



**First Year Writing Program
Rhode Island College
Annual Report
2011-2012**

The 2010-2011 First Year Writing Program's Annual Report concluded with the following list of goals for the 2011-2012 academic year and beyond. While we address all seven of the previously articulated goals, we'd like to highlight a few major accomplishments: we have increased efforts to provide professional development opportunities for instructors of FYW; we have piloted several new curricular initiatives in an effort to better serve our students; and we are working to collaborate with different programs and departments across campus in order to better serve the college community.

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.*

Due to the changes in the General Education Program, as well as the piloting of the WRTG 100P course (see #2, below), ENGL 010 has not yet been revised. Making FYW part of the FYE became the main agenda item of the academic year; the Composition Committee has agreed to change "WRTG 100: Writing and Rhetoric" to "FYW 100: Introduction to Academic Writing," a change which Jim Magyar, Chair of COGE, requested be done no earlier than the 2012-13 academic year (in order to reduce confusion as the new Gen Ed Program was phased in).

Secondly, because we believe WRTG 100P will be a better fit for some, although not all, of our ENGL 010 students, we need to assess the success or failure of the 100P pilot in order to determine in what capacity ENGL 010 will remain. Finally, because of the new FYE initiative, which includes the First Year Seminar, we are not sure the fate of COLL 101, the 1-credit course that is tied to ENGL 010 (the grade for this component does count towards a student's GPA). COLL 101, while an excellent offering for students, seems an odd pairing with ENGL 010; the development of a cohesive curriculum for ENGL 010 is complicated by the unclear connection between COLL 101 and ENGL 010. While it is clear that ENGL 010 is a necessary requirement for some entering RIC students, the number of students, and the needs of those students, has become less clear due to the above changes at the college. We anticipate making changes to ENGL 010 in the next few years, quite possibly after the implementation of the new General Education Program and decisions regarding WRTG 100P and Directed Self-Placement (respectively, #2 and #4, below).

2. *Begin the pilot of WRTG 100P, which would provide an alternative to ENGL 010 for some students.*

Our attempts to pilot two sections of WRTG 100 Plus were unsuccessful for the fall 2011 semester. This six-credit course would allow students placed into ENGL 010 to fulfill their College Writing Requirement (with a grade of “C” or better) in one semester, instead of the two semester sequence (ENGL 010, then WRTG 100) that is required.

Both sections of WRTG 100P were under-enrolled in Fall 2011, and so the English Department Chair, in consultation with the Director of Writing, cancelled those sections and offered additional sections of ENGL 010 instead. We were unclear as to exactly why the pilot did not run. OASIS advisors indicated that some students were unable to commit to a six-credit course in the fall—this was particularly true of students in the professional schools, where schedules are already tightly controlled by disciplinary and accreditation requirements.

While no pilot is a failure as long as something is learned, the enthusiasm for the course from students and faculty alike strongly suggested that we should try again. In particular, two students in Becky Caouette’s ENGL 010 course, fall 2011, were disappointed with the cancellation of the 100P sections (they had been enrolled in the course), and students in the same course who learned of the course for the first time expressed a desire to enroll in such a course.

Thus the FYW Program will offer two sections of 100P for the fall 2012. As of this writing, both sections are half-full, with Orientation coming to a close. New communication efforts, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions, as well as meetings with Dolores Passarelli (Director of OASIS), were implemented in the spring 2012 semester. Students enrolled in ENGL 010 will be emailed later in the summer of 2012 and urged to consider 100P as an alternative to the ENGL 010/WRTG 100 sequence. We hope that such efforts enable us to run the 100P pilot in fall 2012.

3. Introduce more formal workshops and informal conversation for instructors of writing

We were pleased with the number, type, and scope of professional development offerings this year. In addition to our FYW Program Second Annual Summit, held in August, we also offered a mini-Summit in January. In both meetings we discussed program-related issues and also discussed pedagogical methods for improving our teaching. In August, for example, we focused on the concept of “Inquiry as Sustained and Sequential,” which appears in the FYW Course Description. We investigated what this meant both in terms of content and methodology.

