



David Grant &lt;david.grant@uni.edu&gt;

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## Writing at UNI

10 messages

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**David Grant** <david.grant@uni.edu>

Thu, Jan 31, 2019 at 3:59 PM

To: Jim Wohlpart &lt;jim.wohlpart@uni.edu&gt;

Cc: John E Fritch &lt;John.Fritch@uni.edu&gt;, Jennifer Cooley &lt;jennifer.cooley@uni.edu&gt;, Amy Petersen &lt;amy.petersen@uni.edu&gt;, James Mattingly &lt;jim.mattingly@uni.edu&gt;, Mark Nook &lt;mark.nook@uni.edu&gt;, Patrick Pease &lt;Patrick.Pease@uni.edu&gt;

Jim,

I write to let you know that Kim Baker and I presented on the WEC Institute at last week's General Education Revision meeting. I think the group was impressed with the possibilities, though the greatest spark energy seemed to be at the moment we explained how WEC is not really part of the General Education program at Minnesota. While I do not know how this may affect their decision-making overall, I do think they were relieved to hear that they might only be responsible for retaining our sole writing course requirement.

This puts the Writing Committee, I think, in a difficult position: the exact same one it has been stuck in since its re-start in 2009: lots of ideas liked by everyone but zero power to implement them. I urge you, then, to heed the committee's suggestion to the Faculty Senate and create a position that can implement what we know are not just high-impact practices, but practices that support higher learning, its assessment, and all three areas of our commitment to students. I, along with the rest of the committee, am happy to consult with you on this and share what I know as part of my doctoral training, eight years of practice here on campus, and continued professional development at workshops, conferences, and programs across the nation. I know the Writing Committee members have additional perspectives that can provide context, experience, and further insight.

In support of this, I want to bring to your attention the attached piece by Beth Wardle, a sort of behind-the-scenes architect of WEC and a strong leader in WAC generally. Note her focus on supporting writing as a theoretical and intellectual enterprise, not a basic skill that can be either taught or assessed without training. Little can be done with faculty by giving them "cool tips and tricks," just as little can be done this way with student writers. The responsibility for creativity and invention lies with those learning, not those teaching. As Dr. Cyphert said to the Faculty Senate, this is complex stuff that requires specific training. While Dr. Wardle praises Miami in her piece for its long history of writing across its curriculum, this is something we cannot say about UNI. As a result, our efforts are not just inadequate, but perhaps wasteful of those few dollars we have to invest.

The Senate has affirmed that we need not just a basis for writing in the General curriculum, but a link between that and writing in the majors. My money is on the HLC review pointing this out more or less explicitly as we present our case that all UNI students can communicate well. Moreover, I think students and parents can tell the difference between campuses that do this and those that do not. In fact, small schools that saw enrollment increases in the past few years did so as UW-Eau Claire has done, through its academic reputation.

I am always willing to consult with you or other academic leaders in the effort to promote UNI's academics and how quality writing plays a critical role. Thank you for the opportunity to learn about WEC at Minnesota. They have an interesting STEM writing workshop that asks for teams by mid-February if that is of interest to our STEM efforts. I wish you the best as we head to the last half of winter.

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"It isn't the rebels who cause the troubles of the world, it's the troubles of the world that cause the rebels." -- Carl Oglesby

 **You Know More Than You Think Wardle.pdf**  
146K

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**Jim Wohlpart** <jim.wohlpart@uni.edu>

Thu, Feb 7, 2019 at 8:21 AM

To: David Grant <david.grant@uni.edu>

Cc: John E Fritch <John.Fritch@uni.edu>, Jennifer Cooley <jennifer.cooley@uni.edu>, Amy Petersen <amy.petersen@uni.edu>, James Mattingly <jim.mattingly@uni.edu>, Mark Nook <mark.nook@uni.edu>, Patrick Pease <Patrick.Pease@uni.edu>

Thank you David. I will forward this to Deans' Council for discussion.

Jim

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**David Grant** <david.grant@uni.edu>

Sat, Feb 9, 2019 at 11:16 AM

To: Jim Wohlpart <jim.wohlpart@uni.edu>

Cc: Amy Petersen <amy.petersen@uni.edu>, James Mattingly <jim.mattingly@uni.edu>, Jennifer Cooley <jennifer.cooley@uni.edu>, John E Fritch <John.Fritch@uni.edu>, Mark Nook <mark.nook@uni.edu>, Patrick Pease <Patrick.Pease@uni.edu>

Thank you for your support. I do want to mention that John Fritch has a memo from me outlining the various duties such a position might cover. That document basically summarizes and synthesizes the long conversation we have had over the years. Have a good weekend!

Dvd

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**Jim Wohlpart** <jim.wohlpart@uni.edu>

Tue, Feb 26, 2019 at 12:22 PM

To: David Grant <david.grant@uni.edu>

Cc: John E Fritch <John.Fritch@uni.edu>, Jennifer Cooley <jennifer.cooley@uni.edu>, Amy Petersen <amy.petersen@uni.edu>, James Mattingly <jim.mattingly@uni.edu>, Mark Nook <mark.nook@uni.edu>, Patrick Pease <Patrick.Pease@uni.edu>

Dear David,

Thank you for your patience with this request/proposal. As you note, this conversation has been happening since 2009. What I understand from feedback across the campus is that there is not interest in putting the resources behind this proposal; note that the Inside Higher Ed piece that you attach states that they have a large endowment to make writing

across the curriculum happen. We have neither available funds from the GEF nor any endowment to support this work. To put resources into this work would require us to stop doing something else.

Beyond the resource question, though, is the fact that our campus simply does not embrace this proposal (as evidenced by the fact that the conversation has been happening for ten years, with no traction, and by the fact that I hear from folks across campus that there is not interest). I believe it is time to let this proposal go.

In terms of how we will fare with HLC, we are actually doing a very good job of assessing the writing skills of our students at the end of their programs. What I propose is that we let our culture of assessment take hold and then we decide, based on feedback from real data on the writing skills of our students, how we engage the campus in a conversation about writing.

In the meantime, I believe, we need to sunset this proposal.

Thank you.  
Jim

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