



UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE RECORD

The April meetings of the University Faculty will be held on Tuesday, 4 April and Tuesday, 18 April 2006, beginning at 12:00PM in the Langone Center Forum. Professor Martin Ligare will preside. If there are any amendments to the March 2006 minutes, please send them to Erik Lofgren, Secretary of the Faculty, in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Amendments to March 2006 minutes

2. Announcements and remarks by the President

3. Announcements and remarks by the Provost

4. Announcements by the Chair of the Faculty

5. Unfinished Business

b. Report from Committee on Faculty and Academic Personnel: Geoff Schneider and Amy McCready

i) Faculty Salary Increases: Geoff Schneider
(see report attached to the end of this Agenda)

ii) Handbook Revision: Untenured Faculty Leave: Amy McCready
(see report attached at the end of the March Agenda)

Motion by Committee on Faculty and Academic Personnel: Amy McCready

The Committee on Faculty and Academic Personnel moves that *the Faculty adopt the changes to the Faculty Handbook presented in our report.*

b. Report from Faculty Council: Marty Ligare

Motion by Faculty Council: Marty Ligare

Faculty Council, after consultation with an ad-hoc committee responsible for drafting the charge of the proposed standing Committee on Athletics (Mitch Chernin [chair], John Hardt, Joel Wade, George Exner, Jean Peterson, and Kari Conrad; *per Ad Hoc*

Committee to Review Faculty Governance motion adopted 4 April 2005), moves *the creation of a University Committee on Athletics. The charge to the Committee will be that described in the amendments section of this Agenda.*

6. Committee Reports

- a. Report from Committee on Staff Planning: Tony Massoud**
(see report sent to the faculty by e-mail on 22 March 2006)

Motion by Committee on Staff Planning: Tony Massoud

The Committee on Staff Planning moves that *the Faculty endorse the “Five-Course Load Plan” dated 3/30/06.*

- b. Report from Committee Faculty Development: Karen Morin**
(see report attached at the end of this Agenda)

- c. Report from Committee on Instruction: Kevin Myers**
(see reports attached to the end of the this Agenda)

i) Writing Program Review

Motion by Committee on Instruction: Kevin Myers

The Committee on Instruction moves *the Faculty approves of the changes to the Writing Program legislation recommended by the Composition Council in this review. (Specifically, the items that recommend changes to legislation are: Sections 2, 4, 6, and 9.)*

ii) Assessing Student Writing

Motion by Committee on Instruction: Kevin Myers

The Committee on Instruction moves *the Faculty approves of the pilot program proposed by the Composition Council. Composition Council is charged with implementing the program and reporting to COI and the Faculty when initial results are available.*

7. Announcements and remarks by members of the President’s staff

8. Questions for the President

- a. Professor Ben Marsh asks:** “Rumors abound of a significant re-organization of the college structure at Bucknell, in the context of Strategy 1 of *The Plan*. What guidance can

the president provide about whether such a reorganization is contemplated, and—if a change is to happen—what would be the role of the Faculty in planning such a new structure?”

ATTACHMENTS

CFAP Report (i) on Faculty Raises for Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006

[NOTE: The text of the original report, which gave rise to the motion to which this report responds, can be found in the Agenda for the March 2006 Faculty Meeting. ERL]

The Faculty and Academic Personnel Committee (FAPC) carefully considered the issues surrounding the motion passed by the faculty on 3-7-06. That motion was a recommendation to the committee which stated, *The faculty requests that the bulk of the raises be allocated in a fashion reflecting longer-term performance than current merit rankings.*

The first issue the committee considered was whether or not current salaries and merit ratings were an accurate reflection of past merit. The last structural adjustment in faculty salaries was made in 2002-03, and that raise was made as an across-the-board adjustment. Thus, it is reasonable to view faculty salaries as of 2002-03 as being an accurate reflection of prior merit and length of service. The current proposed structural increase is designed to remedy low raises relative to frame of reference institutions during the past 3 years, i.e. since 2002-03. The old merit system was suspended in 2002-03, so the current merit system began influencing faculty salaries in 2003-04.

Given the structure of our merit system, had raises for the preceding 3 years been made at a level to maintain faculty salaries on a par with our frame of reference institutions, all of the additional dollars would have been allocated to merit pay. (Each year, faculty raises are ½ of CPI across-the-board and the rest merit. If faculty raises in a given year were 3% while our frame of reference schools were getting 4% raises, then the 1% loss would come entirely out of merit pay and not across-the-board increases.) So the current structural increase can be seen as an effort to replace merit pay that faculty should have been getting since 2002-03.

Second, it is not at all clear that allocating a larger pool of money to across-the-board increases is more fair or more equal than allocating the money to merit pay. Our merit system was designed such that merit increases are in fixed dollar amounts, rather than being based on percentages. This benefits the lowest paid faculty in each rank more than the highest paid faculty in each rank (thereby creating some salary compression).

Thus, allocating more of faculty raises to across-the-board and less to merit has distributional consequences that are not necessarily desirable or fair. Specifically, a higher across the board component to faculty raises disproportionately benefits those faculty members who (1) have more years of service, (2) are in market fields, and (3) receive lower merit scores.

Correspondingly, a higher merit component benefits those faculty with (1) lower base salaries and (2) higher merit scores. Data indicate that faculty with the lowest salaries in each rank benefit more from allocating dollars to merit increases than they do from allocating dollars to across-the-board increases. The committee also notes that the current allocation of raises, through a specific ATB component and merit dollars, was carefully defined by the Performance Review Task Force in 2002, adopted by the Faculty in November of that year, and approved by the Trustees in January 2003.

Third, if the merit scores are not particularly noisy, that would make it less important to consider longer-term performance rather than a faculty member's current merit rating. Nevertheless, the committee is concerned that a faculty member whose merit rating slipped significantly in the most recent merit review would be disadvantaged unfairly. Similarly, a faculty member whose merit rating increased substantially in the most recent review would be getting a bonus that might not be warranted since the structural increase is designed to correct low pay over the *previous* merit period. However, it is not clear that efforts to boost the former and penalize the latter would be feasible given data limitations nor would this necessarily be good policy. The committee concludes that these issues (and the determination of an appropriate course of action, if any) are particularly complex, as the questions apply not only to those faculty who have been reviewed this year, but (and to an incrementally diminishing extent) to those reviewed in the preceding two years. In addition, a not-insignificant number of associate professors were in fact assistant professors (and thus not part of the merit review process) at some point in the past 3 years, and some tenured faculty have retired or left the university for other reasons since 2002-03.

FAPC is asking the deans to examine the data on changes in merit ratings in detail to determine whether or not there is a problem and to make adjustments within the annual equity adjustment process next year for individuals as warranted.

Proposed charge for the new University Committee on Athletics (from the Ad-Hoc Committee for the Creation of the Committee on Athletics, and Faculty Council) for the Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006

The responsibilities of the Committee on Athletics are to:

- a. foster an intercollegiate athletics program consistent with the educational mission of the University;
- b. annually monitor and evaluate issues pertaining to gender equity and minority opportunities – programs mandated by the NCAA;
- c. conduct and evaluate the annual academic performance survey of student athletes;
- d. develop policy legislation for consideration by the faculty and/or administration;

- e. periodically review programs specifically established for student athletes;
- f. actively participate in the NCAA recertification process;
- g. communicate the results of its work to appropriate university committees or constituencies;
- h. respond as appropriate to requests from the faculty on matters at the intersection of academics and athletics;
- i. act as an advisory body to the Director of Athletics who reports to the President.

Membership

Three members of the faculty elected at-large (3-yr terms)

Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA

Athletic Director

Dean of Students (or appointee)

Dean of Arts and Sciences, or designee

Dean of Engineering, or designee

Senior Woman Administrator of Athletics *non-voting*

Senior Associate Director of Athletics *non-voting*

Two students (one male, one female) elected from the NCAA-mandated Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) for a term to be set by SAAC, but not less than 1 year

Student elected by the BSG, for a term to be set by the BSG, but not less than one year

The chairperson of the committee shall be elected from its faculty membership.

