



**First Year Writing Program
Rhode Island College
Annual Report
2010-2011**

The 2009-2010 Annual Report concluded with this list of future plans for the 2010-2011 academic year and beyond. In the 2010-2011 academic year, the First Year Writing Program has made remarkable progress:

1. Create and implement an assessment plan

FYW has developed an ongoing assessment model for WRTG 100 and has successfully completed assessment for spring 2010 and fall 2010. Spring 2011 assessment is in progress (materials collected and in the process of being coded and names redacted). Final reports for spring 2010 and fall 2010 are in the Appendix. While the model still requires some adjustments, the FYW Program is confident in its development and validity.

2. Establish a web presence and logo

Our website, made possible by the Web Communications office, is available at www.ric.edu/firstyearwriting. Readers can access recent reports, events archives, current course offerings and announcements as well as our new Course Description (see #5 below). Our logo is visible on the top right-hand side of this document.

3. Celebrate the teaching and practice of writing across campus

October 18th-22nd was our first annual Writing Week at RIC. Events for the week included a workshop on providing students with feedback on their writing; a visiting speaker, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, whose talk, entitled "Second Language (L2) Writers in the Composition Classroom: Perspectives and Possibilities" focused on language and identity and was made possible by the College Lecture Series; a celebration, along with the RIWP, of the National Day on Writing; and recognition of the people and services that help make the work done in the FYW Program possible.

Additionally, members of the FYW Program continued to talk and meet with other faculty and staff across campus, participating in the Writing Board's Faculty Development Workshop and the FCTL's Engaging Conversations Conference. The Director of Writing met with COGE and presented on the program's course revisions and assessment. Finally, in conjunction with the VPAA, we have established a Writing Award for ENGL 010 and WRTG 100 students; at least seven submissions were received for the 2010-2011 academic year (a good number for a new event). Winners of the Writing Award will be announced at the 2011 Writing Week, where they will be able

to read from their work (which will also be published on the website and, perhaps after several years of writing awards, in a booklet for WRTG 100 courses to use).

4. Assist in establishing WAC and WID programs for RIC

While the FYW Program has been most actively involved in the work of WRTG 100 and ENGL 010, the success of our program requires RIC to become a writing-oriented campus. Thus the program has provided feedback and support on the GETF's recommendations for WAC and WID courses and programs campus-wide. We hope to continue to provide expertise, models, and support for these initiatives as they become reality.

5. Continue to educate faculty and administration on the work done in First Year Writing

The development and publication of the detailed WRTG 100 description makes available to the campus community information as to what happens in WRTG 100; what expectations instructors and staff can have of students who successfully complete the College Writing Requirement; and how instructors can build on the work done in FYW as they plan their WAC and WID courses. Likewise, celebrating writing (see #3) also involves educating others on the good work done in our writing courses.

6. Establish resources in Program office for instructors (i.e., sample syllabi, a textbook library) and continue to offer workshops

Despite the break-in and robbery—twice—of the FYW Program office, the Director continues to offer a library of potential textbooks for instructors. Sample syllabi are available for instructors to view, and the webpage continues to be a resource. Additionally, the Director has begun to compile notes from past workshops, etc., and is making them available in collated form to instructors. Our FYW Program Annual Summit in August 2010 was attended by approximately 18 instructors; their input led directly to the revised Course Description and some of the practices in place at this time. We hope to replicate that success this coming August.

Finally, at this point all part-time instructors in the FYW Program have been observed by the Director of Writing at least once; in the fall of 2010 alone, the Director performed 11 evaluations. Because of the tremendous turnaround in staffing in FYW Programs (see #9, below), and the Director's insistence on observing all new instructors herself (as much as this is possible), regular observations and feedback of instructors will be an ongoing part of the Director's duties. For fall 2011, the program anticipates at least five new instructors on its roster. While these observations and evaluations insure a proper level of instructor, they also showcase instructor talents and student investment and suggest opportunities to improve the program's pedagogy via program revisions and future workshops.