FYW sponsored Writing Week during the week of October 16th, and we invited Dr. Lad Tobin to campus; he spoke on “Self-Disclosure and Teacherly Ethos” (co-sponsored by the College Lecture Committee). We also celebrated faculty writing with a visual display, and worked with the OBOM Committee in showcasing a giant, interactive “Magnetic Poetry” board in the library. For the first time, we presented our FYW Awards to three students; those award-winning essays are posted on the FYW website.

Because our Writing Week speaker was so warmly received, we invited another speaker, Dr. Pamela Bedore, to campus on February 22nd (again, this event was co-sponsored by the CLC). She spoke on the topic of peer review, and her presentation was entitled “Do We Hate It Too?: Faculty Attitudes Towards Teaching Peer Review.”

Finally, we instituted several events that would allow instructors of FYW to share their teaching pedagogies and methodologies with each other, and help to create a community of FYW instructors

(because so many of our instructors teach part-time and, often, teach at other colleges and universities as well as at RIC, it is increasingly difficult to create professional development and community-building opportunities for all involved). In the fall, we held five informal, one-hour Coffee Hours. There were no agendas or predetermined “talking points” for these events. Rather, faculty were invited to come in and talk about their teaching, their students, and their classrooms. For the spring, we sponsored three “Instructor Invitationals,” where instructors were given a small honorarium to present on a topic that related to their teaching and had some grounding or relation to Composition Theory, Rhetoric, or a related field. And, on Friday June 22nd, the FYW Program teamed up with the RIWP to offer the “One-Day Summer Invitational Institute for Adjunct Faculty of First Year Writing.” We explored topics such as the new General Education requirements and Rhode Island’s implementation of the CCSS. We counted nine RIC adjuncts at the event, all of whom received compensation for attending and all of whom appreciated the opportunity to talk and share with colleagues. We hope to continue to offer all of these events in the 2012-2013 academic year: we have already been approved for funding to bring a speaker to campus during Writing Week 2012 (again, cosponsored by the CLC), and we are in talks with the RIWP for a 2013 event.

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.*

With the help of the Writing Center, we are currently in the process of piloting a new initiative: Directed Self-Placement (DSP). While we used the traditional writing placement exams this year for placing students in ENGL 010 or WRTG 100, we asked students who had to sit for placement exams to review and complete a DSP self-efficacy survey. The FYW Program will receive this survey data at the end of July and will analyze the data to determine correlations between student placement exam scores and their DSP choices. We emailed more information on our DSP process during the spring 2012 semester to academic offices, and that information is available upon request. The FYW Program is particularly grateful for the efforts and labor of Claudine Griggs, Pamela Casey, and the Writing Center tutors who proctored the exam and DSP surveys and who gathered the data.

5. *Draft FYW Program Course Evaluations for WRTG 100, ENGL 010, and WRTG 100P.*
- And
6. *Offer Teaching Awards to instructors in the FYW Program.*

Though we discussed both these issues at the FYW Program Second Annual Summit in August 2011, neither effort was implemented. While the evaluations would be designed to assess the program, we are uncertain to what extent they may come in conflict with the adjunct union contract and the assessment of adjunct instructors. We are reassessing the need for the evaluations and considering other ways in which to obtain some of the information that the evaluations might yield (i.e., could we gather information about the course in another way, such as in our assessment process?).

Many adjunct faculty were concerned as to how Teaching Award recipients would be nominated, selected, and awarded, as well as who would establish the criteria for receiving the award. They were concerned that such an award would fragment the community of instructors and cause unnecessary friction among instructors. FYW will revisit the issue of instructor Teaching Awards at future Summits.

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.*

We were pleased with our initial efforts to collaborate with the RIWP for professional development opportunities (please see item #3, above). The positive response from such an event, which required collaboration and planning on both the part of RIWP and the FYW Program, was overwhelming. In particular, we were pleased to see instructors from an area high school meet to talk with instructors of FYW. It reaffirmed the importance of K-16 involvement in the teaching of writing.

While we were not able to link FYW faculty with students in SED 445 this year for Writing Week, nor were we able to collaborate with the English Educators' Network, we anticipate future opportunities to do so. Again, the collaborative one-day Institute with RIWP illustrated how much FYW instructors at the college-level can learn from RI high school instructors, and vice versa. We were pleased to have established these lines of communication and look forward to building on them.