Report from the Faculty Development Committee for Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006

The Faculty Development Committee met 6 times this semester. We conducted our usual work for the spring semester, as well as met with Provost DeCredico to address (and redress) the current program by which sabbaticals are funded. The following outlines our work:

1. 8 Curricular Development Grant proposals were submitted to the Committee for summer 2006 funding. We requested and received clarifications on one proposal. One was subsequently withdrawn, and we funded the remaining 7.
2. 18 Scholarly Development Grant proposals were submitted to the Committee for summer 2006 funding. We requested revisions on one proposal, which was subsequently funded. The decision was made to fully fund 14 of the proposals and partially fund 2 others; 2 were denied funding.
3. The Committee studied the issue of greater support for year-long sabbaticals, which had begun the previous year via comparisons to the programs of other institutions. While the faculty handbook states that the University encourages full-year sabbatical leaves, the Committee felt that the current practice of awarding only 3 faculty 75% funding was counterproductive to that goal. For immediate context, of the 29 individuals who applied

for a sabbatical leave for 2006-2007, 15 asked for a full year leave. Of those, 9 competed for the 75% funding but only 3 could be awarded.

We submitted a report to Provost DeCredico on the matter, comparing Bucknell's practice to peer institutions, providing cost calculations, and suggesting an improved plan. The Committee then met with her to discuss our findings. Based on her response, we anticipate being able to offer more support in the future, hopefully as soon as next fall (for 2007-2008 sabbaticals). Our report does not at this time recommend a change in policy but rather an enhancement of an existing practice. The Committee can make its report available to interested faculty.

4. In our final meeting for the semester we met to make minor revisions to the forms and documents related to the programs under the auspices of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen M. Morin

Report from the Committee on Staff Planning for Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006
(see next page)

FIVE-COURSE LOAD PLAN

PRESENTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON STAFF PLANNING

MARY DECREDICO, PROVOST
GENIE GERDES, DEAN OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
MARY BETH GRAY (GEOLOGY)
LOIS HUFFINES (ASSOCIATE VP OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS)
DAVID KELLEY (ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING)
BILL KENNY (MUSIC)
TONY MASSOUD, CHAIR (POLITICAL SCIENCE)
JIM ORBISON, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
JOHN RICKARD (ENGLISH)

FINAL REPORT

3/30/06

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INTRODUCTION

The Bucknell campus has discussed the goals and rationale for reducing the course load of faculty for some years. For example, the Planning & Budget (P & B) subcommittee produced a white paper during the spring of 1999 on the strategic importance of moving faculty from a six-course load to a five-course load and provided cost estimates to do so. Because P & B argued that course-load reduction would require the creation of new faculty lines, the Committee on Staff Planning (herein defined as the “Committee”) began discussions during the spring of 2001 of how to reduce course loads, including estimations of the number of new faculty lines necessary.

The Committee conducted a preliminary survey in May 2001 about the potential impacts of a shift to a five-course per year teaching load. The findings of this survey were reported to the faculty in April 2002, and in response, the university faculty directed the Committee, after consultation with other relevant committees, to present a set of options during the fall of 2002 for decreasing the current six-course per year teaching load of the faculty. The Committee in the fall of 2002 presented different alternatives for reducing the teaching load and recommended the adoption of the five-course option.

The faculty in 2003 charged the Committee to proceed with planning for the implementation of a reduced course load. More specifically, the faculty asked that the implementation plan contain the following sections:

- A) rationale for the plan;
- B) principles to guide the implementation and impact of such a plan;
- C) how existing resources can be used to make the transition;
- D) number of new positions needed;
- E) projected costs of the plan; and
- F) timetable and procedures for implementation.

Since its charge, the Committee has provided several updates to the faculty. In the fall of 2004, the Committee reported on the principles that would guide the development and implementation of the Plan, and at the April 2005 faculty meeting the Committee presented the results of the five-course load survey. The last update was provided during the faculty meeting in February 2006. At that meeting the Committee presented a three-year timetable for the implementation of the five-course load plan.

I. Rationale for Moving to a Five-Course Load

[This section is a revised version of the document titled “Enhancing the Quality of Education: Options to Reduce the Course Load” that was presented to the faculty in November 2002. The original wording of that document can be found in Appendix 1. The Committee has made several stylistic and substantive changes in different places in this section. More specifically, the Committee deleted two sentences relating to expectations about scholarship and standards for retention, tenure and promotion found under the

headings of “Balancing Teaching and Scholarship” and “Risks Associated with Course Load Reduction.” Issues relating to scholarship and retention are outside the jurisdiction of the Committee and the charge given to the Committee by the Faculty in 2003. Such questions are better addressed at the departmental and university levels. Changes affecting content are noted in bold bracketed text.]

The Committee has framed its discussions of course-load reduction with the overarching goal of sustaining, strengthening, and extending the quality of the undergraduate education that Bucknell University offers. This goal includes making more faculty time available for teaching, enhancing faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, improving pedagogy, making more time available for scholarship, attracting and retaining the best faculty, and increasing faculty participation in the Bucknell community. To this end, the rationale for decreasing the load includes (1) pedagogical goals; (2) making more faculty time available to students; (3) enhancement of faculty recruitment, retention, and morale; and (4) balancing teaching and scholarship.

Pedagogical Goals

The percentage of faculty time devoted to classroom teaching has increased over the past decades – teaching today requires more time per course than it did a decade or two ago. This increase stems from many sources including the use of technology, preparation of visual teaching tools, use of group projects and collaborative learning, shifts in laboratory instruction from demonstration to investigative projects, adaptation of teaching techniques to address multiple learning styles of a diverse student body, commitment to interdisciplinary programs (e.g., Comparative Humanities, Environmental Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies) and courses such as capstones, writing courses, and foundation seminars, the need for assessment, and staying up-to-date in one’s discipline given an explosion of information. In addition, more teaching today occurs outside the classroom. The Bucknell faculty, while continuing to eagerly accept the supervision of independent student research projects and mentoring of honors thesis research, must now find and support student internships and international study opportunities and direct Presidential Fellows. The faculty wants to continue to do what it does well, but it wants to do it even better.

Making More Time Available for Students

Bucknell needs to encourage further faculty-student engagement outside the classroom through continued improvement of student advising and mentoring (e.g., independent student research projects, honors theses, Presidential Fellows), enhanced faculty interaction with student organizations, and increased faculty availability (e.g., more reliable office hours). The Bucknell faculty encourages itself to develop strong academic relationships with students. Bucknell students expect, and the faculty attempts to provide, the extensive personal contact outside the classroom that makes the difference between an adequate education and an outstanding one. As pointed out in the P & B white paper – the faculty member who supervises several honors projects will spend a number of hours a week with each student; will spend additional time reading and commenting on drafts of the student’s work; and will find himself or herself thinking about the subjects at other times as well. Likewise, the faculty member who supervises a group of students in undergraduate research will spend many hours with students each week; will read

and critique the reports that students prepare; will assist students in thinking through their approach to the problem; and will help lead students to a realistic understanding of a significant problem. These forms of personal contact with faculty constitute the highest form of learning that Bucknell can afford our students. And they demand that the institution find ways to reduce the standard classroom-based teaching load. The Bucknell faculty needs to fulfill the expectations that students bring to our campus for their undergraduate experience, and Bucknell must support faculty commitment to personalized teaching and learning. The faculty is committed to every student that Bucknell admits; and the faculty is dedicated to helping each student be successful.

Enhancement of Faculty Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

Bucknell is committed to improving its ability to hire and retain the best possible faculty. The six-course load employed at Bucknell is the heaviest found among selective liberal arts colleges and universities. A comparison list of 37 institutions that includes our new frame-of-reference institutions and *US NEWS* top-tier liberal arts institutions, indicates that eight institutions (22%) have a four-course load (Amherst, Bowdoin, Lehigh, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Villanova, Wellesley, and Wesleyan); 24 (65%) have a five-course load [Barnard, Bates, Bryn Mawr, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut College, Davidson, Franklin and Marshall, Grinnell, Hamilton, Haverford, Holy Cross, Lafayette, Macalester, Middlebury, Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Occidental, Pomona, Richmond, Swarthmore, Trinity, Williams, and Vassar]; one (3%) has a 5.5 course load (Kenyon); and only four (11%) have a six-course load (Bucknell, Carleton, Dickinson, and Union). Bucknell does not compare well with frame-of-reference institutions and *US NEWS* top-tier liberal arts institutions, and the university is competing for faculty with more institutions with lower teaching loads than it did a few years ago. As a consequence, Bucknell is losing highly qualified candidates and faculty to the competition more often in a marketplace that is more challenging than it was just a few years ago.