7. Communicate more directly and regularly with students

Again, the Course Description speaks to students as well as writing instructors and college faculty. The Writing Award is a chance for some of the best students—too often overlooked—to showcase their work and abilities, as well as serve as a model for other students. For the 2011-2012 academic year, one goal of the FYW Program is to create evaluations for our courses that allow students more direct and specific feedback on the work being asked of them.

8. Establish competitive awards programs for the teaching of writing and for student writing within WRTG 100.

See #3. Having established student awards, one goal of the coming academic year is to include awards for teaching in WRTG 100.

9. *Increase number of sections taught by full-time faculty*

And

10. *Lower enrollment cap*

FYW courses continue to be overwhelmingly taught by adjunct faculty (see statistics in Appendix). Attention to and correction of this program require more than one academic year. While professional organizations in Composition Studies have indicated a *maximum* capacity of 20 students for FYW and 15 for basic writing courses (see 2009-2010 FYW Program Annual Report), WRTG 100 still exceeds that recommendation by 20%. The Director of Writing has urged all instructors to *not overenroll* students this past year, resulting in few classes exceeding the capacity of 24. We are pleased to see that the GETF recommendations for a FYW course recommend a maximum capacity of 20 students. We continue to advocate for COGE and administration to accept this recommendation.

In terms of staffing, this is a larger institutional issue that negatively affects many 100- and 200-level courses at RIC. While more faculty hires in the English Department will help alleviate this problem, those faculty must also have release time in order to teach entry-level positions (see the English Department's 2010-2011 Annual Report subheading entitled "Significant Issues to Be Addressed"). However, more hires in the Composition/Rhetoric field would allow for more tenure-track faculty to teach WRTG 100 and would benefit course offerings of the newly constructed Rhetoric and Writing Minor. Of course, faculty from outside the English Department would also be welcome to teach FYW courses, but that is unlikely so long as other departments continue to be pressed to fill their own offerings with full-time faculty.

Future Goals

For the academic year of 2011-2012 (and beyond), the FYW Program aims to:

1. Revise the Basic Writing Course Description (ENGL 010), which right now focuses the course on grammar, syntax, punctuation and general mechanics, a pedagogy that is not in agreement with research and scholarship in basic writing.
2. Begin the pilot of WRTG 100P, which would provide an alternative to ENGL 010 for some students.
3. Introduce more formal workshops and informal conversation for instructors of writing (a request initiated by adjunct faculty members).
4. Explore, and possibly pilot, a Directed Self-Placement and/or Informed Self-Placement model of placing students in writing classes, with a self-efficacy survey and advisement aimed at helping students make placement decisions for themselves.
5. Draft FYW Program Course Evaluations for WRTG 100, ENGL 010, and WRTG 100P.
6. Offer Teaching Awards to instructors in the FYW Program.
7. Work more closely with English Ed and RIWP to encourage pedagogical and scholarly relationships among the K-16 writing community in RI. Specifically, the Writing Marathon (October 20—during Writing Week) will include collaboration among RIWP, the English Educators' Network, and FYW. Additionally, students enrolled in SED 445—all teacher candidates in English in FSEHD—will work with, and form collaborate relationships with, a select group of WRTG 100 instructors.

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1. WRTG 100 is at 94.28% capacity.
 - a. Several of the severely under enrolled sections are Learning Communities or otherwise not open to the general college community.
 - b. Additionally, instructors this semester were asked not to over-enroll students as per the Director of Writing. Only 5 sections were over-enrolled this semester, as opposed to 17 in fall 2009.

