

March 6, 2017

MARTIN BERGER
Acting Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Dear Martin,

Re: First Year Curriculum

I am delighted to transmit to you an updated proposal from the Council of Provosts for the revision of the first year curriculum.

Overview

The first year of a student's collegiate career is the most formative time of their experience. During that year, we and they lay academic and developmental foundations for a successful completion of their degree and preparation for graduate school, career, or other opportunities. Students for whom we are not successful in building these foundations will be lost, or will progress slowly to their degree, or will not meet the expectations of the University.

Since inception, UC Santa Cruz has had a distinctive and effective approach to the first year curriculum, a melding of the academic and developmental foundations of learning within the context of a smaller college community of scholarship. While not fully recognized in the 1960s, this approach of the deliberative creation of learning communities is now well known as a [high impact practice](#) in higher education, and is an approach that many Universities are seeking to integrate into their own educational environments to improve their student outcomes.

The foundational first year curriculum, including reading, writing, critical thinking, and academic discourse for all students, and mathematics for many students, is strongly supported within our college communities, not just through the core course, but also in developing a community of pedagogy and student support among Writing Program and college instructors, providing additional resources for students such as the college-based writing centers available for students at all levels of their education. Several colleges include science learning communities, integrating the most key aspects of the first year of study and development for many students, and for spring 2017 including pre-calculus offered in the college with the support of the Department of Education Hispanic Serving Institution program. All of these efforts are geared towards creating a strong learning community, physical, intellectual, and social, for our diverse communities of entering students.

DIVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Rachel Carson College • Cowell College • Crown College • Kresge College • Merrill College • Oakes College • Porter College • Stevenson College
Campus Orientation • Enrollment Management • Financial Aid and Scholarships • Office of the Registrar • Undergraduate Admissions
Campus Advising Coordination • Educational Partnership Center • Office of the Vice Provost and Dean • Summer Session

The first year is a complex, interconnected experience and structure. In 2005, the Academic Senate, including the colleges, Writing Program, Committee on Planning & Budget (CPB), and Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), collaborated in articulating the connections between the College Core Cores and the Composition curriculum. At that time, 72% of our incoming frosh grew up speaking only English, and 9% primarily with a language other than English (the remainder use English and another language at home).

Conditions have changed. Eleven years later, 50% of frosh come from English-only households, and 20% from households with a primary language other than English. The population the system was designed to serve has changed dramatically: it is no longer the case that 80% of students ELWR-required at matriculation satisfy that requirement at the end of the first quarter. Thus, to improve the first year curriculum, CEP set a goal to separate writing and Core courses, combined with a redesign of Core meant to bring students together rather than stratify them by writing competency.

The attached proposal separates the critical reading, thinking, and academic discourse foundations in the core course from the specific instruction in written communication. As a result, colleges will be able to focus on the rigorous exploration of an interdisciplinary theme as the context for developing key academic skills within a diverse community of students no longer segregated according to writing assessment, while the Writing Program will maintain its focus on writing and composition.

Even with this separation of content, the articulation of learning objectives not just within but between courses will be vital for student success, as will the services and support of our intentional collegiate learning communities toward all aspects of the curriculum. Beyond the students, the colleges and Writing Program will also have a continuing and expanding role in faculty professional development, graduate student instructor training, and assessment. The units also serve a vital role in community building among those most focussed on the early success of our students, a predicate to student disciplinary success and timely graduation.

Council of Provosts Proposal

The revised proposal addresses formal feedback from the Academic Senate's CEP and CPB, and reflects conversations with representatives from the Writing Program. The revised proposal is more flexible, for students and programs, than the earlier version, while still addressing key learning requisites through the application of recognized high impact practices for student success.

As with the prior proposal, this revision focusses on developing the core competencies of students through a focus on critical reading, writing, thinking, and academic discourse. Critical reading, thinking, and academic discourse, skills that may be increasingly difficult for entering students given the shifts in the most popular means of delivering and acquiring information, are the most foundational skills of the academy, even (I must admit) for the quantitative domains.

The Council of Provosts' proposal is strongly grounded in current research and best practices regarding student education and development. While most readers may not be able to dive into the topic as deeply as the college provosts have done over the past two years, I do hope that all readers take the time to consider at least a few of the works and studies that have formed the basis of this part of the first year curriculum revision.

A university education is not just about developing academic skills, but also about becoming a participating member of a diverse community of scholarship. I am most excited, as were Senate committees, about how the changes to the core curriculum mean that students would no longer be segregated according to their entering score on a writing test. Instead, core classes will bring students from different socio-economic, geographical, and academic backgrounds together within a single learning community at the start of their collegiate career as they pursue rigorous study of an interdisciplinary topic related to the college theme. The full integration within the college academic community of students in the Multilingual Curriculum is particularly important and compelling.

