



**Assessment of the  
University Writing Program  
Year Two: 2004-2005**

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**ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM  
YEAR TWO: 2004-2005  
Executive Summary**

The second year of the three-year phase-in of the University Writing Program moved according to plan, as two-thirds of the incoming freshmen were randomly assigned to participate in the program, and 92 writing in the disciplines courses were offered during the academic year. The Writing Program was designed to promote student engagement, scholarship, and critical thinking skills through the development and practice of good writing. From students' self-reports collected in pre- and post-course surveys, it appears that the Program is making great strides in achieving its goals.

***High School Writing Experiences***

- Students come to GW with little experience doing the types of writing that are expected in college. Typically, their high school writing consisted of brief reports in which they stated and supported their opinion and summarized and synthesized information. Their experience writing long research papers is limited: Only about one-third had written at least one paper that was more than ten pages, and one-third had not written any papers over ten pages. Their most frequently used source for information was the Internet. The high school writing experiences of SEAS and SB students differ in some areas from those in CCAS and ESIA (see Tables 1-5).

***University Writing 20***

- Overall, three-quarters of the students were engaged in the course and rated their level of intellectual challenge as high. Most thought they had learned a great deal in the course and thought their writing had improved. The skills most frequently cited were researching, both locating sources and using them effectively, and developing and backing up an argument (see Tables 6-8).
- Students were very positive about their instructors teaching UW 20 and the quality of instruction. Instructors' comments on their work were informative, especially the individual meetings where they were able to address specific details in their paper. Having a research librarian assigned to each section increased students' comfort with the library and improved their research skills (see Tables 9-10).

***Writing in the Disciplines (WID)***

- Students found the WID courses engaging and thought their courses were intellectually challenging. The writing component helped many of them learn and understand the content material presented in the course. Three-quarters of the students thought they put forth more effort in the WID course in comparison to their other courses (see Tables 16-17).
- At the end of the course about three-quarters of the students thought their writing was excellent or very good. Many observed that writing in a new way had comprised a significant intellectual challenge, and the writing assignments helped them learn the course material, forcing them to reflect on the material and to develop their own ideas about it (see Table 18).
- Students were very positive about their instructors and about the quality of instruction they received (see Table 19).

- Having students submit drafts and obtain detailed feedback on the drafts and final writing samples was an important component of the WID courses. Students commented that the extensive revision process gave them a chance to reflect more on their topics and to receive advice on their mistakes (see Table 19).
- A comparison of the grades earned by the UW 20 (pilot) group and sophomore CCAS and ESIA sophomores who did not take UW 20 (control) revealed that those who took UW 20 earned higher grades (mean grade=3.56) compared to the control group (mean grade=3.38) (see Table 20).

An assessment of UW 20 writing samples and a comparison of the actual writing samples between those who took and did not take UW 20 is planned for the near future.

## ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM YEAR TWO: 2004-2005

The second year of the three-year phase-in of the University Writing Program moved according to plan, as two-thirds of the incoming freshman class were randomly assigned to participate in the program, and writing-in-the-disciplines courses were developed and made available for those who took UW 20 their freshman year. A total of 109 sections of UW 20 and 92 sections of WID courses were offered during the academic year 2004-2005. Approximately 1,600 freshmen, representing all the undergraduate schools enrolling freshmen, registered for a UW 20 class, and 449 of the original pilot group of 685 students enrolled in a WID course<sup>1</sup>. Writing-intensive courses were open to students who had and had not taken UW 20 during their freshman year, creating a “control” group with whom UW 20 students could be compared.

The Writing Program was designed to promote student engagement, scholarship, and critical thinking skills through the development and practice of good writing. From students self reports collected in pre- and post-course surveys, it appears that the Program is making great strides in achieving its goals<sup>2</sup>.

The data collected for year two assessment includes the following:

***For UW 20:***

- Survey of students’ high school writing experiences (distributed and collected in UW 20 courses taught in the spring semester)
- End-of-semester UW 20 evaluation (distributed in UW 20 courses taught both fall and spring semesters)
- Research papers of students enrolled in UW 20 in the spring semester (not all sections and/or students turned in papers)

***For WID courses:***

- Beginning of course survey asking students why they enrolled in the course (distributed and collected in fall and spring semester courses)
- End-of-semester WID evaluation (both semesters; not all faculty distributed surveys)
- Final drafts of a writing assignment in course (not all courses represented)

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<sup>1</sup> The pool of UW 20 students who were eligible to take WID courses was smaller than the original pool, as some students had to repeat UW 20, some did not sign up for a WID course, and a small group did not return to GW. Sixty-five percent of the eligible students enrolled in WID courses.

<sup>2</sup> An assessment of writing samples collected from the final research papers required in UW 20 is planned for the summer of 2006.

## University Writing 20 Students' High School Writing Experiences

Students enrolled in UW20 in the Spring 2005 semester were asked to complete a questionnaire about their high school writing experiences<sup>3</sup>. Of the 822 students registered for a UW 20, 737 completed the survey, representing 90% of the population.

### *Types of writing performed in high school:*

The survey included ten types of writing assignments students may be expected to produce in high school (e.g., book reviews, research papers, literary analyses, lab reports). Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which these writing assignments were assigned<sup>4</sup>.

Only three types of writing assignments were required at least monthly: literary analysis (81% reported it was assigned very often or often), analytical essay (67%), and laboratory report (55%). Only 40% were assigned a research paper on a monthly basis (see Table 1). Other types of writing, such as personal narratives, news reporting or feature writing, and book reviews, were assigned occasionally or not at all.

Although only 18 freshmen enrolled in SEAS completed the survey, the findings suggest that the types of writing assignments and the frequency with which they were produced were different for the SEAS freshmen. In high school, two-thirds (64%) of the SEAS students wrote lab reports at least monthly compared to slightly more than half of the students enrolled in the other schools. Moreover, fewer SEAS students (61%) compared to over 80% in the other schools completed literary analyses on a monthly basis, and only 22% compared to at least 35% in the other schools wrote research papers at least monthly.

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<sup>3</sup> UW 20 students were not surveyed at the beginning of the fall semester because we did not anticipate any substantial change in the 2003 and 2004 cohorts' high school writing experiences. We inadvertently overlooked the fact that we knew about the high school writing experiences of students in CCAS and ESIA only. To rectify the omission, students enrolled in UW 20 in the spring semester were asked to complete the survey.