Future Goals (2012-2013 and beyond)

1. Assess data from 2012 pilot on Directed Self-Placement (DSP) and decide on course of action (phase in DSP, discontinue initiative entirely, or re-pilot DSP, with changes, in 2013).
2. Assess WRTG 100Plus and decide on course of action (pilot the course again in fall 2013, pilot a different iteration of a basic writing/WRTG 100 course, or propose a permanent course to the UCC)
3. Pilot the new Written Communication Outcomes assessment rubric in WRTG 100 assessment.
4. Continue to develop FYW's contribution to the Research Fluency Outcome.
5. Continue to offer, and improve on, professional development opportunities for instructors of FYW

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First-Year Writing Statistics Fall 2011
 Reflects totals from the close of the add/drop period

Sections 010.....	6
Sections 100.....	33
Sections 100H.....	2
Total Sections First-Year Writing.....	41

Adjuncts.....	24
Faculty.....	2
Staff.....	1
Total Instructors.....	27

Sections

1. **9.76%** of all sections are taught by tenure-track faculty
2. **2.44%** of all sections are taught by staff (Writing Center Director)
3. **87.80%** of all sections are taught by adjuncts

Staffing

1. **7.41%** of total instructors are tenure-track faculty
2. **3.70%** of total instructors are staff (Writing Center Director)
3. **88.89%** of total instructors are adjuncts

English 010

Capacity is 10 students as determined by RIconnect

of sections over: 1 section @11 students
 # of sections at cap: 4
 # of sections under cap 1 section @ 7 students

- ENGL 010 is at **96.67% capacity**.

Writing 100

Capacity is 24 students

of sections below cap: 15 (total of 42 open seats)
 # of sections at capacity: 15
 # of sections over capacity: (@25): 2
 (@26): 1
 (@ 27):0

- WRTG 100 is at **95.20% capacity** ($33 \times 24 = 792 - 42 \text{ seats} + 4 \text{ seats}$)

WRTG 100H

Capacity is 17 for WRTG 100H

of sections below cap: 2 (total of 8 open seats)
 # of sections at capacity: 0
 # of sections over capacity: 0

- WRTG 100H is at **76.47% capacity** ($17 \times 2 = 34 - 8 = 26$)

First Year Writing Statistics Spring 2012
 Reflects totals from the close of the add/drop period

Sections 010.....	3
Sections 100.....	17
Sections 100H.....	0
Total Sections First Year Writing.....	20

Adjuncts.....	13
Faculty.....	2
Staff.....	0
Total Instructors.....	15

Sections

4. **10.00%** of all sections are taught by tenure-track faculty
5. **90.00%** of all sections are taught by adjuncts

Staffing

4. **13.33%** of total instructors are tenure-track faculty
5. **86.67%** of total instructors are adjuncts

English 010

Capacity is 10 students as determined by RICConnect

of sections over: 0
 # of sections at cap: 0
 # of sections under cap 1 section each @ 6, 7 and 9 students

- ENGL 010 is at **73.33% capacity**.

Writing 100

Capacity is 24 students

of sections below cap: 13 (total of 110 open seats)
 # of sections at capacity: 4
 # of sections over capacity: 0

- WRTG 100 is at **73.04% capacity** (17 x 24 = 408 – 110 seats)
- 3 of the 13 under-enrolled sections (WRTG 100-13, -14, and -17) meet one day a week (Tuesday evening, Saturday morning, and Monday evening, respectively) and account for 48 of the open seats, or about 44%.

Rhode Island College First Year Writing Program Assessment Report Spring 2011

Summary:

Based on a four-point scoring rubric (see attached), the average holistic score for Spring 2011 was **2.65**, down .19 from fall 2010. Of the total student population in WRTG 100 at the end of the spring 2011 add/drop period, student packets were collected from **8.07%**. The FYW Program solicited 38 packets (two from each of the 19 sections offered); 31 packets were collected, or **81.58%**.