This revision to the curriculum will not only lay stronger foundations for all of our entering lower-division students, but further enhance the college communities, UCSC's unique means of creating a collegiate experience within a research institution. The academic redesign will promote the sense of belonging and place for our students, most of whom are away from their families for the first time and many of whom are from educationally disadvantaged communities or are first generation college students.

The task of creating a major change to our general education requirements is complex, appropriately so as these changes will touch around 4,000 students every year. The proposal involves coordination among eleven units housed in three academic divisions, and a multitude of support issues. The budgetary structure is as complex and interwoven as the curriculum, providing added complexity in the evaluation of the proposal.

The college provosts, through the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, presented a preliminary version of this proposal to the Senate for comment last Spring. With the resulting feedback in hand, last summer I led a group including Council of Provosts Chair and Merrill Provost Abrams, Writing Program Chair Shearer, Porter Provost Keilen, Teaching Professor Ritola, and Lead College Writing Coordinator Flanagan. We made significant progress, as [previously shared with your office and the Senate](#), on moving the revitalization of the first year curriculum forward. After continuing work, and a short delay as pressing national events redirected college focus for a time, the proposal is now complete. This revision more fully specifies aspects about which the colleges were seeking advice, expounds upon the research basis, and is now ready for formal transmittal from the Division.

Divisional Resources

Although the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE) is dean of eight of the ten colleges, I am responsible for the funding of core at all ten.

Core course is funded formulaically based on enrollment, taking into account a Division of the Humanities responsibility to teach (through the Writing Program) 26 core sections within its own budget, as discussed in a [June 2013 budget agreement](#).

The core course budget funds the second quarter of Stevenson College's 2-quarter requirement, and I leverage budgetary scraps to maintain the multi-quarter core experience of the Scholars Program (previously the First Year Honors Program and the Challenge Program), in combination with endowment and gift funds from the colleges, and [funds from the Koret Foundation](#) secured by Interim Vice Provost of Student Success Padgett.

Highly detailed analysis of this proposal will require extensive work with Planning and Budget (when the budget office is re-staffed) and the Division of Humanities (with new curricular and resource staff). However, I am able to provide sufficient analysis for the next round of review of the proposal.

The Council of Provosts has proposed a sound, research-grounded First Year Experience model that modestly increases the enrollment size of the first quarter Core course while making sections of composition courses available at each college. The resource impacts include the expansion of class size to 30 students (the maximum possible for physical and pedagogical reasons) and offering a certain number of aligned Winter C1 and C2 courses. The alignment between reading and composition courses both establishes a logical learning sequence and leverages a thematic connection between the courses. Even a modest thematic alignment will enable students to build on the familiarity of previously introduced material, deepening engagement with the course material while establishing a context in which to apply the lessons about reading and writing.

As an example, in 2014 we had 3,830 incoming lower-division students and 155 core sections, for an average section size of 24.7. The increase of core course section size by 21% to 30 would reduce the number of core sections by about 27.

These 27 sections (approximately) should be the minimum initial level for aligned winter C1 and C2 courses. That is, winter C1 or C2 sections that are "thematically linked" to the colleges, providing for about 3 such sections per college. It is important to recognize that the thematic link is a loose connection, one of recognition and building upon the collegiate theme.

As indicated in the proposal and agreed to in the summer meetings, alignment is simply an awareness and connection to the college theme and work of the fall quarter, rather than (as currently) a reading list and structure determined by the college. Within the broad scope of potential new C1 courses and the current collection of Writing 2 topics, this coordinated curriculum should be easy to achieve. Indeed, there are already examples of thematic links in the aligned fall Writing 20 sections at Crown and Winter Writing 2 sections at Rachel Carson College.

External research (e.g., the transformational work of Kuh on high-impact practices, and other references in the proposal) and internal research (e.g., the Ritola and Sher study of Stretch Core)

support the advantages of linked fall and winter curriculum, and it is my sincere hope that thematic linkages may only be the starting point for continued collaboration and alignment.

Also in support of the campus need for C1 and C2 courses through this revision, I suggest consideration of the idea that the majority of Stevenson winter core sections carry C1 or C2. In Winter 2016 for example, 3 sections carried C2 and 16 sections carried TA. While a modification to C1 or C2 for most all sections would increase campus need for TA courses, it would also ensure that students who choose Stevenson progress quickly through the first-year curriculum.

