind ourselves that writing is not easy—nor should it be—and that moving beyond mediocrity takes time, effort, and practice, practice, practice.

A word about grading.

Although writing in the business world (and, by proxy, Miami’s Farmer School of Business) will eventually mean precision, correctness, and rhetorical savvy, the work of this course will emphasize preparation and practice. As noted above, learning new writing techniques requires time and repetition, especially in the beginning stages, so I don’t see the point of applying to your work the same standards I would apply to the work of senior marketing majors. That said, I simply refuse to accept sloppy work, documents that clearly want for proofreading, and/or excuses about why your assignment is not in my hands on the due date.

Texts and materials.

Required
- Loose-leaf paper or a notebook, a writing utensil, access to a printer.
- A folder, binder, or something similar to keep your course materials together.

Paper Format and Official Grading Policy.

Unless otherwise specified or okayed, formal projects should be word-processed (handwritten drafts will not be accepted), double-spaced with 1” (one-inch) margins, in either Courier or Times New Roman font, and presented in correct MLA format. Please let me know if you have questions about MLA format, I will be happy to recommend some resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-94 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>93-90 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-84 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B−</td>
<td>83-80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-77 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-74 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C−</td>
<td>73-70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69-67 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-64 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D−</td>
<td>63-60 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59-0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Requirements.

Your course grade will be determined by your attendance and participation, your in-class writing and assigned drafts for homework, your efforts during peer response (together, 25% of your grade), and five “formal” writing assignments as described below (15% each for 75% of your grade).

Writing Assignments
1. An e-mail correspondence with two difference audiences
2. A summary of a BUS 101 case or an article from the NY or WSJ
3. A business memo
4. A business letter or cover letter (in which you request or demand something)
5. A revision of one of the above assignments for use in your writing portfolio

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend class. Period. More than two (2) unexcused absences (two weeks of class) will result in your participation grade being lowered by a letter grade (a B to a C, for example). In addition, you will not receive credit for that day’s work. If you miss more classes due to long term or chronic illness, or because of an emergency situation, please let me know and we can work out a way to keep you in step with the class requirements.

In addition, you will be expected to complete all assignments on time and to participate in class discussions and activities. Participation means that you have completed the assigned work for the class, can actively contribute to our discussions, and can participate fully in in-class activities by bringing your own writing (when required) and responding to the work of others. Short in-class writing assignments and exercises will also be included in this part of your grade.

APPENDIX 2

Farmer School of Business

Business 102
Teacher’s Guide

Table of Contents

| Introduction                  | 3 |
| Suggested Weekly Plan         | 4 |
| Suggested Module Plan         | 4 |
| General Suggestions/Themes    | 5 |
| Module 1: Writing for a Business Audience | 6 |
| Module 2: Writing Electronically and Publicly | 8 |
| Module 3: Executive Summary   | 11 |
| Module 4: Team Writing        | 12 |
| Module 5: Editing             | 14 |
| Bibliography                  | 15 |
| Appendix                      | 16 |

HWI handouts

- Aristotle’s Triangle
- Employers on Writing
- Writing in a Business Context
- Using Bullet Points in Business Writing
- Writing Memos Effectively and Efficiently
Introduction

Welcome to Business 102. This course will build upon the framework of stakeholder theory by asking students to consider different stakeholder perspectives in business communications. Using writing as a mode of learning, this writing module provides a space for students to apply the concepts they are learning in Business 101 while learning key business communication skills and forms that will help students successfully make the transition from familiar academic and personal writing to business writing.

Due to the challenging course load, we’ve designed this course so that instructors could choose to meet in larger 60-person sections every other week. That results in five 3-week modules. This guide will provide suggestions for planning and teaching 102, but of course, your course is your course and it is our hope that you adapt these materials to suit your needs in the classroom.

With the adoption of a new textbook in the fall semester, we will need to revise the content of BUS 101. Of course, we all look forward to our new 101/102 team shaping these courses together. Your BUS 102 course is open to interpretation and collaboration with your coordinating 101 instructors, but we have identified some basic business writing forms that we believe all students should be introduced to in BUS 102 so that we may provide students with a consistent experience across many sections. These forms are the memo, the email, the executive summary, the team writing project, and the revised piece. I have put them in this order here in this guide; however, this guide should be read as a resource and not a prescriptive plan for your semester.