Readers: Members of the English Department's Composition Committee (Becky Caouette, chair; Jenn Cook, Mike Michaud, and Joe Zornado, full-time faculty; Claudine Griggs, Writing Center Director; David Shapiro-Zysk, adjunct faculty) along with two additional adjunct faculty members (Maira Collins and Ellen Partridge). The adjunct faculty members were compensated for their work via the FYW Program budget.

Criteria: Four of the six criteria from the COGE Goals and Outcomes Grid (accessible at http://www.ric.edu/academics/generalEducation_goalsAndOutcomes.php) 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 spring 2011 semester, each instructor of a WRTG 100 section (19 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, approximately 8 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 38 packets to be collected, 28 were recorded as having been submitted by faculty. One faculty member was non-compliant, resulting in 2 sections, or 4 packets, not being submitted (the one faculty member met with the Director of Writing and was given a verbal warning). Six 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. However, 31 packets were scored by assessors. We can only conjecture as to why this might be: mistakes in bookkeeping, where student papers were collected but not recorded; the separation of whole packets into two partial packets due to the number of people who handled the packets, etc. For consistency, we will say that 31 packets were collected (see discussion).

Thus, of the 38 potential packets, 31, or 81.58%, were collected, up from fall 2010's 74.32%. This puts our sample at approximately 8.07% of the total number of students enrolled in WRTG 100 in spring 2011 (19 sections, capped at 24 students each, at 84.21% capacity), above our goal of 5% and above fall 2010's collection of 6.57%.

The table below indicates the range of scores for the scored 31 packets:

Score	# of Packets @ Score	% of Total
1 (One)	0	0%
2 (Two)	11	35.48%
3 (Three)	13	41.94%
4 (Four)	2	6.45%
N/A*	5	16.13%

The average score for the 31 packets, excluding the five (N/A) that we could not score (more on this below), was 2.65. The table below compares scores for all assessments conducted thus far:

Semester	Score
Spring 2010 (pilot)	2.75
Fall 2010	2.84
Spring 2011	2.65

Items of Note:

1. **Calibration.** Calibration continues to be a point of concern for our assessment. Over 16% of our packets could not be given a score because readers could not agree (three different readers awarded the packets three different scores). While we recognize that such issues are part of the assessment process and are an important source of information in their own right, we'd like to keep this number below 10%.

We increasingly find that while there are wide areas of agreement between the COGE outcomes that we use in our scoring rubrics and the FYW programmatic outcomes, there are also some differences. Because the FYW Program adopted its outcomes from and build on the [WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition](#), the course as we describe it and

the course as we assess it are not the same. Not only does this call into question issues of validity, but it also presents a scoring challenge for readers. As COGE moves to operationalize the Written Communication Outcome in the new General Education program, members of the FYW Program hope to be an integral part of that work, and hope that the outcomes we articulate will be a helpful starting point for assessing the Written Communication Outcome.

Meanwhile, we hope to experiment with communal scoring sessions and to work more carefully on our calibration sessions. However, the conversations concerning calibration and (dis)agreement on scores provide opportunities to revise the FYW Program.

2. **Bookkeeping:** Although only 28 packets were recorded as collected, readers read 31 packets. Clearly, some error occurred during the processing phase. Likely, additional packets were collected but not recorded (since papers are collected at the end of the semester, such confusion is understandable) or packets were accidentally subdivided at some point.
3. **Attrition:** 6 of the 38 possible packets to be collected were not collected due to student attrition. That is, 15.79% of students whose work was to be assessed did not hand in the required work—either the student dropped the class or failed to submit first and last papers. This number does not include partial packets, where students submitted the first paper but not the last, or vice versa (there were approximately 3 such packets). For fall 2010, 6.76% were not read due to attrition.

Respectfully Submitted,

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In conjunction with:

Moir Collins, Jenn Cook, Claudine Griggs, Mike Michaud, Ellen Partridge, David Shapiro-Zysk and Joe Zornado.

Rhode Island College First Year Writing Program Assessment Report Fall 2011

Summary:

Based on a four-point scoring rubric (see attached), the average holistic score for fall 2011 was **2.34**, down .31 from spring 2011 and down .50 from fall 2010. Of the total student population enrolled in WRTG 100/100H at the end of the fall 2011 add/drop period, student packets were collected from **6.03%**. The FYW Program solicited 70 papers (two from each of the 35 sections offered); 47 papers were collected or **67.14%** of the total number requested.