Overall, I estimate that additional funds would not be required for College 1, and about 40 sections could be “freed up” in support of additional C1 and C2 capacity aligned to the college themes as a result of increased fall class size and revision of the second half of the Stevenson course. That is, the Division of Undergraduate Education expects to be able to allocate to the first-year curriculum revision the equivalent of \$300,000 in additional curricular capacity squeezed from the current core resources. Undergraduate Education expects to be able to reassign this \$300,000 worth of curricular capacity to fund college-aligned winter C1 and C2 classes.

Graduate Student Instructors

The Council of Provosts “also expect advanced graduate students to be candidates for GSI-ships teaching College 1” (page 9). It will be important to determine clear and specific strategies and requirements for the integration of graduate student instructors into the College 1 curriculum. This will have some expense in professional development and graduate student mentorship. Most likely, the colleges will need to offer an annual graduate training course or workshops in the teaching of critical reading and academic discourse to a diverse student body. In addition to providing curricular capacity, GSI positions will increase the professional development and professional practice opportunities of our doctoral students. Finally, our multitude of first-generation (and higher-generation) college students will benefit from being taught by graduate student role models who are undertaking research related to the given College 1 focus.

The structure of College 1 may make it easier to achieve this goal for graduate students interested generally in teaching, but not necessarily in the teaching of writing. Of course, interest in learning to teach critical reading and academic discourse within the context of the college theme would be mandatory.

I propose as a goal and planning target that at least one out of every three sections be taught by a GSI by 2022, providing professional development, training in pedagogy, and financial support to about 40 graduate students. Achievement of this goal would be predicated on implementation of the frequently discussed GSI tuition and fee coverage and on a commitment by programs to encourage participation in College 1.

Additional Resource Issues

While as Dean I most strongly support this proposal, as Vice Provost there are many implications to campus resources and student success regarding the mandated expansion of C1 capacity. The Senate voted last year to change regulations without, to my knowledge, securing agreement on the funding of the change with the Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor or the affected divisions and units. Ensuring curricular articulation and budgetary feasibility will require considering the curriculum dedicated to students working to complete the Entry Level Writing Requirement. Thus, I must unfortunately withhold my full support of this proposal pending review of the Writing Program's and Division of the Humanities' plans regarding ELWR, C1, C2, and the continuing collaboration with colleges and programs. The next section provides a preliminary discussion of some of these issues.

Curricular and Curriculum Thoughts

As a curriculum that affects all students who enter at the lower division, the proposal is designed to have a significant impact on academic acculturation, student success, proficiency, and time to degree. There are a number of issues to consider in the development of the new design. Several of these are repeated from the [summary outcomes of the summer study group](#). I want to emphasize that most of these thoughts are not fully formed, and are primarily intended to stimulate discussion as we all work toward ensuring the success of our students through continuous improvement of the first year curriculum.

Length of ELWR sequence

Currently, in colleges that have all ELWR-required students enroll in a fall ELWR/C1 core taught by Writing Program faculty, approximately half of the students complete ELWR and C1 in a single quarter and go on to be successful in their C2 course. While many of these students would gain from additional instruction prior to C2 (as one could argue about most subjects), for reasons of time-to-degree, not to mention cost, it is important to ensure that there are multiple paths for students, and that students in this group do not uniformly see their curriculum suddenly expand from two courses (Core and Writing 2) to four courses (College 1, Writing 20, C1, C2).

The flexible placement of the Writing Program's Multilingual Curriculum, wherein the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) is used for initial placement but students can discuss with instructors regarding moving to a different course or skipping a course in the sequence, is an example of an approach designed to ensure that students are clustered by level and are within the curriculum for the appropriate period of time. Such approaches require assessment (e.g., through AWPE or another instrument) and individualized faculty advising. Expanding flexible placement to all ELWR-required students would require investment in faculty time but may be worth it to achieve the most efficient and effective placement of students in the ELWR sequence, reducing instructional cost and improving time-to-degree.

The development of learning objectives and a tiered sequence of courses based on placement rather than quarter for the domestic ELWR curriculum, similar to the system now used in the Multilingual Curriculum, could be a natural step with the completion of the College 1, C1, C2, and MLC learning objectives.

The Writing Program, with Student Support funds, is studying computer software to aid instruction in punctuation and grammar. This work may permit more refined placement of students into courses, and the development of low-unit tutorial options for students for whom improved use of language is a main requisite for the satisfaction of ELWR. Such low-unit courses (with perhaps 40 students per class, as suggested by the Writing Program), potentially online during summer, could help students complete ELWR quickly with reduced instructional cost.