Balancing Teaching and Scholarship

The scholarly pursuits of the Bucknell faculty encourage passion for learning and provide the environment for undergraduate research. The 1999 Planning and Budget white paper argued that:

“Bucknell has high standards of scholarly productivity and its faculty is already producing scholarship at a rate and level of excellence that matches many of the selective liberal arts colleges with a five- or even four-course teaching load. Such research and publication activities contribute greatly to the reputation of the faculty and the university in general. However, the faculty struggles to balance the demands of writing grant proposals; conducting research; writing, submitting, and revising scholarly publications; advising and mentoring students; and performing essential service for the university while teaching a six-course load.”

The university’s appreciation and understanding of the benefits of scholarship to effective instruction has increased over the past decades. However, the time available for this activity has decreased as other demands on faculty have increased. Scholarly activities have become a pressured pursuit of summers and semester breaks, which inhibit considered preparation for teaching in the following semester, or time for scholarship must be “stolen” from time needed for teaching. The present load is felt to be debilitating by many members of the Bucknell faculty, given the difficulty of sustaining a program of scholarship during the academic year over and

above the six-course teaching load. An institution with high standards of scholarly productivity must support the scholarly activities of its faculty, both to enable junior faculty members to establish a program of research and scholarship early in their career and to encourage tenured faculty to remain committed to their scholarly programs and to continue to contribute to the state of knowledge in their fields. A five-course load will permit members of the Bucknell faculty to conduct themselves at the level of excellence that is expected of them. The options for course-load reduction considered and the recommendation made by the Committee are designed to improve the balance between teaching and scholarship. **[This sentence differs from the original text (see Appendix 1).]**

Risks Associated with Course Load Reduction

There are risks associated with course-load reduction, including curricular losses (i.e., loss of elective courses, loss of sections from introductory courses), increase in mean class size due to the loss of courses and sections, and decreased faculty availability. Bucknell will need to formulate clear expectations of faculty work, availability, and presence on campus if it moves to a five-course load. It has been the experience of some campuses that the transition to a reduced course load has exacerbated the tendency of some faculty to consolidate their teaching in order to keep some days free for off-campus activities.

Bucknell must assure that all departments and programs have a comparable ability to introduce the five-course load and still cover the central curriculum. Similarly Bucknell must assure that this transition does not reduce the ability or willingness of faculty to contribute to general education and interdisciplinary teaching. The university must preserve appropriate balance between upper-level and lower-level courses, and the balance between specialized disciplinary courses and all-university teaching. Bucknell must make every effort to ensure equitable institution of course-load reduction among faculty. **[The last sentence in this paragraph in the 2002 document is deleted in this version (see Appendix 1).]**

The tables found in Appendix 1 outline the major strengths and weaknesses of the four most viable options among the options discussed by the Committee. Also included for each option are important practical considerations associated with a given option. There are substantial costs associated with each option and the benefits of the options vary. The Committee's discussions resulted in a clear recommendation described below.

Recommendation

The Committee believes that the shift to a five-course (3-2) load provides the most benefits, and that the obstacles to its adoption, while appreciable, are surmountable. New faculty lines will be needed to offset partially the loss of courses, and to minimize the increase in average class size. New faculty positions will be allocated to departments or programs through normal procedures of the Committee.

II. Development and Implementation Principles

In its discussion of what factors should guide the development and implementation of the five-course load plan, the Committee's goal was to ensure that the adoption of the plan would not harm the existing curriculum or the level of quality of undergraduate education at Bucknell. It was of utmost importance that a transition to a five-course load be done correctly. Below we present a list of principles and their rationale under three categories: A) general considerations; B) curriculum; and C) implementation.

A. General Considerations

Principle 1. Conversion to a five-course load plan should not be implemented without the necessary addition of new faculty lines.

Rationale: Adoption of the plan without hiring additional faculty will have a serious negative impact on class size, course offerings, and pedagogy.

Principle 2. A five-course load plan should be an integral part of Bucknell's next strategic plan.

Rationale: The plan should be consistent with Bucknell's overall strategic vision and properly funded.

Principle 3. A five-course load should result in enhancing the undergraduate education at Bucknell.

Rationale: The plan will create more time for one-on-one instruction outside the classroom, experimentation with different pedagogical approaches, refining existing courses, and designing new ones.

Principle 4. The change to a five-course load should be used to bring more balance to Bucknell's teacher-scholar model.

Rationale: Not enough time exists during the year to pursue and maintain research under the current course load. The new plan will free up time to prepare papers for conferences or publication, complete monographs or conduct scientific research.

Principle 5. Development of a five-course load plan should account for how existing resources can be used to achieve this goal.

Rationale: The university should examine ways in which it can reclaim some course releases. However, the plan should not create new inequities among faculty.

B. Curriculum

Principle 6. A move to a five-course load should not compromise the academic quality of each major.

Rationale: Conversion to a five-course schedule should not be achieved by diluting the current requirements for each major. It is imperative that the five-course plan be implemented with the necessary resources to maintain the current level of excellence.

Principle 7. A reduction of courses in elective offerings should negatively impact the fewest number of general education students.

Rationale: It is important that enough courses are offered to meet the demands of majors and non-majors. Departments might have to alternate offerings of electives from year to year and possibly eliminate non-required small classes.

Principle 8. Adoption of the five-course load plan should not adversely affect the current offerings of General Education, particularly, Engineering 100, Foundation Seminars, and Capstones.

Rationale: General Education is an important element of Bucknell's curriculum, and conversion to a five-course load should not endanger this part of the university's offerings. Furthermore, the plan must not be implemented at the expense of Common Learning Agenda (CLA).

Principle 9. A reduction in course load should not increase average class size by more than absolutely necessary for implementation.

Rationale: Class size has relevance to pedagogy and is important to the faculty. Class size should not increase to such a level that it damages our national ranking in *U.S. News and World Report*.

Principle 10. Under the adopted five-course load plan, classes should be offered in a balanced way across the teaching days of the week.

Rationale: The five-course load plan is not meant to make it easier for faculty to move to a two or three-day schedule. Care must be taken to ensure students have choices when selecting their courses. It is not desirable to have a situation in which a department has a two-day schedule in any given semester.

Principle 11. Faculty should teach no fewer than 3 courses per year.

Rationale: It is important that faculty remain engaged as teacher-scholars. In cases in which individuals are entitled to more than two course releases, arrangements should be made to remunerate those individuals beyond the two course releases.

Principle 12. Classes that enroll fewer than 8 students cannot be taught without the dean's permission.

Rationale: Many small courses still will have to be taught because of graduation requirements or teaching certification requirements, but raising the limit will allow us to discuss whether advanced courses are being offered too frequently or whether the topic needs to be broadened, for example.

Principle 13. Sabbatical and Untenured Leaves should be taken during two-course semesters.

Rationale: This principle stabilizes the curriculum and is consistent with the three-course per year principle.

C. Implementation

Principle 14. Allocation of new faculty lines shall be considered through the normal procedures of the Committee on Staff Planning.

Rationale: The Committee already has procedures for allocating new positions. It is the authorized body to make such decisions. The Committee will have to add new criteria to existing procedures for the allocation of positions under the new plan.

Principle 15. The course load reduction plan should not decrease faculty presence on campus.

Rationale: The new plan is not designed to increase faculty absences from campus. The current expectations about faculty presence on campus shall be maintained under the five-course load plan. Faculty presence on campus is necessary to allow for greater interactions and consultations with students.

Principle 16. Temporary faculty will teach a six-course load.

Rationale: Expectations for temporary faculty are different from tenure track appointees. Temporary hires do not have the same demands on scholarship and service as tenure track appointments. This measure also will allow for the reclamation of additional courses.

Principle 17. A five-course load plan should strive to achieve and maintain equity in teaching across different departments and divisions within the university.

Rationale: Adoption of the plan should not burden some departments and divisions more than others. Current distributions, as measured by the number of faculty, student enrollment, and number of majors, should be used as a benchmark for future comparisons.

Principle 18. Course offerings within departments should be balanced between the two semesters unless the curriculum dictates otherwise.

Rationale: A balance in course schedules is necessary to ensure adequate and diverse offerings for each semester. This balance will provide students with flexibility in selecting courses. Such a balance is necessary to prevent competition by faculty for the same students and classrooms.

