## GROUNDED IN TRADITION, EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

#### STRATEGIC PLAN for LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

#### 2008-2013

# WRITING DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

In response to the University's most recent strategic plan, *Grounded in Tradition, Educating for the Future, Strategic Plan for Loyola University Maryland, 2008-2013*, the Writing Department has crafted a five-year plan aligned with the University's mission, goals and initiatives, as appropriate. Our strategic plan articulates the ways in which the Writing Department, its curriculum, faculty, and resources will support the university's goal to become the leading Catholic comprehensive university in the nation.

Below, we outline our mission and general contributions to the University. Following this overview, we provide an Action Plan that specifies our current contributions to *Grounded Tradition, Educating for the Future*, as well as future contributions, resource needs, and assessment criteria.

# **Department Mission**

Because writing and rhetoric play a central role in reflection, expression, and communication, they have been core components of both the liberal arts tradition and of Jesuit education since its inception. Considered alone, the recursive process of writing promotes learning and makes it visible to us and others; rhetoric demands that we consider the implications of writing for the society that surrounds us. Together, writing and rhetoric are essential to the process of discernment because they allow students to think critically and creatively, to respond to the world's joys and suffering, and to engage these constructively.

As a department in the Humanities division of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Writing Department promotes and supports critical and creative writing in all of its forms across the university through the undergraduate curriculum, including the Core writing course and the Writing major and minor; the Loyola Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiatives; co-curricular activities, such as student publications and a public reading series; and faculty service and scholarship.

## **Undergraduate Education**

The Department supports undergraduate education through its curriculum in multiple ways: by offering the Core writing course, WR100 Effective Writing; a Writing Major, Interdisciplinary Major, and minor; and courses designated as Diversity courses and Service Learning courses.

We also support college-wide initiatives by teaching courses that are part of interdisciplinary programs, such as the Honors Program, Alpha and other first-year programs, and Gender Studies, Film Studies, American Studies, and Catholic Studies. In addition, students can take writing courses as electives, regardless of their major. Below, we outline more specifically how our curriculum contributes to student learning.

#### The Core

Writing, as the Loyola University Core statement of purpose makes clear, is an essential component of a liberal arts education: "Both long tradition and the needs of contemporary life mandate the ability to communicate effectively and elegantly as a primary goal of liberal education. Therefore, writing plays a central role in the core curriculum" (1992 & 2004 Core Review Committees). Because WR100 is an introductory course in the discipline of writing, it is only the beginning of students' development as college-level writers. The course provides a foundation for faculty from across the disciplines to build on as they teach students the conventions and expectations of their disciplines. It does not—and cannot—replace sustained, disciplinary-specific writing instruction.

WR100 is based on several key assumptions: Writing is a complex activity that requires ongoing practice and guidance. It is a meaning-making activity used to make sense of the world around us and to communicate to others. It is closely connected to reading and critical thinking. Writing strategies, expectations, and criteria are context-dependent; effective writing depends on the writer's ability to understand and address audience, purpose, and topic. WR100, therefore, focuses on higher-order activities, not remedial or basic skills. The goal is to teach students to approach writing as a rhetorical activity, not as a set of rules. In achieving this goal, the course attends to writing as both process and product within a community of writers.

Given these assumptions, the Writing Department has determined learning aims for WR100 Effective Writing on which faculty from across the disciplines can build as they continue to guide students in their development as writers.

Over the course of the semester, students in Effective Writing will

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Explore how genre shapes reading and writing as they write contemporary American essays (e.g., literary, scholarly, and narrative)
- Identify and respond to different rhetorical situations by adopting appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Formulate an original thesis, focus, or controlling idea and support it by using a variety of strategies, including the integration of ideas and information from others
- Use flexible strategies for generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading
  - Critique their own and others' work (balancing the advantages of working with others with the responsibility of doing their part)
  - Develop an effective writing process that encourages later invention and rethinking to revise their work
  - o Use multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text, and

o Generate texts that conform to conventions of edited American English.

Although faculty design their own courses within the WR100 framework, all students read and analyze primarily contemporary essays by a variety of writers, representing a range of topics, genres, and publication venues. They write 3-6 fully developed formal essays that go through multiple drafts as well as many less formal texts such as reading analyses, critiques, event reviews, journal entries, and free-writes.

WR100 Effective Writing is not a lecture class but rather a highly interactive, participatory course which requires that students work with other student writers, discuss essays (theirs as well as others), practice writing techniques, experiment with new forms, and learn new writing strategies. Consequently, we have a stringent attendance policy.