Such approaches have been highly successful on our campus with ALEKS and mathematics, including the use of 2-unit and 5-unit courses and non-credit computer-mediated learning. It will be interesting to see whether such innovations can assist our students in meeting writing requirements.

Method of ELWR satisfaction

The method and timing of student completion of the ELWR requirement has a significant effect on curricular cost (to the campus) and progress toward degree (for the student). Also, it is important that students who are rated as having completed ELWR be prepared to attempt courses that have ELWR as a prerequisite.

Before enrollment, students can satisfy ELWR by taking the AWPE in May, achieving specific scores on other standardized tests, or completing a college-level composition course.

After enrollment, the primary ways of satisfying ELWR include:

- Passing the UC Santa Cruz AWPE at entry, if the UC AWPE was not taken.
- Passing Writing 27 if enrolled in the multilingual curriculum.
- Submitting a [portfolio](#) for review by the Writing Program, in connection with a Writing Program course, typically around the 6th week of instruction.
- After being barred, completion of a transferable Composition course and by submitting a successful portfolio.

CEP suggests that, as at most campuses, completion of the ELWR requirement should be based on success in courses, rather than on a separate portfolio review of work produced in the first six weeks of the quarter. With this appealing approach, we would start from the assumption that our students will be successful, but also need to ensure that students have the support and resources that will provide them the best opportunity to succeed.

Prior to fall 2013, Writing Placement Exams were offered five times per year. Students who passed the November exam satisfied ELWR, and those who then passed their Core course also satisfied the C1 requirement.

Now, the exam is only offered prior to the start of fall and winter quarters for students who have not previously taken the AWPE exam. After a student matriculates to UCSC, retaking the exam is not allowed and the only way to satisfy ELWR is by enrolling in a course (Core or Writing) and submitting a portfolio for review.

It appears that this change and the expansion of stretch core correlate to a 10-percentage-point drop in Fall ELWR satisfaction rates, from around 50% to around 40%. This drop means that students in the later cohorts with non-passing scores on the AWPE (6 and below) have to take more writing courses prior to attempting Writing 2. In spite of this additional instruction, the pass rate for students in Writing 2 appears to have slightly decreased.

Frosh Cohort	Fall ELWR Completion Rate for all ELWR-required students	W2 Enrollment of initially ELWR-req students	W2 Pass Rate of initially ELWR-req students
2010 Fall	57%	1072	98%
2011 Fall	53%	1099	98%
2012 Fall	50%	1296	97%
<i>November Examination replaced with Portfolio Review</i>			
2013 Fall	41%	1130	96%
2014 Fall	43%	1158	97%

The drop from around 50% to around 40% represents 150 students. The additional Writing 20 sections corresponds to a \$60,000 annual investment by the Humanities Division. The expansion of stretch core, which does not permit students to satisfy ELWR in the first quarter and extends ELWR enrollment for some students, has also had a financial impact.

Based in part on Ritola and Sher’s study that noted the importance of critical reading and use of language for success in completing ELWR, it can be expected that College 1, with its focus on critical reading and academic discourse, will advantage students in their rapid completion of ELWR, and in conjunction with innovations such as 2-unit-ELWR-satisfaction courses or online examinations, may further speed the assessment and progress of students.

I understand that the Writing Program is working to adjust the evaluation of ELWR portfolios so that students are assessed for what they have achieved (ELWR satisfaction) rather than what they may not be ready for (Writing 2). This change is also expected to improve the time to ELWR satisfaction, and hence time to degree, of our students.

College 1 Definition

The proposal includes, in Appendix 1 and 2, the general catalog copy and course learning outcomes for the College 1 requirement:

The college requirement must be satisfied at the start of each student's experience at UC Santa Cruz, because College 1's pedagogy, subject matter, and approach to the formation of academic community are logically prior to the General Education requirements and major requirements that students complete in the academic divisions. With distinctive Course Learning Outcomes (see below), [Academic Literacy and Ethos] will offer all students a foundation for intellectual exploration and personal development as members of an academic community, by teaching practical skills and "habits of mind" that have been shown to demystify academic materials and processes and promote independent, self-reflective, and collaborative participation in campus culture.

The content of College 1 will vary according to the intellectual, creative, and ethical traditions of the colleges. However, all colleges will design an ALE course that introduces first-year students to higher education from three distinct but related vantage points that are characteristic of membership in a university community: analysis, self-reflection, and engagement with others.