Principle 19. The number of sections offered by departments should be roughly equivalent for both semesters.

Rationale: It is important to ensure that not all faculty members in any given department offer their two courses in the same semester.

Principle 20. The five-course load plan should be phased in over a three-year period.

Rationale: For logistical and instructional reasons, implementation of the five-course load plan cannot be done in a shorter period than what is proposed here. It is critical that during the phase of implementation, instability for students and the curriculum should be kept to a minimum, and teaching load equity among faculty cohorts be maintained.

III. Utilizing Existing Resources

In addition to new hires, the university must regain some teaching credits currently lost to administrative release time in order to accomplish the following: offer more electives that otherwise would be lost; provide academic teaching credit for independent studies; and apply a uniform standard for counting teaching credits for labs. In order to meet these goals, the Committee is suggesting that changes be made to i) the course release program, and ii) faculty administrative release time.

Course Release Program

The course release program is administered by the Faculty Development Committee and is designed to provide temporary relief for faculty members in the course of a semester to complete an important project. Under the six-course load, a reduction of one course for a specific semester has proved to be a welcome break for many. Usually, 25-30 course releases are allocated per year, depending on the total size of the applicant pool. Since the goal of the program is to ease the teaching load of faculty in a given semester, the transition to a five-course load makes such a program unnecessary. Therefore, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

The course release program will be discontinued.

Implementation of the above recommendation will recover 25 sections or approximately the equivalent of five (5) faculty positions.

Administrative Release Time

Administrative release time is a delicate issue among the faculty. The current release time structure is a product of previous policies and ad hoc decisions. Release time was last addressed and increased during the last administration. In examining this issue, the Committee was careful not to make administrative positions so unattractive that there would not be enough incentives for faculty to assume such responsibilities. The release time for chairs and other administrative duties is designed to free up individuals from teaching so that they can perform those administrative tasks.

The Committee has always maintained and communicated to the faculty that the current release time would have to be adjusted in moving to a five-course load. The Committee also was concerned that no single group of individuals should unduly bear the burden in the consideration of existing resources. Faculty performing administrative duties still must be provided the time needed for their services. In order to fully implement the plan, allocate teaching credit for independent studies, and to try to protect the current sizes of courses, the committee has estimated that roughly 40 courses or sections would have to be reclaimed from administrative release time in addition to what is gained by eliminating the course release program.

It should be emphasized that the five-course load plan cannot be fully implemented without the addition of these 40 courses to be gained from administrative release time. The question of how these releases are to be reclaimed does not have to be decided at this point, since this

measure would not take effect until the third year of the five-course load plan. It is more productive at this stage to review all release time and the rationale for those releases. Therefore, the Committee recommends the following:

The Provost and the Deans will review the issue of release time and provide the Committee on Staff Planning a plan and rationale for reclaiming these 40 releases by the end of spring 2007 (end of the first year of the three-year transition plan).

Other Faculty Development Programs

Various faculty development programs exist to help faculty advance their scholarship and pedagogy during summers. The transition to a five-course load will still require the resources of the current faculty development programs. These programs serve an important function in promoting the growth of scholarship and pedagogy outside the academic year.

The Untenured Faculty Leave Program exists to further the scholarly development of junior faculty. Over the years, this program has become a popular and critical resource for untenured faculty members. The program provides a major advantage to junior faculty by providing them with an opportunity to devote extra time to their scholarship early in their careers. The change to a five-course load will not replace the need for such a program.

With respect to these two programs, the Committee recommends the following:

The faculty development programs and the Untenured Faculty Leave Program will continue to exist in their present formats.

IV. New Faculty Positions

To determine how many new faculty positions would be needed to successfully implement the change to a five-course load, the Committee was influenced by the following guidelines:

- The curriculum should not be adversely affected.
- The transition should not force departments to decrease the rigor or requirements of their majors.
- CLA, Engineering 100, and other service commitments by each department should be maintained.
- Current class caps should be maintained, if possible.
- Administrative release time would have to be reduced.

Five-Course Load Survey

For the Committee to arrive at a systematic and objective estimate of how many new positions are necessary to convert to a five-course load, the Committee relied on a carefully constructed

survey completed by departments and programs. See Appendix 2 for the full survey. The Committee used the survey to collect information on department staffing, offerings, sections, CLA contributions, and number of majors.

To calculate the impact of moving to a five-course schedule, the Committee queried departments about the impact of eliminating some courses from their offerings, reducing the number of sections of core or introductory courses, and the scheduling of some electives in alternate years. If departments or programs indicated they could not convert without causing significant harm to their offerings, the Committee asked departments to calculate the number and utilization of new positions. The Committee even requested departments and programs to submit a current academic schedule with the six-course load and another academic schedule with a five-course load. The Committee made sure departments understood that the new hires would not be used to expand the curriculum, but to replace essential courses that otherwise would be lost under the five-course load plan.

Results

The Committee carefully examined the responses from each survey as informed by additional data on course enrollments and leave history to help it evaluate the information supplied by each department and program. Decisions by the Committee were reached through consensus for all of the departments and programs examined. After careful consideration of the survey data, coupled with course enrollment data, the Committee estimates that the university will need a minimum of 32 additional faculty lines to successfully convert to a five-course load.

Labs and Independent Studies

During its investigation of release time, the Committee came across two glaring inconsistencies regarding how much teaching credit is awarded to labs and independent studies. The Committee discovered that although labs in the Arts and Sciences consistently count for one-half credit (0.5), this is not the case in Engineering. The current practice in Engineering is for an individual to receive a half credit (2/12) for the first lab section but only a quarter of a credit (1/12) for the second lab section of the same course.¹

The Committee feels that such inequity should not be maintained under the five-course load. Therefore, the Committee recommends that:

all labs with a duration of 2-4 hours receive the same credit of 0.5 of a course.

After this change is implemented, Engineering will no longer use the twelfths system. Both colleges will use the same procedures for allocating credits to courses.

¹ Engineering uses the twelfth system in assigning teaching credits. Under this system, individuals also receive 1/12 credit for new courses and 1/12 for class enrollments higher than 35. The School of Engineering will no longer receive extra credit for new courses or for classes with enrollments over 35 once the plan is fully implemented.

Another obvious anomaly with teaching credits relates to independent studies. The Committee discovered that only a few departments provide credit for supervising independent studies or research. Again, in attempting to apply uniform standards to release time, the Committee concluded that such inconsistent practices should not continue under the five-course load. As a result, the Committee recommends the following:

Teaching credit should be awarded to all professors supervising independent studies or research.

To receive a teaching credit, an independent study should have the following characteristics:

1. The student would work with some degree of independence, not simply working as a research assistant for the professor (which should not qualify for credit for the student either).
2. The faculty member would supervise the individual student for a substantial amount of time each week (at least one hour).
3. The faculty member's teaching would involve preparation for each meeting and reviewing of the student's written work or other products.
4. The student's work would result in a product— a performance or exhibit, a substantial research paper, a creative writing project, a Masters or honors thesis, or a research article or research poster.

Under these conditions, faculty members who register at least four students* in a semester may receive 0.5 teaching credit. If the number of students is not known ahead of time or the faculty member's schedule is full with other courses, the 0.5 credit can be received in a subsequent semester in which the faculty member is not already receiving teaching credit for independent research. A maximum of 0.5 teaching credit can be earned for the students in a single semester (even if more than four students are taught). A faculty member can take no more than 1.0 course credit (earned and banked combined) in any one semester. Using banked credit for independent study must be approved by the department chair/program director.

The amount of credit shall be based on the following formula*:

One Student = 0.125 course release

Four students = 0.5 course release

Eight students = 1 course release

If faculty members have fewer than four students who qualify for teaching credit, they may bank the credit until they accumulate 0.5 credit for four students. Faculty members in departments that cannot grant partial course release would have to bank one credit for eight students.

* Teaching credits are based on a full-course academic credit. For a half-course academic credit, teaching credit will be adjusted accordingly.

Generally, this course will be deducted from the teaching load in the semester in which the faculty member is scheduled for her/his maximum teaching load (e.g., the three-course semester for someone without other released time). Alternatively, a faculty member may choose to receive overload pay for an independent study that qualifies for teaching credit.