Within this framework for WR100 Effective Writing, faculty offer courses designated as Diversity courses, and some faculty incorporate service-learning into their courses. Faculty also offer courses as part of the Alpha Program, Collegium, and the Honors Program.

Though on-going assessments of WR100 have shown that students are achieving the published aims of the course, we plan to continue to fine-tune our learning aims so that they are as clear as possible to students, faculty, and advisors. We also need to make revisions to better align our aims with some new developments in the field of Composition and Rhetoric, especially in the area of technology and writing. Finally, we want to continue our efforts to support key university strategic priorities by increasing the number of WR100 sections with Diversity designations and Service-Learning components and by participating in the Living & Learning initiative, which will replace current first-year programs.

#### The Major

The Department offers two majors: The Writing major, which requires 14 courses across the spectrum of writing, and the Interdisciplinary Major which requires 7 writing courses and 7 courses from one other discipline. In total, we have over 100 majors, split between the standalone major and the interdisciplinary major (which involves partnerships with departments such as History, Political Science, Communication, Psychology, Biology, and English). The broadbased liberal arts approach to writing that we offer prepares our graduates for a variety of paths, such as graduate school in creative writing, rhetoric/communications, education and law; general professional writing positions in fields such as public relations, publishing, and journalism; and entry-level positions in both the corporate and non-profit sectors.

The curriculum for the major frames the spectrum of writing—from literary to professional—with the aim of helping students understand the demands of each genre as *a rhetorical act* (a form of communication).

Writing is the discovery and expression of an individual's thought—about the self and about the world. We are mindful that "thought" involves the whole person, that it is grounded in perception constructed by intellect as well as emotion. Students of writing learn to distinguish the difference between these two influences and use the strengths of each to write persuasively, powerfully, and responsibly.

The writing major not only encourages particular habits of mind, but also contributes to students' moral and aesthetic development. Writing within the rhetorical tradition fosters reflective, principled and engaged citizens. The systematic study of the writer's art and craft highlights matters of sensibility, appreciation, and taste.

Below are the current Learning Aims for the major:

## Habits of Mind Essential to an Accomplished Writer

Students read widely across genres, cultures, disciplines and media

- to develop knowledge of the world beyond the self
- to develop a language of cultivated response
- to discern rhetorical and stylistic strategies that best suit particular arguments, situations, and audiences
- to develop an appreciation of language

# Writing Practice

In order to produce finished, polished texts that show competence in the standards of English usage and style, students

- write widely across genres and for a variety of purposes, showing an ability to adjust their style appropriately to audience and situation.
- develop, through frequent practice, a distinctive voice with original ideas.
- develop an ability to critique other's writing constructively and to use the same effectively through frequent group exercise (workshops) and conferences.
- situate themselves in a larger intellectual conversation in developing and researching their ideas.
- write multiple drafts of extended works in order to extend the rhetorical strategies they began in Effective Writing, viz.:
  - o development and pursuit of a thesis, theme, or controlling idea
  - o orchestration of coherent argument or narrative
  - o generation of increasingly sophisticated texts that conform to the conventions of edited American English
  - through daily practice and exposure, learn to use technology to the best advantage of their writing, understanding both the various forms of media and their rhetorical effects

## Civic Literacy, Promotion of Justice, and Moral Consciousness

Students learn "awareness of the multiplicity of perspectives that bear on the human experience and the historical, global, cultural context in determining the way we see the world" as follows:

In studying the history and nature of language, they learn how it shapes political and material reality; students enable themselves to participate effectively in society so that they become "men and women for others."

In reading widely across genres, cultures, and disciplines, students learn the value of diversity and develop a deeper and fuller sense of what it means to be someone other than themselves in terms of age, race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, religion and other differences. In focusing on contemporary writing (i.e., publishing writers, recent writing, and students' own writing), issues of diversity are brought to the forefront.

The fact that our number of majors has increased nearly 50 percent (from 70 to 104) in two years highlights the richness and quality of our curriculum. However, demographic information suggests that, while interest in creative writing courses remains high, interest in non-fiction, professional, and rhetoric courses is growing. This growing interest is not surprising, given the range of non-Humanities minors pursued by current writing majors: Biology, Math, Natural Science, Political Science, Sociology, and various areas of Business. In order to better address the wide-ranging interests of our majors, we are in the process of revising our curriculum to include more courses in rhetoric and professional writing and to ensure, through new requirements, that our majors are being exposed to a broad spectrum of writing. Additionally, as with the core writing course, we are discussing ways to propose and support more "Diversity" and "Service-Learning" courses and to better integrate technology into our curriculum so that our students will be prepared for the technological demands of the current workplace. We have also been building our Internship program, which provides students with experience in the "diverse and changing world," connecting more traditional academic learning on campus with the experiential learning available in the workplace. Finally, we will continue to look for ways to partner with other departments to offer specialized courses and programs (e.g., the new literacy minor with the School of Ed) in order to enhance Loyola's interdisciplinary-study efforts. The success of these curricular efforts will depend on our ability to hire additional tenure-track faculty.