This description, and the Course Learning Outcomes of Appendix 2, lay the framework for the creation of College 1 courses. This approach follows the model set by the Writing Program, Council of Provosts, and CEP when proposing the [C1 and C2 regulation change](#) in Spring 2004. The documents at that time did not describe specific courses for each college, but a curricular framework that included agreement that the Colleges and the Writing Program would submit future courses and course modifications in support of the 2004 regulation change once the overarching regulatory policy was set. Development of full course proposals for every instance of College 1, for the approval of the Committee on Courses of Instruction, is an obvious next step that will need to be completed in Spring 2017 in anticipation of the Fall 2018 first offerings. This structure of first defining the learning objectives and then the courses was also used for the 2008 general education revision.

Thematic Linkage

We currently have a model of tight linkage between fall and winter at Stevenson and in the stretch core sections at Nine, Ten, Oakes, Rachel Carson, and Kresge, and thematic linkage at Crown and Rachel Carson colleges. While multi-quarter courses within a learning community is a model supported in the literature, stretch core model has had some strain points between college and Writing Program co-sponsors, even with the positive effects found in Ritola and Sher's assessment.

In part as a result of this history, the thematic linkages of some winter classes with college themes was a point of active discussion during the summer working group. The differing views may have been primarily formed based on concern with the current setup (in stretch core) of tight linkage, rather than the proposed thematic linkage.

The model of stretch core, taught by an ELWR-certified Writing Program faculty member selected by the Writing Program, is that the 2-quarter sequence must cover the reading list and topics of the single-quarter core course. Thus, the instructor and the Writing Program do not have full control over the extent and level of reading that will take place in association with the writing instruction.

The idea of college-aligned C1 and C2 courses is that the winter course will take advantage of the common reading and writing experience of students within College 1, further enhancing the development of the living and learning community so important for student retention. Though to ensure full classes these winter courses should be open to students outside of the given college, even as students within the college are given first pass at enrolling in them. This is the model used by Rachel Carson College and the Writing Program in developing Core-aligned winter Writing 2 courses.

Most Writing Program instructors are quite integrated within the colleges, their purpose, and their themes—in 2014-15, 85% of Writing Program faculty taught in one or more colleges—meaning that as an example, most current Writing Program faculty are familiar enough with the ideas and materials of current Core courses that creating college-aligned writing classes employing some of these ideas or materials would be plausible. In prior years, Writing Program faculty have created such courses, including ones focussed on social justice and sustainability.

To explore this question further, I asked the college provosts to review the spring 2017 [Writing 2 topics list](#) to gauge the extent to which they saw each course connected to the college theme. (Writing 2 course titles and descriptions are not available in AIS, an issue for student enrollment.)

The college provosts noted that the topics could be divided into two types: those designed around a specific (inter-)disciplinary theme, and those focused on writing and rhetoric generally. These latter courses could likely, with instructor interest, be aligned to any college theme, while the former would likely be aligned or nearly aligned to only a few college themes.

This preliminary survey found that most college provosts saw a few of the Writing Program’s courses, different for each college, as already being, most likely, aligned to the college theme. Further, most of the courses were considered to already be aligned or be alignable with minor changes by one or more college provosts. Only four of the courses were seen as either not being alignable or requiring major changes to align to any of the college themes in the preliminary survey. The table below summarizes the results for the survey, including section title, the number of sections scheduled to be offered in Spring 2017, and the extent to which the topic may be aligned to one or more colleges. (The survey was based on [web page contents](#) identified in the Spring curriculum on 2/25/2017. The page on 3/4/2017 showed many changes and noted a corrected upload error; for completeness, all surveyed courses and all unsurveyed courses are listed.)

Spring 2017 Writing 2 Topic	# of sections	One or more college provosts rated the topic
Mapping the Neighborhood: Writing about Communities, Social Justice, Social Change	1	Aligned
Is it all just a performance?: Writing In and About Drag	1	Major Changes
Language, Identity, and Power	0	Aligned
Fun, Food and Fantasy: Mass Media Representations of Health, Nutrition and Well Being	2	Aligned