<sup>4</sup> The frequency scale is defined as:

- Very often: at least weekly
- Often: at least monthly
- Sometimes: at least every other month
- Occasionally: one or twice a year
- Not at all

Table 1. Pretest: Types of writing

	Total Percent (N=737)	CCAS Percent (N=311)	ESIA Percent (N=117)	GWSB Percent (N=75)	SEAS Percent (N=18)
<b>Personal narrative/autobiography*</b>					
Very often	2%	4%	0%	1%	11%
Often	11%	12%	16%	5%	0%
Sometimes	15%	16%	9%	22%	6%
Occasionally	47%	44%	51%	50%	56%
Not at all	24%	25%	23%	22%	28%
<b>Business letter*</b>					
Very often	< 0.5%	< 0.5%	0%	0%	0%
Often	4%	4%	1%	10%	0%
Sometimes	10%	8%	9%	16%	6%
Occasionally	37%	36%	49%	41%	41%
Not at all	49%	52%	42%	33%	53%
<b>Book review</b>					
Very often	5%	5%	3%	3%	0%
Often	18%	21%	13%	17%	33%
Sometimes	26%	25%	30%	33%	17%
Occasionally	27%	27%	22%	19%	28%
Not at all	23%	21%	32%	28%	22%
<b>Creative writing</b>					
Very often	15%	16%	9%	15%	6%
Often	24%	24%	23%	32%	29%
Sometimes	29%	30%	29%	26%	24%
Occasionally	23%	24%	28%	24%	24%
Not at all	9%	7%	10%	3%	18%
<b>Laboratory report</b>					
Very often	24%	24%	14%	19%	29%
Often	31%	31%	37%	33%	35%
Sometimes	18%	21%	18%	22%	12%
Occasionally	9%	8%	12%	8%	0%
Not at all	18%	17%	18%	18%	24%
<b>Literary analysis*</b>					
Very often	44%	44%	47%	35%	33%
Often	37%	36%	42%	47%	28%
Sometimes	13%	15%	7%	9%	33%
Occasionally	5%	5%	2%	7%	0%
Not at all	1%	1%	2%	3%	6%
<b>News report or feature writing</b>					
Very often	7%	9%	5%	5%	0%
Often	12%	13%	12%	9%	11%
Sometimes	19%	23%	18%	19%	11%
Occasionally	30%	25%	29%	40%	44%
Not at all	32%	29%	35%	27%	33%
<b>Research paper*</b>					
Very often	13%	13%	12%	10%	0%
Often	27%	27%	34%	25%	22%
Sometimes	26%	25%	31%	27%	33%
Occasionally	30%	31%	18%	38%	28%
Not at all	4%	4%	5%	0%	17%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

	Total Percent	CCAS Percent	ESIA Percent	GWSB Percent	SEAS Percent
<b>Analytical essay</b>					
Very often	28%	28%	26%	16%	28%
Often	39%	41%	47%	31%	28%
Sometimes	21%	20%	17%	34%	17%
Occasionally	10%	9%	8%	16%	22%
Not at all	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%
<b>Writing for extracurricular activities</b>					
Very often	14%	17%	12%	12%	11%
Often	13%	14%	15%	12%	22%
Sometimes	10%	12%	9%	5%	11%
Occasionally	20%	18%	21%	23%	11%
Not at all	42%	39%	43%	48%	44%
<b>Other</b>	(N=94)	(N=37)	(N=21)	(N=12)	(N=1)
Very often	14%	16%	29%	0%	0%
Often	13%	11%	10%	17%	0%
Sometimes	6%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Occasionally	3%	5%	5%	0%	0%
Not at all	64%	62%	57%	83%	100%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

### **Writing Tasks:**

The survey listed nine types of writing tasks reflecting different levels of learning (e.g., reporting, summarizing, describing, criticizing) and asked students to indicate the frequency with which these tasks were assigned (see Table 2). The most frequently assigned writing task was for students to offer and support their opinion (82% were assigned this at least monthly). Other writing tasks assigned at least monthly included summarizing information (67%), using primary and secondary sources (66%), and synthesizing information from different sources (65%). Only half (50%) were frequently asked to criticize a written argument, define a problem and propose a solution (41%), or analyze the needs of a writing audience (30%).

The high school writing experiences of students in SEAS and SB differed slightly from their cohorts in CCAS and ESIA. Fewer SEAS and SB students were asked to analyze the needs of a writing audience and to use primary and secondary sources. In addition, only 17% of the SEAS students were asked to criticize written arguments in high school.

Table 2. Pretest: Writing tasks

	Total Percent N=737	CCAS Percent N=311	ESIA Percent N=117	GWSB Percent N=75	SEAS Percent N=18
<b>Describe a situation</b>					
Very often	17%	20%	15%	12%	17%
Often	33%	31%	40%	30%	28%
Sometimes	28%	27%	22%	34%	22%
Occasionally	15%	14%	15%	23%	22%
Not at all	7%	7%	9%	1%	11%

	Total Percent	CCAS Percent	ESIA Percent	GWSB Percent	SEAS Percent
<b>Report facts</b>					
Very often	19%	19%	21%	12%	22%
Often	38%	42%	38%	42%	33%
Sometimes	26%	23%	25%	21%	39%
Occasionally	13%	12%	9%	18%	6%
Not at all	5%	4%	7%	7%	0%
<b>Summarize information</b>					
Very often	29%	28%	31%	23%	39%
Often	38%	40%	44%	38%	28%
Sometimes	19%	18%	13%	15%	17%
Occasionally	12%	11%	9%	22%	11%
Not at all	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%
<b>Synthesize ideas from different sources</b>					
Very often	24%	25%	28%	12%	11%
Often	41%	40%	40%	42%	39%
Sometimes	21%	22%	18%	23%	28%
Occasionally	11%	11%	12%	20%	17%
Not at all	3%	3%	3%	3%	6%
<b>Define a problem and propose a solution</b>					
Very often	14%	14%	13%	15%	11%
Often	27%	26%	31%	25%	17%
Sometimes	26%	27%	25%	28%	28%
Occasionally	24%	25%	23%	24%	28%
Not at all	9%	7%	8%	8%	17%
<b>Analyze the needs of a writing audience*</b>					
Very often	10%	9%	12%	11%	6%
Often	20%	25%	19%	11%	11%
Sometimes	24%	23%	15%	32%	33%
Occasionally	25%	26%	32%	26%	11%
Not at all	21%	17%	21%	20%	39%
<b>Criticize written arguments</b>					
Very often	19%	20%	23%	14%	0%
Often	31%	29%	27%	35%	17%
Sometimes	27%	27%	30%	24%	50%
Occasionally	17%	17%	14%	24%	28%
Not at all	7%	6%	6%	3%	6%
<b>Offer and support your opinion</b>					
Very often	44%	47%	49%	34%	22%
Often	38%	37%	38%	42%	50%
Sometimes	12%	12%	8%	16%	11%
Occasionally	5%	4%	4%	8%	17%
Not at all	1%	< 0.5%	1%	0%	0%
<b>Use primary and secondary sources*</b>					
Very often	28%	30%	30%	15%	22%
Often	38%	39%	38%	39%	22%
Sometimes	22%	20%	23%	24%	50%
Occasionally	10%	8%	7%	19%	0%
Not at all	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

***Length of Papers and Writing Process:***

The majority of high school writing assignments were short: fewer than three pages or the standard five-paragraph essay (See Table 3). Over one-third (36%) never wrote any paper over ten pages, and another one-third (37%) wrote only one ten-plus-page paper during their senior year in high school. SEAS (81%) and SB students (85%) were more likely to be frequently assigned the five-paragraph essay compared to 60% of the students in ESIA and 74% in CCAS. In addition, fewer SEAS students (39%) compared to students in the other schools were assigned papers of three to five pages, 44% never wrote a paper over ten pages, and 22% never wrote a six-to-ten page paper.