First-Year Writing Statistics Spring 2011

Reflects totals from the close of the add/drop period; please note that add/drop was extended through February 11th because of class cancellations/school closings

Sections 010.....	3
Sections 100.....	19
Sections 100H.....	0
Total Sections First-Year Writing.....	22

Adjuncts.....	11
TT Faculty.....	4
Other Faculty/Staff.....	0
Total Instructors.....	15

Staffing

4. 73.33% of total instructors are adjuncts
5. 26.67% of total instructors are tenure-track faculty

Sections

4. 81.82% of all sections are taught by adjuncts
5. 18.18% of all sections are taught by tenure-track faculty

English 010

Capacity is 10 students

# of sections below cap:	1
# of sections at cap:	1
# of sections exceeding cap:	1

Writing 100

Capacity is 24 students

# of sections below cap:	12
# of sections at 24:	6
# of sections over 24:	1

1. 63.16% of sections are under-enrolled, but only 5 are under-enrolled by more than 3 students. Of those 5, two meet for four hours/once a week (section 14 meets Saturday mornings; section 17 meets Monday evenings).
2. WRG 100 is at 84.21% capacity

Rhode Island College First Year Writing Program Pilot Assessment Report Spring 2010

In spring of 2010 the FYW Program, in conjunction with members of the English Department's Composition Committee, piloted an assessment plan. The goals of the assessment were to investigate how well WRTG 100 satisfied the outcomes and goals of the Committee on General Education (COGE) and to institute an assessment plan to be used in future academic years.

The Director of Writing asked all instructors to collect the writing materials—drafts, informal writing, finished essays—from two students in the time period following Spring Break until the end of the semester. Instructors were allowed to select the students whose work they would be collecting, but were instructed to select a “typical” student’s work and an “atypical” student’s work. Pamela Casey, the Writing Center Information Aide, then redacted names from the submissions, coded them, and photocopied them for the Composition Committee members to read. The Committee met on June 1st to discuss what criteria to use to rank and assess the student packets and what form assessment would take in future academic years.

Using the COGE outcomes statement grid—which can be found at <http://www.ric.edu/faculty/organic/coge/Goals%20and%20Outcomes%20Grid.pdf>—the criteria relating to “Persuasive Speaking” and “Receptive Listening” were removed, as the Committee members found them less useful in assessing WRTG 100. Based on the remaining four criteria, the members then used the rubric to assign a holistic grade for the packet. Each packet had two readers; a third reader was used if the two readers did not agree on the score. Time was spent during the June 1st session calibrating readers (more on this below). Possible scores ranged from one to four: a score of one meant that the packet did not meet General Education requirements; two, that the packet minimally met the requirements; three, that the packet met the requirements; and four, that the packet exceeded the requirements.

By the numbers, then, of possible 40 student packets, the Director of Writing received 22 packets, which is 55%. Of the sixteen instructors teaching WRTG 100, 10 submitted materials for the assessment process, or 62.5%. Part of the reason for this low number of participants could be because calls for assessment materials were not issued until right before Spring Break. For future assessments, there will be better communication, early and often, between the FYW program and the instructors, and there will be clearer indicators of how assessment will help the program. In this way the Committee hopes to have a larger, more complete sampling in the future. Additionally, some of the students whose writing was selected for the assessment did not complete the class or the assignments; other instructors might have provided materials for more than two students. Again, in future assessments, more effort will be made to count the students who did not or could not finish the course—giving those packets, even in absentia, a score of “one”—and to make sure each section only produces two student packets.

The table below indicates the range of scores for the received 22 packets:

Score	# of Packets @ Score	% of Total
1 (One)	0	0%
2 (Two)	9	41%
3 (Three)	7	32%
4 (Four)	4	18%
N/A*	2	9%

The average score for the 22 packets, excluding the two (N/A) that we could not score (more on this below), was 2.75: slightly below the goal scores of 3 or 4, and thus not quite adequately meeting the requirements. While it would be tempting to indicate that *any* score in the “2” range is unacceptable, it’s important to note that, first, a score of “2” still meets the requirements as detailed by COGE and, second, that a score of 2.75 is rather high in the “2” range. RIC student writing is on the cusp of firmly meeting the requirements of a General Education course. The FYW Program’s goal is, of course, to elevate the scores every assessment period, but at this juncture—and in conjunction with some of the observations listed below—a score of 2.75 seems acceptable.