Writing Minor and Courses in Interdisciplinary Programs

The Writing Minor requires 7 courses in writing beyond the Core. Currently, the Writing Department has 49 minors, who are majoring in Communication (6); English (12); Economics (1); Fine Arts (1); Global Studies (2); History (2); Political Science (5); Psychology (3); Speech Path/Audiology (2); Theology (2); Finance (1); International Business (3); Business Management (1); Marketing (4); Biology (3); and Chemistry/Biology (1).

While we currently do a good job of serving Humanities majors with a range of poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction courses, we could do a much better job of developing our curriculum for students who have interests in business and the sciences. After all, as research has consistently demonstrated, competency in writing is a critical component for success in a variety of professions and careers. Again, the success of our curricular plans will depend on our ability to hire additional tenure-track faculty.

## The Loyola Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum Initiative

Eloquentia Perfecta is one of the chief aims of the Jesuit Liberal arts education. The Loyola Writing Center, a program sponsored by the Department of Writing, offers participants—students, faculty and staff—the chance to develop this Jesuit education ideal that began over 400 years ago. Eloquentia perfecta refers not only to the tradition of correct or elegant speech, but also to the use of language—whether spoken or written—which is "perfect" for the task of acting on the human spirit towards good and just action.

In the Jesuit tradition of working with others to reach a common goal, the LWC understands that writing requires input from others. It offers one-to-one consultations for the entire Loyola community of writers, including undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty and staff.

The LWC works with writers in any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting to the final stages of revision. Consultants encourage decisions on style, voice, audience, and purpose. All types of writing are welcome, including academic work from any discipline and self-sponsored writing.

Because students and faculty from all areas of the campus are supported by the LWC, it is the locus for writing across the curriculum (WAC), which has a long and illustrious history at Loyola. The LWC offers workshops for faculty on effective writing pedagogy and provides one-to-one consulting for individual faculty and departments. This WAC work is manifest in the customized edition of *A Writer's Reference with a Guide to Writing in All of the Disciplines at Loyola College*. This writing handbook is a joint venture between the LWC, the Writing Department, and every other department on campus. The book, required of all first-year students, combines a standard writing handbook with over 100 pages of text specific to writing in every discipline and major at Loyola. It also includes a section on the Loyola Notre Dame Library and other programs that relate to students' development as writers.

The Director of the LWC is a tenured faculty member in the Writing Department. Affiliate faculty from the department assist the director is administering the LWC and supporting faculty and students from across the campus. Peer tutors, both graduate and undergraduate students, are trained by the LWC staff through a course, WR323 Writing Center Theory & Practice, and/or through ongoing staff development.

Demand for LWC services has increased significantly in the past year. During fall 2008, for example, we recorded 742 consultations (up from 560 the previous fall) and had to turn away at least 60 writers we could not serve. Administrators and faculty across campus have also increased their calls for writing-center assistance. In response, the LWC has increased the number and variety of writing-across-the-curriculum activities, such as small-group seminars/workshops and faculty-development discussions. The Dean of First-Year students has also called upon the Writing Center to support first-year initiatives by, for instance, hosting FE 100, Collegium, and Alpha classes in the Center to introduce students to our services and to offer workshops on special writing topics. (This support is expected to continue, as Loyola launches its new Living-Learning initiative in fall 2011.) The LWC is also poised to assist with the McGuire Scholars program, through on-going one-to-one mentoring of its students. In an effort to support Loyola's interest in community partnerships, the LWC has also increased its outreach efforts to local public schools over the last three years.

Currently, neither the physical space allocated to the LWC nor the staff is adequate to support ever-increasing demand. Also—and more importantly—the current space does not easily accommodate students, staff, and faculty with disabilities (e.g., wheelchair access is limited, and there are no private spaces for students who have disabilities and/or need separate accommodation for certain specific adaptive technologies). Therefore, included in our strategic plan are action items devoted specifically to securing a bigger, ADA-compliant space for the LWC and increasing the size of the staff.