**Table 3. Pretest: Frequency, Length, and Format of Writing Papers**

	Total Percent (N=737)	CCAS Percent (N=311)	ESIA Percent (N=117)	GWSB Percent (N=75)	SEAS Percent (N=18)
<b>Estimate the frequency with which you used the five-paragraph format*</b>					
Very often	46%	48%	35%	57%	31%
Often	26%	26%	25%	28%	50%
Sometimes	15%	14%	19%	6%	13%
Occasionally	9%	8%	13%	7%	6%
Not at all	5%	3%	7%	3%	0%
<b>Writing assignment: Less than 3 pages</b>					
More than 10 assignments	60%	61%	63%	50%	61%
6-10 assignments	18%	18%	13%	27%	28%
2-5 assignments	18%	16%	19%	20%	11%
One assignment	3%	4%	3%	3%	0%
None	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%
<b>Writing assignment: 3-5 pages*</b>					
More than 10 assignments	24%	23%	28%	12%	6%
6-10 assignments	36%	34%	32%	41%	33%
2-5 assignments	32%	32%	32%	45%	50%
One assignment	6%	7%	7%	0%	11%
None	2%	4%	0%	1%	0%
<b>Writing assignment: 6-10 pages</b>					
More than 10 assignments	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%
6-10 assignments	12%	11%	16%	10%	6%
2-5 assignments	43%	40%	47%	44%	50%
One assignment	29%	31%	23%	39%	22%
None	14%	16%	12%	7%	22%
<b>Writing assignment: Over 10 pages</b>					
More than 10 assignments	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
6-10 assignments	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%
2-5 assignments	24%	23%	26%	18%	6%
One assignment	37%	37%	38%	49%	50%
None	36%	37%	34%	30%	44%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

Even though high school writing assignments tended to be short, a majority of students were not expected to turn in drafts of assignments, nor were they given an opportunity to receive feedback from their peers (only 40% received feedback) or from their instructors (42%) (see Table 4). On the other hand, over two-thirds (68%) thought that they received useful comments from their

instructors on final papers. Again, SEAS students were the outliers, with only 44% indicating that they frequently received useful comments on final papers.

Table 4. Pretest: Writing process

	Total Percent (N=737)	CCAS Percent (N=311)	ESIA Percent (N=117)	GWSB Percent (N=75)	SEAS Percent (N=18)
<b>Turned in drafts of an assignment prior to the final paper</b>					
Very often	12%	11%	15%	8%	17%
Often	34%	33%	31%	45%	11%
Sometimes	24%	25%	21%	17%	28%
Occasionally	21%	20%	27%	23%	33%
Not at all	10%	11%	6%	7%	11%
<b>Exchanged paper with classmates to give and receive feedback on works in progress</b>					
Very often	10%	8%	15%	7%	11%
Often	30%	30%	32%	29%	22%
Sometimes	27%	24%	29%	32%	28%
Occasionally	24%	28%	20%	21%	33%
Not at all	9%	10%	4%	11%	6%
<b>Received feedback from your teachers prior to handing in the final paper</b>					
Very often	14%	10%	19%	16%	22%
Often	28%	32%	20%	30%	11%
Sometimes	25%	27%	26%	16%	39%
Occasionally	25%	23%	28%	29%	22%
Not at all	8%	8%	8%	8%	6%
<b>Received useful comments on final paper*</b>					
Very often	30%	28%	34%	29%	22%
Often	38%	43%	38%	33%	22%
Sometimes	19%	15%	21%	27%	44%
Occasionally	11%	13%	6%	11%	6%
Not at all	2%	2%	1%	0%	6%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

**Research sources:**

Students were given a list of nine research sources and asked to indicate how frequently they used each source. Sources included textbooks, articles in scholarly journals, popular magazines, newspapers, books, and the Internet. By far, the most frequently used resource was the Internet, as 81% indicated that they used it often or very often (see Table 5). Slightly less than two-thirds used assigned textbooks (65%) and topic-specific books (62%). Only 35% used articles in scholarly journals frequently, and 38% used scholarly journals occasionally or not at all.

Table 5. Pretest: Research sources

	Total Percent (N=737)	CCAS Percent (N=311)	ESIA Percent (N=117)	GWSB Percent (N=75)	SEAS Percent (N=18)
<b>Assigned textbooks</b>					
Very often	37%	37%	41%	33%	17%
Often	28%	26%	22%	37%	50%
Sometimes	18%	20%	16%	17%	17%
Occasionally	11%	13%	12%	5%	11%
Not at all	6%	4%	9%	7%	6%
<b>Articles in scholarly journals</b>					
Very often	10%	11%	7%	8%	11%
Often	25%	26%	31%	17%	22%
Sometimes	27%	23%	25%	29%	22%
Occasionally	22%	22%	22%	31%	17%
Not at all	16%	17%	16%	15%	28%
<b>Articles in popular magazines</b>					
Very often	3%	2%	5%	5%	6%
Often	12%	15%	12%	8%	17%
Sometimes	24%	22%	24%	28%	22%
Occasionally	33%	34%	28%	43%	33%
Not at all	28%	27%	31%	16%	22%
<b>Articles in newspapers</b>					
Very often	11%	10%	19%	9%	6%
Often	23%	22%	21%	25%	0%
Sometimes	27%	27%	23%	27%	39%
Occasionally	28%	30%	31%	25%	50%
Not at all	12%	12%	7%	13%	6%
<b>Topic-specific books</b>					
Very often	25%	28%	25%	17%	6%
Often	37%	38%	33%	45%	44%
Sometimes	25%	22%	30%	24%	22%
Occasionally	11%	9%	10%	12%	22%
Not at all	2%	3%	2%	1%	6%
<b>Internet</b>					
Very often	53%	55%	50%	57%	56%
Often	28%	30%	25%	29%	17%
Sometimes	13%	10%	18%	7%	22%
Occasionally	5%	5%	7%	4%	6%
Not at all	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%
<b>Encyclopedias*</b>					
Very often	12%	12%	6%	16%	22%
Often	22%	24%	17%	27%	17%
Sometimes	25%	25%	27%	28%	22%
Occasionally	25%	20%	34%	23%	33%
Not at all	17%	19%	16%	7%	6%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

	Total Percent	CCAS Percent	ESIA Percent	GWSB Percent	SEAS Percent
<b>Films*</b>					
Very often	5%	6%	3%	1%	6%
Often	13%	13%	9%	12%	22%
Sometimes	23%	22%	21%	36%	6%
Occasionally	38%	40%	38%	29%	44%
Not at all	22%	18%	30%	21%	22%
<b>Interviews</b>					
Very often	2%	2%	3%	1%	11%
Often	7%	9%	3%	4%	0%
Sometimes	15%	16%	13%	18%	11%
Occasionally	37%	33%	47%	39%	22%
Not at all	38%	40%	34%	38%	56%
<b>Other</b>	(N=83)	(N=29)	(N=19)	(N=12)	(N=4)
Very often	8%	10%	5%	8%	0%
Often	6%	7%	11%	0%	0%
Sometimes	4%	0%	11%	0%	0%
Occasionally	7%	3%	5%	8%	25%
Not at all	75%	79%	68%	83%	75%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS students who responded, this school was not included in the analyses.