Applying standard procedures to how labs and independent studies are counted will require the addition of four new positions beyond the original 32 derived from the survey. The Committee feels that these changes are significant and must be supported under the five-course load plan. Thus, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

Thirty-six (36) new hires are required to successfully convert to a five-course load and to standardize teaching credits for labs and independent studies.

V. Projected Costs of the Plan

In early 2004, the Committee on Planning and Budget provided an estimate of the total costs associated with hiring the necessary positions to convert to a five-course load. The Committee recently requested the same committee to provide an update of the total cost of adding 36 faculty positions. The Committee on Planning and Budget calculated that the net budget impact after three years will be \$3.8 million (approximately \$106,000.00 per position). This estimate was based on its model assumptions about inflation, salary increase, and benefits increase (see Appendix 3 for more details).

Space Issues

The projected costs for the 36 new positions do not include the conversion or the building of new office or lab space. In reviewing available space including existing offices that can easily be assigned to new faculty or reclaiming offices of retirees, the Committee determined the university will be able to house approximately half of the new faculty lines. However, a major drawback of the existing spaces is that they might not be attached to departments. The Committee also notes that lab space could be a problem for some departments after they hire additional faculty.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

- 1) the identification, preparation, and reservation of available offices to house a minimum of 18 new hires by the second year of the five-course load plan;*
- 2) the expansion, conversion, or creation of the necessary space to house the rest of the new faculty positions by the third year of the plan; and*
- 3) the consideration of additional space requirements of the five-course load plan under the Strategic Plan for Bucknell and the Comprehensive University Campaign.*

VI. Procedures and Implementation Timetable

In considering the implementation procedures for the five-course load, the Committee is guided by the implementation principles found in Section II of this document.

The Committee's goal is to distribute, present, and have the plan approved by the faculty before April 2006. Once the plan has been approved by the faculty, we anticipate its endorsement by the Administration and the Board of Trustees in April 2006. The following is a list of the steps and the time frame in which they are expected to occur:

- The plan will be distributed to committees and faculty in early March 2006.
- An open forum will be held in late March to discuss the plan.
- The plan will be ready for Faculty vote and Administration and Board approval by April 2006.

Five-Course Load Transition Schedule

The committee forecasts that the hiring of the necessary faculty lines will occur over a two-year period, and the full change over to the five-course schedule will be completed by the end of three years. The Committee suggests the following schedule:

1. SPRING 06

- Departments/programs submit proposals to the Committee on Staff Planning for new faculty needed. Calls for such proposals, including new guidelines, were sent to chairs in late January 2006.

2. YEAR ONE (Fall 2006 - Spring 2007)

- University searches to fill approximately one-half of required new positions, with new faculty on campus by August 2007.
- All newly hired tenure track faculty starting employment during this year receive a five-course load.

3. YEAR TWO (Fall 2007- Spring 2008)

- University searches to fill the remaining new faculty lines needed for transition.
- All Assistant Professors convert to a five-course load.

4. YEAR THREE (Fall 2008 - Spring 2009)

- All tenured professors transition to five courses.
- New procedures for awarding teaching credits for labs and independent studies go into effect, provided that a procedure has been devised to reclaim the equivalent of 40 courses in administrative release time.

Two-Thirds Positions

Tenure-track faculty members with two-thirds appointments currently teach four courses per year for 67% of the normal salary. Under a five-course load these individuals would teach three courses in one academic year and four courses in the next (70% over two years) and their salary would be 70% of the normal salary. If both members of a shared appointment are in the same department, it would be expected that they would alternate their four course academic years so that the couple is contributing seven courses per year.

VII. Conclusion

The five-course load plan presents a major opportunity to move forward and enhance undergraduate education at Bucknell. The Committee has devoted several years to researching this issue and has developed a plan consistent with the charge given by the faculty. The Committee has taken great care to evaluate each part of the plan.

In part one, the Committee evaluated several options for reducing the teaching load of the faculty and concluded that the five-course load option best met Bucknell's needs. The Committee argued that adopting the five-course option would improve 1) teaching, 2) recruitment and retention, 3) balancing the teacher-scholar model, and 4) service.

One major concern of the Committee was to ensure that a transition to a five-course load be accomplished with adequate resources to protect the level of excellence expected at Bucknell. Part II of the plan presented many principles relating to the development and implementation of the five-course plan.

The Committee recognized that not all courses lost in converting to the five-course plan could be compensated for by simply hiring additional faculty. The Committee concluded that it needed to examine existing resources and determine what reasonable sacrifices the faculty could make to protect the curriculum. The Committee recommended the elimination of the course release program and the reduction of administrative release time by 40 courses. The Committee did not advocate any change to the Faculty Development Program or the Untenured Leave Program. The Committee believes that these two programs are critical to meet the university's future objectives under the five-course load.

Applying a systematic and objective procedure to estimate how many new faculty positions would be needed, the Committee devoted a great deal of time to developing and analyzing the results of the five-course load survey. After careful deliberation, the Committee estimates that a minimum of 32 new positions would be needed to convert to a five-course schedule without changing the status quo. The Committee discovered major inconsistencies with respect to how teaching credits were applied to labs and independent studies. The Committee concluded that conversion to a five-course plan presented an opportunity to correct these inequities. As a result, the Committee recommended the application of uniform procedures in assigning teaching credits

to labs and independent studies. However, making such changes requires the addition of four faculty members, bringing the total of new positions to 36, at a cost of \$3.8 million.

The last part of the plan specifies a timetable and procedure for implementing the five-course plan. Again, the Committee was guided by a set of principles to ensure that implementation was done in an equitable manner. The Committee recommended a three-year phase-in schedule to start with academic year 2006-2007.

In sum, the Committee has developed a comprehensive and feasible plan for the university to transition to a five-course load. This plan represents a historic opportunity for Bucknell to move forward and to enhance the quality of undergraduate education. The Committee strongly believes that the five-course load plan is a substantial improvement over the existing six-course load. We strongly urge the faculty, administration, and the Board of Trustees to immediately adopt the five-course load plan described in this document.

Appendix 1.

I. RATIONALE/ARGUMENT FOR MOVING TO A FIVE COURSE LOAD

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION: OPTIONS TO REDUCE THE COURSE LOAD OF BUCKNELL FACULTY

COMMITTEE ON STAFF PLANNING REPORT TO THE BUCKNELL FACULTY

November 25, 2002

Introduction

The Bucknell campus has discussed the reasons and means to reduce the course load of faculty for some years. For example, the Planning & Budget (P & B) subcommittee produced a white paper during the spring of 1999 on the strategic importance of moving faculty from a six-course load to a five-course load and provided cost estimates to do so. Because P & B argued that course-load reduction would require the creation of new faculty lines, the Committee on Staff Planning (CSP) began discussions during the spring of 2001 of the rationale and means of reducing course loads, including estimations of the number of new faculty lines necessary. The CSP surveyed departments and programs in May 2001 relative to the potential impacts of a shift to a five-course per year teaching load. The findings of this CSP survey were reported to the faculty in April 2002, and in response, the university faculty directed the CSP, after consultation with other relevant committees, to present a set of options during the fall of 2002 on methods to reduce the current six-course per year teaching load of the faculty. Consequently, the CSP has been working towards that goal since early this semester. The CSP and the Academic Affairs Task Force for strategic planning share similar perspectives on the goals associated with course-load reduction. This report represents a summation of several years of discussions in the P & B subcommittee, the CSP, and elsewhere. Our list of options with a recommendation is based on the findings of the April 2002 CSP report to the faculty entitled “Results of 3-2 Teaching Load Survey” and CSP reviews of curricular plans for departments and programs.

Rationale

The CSP has framed its discussions of course-load reduction with the overarching goal of sustaining, strengthening, and extending the quality of the undergraduate education that Bucknell University offers. This goal includes making more faculty time available for teaching, enhancing faculty involvement outside the classroom, improving pedagogy, aiding the course-development process, attracting and retaining the best faculty, and increasing faculty participation in the Bucknell community. To this end, the rationale for decreasing the load includes (1) pedagogical goals; (2) making more faculty time available to students; (3) enhancement of faculty recruitment, retention, and morale; and (4) balancing teaching and scholarship.

