

## **Proposal for The Queens College Writing Curriculum under Pathways**

### **Background: The Writing Intensive Requirement at QC**

Queens College advances its mission in the liberal arts by requiring every student to take three courses that are Writing Intensive in addition to one course in First Year Writing (English 110). This interdisciplinary writing requirement predates CUNY's Writing Across the Curriculum program by nearly a decade, and it reflects a longstanding commitment that is shared by faculty and administrators at Queens: We aim to foster our students' intellectual growth by requiring them to write throughout their progress to their degrees, from their General Education courses to advanced research in their majors.

Implicit in the Writing Intensive requirement is our shared belief that our students need ongoing practice writing in a wide range of disciplines. The belief is articulated more fully in the college's "Goals for Student Writing Statement," adopted by the Academic Senate in 2006:

The College's curriculum reflects ambitious goals for student writing intended to foster a commitment to ideas, engagement with texts, and ownership of language. The cumulative experience Queens College graduates have had by the time they complete a bachelor's degree will prepare them to:

- Become fluent with the elements of academic writing, including thesis, motive, evidence, analysis, and style
- Practice the processes and methods commonly used by effective writers
- Take ownership of the language and rhetorical strategies they employ
- Develop a working knowledge of the grammar and mechanics of standard English
- Gain experience with the conventions of various genres, disciplines, and profession.

### **Pathways**

Queens College's Writing Requirement is classed as an "overlay" and thus lies outside of the "Common Core Structure" mandated by CUNY for General Education. But the Pathways proposal mandates an additional 3 credits of English composition in addition to our ENGL 110, so that every CUNY student will now complete six credits of writing instruction. The Pathways committee has indicated, however, that departments outside of English may submit course proposals for the second English Composition course that is now required:

### **A. English Composition: Six credits**

A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

- Read and listen critically and analytically, including identifying an argument's major assumptions and assertions and evaluating its supporting evidence.
- Write clearly and coherently in varied, academic formats (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports) using standard English and appropriate technology to critique and improve one's own and others' texts.
- Demonstrate research skills using appropriate technology, including gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary sources.
- Support a thesis with well-reasoned arguments, and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media.
- Formulate original ideas and relate them to the ideas of others by employing the conventions of ethical attribution and citation.

### **Proposal**

On behalf of Writing at Queens and the English Department, we offer this proposal to adapt to the new Common Core structure. We believe that incorporating the interdisciplinary writing curriculum that has historically been central to the liberal arts at Queens College can usefully inform how we implement the English Composition requirement. We also believe that our proposed response to Pathways will ultimately strengthen the College's writing curriculum by refocusing our writing requirement on the cumulative writing experience of Queens College graduates.

We propose a writing curriculum at Queens that will have four staged components involving some version of our current W courses, two General Education courses, and one course in the major.

1. English Composition I (English 110). 3.0 credits / 4.0 hours.\* Enrollment: 20. This course already exists and would continue to be taught as it currently is, in topic-based sections intended to introduce students to a variety of writing strategies they will need in the variety of disciplinary courses they encounter.
2. English Composition II: English Composition in the Disciplines Freshman Seminar. 3.0 credits / 4.0 hours. Enrollment: 20. These courses would introduce students to the particular writing strategies relevant to a particular discipline or profession. One possibility is that all of these courses would be divisional—for example, English Composition in the Natural Sciences, English Composition in the Arts, or English Composition and Social Analysis. Another possibility is that some could be divisional and others could be departmental—for example, English Composition for Literary Studies in the English Department, or English Composition and the Methods of Psychology in the Psychology Department. Many departments already

offer courses that could meet this requirement with minor adaptations, and the Office of General Education is piloting a number of them in a new freshman seminar model in the spring of 2012. \*\*

3. W courses. With regard to W courses, there are two options, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:
  - a. Continue to require three W courses, using the college's current model, offering these as an "overlay."
  - b. Designate particular General Education courses as W courses, possibly requiring students to take W courses at specific points in their advancement toward the degree.
4. Capstone W courses. Consider requiring a capstone course that's also a W, offered either in the majors or the Divisions (in the "synthesis" model the college has been considering for some time).

\*English 110 is a 3.0 credit , 4.0 hour course. We recommend that this model be adopted for all courses that fulfill a writing requirement. This would enable instructors to devote the necessary time to integrating writing instruction with their instruction of their course topics. Also, the fourth contact hour could be applied to the instructor's course load and would give instructors an incentive to teach writing courses, which are labor intensive and require more individualized instruction than most courses. This is a proposal the Writing Intensive Sub-Committee has been planning to put forward already.

\*\*We suggest exploring the possibility of staffing many of these English Composition in the Disciplines courses with Enhanced Chancellors' Fellows, as the English Department does with English 110. ECFs are contracted to teach 12 hours each academic year. If they were assigned a total of 11 hours of teaching per year—two of the proposed writing courses and one three-credit, three-hour course—that would leave one hour which might be used for faculty development. Additionally, if the courses were staffed with ECFs, Writing at Queens could recruit Faculty Writing Coordinators in each division to design and implement ongoing professional development workshops to help the ECFs (and other instructors) gain the experience they need to teach writing effectively. In their fifth year, ECFs are eligible to become CUNY Writing Fellows. In addition to making them better teachers, this faculty development would make them competitive candidates for these positions and ultimately serve them well when they seek full-time academic employment.