### **Summary:**

Students come to GW with little experience doing the types of writing that are expected in college. Typically, their high school writing consisted of brief reports (fewer than three pages) in which they stated and supported their opinion, and summarized and synthesized information. The majority were not expected to turn in drafts and thus did not have experience revising what they had written. Their experience writing long research papers was limited: Only about one-third had written at least one paper that was more than ten pages, and one-third had not written any papers over ten pages. Their most frequently used source for information was the Internet.

## **University Writing 20 End-of-Semester Evaluation**

Of the 1,600 students enrolled in UW 20, 1,292 (approximately 80%) completed an end-of-semester evaluation. The survey included questions about the course, quality of instruction, and what they learned about writing and research. Overall, students enrolled in UW20 were very positive about all aspects of the course. On most items, there was consensus across all schools; major differences will be noted.

### **Engagement and challenge:**

Overall, 70% of the students were very engaged or engaged in the course, and 72% rated their level of intellectual challenge as high. Interest in the course topic motivated over half (58%) of the students to enroll in a particular section; three-quarters thought that the theme was engaging (73%) and found the assignments challenging (76%). Moreover, 76% of the students thought they put forth more effort in UW 20 compared to the other courses they took during the same semester. Even though 76% of the students thought that the effort demanded by the course was high, about half (49%) spent only three to five hours outside of class actually doing work for the course. Another 30% put in six-to-ten hours per week (see Table 7).

As Table 6 indicates, there are some differences across schools. Fewer SEAS students (50%) were engaged in the course or rated their level of intellectual challenge highly (59%) compared to students in the other schools. Moreover, fewer SEAS students (63%) thought that their effort in UW 20 was higher than the effort put forth in other courses. These differences may be attributed to the very demanding curriculum for first-year engineering students who are required to take calculus and a four-credit lab science course (i.e., Chemistry 11, Physics 21). One interesting finding is that SEAS students, on average, spent fewer hours outside class doing work for the class. Sixty-three percent of SEAS students devoted about three to five hours per week on the course, and 21% spent six to ten hours a week. Comparatively, only 50% of the students in the other schools spent three to five hours, and 31% spent six to ten hours a week (see Table 7).

Table 6. Students levels of engagement and challenge

	Total Percent (N=1292)	CCAS Percent (N=637)	ESIA Percent (N=197)	GWSB Percent (N=136)	SEAS Percent (N=44)	SPHHS Percent (N=4)
<b>Overall, I rate my level of engagement in this course</b>	<b>M=3.91</b>	<b>M=3.94</b>	<b>M=4.00</b>	<b>M=3.95</b>	<b>M=3.55</b>	<b>M=3.50</b>
Very	27%	28%	34%	26%	18%	0%
4	43%	44%	40%	47%	32%	75%
3	23%	22%	21%	24%	39%	0%
2	5%	4%	4%	2%	9%	25%
Not at all	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%
<b>Overall, I rate my level of intellectual challenge in this course</b>	<b>M=3.87</b>	<b>M=3.89</b>	<b>M=3.84</b>	<b>M=4.07</b>	<b>M=3.68</b>	<b>M=3.50</b>
Very	24%	24%	21%	32%	14%	0%
4	48%	50%	51%	46%	45%	75%
3	21%	20%	21%	18%	36%	0%
2	5%	5%	4%	2%	5%	25%
Not at all	2%	2%	3%	1%	0%	0%
<b>I registered for this particular section because the content interested me.*</b>	<b>M=3.59</b>	<b>M=3.64</b>	<b>M=3.76</b>	<b>M=3.32</b>	<b>M=3.39</b>	<b>M=4.00</b>
Strongly agree	33%	34%	36%	26%	27%	50%
4	25%	26%	30%	18%	23%	25%
3	21%	20%	19%	28%	25%	0%
2	11%	11%	6%	15%	11%	25%
Strongly disagree	11%	10%	10%	13%	14%	0%
<b>The theme of this course was engaging.</b>	<b>M=3.98</b>	<b>M=4.03</b>	<b>M=4.09</b>	<b>M=3.90</b>	<b>M=3.89</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Very	36%	39%	37%	30%	27%	25%
4	37%	35%	44%	39%	45%	50%
3	18%	17%	13%	21%	18%	0%
2	6%	6%	4%	9%	7%	25%
Not at all	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	0%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS and SPHHS students who responded, these schools were not included in the analyses.

	Total Percent	CCAS Percent	ESIA Percent	GWSB Percent	SEAS Percent	SPHHS Percent
<b>The assignments for this course were challenging.*</b>	<b>M=3.99</b>	<b>M=4.03</b>	<b>M=3.97</b>	<b>M=4.24</b>	<b>M=3.89</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Very	29%	31%	31%	35%	25%	25%
4	47%	46%	44%	56%	48%	25%
3	19%	18%	17%	9%	18%	50%
2	4%	3%	7%	1%	9%	0%
Not at all	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Compared with my other GW courses this semester the amount of effort I put into UW 20 was*</b>						
Higher	40%	40%	32%	60%	30%	0%
4	36%	37%	38%	28%	33%	50%
About the same	19%	17%	24%	10%	23%	25%
2	4%	4%	3%	2%	12%	25%
Lower	2%	2%	3%	0%	2%	0%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS and SPHHS students who responded, these schools were not included in the analyses.

Table 7. Time spent on course

	Total Percent (N=1292)	CCAS Percent (N=637)	ESIA Percent (N=197)	GWSB Percent (N=136)	SEAS Percent (N=44)	SPHHS Percent (N=4)
<b>On average, how much time outside of class did you spend per week on UW 20?</b>						
More than 20 hours	1%	1%	1%	3%	5%	0%
16-20 hours	2%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%
11-15 hours	4%	5%	4%	5%	0%	0%
6-10 hours	30%	33%	31%	29%	21%	50%
3-5 hours	49%	50%	46%	51%	63%	25%
2 hours or less	12%	10%	17%	9%	9%	25%
No hours	< 0.5%	< 0.5%	0%	0%	2%	0%

**Learning outcomes:**

Students were asked to indicate the degree to which their writing skills improved. Overall, 77% thought that they learned a great deal in the course, and 61% thought that their writing improved after taking UW 20. While very few (12%) rated their writing as excellent, 73% indicated that it was very good. More than half (61%) thought that their writing improved because of UW 20.

As Table 8 indicates, over two-thirds of the students in all the schools thought that their critical thinking, research, and writing skills improved:

- 71% thought that their abilities for analytical writing improved
- 71% thought that their ability to synthesize ideas from a number of sources was enhanced
- 67% thought that their ability to construct a persuasive argument improved
- 66% thought that their ability to analyze and evaluate arguments in the readings improved.

