

March 15, 2004

To: Lou Anna K. Simon
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: June Pierce Youatt
Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education

Re: Reviewing Writing in the Undergraduate Curriculum

In order for graduates of Michigan State University to be successful in both shaping and communicating ideas in the 21st century, they must have the capacity to write effectively. Writing is integral to undergraduate education, and a more integrated and coherent program would enhance the overall undergraduate experience. To that end, I requesting that you charge a planning committee with the tasks of reviewing the current writing program, considering alternatives, and making appropriate recommendations for the revision of the general education writing requirement, including the Tier I requirement and the current approach to writing across the curriculum (Tier II). I propose that the Office of the Provost appoint a Planning Committee to direct the review, with the expectation that this committee will establish a set of work groups to address specific tasks outlined in the charge.

Key tasks of the Planning Committee to be completed by November, 2004 include:

- A review of pertinent local and national documents relevant to current practice in first-year writing instruction and assessment.
- A broad review of the status of existing writing instruction across the university, including writing embedded in study abroad programs, Tier II courses, and in professional schools/majors curricula.
- Focus groups with faculty and students involved in current instruction which identify issues in/with writing instruction
- A review of current WRAC (ATL) placement and remediation practices and their effectiveness

- Recommendations for assessing outcomes of the writing program on an ongoing basis.
- Review of the relationship of Tier I writing to integrative studies (completed in conjunction with the review committee on integrative studies)

With submission of the following by November, 2004:

- Summary of findings related to review of current practice
- Recommendations for possible modifications of the writing curriculum

Pending acceptance of these recommendations, an implementation group will be charged with developing a curricular plan, addressing questions of instructor and TA training, and making recommendations for needed resources, including technology.

The decisions regarding MSU's expectations for all students in the area of writing are properly university-wide and not the purview of any single department or limited subset. The Planning Committee should design a process that includes broad input from interested constituents across the university.

Per our conversation, the Office of the Provost will provide the usual resources to support the work of the Planning Committee and work groups.