Issues to Consider

1. **Calibration.** The rater reliability is an important issue in any assessment, and for this assessment pilot, there were serious concerns. Despite the fact that some time was spent in the assessment session discussing scores and what each constitute, more time, attention, discussion and consensus is needed on what each score represents. Over half of all student packets read needed a third reader, because the first two readers could not agree. The two packets scored with an “N/A” received three separate scores from three separate readers; thus these packets were excised from the assessment.

Clearly, such unreliability needs to be addressed before future assessment readings. One step is to have a discussion, and to create descriptions, as to what each score reflects when assigned (for example, what is the difference between a score of 2 and a score of 3?). More thorough calibration sessions need to be held, particularly since which faculty members read and rate the packets will change from year to year. Finally, those members of the Composition Committee are going to reflect on their choices specifically by revisiting papers (such as those scored N/A) and articulating the thought process that helped them arrive at their score. These steps should help secure a more reliable scoring process for the future; the Director of Writing will continue to monitor this process.

2. **Student Selection.** For this pilot, instructors of WRTG 100 sections were asked to select two students from each section for submission: one student who represented the “typical” student and one student who could be labeled as “atypical.” While the Composition Committee did not indicate whether “atypical” would mean above or below average, or typical, most instructors chose to define “atypical” as a more advanced student. Such partiality in selection, however, skews the sample and thus the scoring. Although the Committee liked the idea of giving instructors as much control as possible over their sample, in order to preserve the integrity of the sample, students might be randomly preselected by the Director of Writing. The fall 2010 assessment will implement random selection.

An additional drawback of asking instructors to select students is that students who dropped, withdrew from, or failed the course were not likely to be counted; instead, instructors were likely to simply select another student if the first could no longer be counted on to supply his/her writing. An important part of assessment is to count those students who successfully completed the course as well as those who did not. And since attrition is a large part of WRTG 100—particularly in the spring—random selection by the Director of Writing will help insure that those students who did not produce any writing, or enough writing, will still be counted in the final assessment.

3. **Programmatic Changes.** This assessment confirmed that the current move from an expressivist, modes-of-discourse writing pedagogy towards an emphasis on textual analysis and inquiry-based writing is a good strategy, as was the move away from the mandatory textbook that reinforced this pedagogy. The Director of Writing is currently in the process of revising the FYW Outcomes Statement to emphasize this new direction. Because the COGE Goals emphasize textual analysis and synthesis, such a revision would put the FYW Program more in line with the General Education requirements while allowing the Program to serve the writing and rhetoric needs of the College.
4. **Semester Significance.** It is important to note that this assessment took place in the spring semester, when students in WRTG 100 might produce markedly different writing than those in the fall or even the summer. While the FYW Program has no hard-and-fast data concerning spring versus fall enrollment demographics (yet), anecdotal observations indicate there is a difference. We know that spring students potentially failed 100 in the fall, took 010 in the fall, or put off taking their writing requirement until the spring (or several springs later). Are spring students, on average, less accomplished writers? While the spring 2010 assessment was a pilot, the Composition Committee might have to make further adjustments to the assessment plan following the implementation, reading, and scoring of fall assessment submissions.

Future Assessment Plan

1. **Larger Sample Size.** For this pilot, 22 student packets were collected. Estimating each section to contain approximately 24 students, with 20 sections offered in the spring, there were approximately 480 students enrolled in WRTG 100. Thus, approximately 4.6% of all students were assessed. In general, assessment experts call for a sample of *at least* 5%.

An example from fall 2010 illustrates how the Program hopes to reach that sample percentage. Estimating each section to again contain 24 students (fall classes tend to achieve their capacity), with approximately 33 sections offered, the FYW Program anticipates about 792 students enrolled in fall 2010. If each section supplies two student packets, that results in 66 student packets—approximately 8% of the student body, which is a statistically significant sample.