Table 8. Self-reported learning outcomes

	Total Percent (N=1292)	CCAS Percent (N=637)	ESIA Percent (N=197)	GWSB Percent (N=136)	SEAS Percent (N=44)	SPHHS Percent (N=4)
<b>Amount you learned in the course (Spring Only):</b>	<b>M=3.90</b> (N=643)	<b>M=3.96</b> (N=293)	<b>M=3.97</b> (N=91)	<b>M=3.95</b> (N=64)	<b>M=3.58</b> (N=19)	<b>M=2.00</b> (N=1)
A great deal	30%	30%	38%	27%	16%	0%
4	44%	46%	36%	50%	47%	0%
3	18%	15%	13%	19%	26%	0%
2	6%	5%	8%	2%	0%	100%
Almost nothing	3%	3%	4%	3%	11%	0%
<b>My ability to analyze and evaluate arguments in the readings improved.</b>	<b>M=3.73</b>	<b>M=3.72</b>	<b>M=3.82</b>	<b>M=3.88</b>	<b>M=3.73</b>	<b>M=3.33</b>
Greatly	22%	22%	26%	22%	20%	0%
4	44%	44%	44%	50%	48%	33%
3	23%	23%	21%	23%	18%	67%
2	7%	7%	5%	4%	11%	0%
Not at all	4%	4%	4%	1%	2%	0%
<b>My abilities for analytical writing improved.</b>	<b>M=3.82</b>	<b>M=3.83</b>	<b>M=3.90</b>	<b>M=3.94</b>	<b>M=3.95</b>	<b>M=3.50</b>
Greatly	24%	23%	28%	24%	30%	0%
4	47%	48%	45%	54%	43%	50%
3	20%	20%	18%	18%	20%	50%
2	6%	6%	6%	4%	7%	0%
Not at all	3%	3%	3%	1%	0%	0%
<b>My ability to synthesize ideas from a number of sources was enhanced.</b>	<b>M=3.89</b>	<b>M=3.91</b>	<b>M=3.93</b>	<b>M=3.98</b>	<b>M=3.95</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Greatly	28%	29%	31%	30%	30%	0%
4	43%	43%	43%	44%	41%	75%
3	21%	20%	18%	21%	25%	25%
2	6%	5%	5%	2%	5%	0%
Not at all	2%	2%	3%	2%	0%	0%
<b>My ability to construct a persuasive argument improved.</b>	<b>M=3.77</b>	<b>M=3.77</b>	<b>M=3.81</b>	<b>M=3.95</b>	<b>M=3.61</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Greatly	23%	23%	25%	27%	9%	0%
4	44%	45%	45%	47%	55%	75%
3	23%	23%	21%	21%	27%	25%
2	7%	7%	5%	2%	7%	0%
Not at all	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%	0%
<b>To what degree did UW 20 improve your writing?</b>	<b>M=3.60</b>	<b>M=3.60</b>	<b>M=3.61</b>	<b>M=3.81</b>	<b>M=3.55</b>	<b>M=3.50</b>
A great extent	17%	17%	16%	21%	9%	0%
4	44%	46%	45%	46%	55%	50%
3	25%	23%	25%	27%	18%	50%
2	10%	9%	12%	4%	18%	0%
Not at all	4%	5%	2%	1%	0%	0%
<b>How would you evaluate your own writing ability based on completing UW 20?</b>	<b>M=3.81</b>	<b>M=3.82</b>	<b>M=3.91</b>	<b>M=3.76</b>	<b>M=3.81</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Excellent	12%	12%	13%	10%	5%	0%
4	61%	62%	66%	61%	74%	75%
3	25%	23%	22%	26%	19%	25%
2	2%	3%	0%	3%	2%	0%
Poor	< 0.5%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%

In response to the question “How would you evaluate your own writing based upon completing UW 20,” about two-thirds indicated that their writing had improved. The skills most frequently cited were researching, both locating sources and using them effectively, and developing and backing up an argument. In fact, students often described these processes as necessarily linked, not as distinct activities. Students also thought that their writing styles and ability to think analytically had improved. A small group observed that their confidence in their writing had increased because they were better equipped to identify their weak points.

**Research instruction:**

Having a research librarian assigned to each section increased students’ comfort with the library and improved their research skills (see Table 9). Over three-quarters of the students indicated that they were comfortable using the library for research (81%), and 76% thought that their research skills improved. In addition, 73% of the students who were taking at least one other class that required significant research found the research skills very useful in other class(es). In an analysis of an open-ended question about the most useful aspect of the research instruction, students identified the demonstration of online article databases; learning ALADIN; and the demonstration of search engines and powerful search techniques as most helpful. The individual conferences with the research librarians, whom they described as available, knowledgeable, and helpful, were greatly appreciated.

Table 9. Research skills

	Total Percent (N=1292)	CCAS Percent (N=637)	ESIA Percent (N=197)	GWSB Percent (N=136)	SEAS Percent (N=44)	SPHHS Percent (N=4)
<b>My research skills improved.</b>	<b>M=3.97</b>	<b>M=3.97</b>	<b>M=4.06</b>	<b>M=4.11</b>	<b>M=4.02</b>	<b>M=3.50</b>
Greatly	32%	31%	37%	36%	30%	25%
4	44%	44%	39%	44%	50%	0%
3	18%	18%	18%	16%	16%	75%
2	5%	4%	6%	2%	2%	0%
Not at all	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	0%
<b>I am comfortable using GW libraries for research.</b>	<b>M=4.14</b>	<b>M=4.18</b>	<b>M=4.12</b>	<b>M=4.15</b>	<b>M=4.00</b>	<b>M=4.00</b>
Very	40%	41%	41%	38%	41%	25%
4	41%	41%	38%	46%	32%	50%
3	14%	14%	14%	12%	18%	25%
2	4%	3%	5%	4%	5%	0%
Not at all	1%	1%	2%	1%	5%	0%
<b>In addition to UW 20, I took one or more classes this semester that required significant research.*</b>						
Yes	44%	45%	65%	14%	17%	50%
No	57%	55%	35%	86%	83%	50%
<b>The research skills learned in UW 20 were useful in other classes I took this semester.</b>	<b>M=3.91 (N =528**)</b>	<b>M=3.90 (N =274)</b>	<b>M=4.07 (N=123)</b>	<b>M=3.71 (N =17)</b>	<b>M=3.71 (N =7)</b>	<b>M=4.00 (N =2)</b>
Very useful	31%	32%	37%	29%	29%	0%
4	42%	41%	44%	35%	43%	100%
3	16%	19%	13%	24%	14%	0%
2	5%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all useful	5%	5%	3%	11%	14%	0%

Note: \* indicates differences among the schools are significant at  $p < .05$ , but only CCAS, ESIA, and GWSB were included in the analyses. Due to the small number of SEAS and SPHHS students who responded, these schools were not included in the analyses.

\*\* These numbers represent only those students who answered the question. Not all their other courses required research papers.

**Quality of instruction:**

Students were very positive about their instructors and the quality of instruction. As Table 10 indicates, 90% of the students thought that their professors were accessible, that feedback on assignments was given in a timely fashion (82%), and that the instructors' comments on their work were informative (82%). Students were less positive about the value of peer review and collaborating with others on projects: About half thought they were helpful or valuable. Finally, 62% thought the small class size greatly contributed to making the course an effective learning experience.

