

UW COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IMPACTS 2020-2022

The work of UW Communication Across the Curriculum (CxC) is driven by four strategic goals for fostering stronger academic and scholarly communication activities on campus. Although the past 2 years have been marked by massive pandemic upheaval, CxC has continued to maintain and expand its programming.

GOAL 1: *Provide substantial individualized support for writers across campus.*

After an initial pandemic dip in usage, the UW Writing Center rebounded in 2021-2022, providing **1760 consultations**.

CxC Graduate Learning Communities, first offered in Spring 2020, have now supported **over 100 graduate students** in developing scholarly writing practices.

GOAL 2: *Support faculty as writers and instructors of writing*

The UW Cross-Disciplinary Writing Fellows Program saw **18 faculty complete** its inaugural and second years of support.

12 faculty participated in a CxC + ECTL-facilitated program to improve student communication and critical thinking skills.

GOAL 3: *Encourage research and inquiry into the impacts of communication-related activities at UW*

Direct assessment of COM student work in Spring 2021 found **83% of student work “excellent” or “adequate”** in developing structures in support of a clear purpose and in matching the writing to the needs, values, and expectations of the audience.

An interdisciplinary, CxC-facilitated inquiry project will be **published in *Across the Disciplines*** in the coming year.

GOAL 4: *Foster a general culture of writing and communication on campus*

CxC kicked off **weekly and weekend writing blocks**. Over 70 faculty, staff, and students worked alongside one another making progress on major writing projects.

CxC continues to partner with campus units including **UW Libraries, Office of Graduate Education, Wyoming Institute for the Humanities, Communications/Journalism, Wyoming Science Communication Initiative (WYSCI), and more.**



A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR IMPACTS

WRITING CENTER OUTREACH AND IMPACTS

- **Use by college.** In Spring 2022, 30% of clients identified a major within A&S; 14% were from Engineering, 13% from Health Sciences, 8% from Business, 12% from Education, 11% from Agriculture, 2% from the School of Environment & Natural Resources, and 1% from Law. (The remainder did not declare their colleges.) While these percentages have remained similar over the past three semesters, the center is excited to note an increase of visits from Engineering students; historically accounting for a small percentage of clients, this group represents a steadily increasing proportion of appointments (4% in Spring 2021, 10% in Fall 2021, and 14% in Spring 2022).
- **International/ESL students.** Between Fall 2020 and Spring 2020, approximately 1 in 7 consultations served writers of English as a second or other language. To further increase usage by this population, the Writing Center plans to establish a 'buddy system' program with the English Language Center.
- **Increasing visibility.** In Fall 2021, the Writing Center worked ten shifts at a booth on the Union Breezeway over the first four weeks of the semester. Staff handed out flyers, stickers, pens, and candy, engaging 273 students, staff, and faculty in conversations about the Writing Center mission.
- **Resource bank.** In Spring 2022, tutors created a variety of handouts on topics including uncommon citation styles and peer review methods. With the recent move of the Bridge Writing Fellows program into the Writing Center (from STEP Tutoring), undergraduate tutors/fellows will present some of these new resources in 1010 classrooms in Fall 2022.

"I always use the writing center for my bigger projects, and it has been an amazing tool that helps me continually improve my writing skills." - Spr22 Writing Center client

COM COURSE SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT

COM Course Support. The CxC program continues to advise the USP Committee on COM course review and renewal, and the director serves as a resource when faculty are requested to revise their submissions. Additionally, the director provided over 2 dozen individual consultations with COM instructors in the past 2 years, over zoom or email and in face-to-face settings.

New CxC website. With the move of CxC from ECTL to LeaRN (2020) came a revamp of the CxC website (uwyo.edu/cxc) that has allowed for both an expansion of teaching resources and a reduction of duplicated information between CxC and USP web pages.

Spring 2021 Direct Assessment. A group of twelve instructors evaluated a sample of student work from 37 Fall 2020 COM2 and COM3 courses. Two central questions (related to COM2/COM3 Student Learning Outcome 2) drove the assessment: How well do student documents indicate skill with *audience awareness*, *document purpose*, and *appropriate structures*?; and, What do readers notice about relative strengths and weaknesses of student efforts?

Across all student work, evaluators found 83.2% of student work to be "excellent" or "adequate" in developing structures in support of a clear purpose. Similarly, they rated 83.3% of student work as "excellent" or "adequate" in matching the writing to the needs, values, and expectations of the audience.

Qualitatively, evaluators noted that some assignment types seemed to set students up for greater success than others. (For example, one evaluator noted that an engineering "consultant" report they read seemed to provide a clearer sense of audience (both for the student and for the reviewer as an outside reader).) Similarly, evaluators noted that tables and graphics sometimes seemed to help students think

through their knowledge and/or craft clearer structures in their writing. Others, however, noted that students often seemed to lack a clear understanding of conventions for multimedia genres they were asked to write (such as web pages). In both cases, evaluators wondered whether more explicit instruction around multimedia might help students clarify their content knowledge *and* produce work that was more effective for its audience and purpose.

Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 Direct Assessment. In these semesters, all COM instructors were asked to submit scores for a random set of their students' work. Scoring was based on the nationally developed 4-point AAC&U VALUE rubrics for written and oral communication. Tables 1 and 2 provide average instructor evaluation scores from Spring 2022 (which are mostly similar to Fall 2021 scores).

	Context	Content	Conventions	Sourcing	Grammar
COM1	2.97	2.93	3.10	3.07	2.97
COM2	3.42	3.30	3.11	3.12	3.07
COM3	3.32	3.24	3.27	3.23	3.17

	Organization	Language	Delivery	Support	Message
COM2	3.30	3.24	3.18	3.09	3.48
COM3	3.47	3.27	3.13	3.27	3.40

Notably, student work was generally scored higher in more advanced courses. For all criteria, students in COM 2 and COM3 courses received higher scores than did students in COM1 courses. Additionally, at the intermediate and advanced levels, *all* averages are greater than 3.

Spring 2022 Survey of COM3 Students. In Spring 2022, all students enrolled in one or more COM3 courses (N=1344) were sent an invitation to provide information about written, oral, and digital communication experiences during their undergraduate coursework. Just under 300 students (~22%) submitted substantially complete responses.

Over 70% of respondents “mostly” or “fully” agreed that their COM courses provided them with sufficient practice in oral and written communication and adequately prepared them for future communication tasks. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent “somewhat,” “mostly,” or “totally” disagreed with statements about the impact of their COM coursework.

Based on *all* of their undergraduate communication experience (not only academic coursework), over 85% of students reported feeling “fully” or “mostly” prepared for the following communication tasks:

- editing and proofreading to produce error-free final-quality documents
- creating documents that meet specific format/design expectations
- evaluating secondary research materials
- writing documents for a variety of audiences
- citing secondary research materials
- conducting self-guided secondary research

In contrast, fewer than 70% felt “mostly” or “fully” prepared for these tasks:

- creating documents that blend text with visual, audio, and/or visual materials
- learning new software, applications, and strategies to help them manage extensive collaborative projects

CULTURE OF WRITING

UW Cross-Disciplinary Academic Writing Fellows program (UW-AWF). Initiated in Fall 2020 and facilitated by CxC, the yearlong UWAWF program supports faculty as scholarly writers. The 18 participants of the program's first two years produced over 100 scholarly works (journal articles, book chapters and proposals, grants, etc.) during their time in the program.

The program additionally celebrates the follow-on effects of the program on Fellows' work as teachers of writing, speaking, and thinking. One Fellow from the program's inaugural year commented: "I forwarded many tips, tricks, and resources from the group to my graduate student. As a first-year student in the program coming straight out of undergrad, she struggled with writing when she arrived at UW. Through the resources I forwarded her from this group, along with the graduate student writing group, her writing improved immensely over the course of one academic year. In fact, she was awarded two grants this academic year!"

Graduate Learning Communities. CxC partners with Wyoming Science Communication Initiative and Office of Graduate Education to provide non-credit programs which focus on developing participants' scholarly writing practices. These programs (first offered in Spring 2020) continue to be very positively reviewed. The Spring 2022 program (which served masters, doctoral, and other graduate students across UW colleges) added a new feature--weekly writing groups—with a goal of increasing participants' continuous progress on major projects.

The CxC Director co-sponsored **two discussion series** (Spring 2021 and Spring 2022) related to issues of diversity, democracy, and privilege. Though not focused directly on writing, these sessions offered a cross-disciplinary forum for discussing the role of language in perpetuating (and disrupting) cultures of power. During the pandemic, these zoom-based sessions were opened to interested participants across the state, including community college faculty and librarians at county and state libraries.

RESEARCH, INQUIRY, AND DISSEMINATION

Rick Fisher, Amanda DeDiego, Kaatie Cooper, Michele Larson, Kathleen Frye, and Chelsea Duball, "This is the type of audience I've learned to write to my whole life': Students across the curriculum explain their choice of audience." Accepted for publication in *Across the Disciplines* (anticipated Fall 2022).

Rick Fisher, Cynthia H. Brock, Kate Muir Welsh, & Gabriel P. Swarts. "An Academic Writing Program as Displacement Space: New Stories and New Positions." Under review at *Journal of Writing Research*.

Rick Fisher and April French. "A Public Syllabus: Advancing your Academic Writing Identity." Wyoming Institute of Humanities Research (anticipated Fall 2022).

Sarah Lee, Janissa Martinez, and Rick Fisher. "How well are students writing in UW communication-intensive courses? Some findings and implications from a Spring 2021 Project," hybrid session as part of ECTL Teaching & Learning Symposium: 30 Years of Building Community Around Teaching and Learning - Celebrating Resilience. Sept. 2021.

Rick Fisher. "Teaching through COVID: Faculty debrief their experiences," session engaging participants in discussion of trends from Summer 2020 focus groups (after the initial rapid shift to hybrid teaching). *Related publication:* Fisher, R. (20 Sept. 2020) "Looking towards fall semester at UW: Some continuing optimism." *Casper Star Tribune* [opinion].