2. **Fewer Student Papers Collected.** The Composition Committee chose to ask for all writing from selected students for the pilot assessment. It became clear rather quickly that such volume was impractical for future assessment (recall that instructors in the pilot were only requested to collect material from Spring Break onward—about half a semester's worth

of material) in a practical amount of time. Future assessments will ask instructors to collect student's first and last papers, including drafts and assignment prompts, with the hope that this smaller sample size, which will bookend the semester, will be more manageable. While this is not ideal, the constraints of time and resources make it necessary.

3. **Do More With Collected Materials.** The Composition Committee realized that more could be done with the collected material than just reading it and filing it away. Assessments such as these produce a rich assortment of writing that reveals much about a program. Assignment prompts, for example, could be used as a catalyst for a future workshop. The fact that faculty and student voices/surveys could not be part of the final assessment plan—despite the Committee's hope that they would be in the original assessment plan—means that the Director of Writing will have to find other ways to hear from these community members, whether through surveys, focus group interviews, etc. In the end, this assessment produced a real sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and an understanding of some of the directions the program needs to take in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

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in conjunction with:

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Rhode Island College First Year Writing Program Assessment Report Fall 2010

Summary:

Based on a four-point scoring rubric (four being the highest score), the average holistic score for fall 2010 was **2.84**, up .09 from spring 2010. Of the total student population in WRTG 100 at the end of the fall 2010 add/drop period, student packets were collected from **6.57%**. The FYW Program solicited 74 packets (two from each of the 37 sections offered); 55 packets were collected, or **74.32%**.

Readers: Members of the English Department's Composition Committee (Becky Caouette, chair; Jenn Cook and Mike Michaud, full-time faculty; Claudine Griggs, Writing Center Director; Jay Peters, adjunct faculty) along with two additional adjunct faculty members (Moirra Collins and Ellen Partridge). The adjunct faculty members were compensated for their work.

Criteria: Four of the six criteria from the COGE Goals and Outcomes Grid (accessible at http://www.ric.edu/faculty/organic/coge/Goals_and_Outcomes_Grid.pdf) were used to assess the writing (standards related to "Persuasive Speaking" and "Receptive Listening" were removed, as the Committee members found them less useful in assessing WRTG 100)(see attached scoring grid). Based on the remaining four criteria, the members then used the rubric to assign a holistic grade for the packet. Each packet had two readers; a third reader was used if the two readers did not agree on the score. Possible scores ranged from one to four:

1. the packet *did not meet* General Education requirements;
2. the packet *minimally met* the requirements;
3. the packet *met* the requirements;
4. the packet *exceeded* the requirements.

Methodology: Prior to the start of the fall 2010 semester, each instructor of a WRTG 100 section (37 sections in all) was assigned two (different) randomly generated numbers, ranging between 1 and 24. These numbers corresponded with WRTG 100 rosters, where the class capacity is 24 students. Instructors were asked to locate the student names that corresponded with those numbers, and to collect the first and last essay/project from those two students and to submit them to the Director of Writing by semester's end. The names of those students who were selected for assessment but who did not finish the class, or who failed to turn in specific papers, were also requested by the Director (see information on attrition, below), thus accounting for all students.

Identifying information was redacted from student papers and each student packet (first and last semester essay/project) was then assigned a random code; this was done by the English Department secretary. After calibration sessions (two scheduled, of which readers were required to attend one), approximately 14 packets were given to each reader, along with a scoring grid. Each packet was read

once by two different readers; in cases where the two readers could not agree, a third reader was asked to score the packets.