An analysis of students' comments indicates that good class discussions, especially those that incorporated the reading material, helped clarify concepts, and individual meetings with their instructors, in which they were able to address the specific details in their paper, were critical in helping to improve their writing. Some students complained that the instructors did not make their expectations clear from the beginning; they requested that standards for grading and examples of good writing be provided from the outset. Though workshops and peer editing were often described in positive terms, students repeatedly said that these techniques were inadequate without extensive feedback from the instructor. Their classmates lacked the expertise to replace the professor's insight.

The workload and pacing of the course provoked some criticism. In addition to complaints that readings were too long or unnecessary, some thought that the instructors assigned too many papers. Students claimed that fewer assignments would have given them more time to revise and polish their writing. Other objections included having deadlines too close to each other, or having one paper due before the previous one had been returned.

Table 10. Interaction with instructor and other students

	Total Percent (N=1292)	CCAS Percent (N=637)	ESIA Percent (N=197)	GWSB Percent (N=136)	SEAS Percent (N=44)	SPHHS Percent (N=4)
<b>The instructor's comments on my work were informative.</b>	<b>M=4.25</b>	<b>M=4.26</b>	<b>M=4.27</b>	<b>M=4.41</b>	<b>M=4.09</b>	<b>M=4.25</b>
Very	50%	50%	54%	61%	36%	25%
4	32%	34%	28%	24%	39%	75%
3	11%	10%	10%	11%	23%	0%
2	5%	5%	6%	3%	2%	0%
Not at all	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%
<b>Feedback on assignments was returned in a timely fashion.</b>	<b>M=4.24</b>	<b>M=4.26</b>	<b>M=4.28</b>	<b>M=4.26</b>	<b>M=3.89</b>	<b>M=4.00</b>
Very	50%	49%	54%	51%	32%	50%
4	32%	35%	28%	32%	43%	0%
3	12%	11%	12%	11%	11%	50%
2	4%	4%	3%	6%	9%	0%
Not at all	2%	2%	3%	1%	5%	0%

	Total Percent	CCAS Percent	ESIA Percent	GWSB Percent	SEAS Percent	SPHHS Percent
<b>The instructor was accessible to answer my questions about the course.</b>	<b>M=4.52</b>	<b>M=4.54</b>	<b>M=4.58</b>	<b>M=4.56</b>	<b>M=4.34</b>	<b>M=3.75</b>
Very	65%	65%	68%	68%	50%	25%
4	25%	26%	23%	21%	36%	50%
3	8%	8%	6%	10%	11%	0%
2	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	25%
Not at all	< 0.5%	< 0.5%	0%	1%	0%	0%
<b>The class size contributed to making this course an effective learning experience.</b>	<b>M=4.50</b>	<b>M=4.53</b>	<b>M=4.53</b>	<b>M=4.58</b>	<b>M=4.48</b>	<b>M=4.50</b>
Greatly	62%	64%	67%	65%	57%	50%
4	29%	27%	23%	29%	34%	50%
3	7%	7%	8%	7%	9%	0%
2	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>The peer review process helped to improve my writing.</b>	<b>M=3.45</b>	<b>M=3.52</b>	<b>M=3.52</b>	<b>M=3.59</b>	<b>M=3.27</b>	<b>M=3.25</b>
Greatly	25%	27%	26%	29%	18%	0%
4	25%	25%	27%	26%	23%	50%
3	28%	28%	25%	24%	39%	25%
2	13%	13%	16%	15%	9%	25%
Not at all	8%	7%	6%	6%	11%	0%
<b>Collaborating with other students on classroom projects or activities was valuable.</b>	<b>M=3.46</b>	<b>M=3.47</b>	<b>M=3.56</b>	<b>M=3.63</b>	<b>M=3.60</b>	<b>M=3.25</b>
Very	20%	21%	23%	21%	21%	25%
4	32%	33%	32%	35%	42%	25%
3	29%	27%	30%	32%	21%	0%
2	12%	12%	10%	9%	9%	50%
Not at all	7%	7%	6%	3%	7%	0%

**Summary:**

Students continue to find UW 20 very engaging and challenging and think their writing improved from taking the course. The areas in which over two-thirds thought their writing improved was in analytical writing, ability to synthesize ideas from a number of sources, construct a persuasive argument, and analyze and evaluate arguments in the readings. Students are very positive about their instructors and the quality of instruction. Having research librarians assigned to each section increased students comfort with the library and improved their research skills.

## Writing in the Disciplines

### *Characteristics of the Sample:*

The WID program was inaugurated in the Fall 2004 semester, the second year of the University Writing Program. A total of 92 WID courses, representing the humanities, social sciences, and mathematical and physical sciences were offered in the Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 semesters. In addition to many of the sophomores who had taken UW 20 in their freshman year, the WID classes included freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who had taken other courses to satisfy their literacy requirement. All students who completed the surveys are included in the initial evaluation of the WID program. An analysis comparing those CCAS and ESIA students who took UW 20 with a similar group of students can be found on pages 27 and 28. The characteristics of both groups may be found in Table 11.

Table 11. Characteristics of the Sample

	Took UW 20	Did not take UW 20
<b>Number of students</b>	394	527
<b>School of enrollment</b>		
No designation	6	22
CCAS	370	501
ESIA	11	3
SMHS	7	1
<b>Literacy course taken</b>		
English 10 and/or 11	--	397
None	--	130

### **Beginning of Semester Survey**

All faculty teaching WID courses were asked to distribute a survey at the beginning of the semester. The WID survey was distributed in 80 of the 92 WID (87%), yielding 1,119 respondents.

The survey listed seven reasons for registering for a particular course, and students were asked to indicate the relative importance of each of the reasons. The most important reasons for enrolling were interest in the subject and that it fulfills a general or major curriculum requirement. Students in the UW 20 pilot group were more likely to enroll because it fulfills part of the WID requirement. More than half of both groups (54%) registered because the course fit into their schedule.

Table 12. Reasons for registering for a WID course

	Percent (N=1255)
<b>I am interested in the subject covered in the course.</b>	<b>M =4.13</b>
Very important reason	48%
4	30%
3	14%
2	5%
Not a reason	3%
<b>It fulfills a writing-in-the-disciplines (WID) requirement.</b>	<b>M =2.59</b>
Very important reason	30%
4	8%
3	5%
2	3%
Not a reason	53%
<b>The course fits into my schedule.</b>	<b>M =3.46</b>
Very important reason	22%
4	33%
3	23%
2	9%
Not a reason	11%
<b>It is a small class.</b>	<b>M =2.74</b>
Very important reason	11%
4	22%
3	24%
2	15%
Not a reason	28%
<b>I am interested in majoring in the field.</b>	<b>M =2.64</b>
Very important reason	23%
4	12%
3	14%
2	11%
Not a reason	41%
<b>I wanted to take a class with this professor.</b>	<b>M =2.28</b>
Very important reason	11%
4	11%
3	19%
2	12%
Not a reason	47%
<b>The course fulfills a general curriculum requirement or a requirement for my major.</b>	<b>M =3.75</b>
Very important reason	49%
4	18%
3	9%
2	4%
Not a reason	19%

Students had high expectations for the courses. As Table 13 indicates, 84% expected to gain a conceptual understanding of the material, and 81% expected to earn a good grade in the course. Two-thirds (65%) hoped to improve their writing skills.