Pedagogical goals

The percentage of faculty time devoted to classroom teaching has increased over the past decades – teaching today requires more time per course than it did a decade or two ago. This increase stems from many sources including the use of technology, preparation of visual teaching tools, use of group projects and collaborative learning, shifts in laboratory instruction from demonstration to investigative projects, adaptation of teaching techniques to address multiple learning styles of a diverse student body, commitment to interdisciplinary programs (e.g., Comparative Humanities, Environmental Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies) and courses such as capstones, writing courses, and foundation seminars, need for assessment, and staying up-to-date in one’s discipline given an explosion of information. In addition, more teaching today occurs outside the classroom. The Bucknell faculty, while continuing to eagerly accept the supervision of independent student research projects and mentoring of honors thesis research, must now find and support student internships and international study opportunities and direct Presidential Fellows. The faculty wants to continue to do what it does well, but it wants to do it even better.

Making more time available for students

Bucknell needs to encourage further faculty-student engagement outside the classroom through continued improvement of student advising and mentoring (e.g., independent student research projects, honors theses, Presidential Fellows), enhanced faculty interaction with student organizations, and increased faculty availability (e.g., more reliable office hours). The Bucknell faculty encourages itself to develop strong academic relationships with students. Bucknell students expect, and the faculty attempts to provide, the extensive personal contact outside the classroom that makes the difference between an adequate education and an outstanding one. As pointed out in the P & B white paper – the faculty member who supervises several honors projects will spend a number of hours a week with each student; will spend additional time reading and commenting on drafts of the student’s work; and will find himself or herself thinking about the subjects at other times as well. Likewise, the faculty member who supervises a group of students in undergraduate research will spend many hours in the laboratory with the students each week; will read and critique the lab reports that the students prepare; will assist students in thinking through their approach to the problem; and will help lead students to a realistic understanding of a significant scientific problem. These forms of personal contact with faculty constitute the highest form of learning that Bucknell can afford our students. And they demand that the institution find ways to reduce the standard classroom-based teaching load. The Bucknell faculty needs to fulfill the expectations that students bring to our campus for their undergraduate experience, and Bucknell must support faculty commitment to personalized teaching and learning. The faculty is committed to every student that Bucknell admits; and the faculty is dedicated to helping each student be successful.

Enhancement of faculty recruitment, retention, and morale

Bucknell is committed to improving its ability to hire and retain the best possible faculty. The six-course load employed at Bucknell is the heaviest found among selective liberal arts colleges and universities. A comparison list of 37 institutions that includes our new frame-of-reference institutions and *US NEWS* top-tier liberal arts institutions, indicates that eight institutions (22%) have a four-course load (Amherst, Bowdoin, Lehigh, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Villanova,

Wellesley, and Wesleyan); 24 (65%) have a five-course load [Barnard, Bates, Bryn Mawr, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut College, Davidson, Franklin and Marshall, Grinnell, Hamilton, Haverford, Holy Cross, Lafayette, Macalester, Middlebury, Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Occidental, Pomona, Richmond, Swarthmore, Trinity, Williams, and Vassar]; one (3%) has a 5.5 course load (Kenyon); and only four (11%) have a six-course load (Bucknell, Carleton, Dickinson, and Union). Bucknell does not compare well with frame-of-reference institutions and *US NEWS* top-tier liberal arts institutions, and the university is competing for faculty with more institutions with lower teaching loads than it did a few years ago. As a consequence, Bucknell is losing highly qualified candidates and faculty to the competition more often in a marketplace that is more challenging than it was just a few years ago.

Balancing teaching and scholarship

The scholarly pursuits of the Bucknell faculty encourage passion for learning and provide the environment for undergraduate research. The 1999 Planning and Budget white paper argued that:

“Bucknell has high standards of scholarly productivity and its faculty is already producing scholarship at a rate and level of excellence that matches many of the selective liberal arts colleges with a five- or even four-course teaching load. Such research and publication activities contribute greatly to the reputation of the faculty and the university in general. However, the faculty struggles to balance the demands of writing grant proposals; conducting research; writing, submitting, and revising scholarly publications; advising and mentoring students; and performing essential service for the university while teaching a six-course load.”

The university’s appreciation and understanding of the benefits of scholarship to effective instruction has increased over the past decades. However, the time available for this activity has decreased as other demands on faculty have increased. Scholarly activities have become a pressured and uncompensated pursuit of summers and semester breaks, which inhibit considered preparation for teaching in the following semester, or time for scholarship must be “stolen” from time needed for teaching. The present load is felt to be debilitating by many members of the Bucknell faculty, given the difficulty of sustaining a program of scholarship during the academic year over and above the six-course teaching load. An institution with high standards of scholarly productivity must support the scholarly activities of its faculty, both to enable junior faculty members to establish a program of research and scholarship early in their career and to encourage tenured faculty to remain committed to their scholarly programs and to continue to contribute to the state of knowledge in their fields. A five-course load will make members of the Bucknell faculty better able to conduct themselves at the level of excellence that is expected of them.

The options for course-load reduction considered and the recommendation made by the CSP are based on the explicit assumption of no expectation of increased scholarship but rather on an improved balance between teaching and scholarship. The objective is to generate a more reasonable balance between teaching and scholarship – given that scholarship is forced to the margins when teaching takes so much time.

Risks associated with course-load reduction

There are risks associated with course-load reduction, including curricular losses (i.e., loss of elective courses, loss of sections from introductory courses), increase in mean class size due to the loss of courses and sections, and decreased faculty availability. Bucknell will need to formulate clear expectations of faculty work, availability, and presence on campus if it moves to a five-course load. It has been the experience of some campuses that the transition to a reduced course load has exacerbated the tendency of some faculty to consolidate their teaching in order to keep some days free for off-campus activities.

Bucknell must assure that all departments and programs have a comparable ability to introduce the five-course load and still cover the central curriculum. Similarly Bucknell must assure that this transition does not reduce the ability or willingness of faculty to contribute to general education and interdisciplinary teaching. The university must preserve appropriate balance between upper-level and lower-level courses, and the balance between specialized disciplinary courses and all-university teaching. Bucknell must make every effort to ensure equitable institution of course-load reduction among faculty. Bucknell must communicate clearly that the university is NOT contemplating an upward shift in the scholarly expectations associated with reappointment, tenure, or promotion.

The following four tables outline the major strengths and weaknesses of the four most viable options among the options discussed by the CSP. Also included for each option are important practical considerations associated with a given option. There are substantial costs associated with each option and the benefits of the options vary. The CSP discussions resulted in a clear recommendation, which follows the four options. Finally the CSP provides a rough estimate of the annual cost of its recommendation.

Options for Reducing Course Load (originally presented in the fall of 2002)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Practical Considerations
<p>(1) <u>Reduction to five-course annual load</u> with enough added faculty to protect curricular and class-size advantages.</p>	<p>Increased interactions with students outside the classroom. Benefit accrues during the academic year, to provide time for improving teaching and pedagogy when teaching occurs. Provides opportunity to strengthen parts of the curriculum – through allocation of new faculty lines. Easy to understand to an audience outside Bucknell as well as on campus. Aids in recruitment and retention of faculty. Better enable faculty to conduct itself at the level of teaching and scholarly excellence that is expected of them. Make more faculty time available to participate in college-wide and university-wide service that would enhance the undergraduate experience. Enhances morale. Endorsed by a majority of departments and programs.</p>	<p>Advantages to students are less obvious than other options – must work to make advantages occur. Faculty could become less available to students if faculty cluster teaching on fewer days and spend more time off campus. Course caps will have to increase – potentially a 10% increase in average course enrollments. Beneficial impacts to departments, programs, and faculty members will vary since not every department or program will gain staff.</p>	<p>Requires new faculty positions. Preliminary estimates based on the Committee’s “3-2 Teaching Load Survey” indicate that this option is workable with roughly 19-20 new faculty positions along with associated office and/or laboratory space needs. [This estimate has been superceded by a more recent survey which estimates that a total of 36 new faculty lines will be needed.] All current teaching releases will need to be reconsidered to reclaim approximately 50% of released courses. [This percentage is based on the original estimate of 20 new faculty positions.] Fewer course releases would add to the teaching pool to mitigate curricular losses. Faculty members would be able to teach fewer elective upper-level courses and fewer courses with six or fewer students. Must actively work to develop ways to ascertain whether five-course load is increasing faculty availability to students outside the classroom, enhancing faculty commitment to</p>