Results: Of the possible 74 packets to be collected, 55 were submitted by faculty. Five faculty were non-compliant, resulting in 7 sections, or 14 packets, not being submitted (of those 5 faculty, 2 are no longer teaching at RIC and the remaining three were asked to account for their nonparticipation). Five additional packets were not submitted because of student attrition—students either did not turn in the first and last papers or dropped out/withdrew from the course. Thus, of the 74 potential packets, 74.32% were collected, up from spring 2010's 55%. This puts our sample at approximately 6.57% of the total number of students enrolled in WRTG 100 in fall 2010 (37section, capped at 24 students each, at 94.28% capacity), above our goal of 5% and above last year's collection of 4.6%.

Of the 55 packets submitted, two were misplaced at some point during the coding and distribution phase. The below numbers, then, are based on the final number of 53 packets. The table below indicates the range of scores for the scored 53 packets:

Score	# of Packets @ Score	% of Total
1 (One)	0	0%
2 (Two)	12	22.64%
3 (Three)	33	62.26%
4 (Four)	4	7.55%
N/A*	4	7.55%

The average score for the 53 packets, excluding the four (N/A) that we could not score (more on this below), was 2.84. The table below compares scores for all assessments conducted thus far:

Semester	Score
Spring 2010	2.75
Fall 2010	2.84

Items of Note:

5. **Calibration.** For the pilot assessment (spring 2010), 2 of the 22 student packets collected—approximately 9%—were not recorded because each of the three readers scored the packet differently. This semester, four packets remained unrecorded because of a lack of agreement between two of three readers. While still less than ideal, it's important for the FYW Program to recognize that this is only 7.55% of the total number of packets read—down 1.45% from spring 2010. In addition, 41.5% of all packets required a third reader, down from the spring 2010 assessment where more than half of all packets required a third reader.

This semester, the Director of Writing again held calibration sessions where discussions centered on the difference between a score of “2” and a score of “3” (the most common source of confusion and debate). Unrecorded materials will be retained from this assessment session and used for the next calibration session for spring 2011 assessment. The FYW Program goal is continued improvement in calibration.

6. **Paper Selection for Inclusion in Packets:** While the spring 2010 assessment asked instructors to submit all writing materials from students, fall 2010 assessment asked instructors to submit the first and last papers of the semester in the assessment packets. As it turns out, neither scenario is ideal. The pilot requirements simply resulted in too much reading for the assessment committee. The requirements of first and last papers from the fall 2010 assessment ran the risk of not adequately conveying the kinds of work students might be doing in FYW. For example, many instructors ask students to begin and end the semester by reflecting on their literacy experiences or with reflection on their previous writing experiences and, at the end of the semester, on their work in their WRTG 100 class. While these are important and valuable ways to teach writing, the COGE Goals and Outcomes also stress textual analysis and synthesis, for example, which might not be represented in more reflective pieces. The Composition Committee is working on language that would require a more representative sample be submitted for assessment; ideally, the newly revised Course Description and the distribution of the scoring grid will help committee members come to a decision as they begin crucial conversations with FYW Program instructors

7. **Workload:** The Composition Committee consists of five faculty members, four of whom participated in the assessment process. Two adjunct members have volunteered to serve as well. The FYW Program was pleased to have three adjuncts (one of whom was on the Composition Committee) compensated for helping with assessment.

In particular, fall assessment can be quite intensive. Some figures might illustrate our point. If every student produces 10-15 pages per packet (on average), and there are 53 packets, then the Composition Committee must read, at minimum, approximately 1060-1590 pages of student writing (since every packet must be read at least twice). With four faculty members on the Committee participating in assessment, that results in about 265-397 pages per reader per semester. The addition of three extra readers in the form of the compensated adjuncts means that each reader, on average, would read approximately 151-227 pages—a significant difference (and still not taking into account the need for the occasional third reader).

While the Director of Writing and committee members are committed to assessment and realize its programmatic and institutional importance, assessment runs the risk of becoming the *only* thing that the Composition Committee is able to accomplish each semester. Thus we respectfully request the continued assistance and compensation of adjuncts for assessment in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

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