Table 13. What students expect to learn in the WID courses

	Percent (N=1255)
<b>Gain a conceptual understanding of the material.</b>	<b>M =4.31</b>
High degree	49%
4	35%
Moderate degree	14%
2	1%
Not at all	1%
<b>Improve writing skills.</b>	<b>M =3.87</b>
High degree	39%
4	26%
Moderate degree	22%
2	8%
Not at all	4%
<b>Earn a good grade in the course.</b>	<b>M =4.19</b>
High degree	42%
4	39%
Moderate degree	16%
2	2%
Not at all	1%
<b>Understand the conventions of writing in this discipline.</b>	<b>M =3.66</b>
High degree	28%
4	33%
Moderate degree	25%
2	7%
Not at all	7%
<b>Prepare me for graduate school or career.</b>	<b>M =3.16</b>
High degree	19%
4	22%
Moderate degree	29%
2	15%
Not at all	15%

### End-of-Semester WID Evaluation

Only 676 of the 1,957 students (35%) completed the end-of-semester survey<sup>5</sup>. Of this group, 233 were enrolled in UW 20. Table 14 provides a profile of the students who completed the end-of-semester survey. Note that over one-quarter of the students enrolled in a WID course were juniors and seniors, who may have taken other writing-intensive courses. This may skew the findings.

<sup>5</sup> To accommodate some concern on the part of faculty that the end of course evaluation would take up valuable class time, we created an online version of the evaluation. Unfortunately, the response rate was much lower than expected. In the future, end of course evaluations will be distributed in class.

Table 14. Characteristics of the Sample

	Took UW 20	Did not take UW 20
<b>Number of students</b>	233	239
<b>Year in school</b>		
Freshman	27	24
Sophomore	178	60
Junior	9	57
Senior	0	77
<b>School of enrollment</b>		
No designation	3	23
CCAS	201	203
ESIA	29	13
SMHS	0	0
<b>Literacy course taken</b>		
English 10 and/or 11	--	179
None	--	60

***Drafts of writing:***

Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they turned in drafts of writing assignments, exchanged drafts with their classmates, received feedback from the instructor, and the usefulness of the feedback. As Table 15 indicates, 70% of the students turned in drafts of writing assignments often or very often. About 60% received feedback often from their instructors on the drafts, and 71% received feedback often on the completed assignments.

Table 15. Drafts of Writing

	Percent N=676
<b>Turned in drafts of a writing assignment.</b>	<b><i>M = 3.84</i></b>
Very often	41%
4	29%
3	14%
2	7%
Not at all	10%
<b>Exchanged drafts of a writing assignment with classmates to give and/or receive feedback</b>	<b><i>M = 2.99</i></b>
Very often	27%
4	19%
3	12%
2	9%
Not at all	33%

	Percent
<b>Received feedback from the instructor on your drafts prior to handing in the finished product</b>	<b>M =3.57</b>
Very often	39%
4	21%
3	15%
2	9%
Not at all	16%
<b>Received useful feedback from the instructor on completed assignments</b>	<b>M =3.94</b>
Very often	43%
4	28%
3	15%
2	8%
Not at all	6%

***Students' level of engagement and challenge:***

Overall, 71% of the students were very engaged or engaged in the course, and 68% rated their level of intellectual challenge as high (see Table 16). Three-quarters (74%) found the assignments challenging and two-thirds (66%) thought that the writing component of the course helped them learn and understand the content material presented in the course.

While students thought that they worked harder in this course than in their other courses, the amount of time spent studying does not indicate that they worked especially long hours on the course. Over half the students (61%) thought that they put forth more effort in this course compared to the other courses they took the same semester. Yet, in spite of their putting forth more effort, 80% spent at *most* five hours per week working on the course. Only 17% put in six to ten hours per week, and 4% studied more than ten hours per week (see Table 17).

Table 16. Students' levels of engagement and challenge

	Percent N=676
<b>Overall rating of level of engagement in the course:</b>	<b>M =3.90</b>
Very	31%
4	40%
3	18%
2	9%
Not at all	2%
<b>Overall rating of level of intellectual challenge in the course:</b>	<b>M =3.85</b>
Very	27%
4	41%
3	21%
2	8%
Not at all	2%

	Percent
<b>The assignments for this course were challenging.</b>	<b>M =3.89</b>
Very	24%
4	50%
3	21%
2	5%
Not at all	1%
<b>The writing component of the assignments helped me learn and understand the content material presented in the course.</b>	<b>M =3.79</b>
Greatly	30%
4	36%
3	21%
2	8%
Not at all	4%

Table 17. Students' effort

	Percent (N=676)
<b>Compared with my other GW courses this semester the amount of effort I put into this course was</b>	
Higher	25%
4	36%
About the same	30%
2	7%
Lower	3%
<b>On average, how much time outside of class did you spend per week on this course?</b>	
More than 20 hours	< 0.5%
16-20 hours	1%
11-15 hours	3%
6-10 hours	17%
3-5 hours	53%
2 hours or less	27%
No hours	1%

***Learning outcomes:***

Students were asked to indicate the degree to which and to indicate the areas in which their writing skills improved. Overall, 70% thought that they learned a great deal in the course, and 46% thought that their writing improved after taking this course. By the end of the course, 74% thought that their writing ability was excellent or very good.

As Table 18 indicates, about half thought their writing skills improved or greatly improved in a number of areas including the ability to:

- think critically about the subject matter (63% thought it improved)
- structure and organize their writing appropriately for the discipline (57%)
- evaluate arguments in the readings (55%)
- engage in analytical writing in the discipline (52%)
- synthesize ideas from a number of sources (47%).

Table 18. Self-reported learning outcomes

	Percent (N=676)
<b>My ability to evaluate arguments in the readings in this course improved.</b>	<b>M =3.51</b>
Greatly	23%
4	32%
3	27%
2	11%
Not at all	8%
<b>My ability to construct a persuasive argument improved.</b>	<b>M =3.17</b>
Greatly	15%
4	27%
3	31%
2	15%
Not at all	12%
<b>My ability to think critically about the subject matter improved.</b>	<b>M =3.70</b>
Greatly	25%
4	38%
3	23%
2	9%
Not at all	5%
<b>My ability to synthesize ideas from a number of sources was enhanced.</b>	<b>M =3.34</b>
Greatly	18%
4	29%
3	30%
2	14%
Not at all	9%
<b>My abilities for analytical writing in a discipline improved.</b>	<b>M =3.43</b>
Greatly	18%
4	34%
3	28%
2	12%
Not at all	8%
<b>Amount you learned in the course (Spring only):</b>	<b>M =3.93</b> (N=252)
A great deal	39%
4	31%
3	17%
2	8%
Almost nothing	4%