Writing About Films About Writing	3	Minor Changes
Women's Ways of Writing	1	Major Changes
The Art of Living Through Writing	2	Minor Changes
Climate Change, Biodiversity, and the Environment	2	Aligned
MEDICINE: Health, Drugs, Life, Death	2	Minor Changes
Mindfulness of the Creative Experience through Genre Writing and Research	2	Aligned
Writing as an Act of Love	1	Minor Changes
The Distractions: Writing In and About The Social Media Age	2	Minor Changes
Censorship and the Power of Words	0	Aligned
Where the Wild Things Are	0	Major Changes
From Personal Experience to Academic Inquiry	0	Aligned
Big History	2	Minor Changes
Writing Against the Silence	3	Aligned
Welcome to the Suck: Writing about the War on Terror	0	Aligned
Regarding the Pain of Others: On War and Memory	0	Minor Changes
A History of "Cool": American Counterculture & the Modern Era	2	Minor Changes
Re-membering Yourself through Writing	0	Aligned
Writing About School	0	Aligned
Thinking About Learning	0	Aligned
Writing for Life	2	Aligned
The Story	0	Aligned
Envisioning a Sustainable Future	0	Aligned
Understanding Argument	3	Aligned
The World and Me: Purpose, Place and Prose	2	Aligned
Interrogating Education	2	Aligned
Genre Writing/Visual Culture	2	Minor Changes
Wave-Writing: The Rhetoric of Surf Culture	1	Not aligned
Literature as a Weapon: Reading and Writing about Fiction	1	Aligned
Is Higher Education Worth the Costs?	1	Aligned
Writing About Photography	1	Aligned
Writing About Food	3	Aligned
What's in the New Yorker This Week	2	Not Surveyed
Writing Our Relationships to Animals	2	Not Surveyed
Breaking Science	2	Not Surveyed
Art and Activism: Writing Across the Genres	2	Not Surveyed
Leisure, Labor, and Slacking	2	Not Surveyed
Fun and Games: Writing About Play	2	Not Surveyed
Writing the Emerging Africa: Beyond the four D's	1	Not Surveyed
Happiness in Modern Society	1	Not Surveyed

Youth Identity in a Networked Culture	1	Not Surveyed
Do Facts Matter	2	Not Surveyed
Spoken Words	1	Not Surveyed
The \$10 Founding Father: Writing About Hamilton: An American Musical	2	Not Surveyed
Conversation Starters: Texts and Their Ripple Effects	2	Not Surveyed
Cyberspace and the Biosphere	2	Not Surveyed
Redefining America: Undocumented Students in Higher Education	3	Not Surveyed
Title not listed (Rhetoric & Inquiry)	5	Not Surveyed

This survey is simply a first step, meant to identify whether there are potential connections between Core and Writing 2 courses. The next step would be for college faculty and Writing Program faculty (many of whom are both) to review and discuss the courses in detail, as well as to consider what other thematic linkages between ELWR, C1, and C2 courses might be appropriate to develop for students in the first year curriculum.

The thematic linkages will help maintain into the future the close collaboration of faculties dedicated to frosh student success highlighted in the recent Writing Program external review: “the relationship between the Writing Program and the ‘college system’ was one that faculty singled out as especially successful.”

Support of the Multi-Lingual Curriculum

The Writing Program’s rapid establishment of the Multilingual Curriculum (MLC) for new F-1 visa-holding international students was an important contribution to our campus. The curriculum ensured that, beginning fall 2015, students newly arrived from countries where English is not the primary language of instruction would have a curriculum focussed on translating their native-language fluency to English language excellence. Additionally, the MLC provides significant and important academic (and societal) acculturation to the standards and practices of the best educational system in the world. Finally, as a Senate-designated “ESL” program, the MLC allows our international students to progress through writing and major requirements in measured order.

The rapid deployment of the MLC led to different approaches on how MLC students should best join the college academic community and complete the college requirement, most often with special sections of core just for the MLC students. The new proposal, with students enrolling in College 1 at the same time as MLC courses, will instead truly integrate all students within a diverse collegiate learning community.

While the fall 2015 cohort has not entirely exited the MLC, the Writing Program’s [fall 2016 addendum](#) to its [spring 2016 preliminary assessment report](#) notes that “Reviewing Spring ELWR satisfaction percentages and MLC and Writing 1 course pass rates, the MLC continues to show, on the whole, that the curriculum successfully prepares students for the demands of college writing.”

Because of the differential planned growth rate of international students, the distinctive needs, and our commitment to ensure that all students invited to join our learning community are provided the tools needed for their success, it will be important that that campus have a separate funding model for the MLC and its students that is based on enrollment within the curriculum.

I was pleased to hear that, even with the first (fall 2015) cohort not quite complete, the Writing Program is considering ways to make the specialized curriculum available to domestic students for whom it may be a better choice than the standard ELWR curriculum.

Ongoing assessment of the first-year curriculum

Periodic review, assessment, and revision of curricula are necessary to ensure that our programs and requirements are meeting the needs of our students and the intentions of our faculty. In the last several years, the campus has adopted a new culture of assessment and worked to institutionalize this commitment as part of ongoing accreditation review. Since the first year curriculum has among the highest impacts on student success, it will need to remain a priority for institutional self-examination.

