

To: Sue Abbotson, Chair of UCC
 From: Mike Michaud, Chair of Writing Board
 Date: 5/14/21
 Subject: Annual Report (2020/2021)

I am pleased to submit this report summarizing the activity of the Writing Board (WB) and Writing Board Chair for the academic year 2020/2021.

Writing Board Membership (2020/2021)

The table below indicates Board membership for this past academic year and the year ahead. The numbers in parentheses indicate year of service within a two-year term.

Position		2020/2021
Chair		Mike Michaud (1)
Director of (Writing)		Becky Caouette
Director (Writing Center)		Clarissa Walker
Director (FCTL)		Chris Marco
Faculty (FAS) (2) -- 1 Math/Science		Peter Little (2) & Andrea Del Vecchio (2)
Faculty (FSEHD) (1)		Martha Horn (1)
Faculty (SOSW) (1)		Cary Donaldson (2)
Faculty (SOM) (1)		Michael Casey (2)
Faculty (SON) (1)		Deborah Kutonplon (2)
Faculty (Adams Library)		Tish Brennan (1)
Faculty (Comp/Rhet)		Mike Michaud

Blue = Ex Officio
 Green = Rotating

Summary and Reflection

The Writing Board's annual Faculty Development Workshop (FDW), held each year during the January break, *almost* made it to 25 consecutive years. With the challenges RIC and the state of Rhode Island faced during this frustrating, discouraging, debilitating, and exhausting COVID year, however, the lights went out for the Writing Board and so we missed our 25th annual FDW. Perhaps, though, it was time. More on this in a moment, but since the Writing Board was not active this year I have no news to report and will offer, instead, a few words of reflection on the status of writing pedagogy at RIC going forward (i.e. the Writing Board, Writing in the Disciplines [WID], etc.). I'll start with a few words about WID, as this is the college's most substantial

commitment to helping all students across campus learn to write effectively for college and beyond.

In her 2017 assessment report on WID, then-coordinator Dr. Maureen Reddy notes a number of concerns about the college's efforts to satisfy its WID requirement and offers a series of recommendations, most of which argue for the need for greater clarity in the requirement and greater visibility about WID, itself. The assessment, the first conducted on WID since it was created around 2011/2012, underscores the challenges the college has faced with fulfilling its obligations as far as WID is concerned. These challenges are structural and begin with the creation of the WID requirement itself and the decision to house WID within the Committee on General Education (COGE) which, until recently, was chaired by a faculty member with no specific knowledge of writing pedagogy and little interest in listening to those with such knowledge. The problems Dr. Reddy identifies with WID circa-2017, especially the fact that faculty were, in general, often unclear and confused about WID, are the direct result of the earlier decision to locate WID within COGE.

In response to Dr. Reddy's report a new unfunded position was created, the interim Writing in the Disciplines coordinator. For three years I have worked in this position to try to create greater knowledge about and visibility for WID. I was the obvious choice for this work, as I have served as the Writing Board chair since 2012 and have run an annual faculty professional development summer seminar on writing pedagogy which has engaged over 80 and part-time faculty members since 2011. In the fall of 2020 I delivered my final report to COGE, updating the committee on the status of my work. Throughout the 2020/21 year, I have continued to work in a limited capacity to wrap up my work as interim WID coordinator. To the best of my knowledge, this position is now kaput. Further, without funding for the Writing Board this year, my work leading the board, which consists largely of planning and facilitating professional development for faculty, also came to an end. And, of course, the summer seminar came to an abrupt halt in summer 2020 and is also not running in 2021. In short, my decade-long work as the college's Writing Across the Curriculum or Writing in the Disciplines expert has now come to a close. WID still exists, but is now far from anyone's mind and there are no resources to support it. The Writing Board is, for now, shuttered. Where do we go from here?

It is my hope that if we go anywhere, we don't go backward. What we had before COVID with regard to WID/Writing Board, etc. was a structurally dysfunctional arrangement. I was a summer seminar leader reporting to the FCTL but compensated on a conditional yearly-renewal basis by the Provost. I was the chair of a board charged with providing professional development on writing pedagogy that came with some limited funding and adequate release time for me to do my work, but here I reported to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. And I was interim-Writing in the Disciplines Coordinator with no compensation who reported to COGE. No one but me could see the forest for the trees. And the forest was, as I've tried to explain, incoherent.

I began to raise my concerns about the need for a conversation about the confused state of affairs as regards the work of teaching writing in the disciplines effectively at RIC several years

ago but, in particular, tried to describe the structural problems that exist in my 2019/2020 annual report to UCC. A year has gone by and nothing much has changed. It has been a very difficult year for the college and I understand this. Many other higher-level concerns needed to be prioritized. It is my hope, though, that at some future point we can have a conversation about a path forward for WID, the Writing Board. I have some ideas about how we might begin and where we might go. We have a strong foundation to build on, with almost 25 years of support for the Writing Board and a decade's worth of additional fragmented but, in my estimation, often effective funding for professional development on writing pedagogy. We should not forget the considerable work that has already been done to support faculty as they support students on writing at Rhode Island College.

For myself, I have, over the past decade, begun to shift my scholarly energy in the direction of WAC and WID, becoming conversant in the field's literature, participating in its scholarly conversations, attending a multi-day seminar for WAC leaders at the University of Denver in 2019, and traveling with a small cohort of RIC faculty to share our good work at an international WAC conference in 2018. I hope that I can continue to engage in this work. It was my service to the college that drew me in these scholarly directions in the first place. Most of all, I hope that if and when we do renew our commitment to the Writing Board and WID we can begin anew and rethink how we structure our writing initiatives and the work of those who carry them out. We absolutely cannot simply go back to what we had before.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts and for the many years of support and funding the college has allocated to writing pedagogy at RIC.