	Percent
<b>The extent to which this course improved my writing:</b>	<b><i>M =3.26</i></b>
A great extent	11%
4	35%
3	31%
2	15%
Not at all	8%
<b>How would you evaluate your own writing ability based on completing this WID course?</b>	<b><i>M =3.84</i></b>
Excellent	14%
4	60%
3	22%
2	4%
Poor	< 0.5%
<b>My ability to structure and organize my writing appropriately for the discipline improved.</b>	<b><i>M =3.57</i></b>
Greatly	23%
4	34%
3	27%
2	10%
Not at all	6%
<b>My research skills improved.</b>	<b><i>M =2.87</i></b>
Greatly	11%
4	20%
3	31%
2	19%
Not at all	19%

A majority of the students who wrote comments said that their writing had improved as a result of their WID course; however, about one-third said that it had not. Both groups' comments indicated the importance of focusing on writing in the discipline in addition to general writing skills. Overwhelmingly, those students who thought that their writing had improved said it improved in the field their course had targeted. Many referred to writing styles or techniques within their chosen discipline and observed that writing in a new way had comprised a significant intellectual challenge. "There is always room for improvement in one's writing, but I certainly feel as though I walked away from this course with increased competence in writing about international affairs," was a typical comment. Those who thought that their writing had not improved often believed that their writing skills were good enough already<sup>6</sup>.

In the written comments, many of the students said that the writing assignments helped them learn the course material; it forced them to reflect on the material and to develop their own ideas about it, a challenge that many enjoyed. Students described the writing assignments as opportunities to practice using the theories that they were learning or to improve their understanding of the theory by articulating it. One student wrote:

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<sup>6</sup> One-quarter of the students enrolled in WID courses were juniors and seniors who, depending upon what courses they had taken in previous semesters, may have had substantial experience writing and getting feedback on their writing.

Truth is, without the writing assignments, I probably wouldn't have been nearly as interested in the subject matter. The writing assignments forced me to think abstractly about the things we learned through the readings and in class, and it forced me to focus.

***Quality of instruction:***

Students were very positive about their instructors and about the quality of instruction received (see Table 19). About three-quarters of the students found the assignments challenging or very challenging (74%) and were well integrated with the course content (76%). Feedback on assignments was returned in a timely fashion (75%), and 80% thought the instructor was accessible. Sixty percent indicated that they received feedback from the instructor on drafts often or very often, and 71% received useful feedback on completed assignments. Less effective were the peer review process and collaborating with other students on classroom projects or activities.

Table 19. Quality of instruction

	Percent (N=676)
<b>The assignments for this course were challenging.</b>	<b>M =3.89</b>
Very	24%
4	50%
3	21%
2	5%
Not at all	1%
<b>The writing assignments were integrated with the course content.</b>	<b>M =4.16</b>
Very	48%
4	28%
3	17%
2	5%
Not at all	2%
<b>Feedback on assignments was returned in a timely fashion.</b>	<b>M =4.10</b>
Very	45%
4	30%
3	17%
2	6%
Not at all	2%
<b>The instructor was accessible.</b>	<b>M =4.22</b>
Very	47%
4	33%
3	15%
2	4%
Not at all	1%
<b>The instructor's comments on my work were informative.</b>	<b>M =3.88</b>
Very	38%
4	30%
3	19%
2	9%
Not at all	5%

	Percent
<b>The peer review process helped to improve my writing.</b>	<b>M =3.11</b>
Greatly	21%
4	24%
3	18%
2	18%
Not at all	19%
<b>Collaborating with other students on classroom projects or activities was valuable.</b>	<b>M =3.15</b>
Very	19%
4	26%
3	20%
2	19%
Not at all	16%

The instructor's feedback on papers also emerged as an important issue when reading students' comments. Almost equal numbers of students praised or decried their instructor's comments. Some described feedback as detailed and insightful; others thought it was vague or minimal. Instructors who required an intense amount of writing received high praise, since, as many students observed, any writing practice is valuable. Other students complained that they had written only one paper for the class and hardly had a chance to improve. Students also commented that the extensive revision process gave them a chance to reflect more on their topics and to receive advice on their mistakes.

***Writing Assignments:***

One question asked students to reflect on which assignments were most (and least) helpful and why. A large number of students thought that all the assignments were helpful. They tended to favor long essay assignments; they liked the in-depth study and opportunity to explore personally interesting topics that were possible with long papers. Students also appreciated the research skills many learned in their WID classes. Overall, students enjoyed challenging assignments that encouraged creative treatment of the subject (e.g., a paper written from the point of view of an author whose work the class had read). There were fewer negative remarks about writing assignments.

**Comparison of UW 20 Pilot Students and Non-UW CCAS & ESIA Sophomores**

In the fall semester, all WID courses were given two course numbers: one for the WID enrollees and one for the non-WID enrollees. In almost all courses, faculty treated both groups equally, assigning the same writing assignments. The inclusion of non-WID students in the WID courses provides the opportunity to see if there are differences between the two groups in terms of what they learned, their views about writing, and their ability to write effectively. For this analysis only students in CCAS and ESIA who were sophomores were used. Juniors and seniors may have had other writing-intensive courses which could skew the findings. Unfortunately, the number of CCAS and ESIA sophomores who enrolled in the non-WID section of the course and completed the survey is small (47 students) compared to 175 of the WID group.

A few statistically significant differences emerged between the two groups. Of most interest is a comparison of the final grades. As Table 20 shows, students who took UW 20 earned slightly higher grades than those who did not take UW 20. The mean grade for UW 20 students was 3.56 compared to 3.38 for the non-UW 20 group. The higher grade for the UW 20 group is remarkable given that their amount of effort exerted and their rating of intellectual challenge for the WID course were lower for the UW 20 group compared to the control group (see Table 21). While the non-UW 20 group was slightly more engaged than the UW 20 group, the differences between the two groups are not statistically significant.

Table 20. Differences in grade, engagement, and intellectual challenge by UW20 involvement

	Took UW 20 (N=175)	Did not take UW 20 (N=47)
<b>Grade in WID*</b>	<b>M =3.56</b>	<b>M =3.38</b>
<b>Overall rating of level of engagement in the course:</b>	<b>M =3.80</b>	<b>M =4.07</b>
<b>Overall rating of level of intellectual challenge in the course:*</b>	<b>M =3.80</b>	<b>M =4.13</b>

Note: \* indicates differences between those who took and did not take UW 20 are significant at  $p < .05$

Table 21. Differences in amount of effort put into course by UW20 involvement

<b>Compared with my other GW courses this semester the amount of effort I put into UW 20 was</b>	Took UW 20 (N=175)	Did not take UW 20 (N=47)
Higher	21%	38%
4	36%	36%
About the same	34%	21%
2	5%	4%
Lower	4%	0%

A comparison of the actual writing samples from both groups, planned for the near future, should help us better understand the impact of the Program on students' writing.

**Summary:**

Students rated the writing-intensive courses and the instructors who taught them highly. Most were engaged in the course, and their level of intellectual challenge was high. Many thought that learning the writing styles or techniques within their chosen discipline was a significant intellectual challenge and increased their competence. The writing forced them to reflect on the material and to develop their own ideas about the subject.