Writing Program Teaching Professor Tonya Ritola and Dr. Anna Sher of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Policy Studies, have conducted a series of assessments of Core courses. These provide a starting point for the regular assessment of the first year curriculum, including (but not limited to) the Core courses.

- [Criteria-Based Assessment of Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing Outcomes in the C1 College Core Course](#), conducted in 2014–15.
- [Criteria-Based Assessment in Writing 20, Part 1: The Crown Model](#). Conducted in 2015–2016.
- [Criteria-Based Assessment of the C1 Course \(80A\), Part 2: The Crown Model](#). Conducted in winter and spring of 2016.

Teaching Professor Kimberly Helmer and Writing Program Chair Heather Shearer have been similarly careful to assess the Multilingual Curriculum even before the first cohort has exited the program:

- [Preliminary Assessment of UCSC's Multilingual Curriculum for International Students](#), Spring 2016.
- [Addendum to Preliminary Assessment of UCSC's Multilingual Curriculum for International Students](#), October 2016.

A sustainable and long-term model of assessment of the first year curriculum will need to be developed and supported in the future. Assessment and improvement of all aspects of the first year curriculum, College 1, the ELWR and MLC course sequences, C1, and C2, and the transition to DC, and of course the concurrent innovation and assessment of the mathematics curriculum, will be important to our continuing efforts in student success.

Professional development

Faculty and GSIs teaching College 1, ELWR, C1 and C2 classes will benefit from professional development focussing on approaches to teaching these classes. It is exceptionally positive that Student Support funds, overseen by the Interim Vice Provost of Student Success, have made possible workshops on the new C1, C2, and College 1 objectives. Future professional development, as well as ongoing graduate instruction for GSIs taking part in the first year curriculum, will be necessary. Over the longer term, the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning will also be an important partner.

Graduate Student Instruction

With the expansion of the first-year curriculum, it will be important to also expand the involvement of graduate student instructors. There are high potential gains for developing systems that will further encourage graduate student instructors, not just in College 1, but also in C1 and C2 courses, and potentially some parts of the MLC as the graduate Languages and Applied Linguistics program grows.

Expanding GSI participation will mean also expanding GSI training. The Writing Program has been exemplary in providing such training, and is certainly up to the task of expanding their writing pedagogy curriculum with appropriate support.

Connection to Disciplines

Critical reading, writing, thinking, and communication form the basis not just for a liberal arts education broadly, but also for success and accomplishment in every major and minor. Currently, and in the proposed first year curriculum, there is articulation of purpose among the ELWR, MLC, Core, and C2 curricula. However, for many majors, there is a divide between the upper-division Disciplinary Communication requirement and prerequisite lower-division composition courses, infrequently spanned by individual faculty collaborations between major and the Writing Program. Although the Council of Provosts' proposal is narrowly focused on the first-year and lower-division experience, the campus as a whole must address the larger picture of coordinated knowledge of writing across all four years of a student's education.

The progression of a student through the reading, writing, and communication curriculum is an evolutionary process of learning, using, and returning to and advancing a multitude of skills. As with majors, in addition to repetition and reinforcement, there is a need for vertical integration and articulation throughout the curriculum. Students may begin with broadly focussed courses that build foundational skills (i.e., College 1 and ELWR), move on to more tightly focussed courses that build additional techniques and skills (i.e., Composition 1 and 2), and complete the work with advanced capstone study (i.e., disciplinary communication). Clearly articulating progression between stages and courses aids curricular coherence, student understanding, and instructor focus.

The collaborative work by the Writing Program, College Provosts, and Committee on Educational Policy has led to clearly defined learning objectives for College 1, C1, and C2. This has led to the pedagogical consideration, advantaged by assessment, of the ways in which the courses take a student through a progression of accomplishment, understanding, and learning. It will be important to extend discussion, review, and assessment to the transition from the first year curriculum and composition to the Disciplinary Communication (DC) curriculum.

As the first year curriculum expands, it may be advantageous for some students to have higher levels of connections between C2 and DC. Discipline-focussed C2 courses might be developed and potentially taught by Writing Program GSIs or faculty, or by GSIs or faculty associated with other programs. It would be important for any such courses to be assessed in the same manner and at the same time as other C1 and C2 courses, with leadership from the Writing Program, Institutional Research and Policy Studies (IRAPS), Humanities, and Undergraduate Education.

On many campuses, multiple departments offer some of the composition curriculum, even if primarily offered by one department. This may also be possible on our campus as a means of leveraging expertise, interest, and instructional resources, especially in programs that place high focus on critical reading, thinking, and writing. It would be important that any courses proposed for the C1 or C2 general education requirements be designed to achieve CEP's established C1 and C2 course learning objectives.