Readers: Members of the English Department's Composition Committee (Becky Caouette, chair; Mike Michaud and Joe Zornado, full-time faculty; Claudine Griggs, Writing Center Director; Pam Mazzuchelli, adjunct faculty) along with two additional adjunct faculty members (Moirra Collins and Barnaby McLaughlin) for a total of seven (7) readers. The adjunct faculty members were compensated for their work via the FYW Program budget.

Criteria: Four of the six criteria from the COGE Goals and Outcomes Grid (accessible at http://www.ric.edu/academics/generalEducation_goalsAndOutcomes.php) 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:

5. the packet *did not meet* General Education requirements;
6. the packet *minimally met* the requirements;
7. the packet *met* the requirements;
8. the packet *exceeded* the requirements.

Methodology: Prior to the start of the Fall 2011 semester, each instructor of a WRTG 100/100H section (35 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, to collect the 8-10 page paper (as mandated in the program's longer Course Description) 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 submit this particular assignment, 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 paper was then assigned a random code; this was done by the English Department secretary. Each reader read approximately 13 separate papers for the first round, serving as either the first or second reader. 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 (for fall 2011, approximately 21 papers, or 44.68%, needed a third reader).

Results: Of the 70 possible papers to be collected (35 sections x 2 students per section), 47 were recorded as having been submitted by students and faculty, or 67.14%. Six faculty members were non-compliant, resulting in 6.5 sections, or 13 papers (18.57%), not submitted (of those faculty members, one made a calculation error and four were not rehired for spring 2012; should they return in fall 2012, participation in assessment will be a condition of their reemployment. The remaining faculty member was given a warning via email). Ten (14.29%) additional packets were not submitted because of student attrition—selected students either did not turn in the required paper or dropped out/withdrew from the course. This accounts for all 70 papers that were to be collected and assessed.

Thus, of the 70 potential packets, 47, or 67.14%, were collected, down from spring 2011's 81.58%. This puts our sample at approximately 6.03% of the total number of students enrolled in WRTG 100/100H in fall 2011 (33 sections, capped at 24 students each, at 95.20% capacity for WRTG 100; 2 sections, capped at 17 students each, at 76.47% capacity for WRTG 100H. Thus 780 of the possible 826 seats were filled as of the end of add/drop, or 94.43%), above our goal of 5% but below spring 2011's collection of 8.07%.

The table below indicates the range of scores for the scored 47 packets:

Score	# of Packets @ Score	% of Total
1 (One)	6	12.77%
2 (Two)	18	38.30%
3 (Three)	19	40.43%
4 (Four)	1	2.13%
N/A*	3	6.38%

The average score for the 47 packets, excluding the three (N/A) that we could not score (more on this below), was 2.34. The table below compares scores for all assessments conducted thus far:

Semester	Score
Spring 2010 (pilot)	2.75
Fall 2010	2.84
Spring 2011	2.65
Fall 2011	2.34

Items of Note:

1. **Calibration.** While calibration has traditionally been an issue in FYW assessment, we were unable to offer calibration sessions this semester because of scheduling. Ideally, we'd like to begin experimenting with group reading and scoring sessions, but faculty schedules and commitments have, so far, made that difficult to organize. Interestingly, the number of papers that could not be scored due to disagreement among all three readers was down in the fall 2011 semester, from 16.13% in spring 2011 to 6.38% in fall 2011. This is a

significant decrease, and a trend we hope will continue even as we look to continued discussion on agreement among scorers.

We increasingly find that while there are wide areas of agreement between the COGE outcomes that we use in our scoring rubrics and the FYW programmatic outcomes, there are also some differences. Because the FYW Program adopted its outcomes from and build on the [WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition](#), the course as we describe it and the course as we assess it are not the same. Not only does this call into question issues of validity, but it also presents a scoring challenge for readers. As COGE moves to operationalize the Written Communication Outcome in the new General Education program, members of the FYW Program hope to be an integral part of that work, and hope that the outcomes we articulate will be a helpful starting point for assessing the Written Communication Outcome.

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