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Practical Considerations
			<p>students, and improving pedagogy.</p> <p>Need to balance course offerings across semesters.</p> <p>Temporary replacement faculty would teach a six-course load given no advising, no participation in the governance process, and lower scholarly expectations.</p>
Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Practical Considerations
(2) <u>Move to smaller section sizes</u> with enough added faculty to protect curricular and class-size advantages but with no reduction in annual course load.	<p>Smaller section sizes, which reduces the load per course.</p> <p>Increases teaching effectiveness in each class.</p> <p>Helps students more than faculty.</p> <p>Can be implemented stepwise.</p>	<p>An expensive option given the return – even with as many new faculty lines as option #1, it would decrease average class size by only 2 students. Thirty new faculty lines would produce only a 10% mean class-size reduction and new lines can't be distributed equally across campus.</p> <p>Less value to faculty than moving to a five-course annual load.</p> <p>Does not relieve the fixed-costs of teaching associated with a class of any size – i.e., lecture time, class and examination preparations.</p> <p>Value to faculty differs by department or program.</p> <p>Less obvious advantage for recruitment given that candidates are less aware of class size as a</p>	<p>Same issues regarding staffing as option #1.</p> <p>Bucknell would adopt reduced class-size caps.</p> <p>Faculty would be expected to revise pedagogy to benefit students if the realized class-size reduction for a given course is meaningful.</p>

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Practical Considerations
<p>3) <u>More frequent paid sabbatical leaves</u> with enough added faculty to protect curricular and class-size advantages but with no reduction in annual course load. For example, a 4- or 5-year cycle (i.e., one semester leave after six semesters of teaching).</p>	<p>Appreciably increases the time available for focused research and course development. It clearly benefits recruitment. Some curricular enhancements and addition of faculty lines may be possible if new faculty positions were made available via permanent sabbatical-replacement positions. Simple to institute, lower salary costs of replacement faculty saves money.</p>	<p>recruitment issue. Increased time is available when faculty member is <u>NOT</u> teaching – negating most benefits of load reduction to students. Does not make more time available for student mentoring and advising. Relies on less-well prepared instructors when temporary replacement faculty is hired. Dangers to common curricular efforts (e.g., Foundation Seminars, Capstones) – temporary staff does not often teach such courses – this option would shift more work to fewer tenured faculty given sabbatical leave absences. More frequent disruption to curriculum and advising. Damages department planning, administrative planning, and university governance given that temporary faculty members do not participate in the governance process. Potentially fragments the faculty because of increased coming and going of faculty from leaves. Financial costs of recruiting and increased faculty time and energy</p>	<p>Some portion of the sabbatical leave would be devoted to activities that would benefit students or pedagogy; possibly alternating sabbatical leaves focused on research with ones directed at benefiting students.</p>

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Practical Considerations
		<p>spent recruiting temporary staff.</p>	
<p>(4) <u>Provide teaching credit for a wider range of activities</u> (student research, mentoring honors students, large class size, new courses) with no reduction in annual course load and with enough added faculty to protect curricular and class-size advantages.</p>	<p>Responds specifically to where instructional pressure is strongest. Plan can be implemented stepwise.</p>	<p>The quality of student projects may decline given the pressures to enroll independent research students in order to gain teaching credit. May not benefit the majority of faculty since a few departments use this approach already. Creates equity issues as it pits faculty members against one another to compete for students. Not available in many departments/programs unless additional faculty members are provided, as no course can be dropped.</p>	<p>Requires new faculty positions to protect curriculum. Implementation would include considerable attention to reducing inequities.</p>
		<p>Option may effectively reduce course load without any staff additions – the consequence would be erosion of the curriculum.</p>	

Recommendation

The CSP believes that the shift to a five-course (3-2) load provides the most benefits, and that the obstacles to its adoption, while appreciable, are surmountable. New faculty lines would be needed to offset partially the loss of elective courses, loss of sections within larger courses, and to minimize the increase in average class size. New faculty positions would be allocated to departments or programs through normal CSP procedures. Because of the need for an estimated 19-20 new faculty lines **[this number was based on an older and incomplete survey that has been replaced by a current and more comprehensive one, which estimates the need for 36 new positions]**, a transition period of 5 years or more may be necessary to move all faculty members from the current six-course load to a five-course load. This transition period may include a 5.5 course-load as an intermediate step to full implementation of the five-course load. The estimate that 19-20 new faculty lines are needed is based on the assumption that all current teaching releases will be reconsidered and that approximately 50% of released courses will be reclaimed **[This estimate was based on the need for 19-20 new faculty lines.]** Fewer course releases would add to the teaching pool to mitigate curricular losses. Implementation will require that the Committees on Instruction and Planning and Budget help to refine the goals and expectations associated with a shift to a five-course load and to see the magnitude of new resources needed for full implementation.

Financial Implications

The financial implications of a shift to a five-course load are substantial. Costs of salaries and benefits associated with the addition of 19-20 new faculty lines are estimated to be approximately \$100,000 per year per position for a total cost of approximately \$2,000,000 per year (or approximately \$600 per student per year). Additional costs would be associated with renovation of office and laboratory spaces for new faculty as well as teaching and scholarly support for new faculty.

Appendix 2. Five-Course Load Survey
FIVE-COURSE LOAD PLAN SURVEY
COMMITTEE ON STAFF PLANNING
FALL 2004

I. PURPOSES

The goal of this survey is to obtain more accurate data on how converting to a five-course load plan can be best achieved. More specifically, the Committee is interested in:

1. whether departments/programs can successfully make the conversion without the addition of new faculty lines;
2. the impact the conversion could have on the offerings related to majors, electives, and CLA; and
3. how many new faculty lines are needed to successfully implement the five-course plan.

Departments/programs should consult their 2001 document that they forwarded to the Committee for background information.

II. ASSUMPTIONS

For purposes of this survey, assume the following (implementation of the five-course load plan might result in the modification of some of these assumptions):

1. requirements for each major do not change;
2. CLA, Engineering 100, and other service commitments by each department are maintained;
3. faculty administrative release time stays the same;
4. section enrollment caps will increase slightly; and
5. the minimum number of students required for a course to be offered will have to be raised to a number above the current minimum of six.

III. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT DEPARTMENTS/PROGRAMS AND THEIR OFFERINGS

Fill in the following table as best as you can.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Department/ Program Name	# of current FTEs[1]	# of course releases ^[2] measured by FTEs*	Faculty on leave not replaced (FTEs)*	Faculty on leave replaced (FTEs)*	Effective FTEs: [Col. 2- Col. 3- Col. 4]	Average # of senior majors (BA +BS)*	# of sections offered that meet the core ³ courses required for the major*	# of sections offered that can meet the electives required for the major*	# of sections offered to meet required CLA commit- ments*	Total # of sections offered by department (add previous 3 columns)

¹ Full time equivalent (FTE) total should reflect the number of individuals (count two-thirds appointments as .67) assigned to your department/program, including tenure and nontenure track appointments. Do not count visiting appointments or temporary persons filling in for people on leave. Indicate if any of your FTEs were recently hired as a leave replacement position.

² Calculation of releases includes releases for: chairs, endowed chairs, Senior Fellows, and other administrative positions.
* This number should reflect the average count for the last three years.

³ These are specific common courses that all majors must take. If your department offers more than one major then you should combine the requirements for all of the majors in your reporting for this column and the next.

IV. CONVERTING TO A FIVE-COURSE LOAD

We don't expect to be able to provide each department/program with new faculty lines. We are interested in learning which departments/programs simply cannot convert to the five-course load without causing serious and unacceptable damage to their curriculum. In the 2001 survey, the overwhelming majority of departments/programs suggested that they could convert to a five-course load without adding faculty.

We anticipate that departments/programs will use some of the following devices to convert to the five-course load: eliminating some courses from their offerings; reducing the number of sections of core or introductory courses; and offering some electives in alternate years. Please submit the following:

- i) a draft copy of next year's preliminary academic course schedule or a typical schedule based on a six-course load and indicate which individuals are on leave for that year;
- ii) using the same draft copy, indicate which courses will be omitted in a five-course load scenario; and
- iii) fill in the following table as best as you can; account for labs in the usual way.