On our campus, many programs have engaged in the refinement and support of their DC requirements through Undergraduate Education's [Disciplinary Communication Grant program](#), in collaboration with CEP. Given the level of engagement with the DC, it may be that some of the DC grant participants would be interested in collaborating on the development of composition courses that more directly connect to specific disciplines.

Potential C1- or C2-hosting departments may hesitate due to concern for faculty and GSI pedagogical readiness to teach writing formally as a subject. This may be addressed through collaborations with the Writing Program in course development and training. Departments may also be concerned about the cost versus benefit. Because of the need for individualized feedback, composition courses are among the most expensive to offer, though just like laboratory and studio courses, they are a vital component of a UC-quality education. Current campus processes discourage programs from taking on such costs, an issue that could have several solutions.

One might consider adjusting formulas to take special account of composition enrollments in the faculty workload and Teaching Assistant (TA) systems. For example, if C1 and C2 enrollments were multiplied by 4 within the TA allocation process, a section of 20 students would generate a TA position for the division, making such a course significantly more feasible by removing the opportunity cost in comparison to offering a much larger course.

A second approach could be to establish a campus fund for such courses, to which course sponsors could apply to develop and offer composition courses, with the fund covering the majority,

or even totality, of the cost. Proposals could be reviewed and approved by CCI. Even with a central fund, the opportunity cost of not offering some other course may still need to be addressed, so a mixture of strategies are likely to be required.

Processes such as these might leverage to a greater extent existing instructional capacity, senate, non-senate, and GSI, as well as interest throughout campus.

In either case, ongoing assessment would be quite important.

Composition time limit

Regulation 10.2.3.1.a specifies that C1 and C2 “must be completed before the student enrolls in the 7th quarter.” This results in an enrollment bar without appeal for a small handful of students each year.

It is time for us to move beyond this narrow focus on a single requirement to a more nuanced approach in two steps. First, faculty should evaluate exactly which courses throughout the curriculum should have ELWR, C1, or C2 as a prerequisite. While we all talk about writing being the foundation of academic success (and it is), only one course outside the colleges has C1 as a prerequisite, and only DC courses have C2 as a prerequisite (and, redundantly, C1 and ELWR). Certainly, other courses expect students to be able to form and communicate a coherent argument at the collegiate level. The work led by the Writing Program to revise the C1 and C2 objectives as outcomes should provide clear guidance to programs regarding appropriate prerequisite levels. Second, failing to complete C1 and C2 in the first two years should place students on probation, subject to the oversight of their academic standing committee and its appeal process. I will be raising these issues separately with CEP, but mention them here due to their importance to the first year curriculum, and especially to students who start in the domestic or international ELWR curriculum.

Implementation Timeline

At the conclusion of the summer study group, we examined three possible roll-outs for the new curriculum: fall 2017, fall 2018, or a mixed model of some changes in fall 2017 and the remainder in fall 2018.

The fall 2017 implementation is no longer viable for consideration.

The mixed model could happen as follows:

- Core courses are split into three types, ELWR, C1, and C2, rather than ELWR/C1, C1, and C2. New course proposals are provided for ELWR core.
- Stretch core carries ELWR or C1 in the second quarter, something that would reduce the 2-quarter cohort approach for many students as they shift among sections.
- CP/EVC budgetary allocation for the C1 courses offered for the students satisfying ELWR after matriculation.

The mixed model would engender a certain amount of confusion for instructors, advisors, and students, as there would be a period when current lower-division students would be present on campus under three different versions of the first year curriculum.

Fall 2018 implementation would implement the entire curriculum at once, normalizing the first year curriculum among colleges, with a high dedication to student success, though of course it would also require a budgetary allocation from the CP/EVC.

In summary, the Council of Provosts, advantaged by Academic Senate feedback, has developed a well considered and cost-efficient proposal for revision of the first year curriculum. I am delighted to support their work and this proposal, pending formal consideration of the remainder of the first year curriculum, and would be pleased to discuss the first year curriculum further with you, Academic Senate committees, and others.

Sincerely,



Richard Hughey
Vice Provost and Dean
of Undergraduate Education

Attachment

Cc: Academic Deans
Academic Senate
Vice Provosts
Interim Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor Lee
Vice Chancellor of Planning & Budget Delaney
Council of Provosts Chair Abrams
Writing Program Chair Shearer
Assistant Dean Coddling
Assistant Dean Eischen
Assistant Dean Harrell