### **Co-Curricular Activities**

To support students and contribute to the College as a whole, the Writing Department supports several types of co-curricular activities, including:

- three student-run literary magazines (*Forum*, for student-composed essays; *Garland*, for student-composed poetry and fiction; and *Warnings*, the monthly *Greyhound* literary supplement), which give students hands-on experience at creating magazines that put their writing to significant use;
- an honor society, Pi Epsilon Pi, which our department chartered to promote academic excellence for writing majors and minors;
- a reading series, Modern Masters, which brings prominent writers to campus throughout the year;
- a writers' workshop to foster community among writing majors.

Individual faculty routinely sponsor/co-sponsor other readings and workshops for students and faculty and participate in cultural activities on campus (e.g., the Humanities Symposium and the Year of the City) and in the Baltimore community (e.g., the CityLit book festival). These co-curricular activities create leadership opportunities for students and contribute considerably to the intellectual climate of the campus.

Over the next five years, we intend to maintain these co-curricular efforts, especially in areas highlighted by the Loyola Strategic Plan (e.g., cultivating the whole person, fostering appreciation for diversity, partnering with other departments and programs on campus as well as with community agencies). Our ability to continue these efforts, of course, is contingent upon having appropriate tenure-track faculty to support the initiatives.

## **Faculty Service and Scholarship**

Faculty in the Department are engaged colleagues and productive scholars. We serve our department, the University, and our disciplines in various ways and routinely publish and present our work in national venues.

#### Service

Writing Department faculty, although small in number, routinely serve the department, the College, and the University, as well as their disciplines through leadership positions and committee membership.

Within the department, writing faculty meet traditional service demands aimed at enhancing students' educational experiences (such as sponsoring independent studies, student publications, student writing awards, student activities, and advising and mentoring) and ongoing department committees (such as curriculum committee, program review, and hiring). However, we have also had the burden of additional service demands connected with the split from the Communication Department in the middle of 2005-2006. This work has included reviewing writing curriculum in terms of courses, course rotation, etc; articulating our major and minor; creating department documents such as a mission statement and learning aims; and developing policies and procedures for departmental governance. All of this must be done while faculty continue to fulfill the more routine expectations of service, scholarship and teaching. In short, establishing a department requires substantial service work from the faculty beyond those expected of faculty in an established department. We have, however, met both the more traditional service expectations as well as those associated with developing a new academic department.

Although a relatively new stand-alone department (we were originally established as a Writing department when we were split from English in 1983-84), the writing faculty have a history of significant contribution to the University: we led an ambitious, nationally recognized WAC program in the 1980s and early 1990s; our faculty have served as directors of campus-wide programs such as Alpha and Honors, and have routinely been involved in important institutional initiatives (e.g., establishing the Newcastle Study Abroad program and the Task Force on Undergraduate Grading Practices). Currently, as a department, we have two tenured faculty members who serve the university as a whole—the Director of the Loyola Writing Center and the Director of Composition. The Department Chair also serves on the Center for the Humanities Steering Committee. In addition, tenured faculty routinely serve on college-wide committees, including, for example, Loyola's Living-Learning Task Force, Faculty Research and Sabbatical Committee, the McGuire Scholars Committee, and the Undergraduate Curriculum

Committee. Our commitment to university service is established, but our ability to continue to carry it out is, to some extent, compromised by our small numbers and lack of junior faculty.

Beyond the university, faculty are involved in community-outreach activities and professional service. Local efforts include teaching writing and literature at the women's prison in Jessup and serving on committees for the Maryland State Department of Education. Nearly all tenured faculty are active in their respective disciplines, holding leadership positions in national professional organizations, such as the Associated Writing Programs (AWP) and the Jesuit Conference on Composition and Rhetoric, and serving on editorial/review boards of national literary and scholarly journals.

Though we now have 104 majors and 49 minors, our department currently has only 8 tenure-line faculty (one of whom is on long-term disability leave). Of the 7 active faculty, we have no junior faculty (i.e., all current faculty are tenured) and one nearing retirement. Because of our relatively small numbers, we have been struggling to do the work of the department (including, for instance, curriculum review and revision, strategic planning, and assessment) and, at the same time, support the University by serving on its many important committees (such as the Board of Rank and Tenure or the Research and Sabbatical Committee) as well as those associated with strategic initiatives (such as the Living-Learning Task force and hiring committees for other departments). Although our many affiliate faculty can—and do--help with department-based projects and initiatives, they cannot provide leadership, nor can they represent our department at the college level. The additional tenure-track faculty that we will request to help us develop our curriculum will also help us participate more fully in university-wide service activities.