One of the other major goals of this course is placing writing assignments in context, so that students can consider the rhetorical effects of their choices. In other words, directing assignments to specific audiences (and often, several different audiences) is an important aspect of this course. We have often found that by narrating an assignment and placing students in a role within the context of the assignment helps to achieve this goal. To that end, we have often spoken to FSB students about Aristotle’s triangle and the importance of considering the writer (or speaker), audience, and knowledge at play in any communicative act.

Suggested Weekly Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Module 1</th>
<th>Module 2</th>
<th>Module 3</th>
<th>Module 4</th>
<th>Module 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>large class meeting</td>
<td>Assign module project</td>
<td>Review module project 1</td>
<td>Review module project 2</td>
<td>Review module project 3</td>
<td>Review module project 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Short in-class writing, Peer review</td>
<td>Short in-class writing, Peer review</td>
<td>Short in-class writing, Peer review</td>
<td>Short in-class writing, Peer review</td>
<td>Short in-class writing, Peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small class meeting</td>
<td>Module 1 project due, assign module project 2</td>
<td>Module project 2 due, assign module project 3</td>
<td>Module project 3 due, assign module project 4</td>
<td>Module project 4 due, assign module project 5</td>
<td>Module project 5 due, class review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Module Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Writing Content/Form</th>
<th>Business Topic/101 Coordinating Topic, Reading, or Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Writing for a Business Audience Memo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
<td>Writing Electronically &amp; Publicly Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Team Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 5</td>
<td>Editing Revision of memo &amp; executive summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Suggestions/Themes
PUBLIC WRITING: At the Howe Writing Initiative, we often tell students that “all of your writing is entirely public.” With the instantaneous dissemination of information over the Internet and email servers, it is more important than ever for students to own their writing choices and always represent themselves and their company well.

CONTEXT: Business writing is necessarily contextual. By focusing on the rhetorical context of business writing, students learn to identify the audience, purpose, circumstances, concerns, and rhetorical aims that they will encounter in the work world, and they learn to develop strategies for addressing these aspects of writing.

RHETORICAL AIMS: In contextualizing assignments, students should keep in mind the desired outcomes/goals/results/actions of the business interaction. Likewise, what rhetorical aims are at play? Is this piece intended to persuade, direct, investigate, etc.?

TONE: Because tone is so important in business writing, before the first revision workshop day, ask students to freewrite for a few minutes about how tone affects one’s ability/willingness to take feedback. A short discussion about how important tone is to business communication could be introduced here and revisited throughout the semester.

COLLABORATION: A team writing project much more accurately reflects business practice than a single-authored piece. A workshop class assists students in learning how to write collaboratively, and establishes a model for the types of supervisory guidance a student may encounter in business.

CONCISENESS: Students often have trouble negotiating the conciseness required of business writing and the thoroughness needed to effectively argue/persuade/inform, etc. Business students also often abuse the thesaurus in an attempt to sound like a professional. Using the thesaurus to find words with which one is not familiar can easily lead to mistaken tone because students are often unaware of the connotations of unfamiliar words. Additionally, the audience determines the level of sophistication or specific terminology a writer can use in business communication.

DESIGN: At the Howe Writing Initiative, we often say that “white space is nice space” to direct students’ attention to the appearance of their documents. Beyond the crowding of a page, as you move through different forms of business writing, your discussion of design may increase. The use of bullet points and headings may begin with the memo, but if you choose to have students create a PowerPoint presentation, for example, you may want to go into much more detail regarding design.

ETHICS: Students will discuss ethics as part of Business 101, but certainly issues of plagiarism, discrimination, exaggeration, manipulation, etc. arise in business communication.

APPENDIX 3

Interview questions:

Freshman Year [During/immediately after taking Business 102]

1. During class, what did your BUS 102 instructor emphasize about business writing?
2. How would you describe business writing in general?
3. In what ways, if at all, have you applied what you’ve learned in BUS 102 to your other classes (both business and non-business courses)?
4. Think about one of your writing assignments in BUS 102 (preferably one you revised):
   a. What was the name of the assignment?
   b. Describe the assignment.
   c. What decisions did you make regarding audience, purpose, and/or form as you wrote and revised that assignment?
   d. What did you learn from this assignment?
   e. In what ways do you think this assignment applies to a real-world business situation?
5. What was the most useful assignment in BUS 102? Why?
6. What was the least useful assignment in BUS 102? Why?
7. What was the most useful strategy you learned in BUS 102? Why?
8. What was the least useful strategy you learned in BUS 102? Why?
9. How would you describe the differences between business writing and writing in your first-year English courses?