### **Scholarship**

Scholarship is an integral part of the tenured faculty's responsibility and valued for its contribution to the ongoing conversation of humankind that transcends time and place. Through our scholarly and creative work, Writing faculty make a substantial contribution to the University's commitment to enhance knowledge and human understanding. As a Department of Writing, our scholarship spans traditional research-based genres (e.g., articles in peer-reviewed disciplinary journals) as well as creative writing genres (e.g., poetry, fiction, essays). We both publish and present our scholarly and creative work in national/international peer-reviewed venues. The 8 current tenured faculty have published roughly seventeen books (many of these with first-tier publishers), 65 scholarly chapters and articles, 80 literary essays, over 100 review essays, 91 poems, and 50 stories. They have given approximately 150 readings and conference presentations and won roughly 50 grants and/or awards, many of which are highly-competitive national honors.

Among our affiliate faculty, we also have accomplished writers, many of whom publish in prestigious literary journals, receive national awards and grants, and have collectively produced over 10 books and numerous literary, journalistic, and scholarly publications.

With purposeful hiring, guided by strategic priorities, we look forward to maintaining our impressive publishing record over the next five years.

### **Future Directions**

As the preceding pages suggest, the Department is currently in the process of aligning our goals and objectives more directly with the University's Strategic Plan. In brief, we have identified several areas where we can directly support the Strategic Plan:

### Commitment to Core Values

- Supporting Jesuit, Catholic Intellectual Life Across the Entire Campus.
  - Continue WR100 assessment, implement assessment of major, revise curriculum to better serve students, expand interdisciplinary collaborations, expand Writing Center services.
- Fostering Campus-Wide Education, Cultivation, and Promotion of Diversity.
  - Continue offering approved "Diversity" and "Service-Learning" courses, design and propose additional D and SL courses, identify additional opportunities for community outreach (as appropriate).
- Cultivating the Whole Person to Succeed in a Diverse and Changing World.
  - Incorporate more technology into current courses, develop more courses that explicitly address connections between writing and technology, increase number of SL-designated courses, develop an additional on-line course for students traveling abroad.
  - Expand internship opportunities for students to experience the "diverse and changing world," connecting more traditional academic learning on campus with the experiential learning available beyond campus.

### Undergraduate Education Initiatives

- Establish Living and Learning Communities for all First-year Students.
  - All tenured Writing faculty will be encouraged to participate; Writing Center will support faculty who teach in L&L.
- Enhance and Enrich the Natural Sciences.
  - Writing faculty will be encouraged to develop Living & Learning course pairings with faculty in the Sciences; the Dept. will develop more courses to support students who are majoring or minoring in the Sciences.

### **Graduate Education Initiatives**

- Launch a School of Education, Achieve National Recognition for the Loyola Clinical Centers, and Strive for Greater Renown for the Sellinger School.
  - Writing faculty will contribute to the new literacy minor being developed by the School of Ed; the Loyola Writing Center will continue to look for ways to support graduate students in all areas, through increased summer and off-campus hours and graduate assistantships.
- Augment Services that Enable Recruitment, Retention, and Development of Graduate Students.

• The Loyola Writing Center will continue to look for ways to support graduate students in all areas, through increased summer and off-campus hours and graduate assistantships.

# **Faculty Development Initiatives**

- Strengthen Loyola's Intellectual Positioning through Tenure-track Faculty Positions and Enhanced Faculty Development Support.
  - The Department will request four tenure-track positions over the next five years to help develop and teach courses in the following areas: professional/technical writing, "new media," playwriting, screenwriting, and fiction.
  - The Department will sponsor more faculty-development meetings/workshops centered on WR100 curriculum, A Writer's Reference with a Guide to Writing in all the Disciplines, assessment and revision/assessment of major—and on how to best incorporate technology into our curriculum.

## Community Engagement Initiatives

- Partner in Developing a Plan for York Road Corridor Redevelopment.
  - o Expand Dept. and Writing Center initiatives at area schools.
- Enhance the Global Studies Program.
  - Support faculty and students in the Global Studies initiatives through the Loyola Writing Center and new course development.

The Action Plan, which follows, details specifically the current alignment, future plans, resources needs, and assessment indicators between the Writing Department and the University's Strategic Plan, *Grounded in Tradition, Educating for the Future, Strategic Plan for Loyola University Maryland*, 2008-2013.