Interview Questions:

Senior Year [Immediately prior to graduation]

1. Please state your name, class year, and major.
2. What do you remember about writing in BUS 102?
3. In what ways, if at all, have you applied what you’ve learned in BUS 102 to your other business classes?
4. What specific writing assignments did you do the semester of _____ (e.g. spring 2010)?
5. Which writing assignment helped your learning the most?
   a. Describe the assignment.
   b. What decisions did you make regarding audience, purpose, and/or form as you wrote and revised that assignment?
   c. What did you learn from this assignment? (both business principles and writing skills)
   d. In what ways do you think this assignment applies to a real-world business situation?
   e. How much did this assignment count towards your final grade?
6. Which writing assignment from last semester was least helpful?
   a. Describe the assignment.
   b. Why was it not as helpful for you?
c. How much did this assignment count towards your final grade?
7. How would you describe business writing in general?
8. How would you describe business writing as it pertains to your major?
9. How important is writing in the business professions? In your major? In the FSB?
10. What do you think Business faculty perceptions are about writing?
   a. How helpful have faculty been regarding writing instruction and assignments?
   b. How clear are the assignment sheets for writing projects?
   c. In what ways do Business faculty assess your writing (rubrics, written notes, etc.)?
   d. How helpful are these forms of assessment in terms of developing your business writing skills?

Notes

1. We wonder, with the perspective of time, if the goals of Kate’s position and the HWI in general would have been more clearly defined if the English department had been more involved in its creation. In other words, because Kate’s position and the establishment of the HWI were spurred by an endowment, the English department had minimal input in the design of the HWI. (Return to text. [#note1_ref])
2. In 2007, the Howes again donated money to Miami University to support writing, this time by establishing a university-wide writing center, called the Howe Writing Center and located in the campus library. In 2012, since the time of writing, Kate became the director of the campus-wide Howe Writing Center, no longer directing the HWI. (Return to text. [#note2_ref])
3. During the time frame described in the article, earning an assistantship in the HWI was a desirable placement within Miami’s PhD program. After undergoing an application process, candidates were hired by Kate and trained in-house once their assistantships began. At the time of writing, Caroline, Abby, and Denise have all graduated from Miami and moved on to tenure-track positions at institutions around the country. For the sake of representing our work at the HWI (which is currently ongoing by other graduate students), we have composed this profile in the present tense and draw upon our current professional contexts at the end of the profile. (Return to text. [#note3_ref])
4. For other hopeful and cautionary tales about the HWI’s work, see Shaver (2009) and Ronald, Beemer, Shaver (2010). (Return to text. [#note4_ref])
5. While Mackiewicz does not use the concept of embeddedness in her article, her program has a hybrid, integrated design, created by collaboration between the College of Business and Writing Studies program at Auburn. Called the Business Writing Prototype, graduate students trained in business communication were assigned to Business class sections to work with students on a semester-long writing project. As Mackiewicz writes, “These writing consultants provided students with one-on-one conferencing and substantial written feedback (along with rubric ratings that faculty used in calculating assignment grades). Their extensive work with students and students’ writing lessened the workload for COB faculty” (230). (Return to text. [#note5_ref])
6. Generally speaking, stakeholder theory is the business management framework that privileges morals and values, highlighting the implications of business decisions and practices for various individuals and groups associated with the decision, not just the investments of stockholders. Under this model, businesses are thus tasked with creating value for stakeholders, not just increasing the bottom line for stockholders only. (Return to text. [#note6_ref])
7. BUS 101 started one academic year before BUS 102, and an HWI TA attended classes, read the textbook, and developed pedagogical materials for 102. Since FSB faculty members already on staff taught BUS 101, it didn't present the initial staffing needs like 102. (Return to text. [#note7_ref])
8. Kate’s original idea for staffing 102 was to create attractive teaching positions for 5th-year PhD students in English who had reached the end of their funding and had several years of experience teaching writing. However, since English didn’t have an abundance of TAs, the job ad was posted publicly and invited applicants with business or English credentials. (Return to text. [#note8_ref])
9. The TA observes 102 instructors and provides teaching feedback, organizes faculty meetings for 102 instructors to exchange teaching strategies, and meets regularly with the Associate Dean for Curriculum to provide updates on the course, among other duties. (Return to text. [#note9_ref])

Works Cited


“Composing a Curricular Circle” from Composition Forum 30 (Fall 2014)
Online at: http://compositionforum.com/issue/30/miami-u.php
© Copyright 2014 Caroline Dadas, Abby M. Dubisar, Denise Landrum-Geyer, Kate Ronald.
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License. [http://compositionforum.com/issue/30/miami-u.php]