1	2	3	4	5	6
# of courses per year that can be eliminated from department/program (list # of sections per year) ³	# of sections per year that can be reduced in your service or core courses ⁴	# of sections per year that can be reduced in your electives by offering them in alternate years	Total # of sections that can be reduced per year (add previous 3 columns)	Can your department or program convert to a five-course load teaching schedule without additional faculty (yes or no)?	If you answered "no" in Col. 5, estimate # of positions the department or program would need to maintain the integrity of its major and commitments under a five-course load ⁵

V. USE OF NEW FACULTY LINES

Requests for additional hires are not designed to expand any area nor fill a void in any given curriculum. We anticipate, if and when new faculty lines are granted, that those lines will serve to replace courses deemed to be essential to the major or to maintain the department's commitment to the overall university curriculum.

If you anticipate asking for additional faculty lines, explain how your department/program will utilize such new hires by filling in the table below. Indicate # of sections that will be allocated to each purpose in the columns below.

1	2	3	4
# of sections that otherwise would be eliminated	# of sections in service or core courses that should be offered yearly	# of electives that should be offered yearly	Total # of sections that would be saved (add previous 3 columns)

Appendix 3. Estimated Costs of Adding 36 New Positions

Bucknell University

Finance Office

Costs to Add Faculty Positions

---DOES NOT INCLUDE NEW OFFICE SPACE---

Updated February 23, 2006

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Financial Assumptions			
Inflation	2.50%	2.25%	2.00%
Salary Increase	6.57%	5.20%	5.20%
Benefits Increase	3.12%	3.12%	3.12%
Staffing assumptions			
New Faculty Positions to Add	18	18	0
New Support Positions to Add	1.5	1.5	0
Net change Faculty	18	36	36
Net change staff	1.5	3	3
Starting Salary Assumptions			
Base Salary for Faculty Position	\$64,500	\$67,854	\$71,382
Benefits for Faculty Position	\$20,640	\$21,284	\$21,948
Base Salary for Support Position	\$42,436	\$44,643	\$46,964
Benefits for Support Position	\$13,580	\$14,003	\$14,440
Ongoing Expenses per FTE			
Technology	\$520	\$532	\$542
Professional Development	\$2,082	\$2,129	\$2,171
Other Ongoing Expenses	\$5,205	\$5,322	\$5,429
Total Ongoing Costs	\$7,807	\$7,983	\$8,142
(Total ongoing costs per faculty member)	\$92,947	\$97,121	\$101,473
One-Time Expenses per FTE			
Recruiting	\$5,205	\$5,322	\$5,429
Technology	\$2,082	\$2,129	\$2,171
Average Startup Expense	\$20,818	\$21,286	\$21,712
Office Furniture (Bsc Package)	\$1,561	\$1,596	\$1,628
Total One-Time Costs	\$29,666	\$30,333	\$30,940
Annual Cost Increases			
Faculty Wages	\$1,161,000	\$1,221,372	\$0
Faculty Benefits	\$371,520	\$383,111	\$0
Support Staff Wages	\$63,654	\$66,964	\$0
Support Staff Benefits	\$20,369	\$21,005	\$0
Ongoing Expenses	\$140,526	\$143,688	\$0
One-Time Expenses	\$533,988	\$546,003	\$0
Total Annual Expense Increment	\$2,291,057	\$2,382,143	\$0
Aggregate impact			
Faculty wages & benefits & expenses	\$1,673,046	\$3,496,343	\$3,653,019
Staff wages & benefits	\$84,023	\$175,938	\$184,213
One-Time Expenses	\$533,988	\$546,003	\$0
Net budget impact	\$2,291,057	\$4,218,283	\$3,837,231

CoI Report (i) on The Writing Center for Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006

The Writing Program is the only University-wide curricular requirement, and it involves the participation of faculty from virtually every department. Despite the importance of this Program as a central feature of the University's academic core, a comprehensive review of the program's procedures and administration had not been conducted since 1987. In February 2004, COI charged the Composition Council with convening a faculty subcommittee to conduct a review of the writing program, primarily by "assessing faculty opinion of current Writing Program procedures, administration, and criteria, and if deemed necessary, recommending procedural changes to the Program."

The Composition Council has recently completed their review (attached). This review was based on (among other sources of information) a survey that all faculty were invited to participate in, meetings with several departments and with individual faculty who responded to the Composition Council's broad solicitations for input, consultation with the Writing Center staff, and information available from national professional organizations and peer institutions.

After extensive discussion and a cooperative revision process between COI and Composition Council, COI reports to the faculty that we approve of the final draft of this review and endorse all of the recommendations it contains.

CoI Report (ii) on The Writing Center for Faculty Meeting on 4 April 2006

The legislation that created the Writing Program charges the Composition Council with being the body that is to approve plans for assessment of writing by incoming and graduating students. Lately, assessment is becoming regarded as an increasingly important complement to University educational activities, due to mandates from accrediting bodies and in recognition of the pedagogical value of assessment itself. In April, 2004, COI charged the Composition Council with developing a plan for formal assessment of student writing and the success of the Writing Program. Resulting from a two-year process of study, discussions with faculty, and consultation with professional sources on writing assessment, the Composition Council has developed and submitted to COI a "Proposed Plan for Assessing Student Writing at Bucknell" (attached). This plan describes a framework of assumptions and general procedures, intended as a starting point for an evolving process that remains open to faculty feedback and expert guidance. After extensive discussion and a collaborative revision process between COI and Composition Council, COI reports to the faculty that we recommend the proposed plan.

CoI Supporting Reports

(see next page)

Results of Internal Review of Writing Program

March, 2006

Tom Solomon, Physics/Astronomy (Chair, Composition Council)

Paula Davis-Larson, Theater and Dance

George Exner, Mathematics

Lynn Hoffman, Education

Erin Jablonski, Chemical Engineering

Meenakshi Ponnuswami, English

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Overview

In February of 2004, the Committee on Instruction (COI) charged the faculty members of the Composition Council with the task of conducting a review of Bucknell's Writing Program and recommending procedural changes to the Program if deemed necessary. (See Appendix A for the text of the COI charge.) An electronic survey was sent to the Faculty in the Fall of 2004. This was followed in the Fall of 2005 with a series of departmental conversations about specific issues raised by the survey.

There were 92 faculty responses to the on-line survey of Fall 2004. Fifteen departments from all the divisions, along with the staff of the Writing Center, either had conversations with members of the committee or sent written reports between November of 2005 and January of 2006. Based on an analysis and discussion of this feedback, the following emerged:

- Overall, there is strong support among the faculty for the two main goals of the Writing Program; i.e., developing expository skills and teaching the use of writing as an instrument for thinking.
- Most faculty are comfortable with the basic approach being used now in the Writing Program (with some modifications), although some faculty and departments say that significant changes should be considered to the Writing Program.
- A large number of faculty feel very strongly that W2 courses must support a process-based approach to writing, with multiple drafts. Some other faculty members feel that the Writing Program should have space for W2 courses, designed for students within a major, that emphasize discipline-specific writing over a general writing process.
- A large number of faculty say that the most significant problem with the Writing Program is W courses with too many students for appropriate instruction.
- Although there is some reluctance to implement a program for assessing student writing, most of the faculty express a sense of resigned acceptance that some form of assessment is inevitable. (Assessment is discussed in a separate report.)
- There is widespread agreement that students need help with basic writing mechanics. Some faculty feel that it is a necessary role of an instructor of a W-course to teach these skills; others state that they do not think that class time should be used for such instruction or that they are personally unqualified to teach these skills.
- It is universally agreed that the current Writing Referral/Deficiency System is ineffective and that changes need to be made. There is wide-spread agreement with the idea of encouraging referrals early in a semester and within the context of a course, along with a recognition that improvements in the referral system will have to be combined with additional resources to the Writing Center.
- Opinions are divided about the desirability of an option to withhold W-credit for students in a course if content objectives have been met but the quality of writing remains

deficient.

- There is a range of opinions (both negative and positive) about the desirability/feasibility of offering “developmental” (or remedial) courses in writing.
- A range of opinions is expressed about the effectiveness of the Writing Center in its role supporting the Writing Program. Some faculty are very complimentary of the Writing Center and staff. Others express the view that tutoring sessions at the Center are ineffective.
- Writing Center staff express the view that there are misconceptions among a small number of faculty about how tutoring sessions work and say that some faculty expect the Writing Center to “fix” student papers rather than helping the students learn to write themselves.

Based on the feedback received from the faculty, we make recommendations for changes in the areas enumerated below and discussed in more detail in the following section:

1. Enrollment caps and teaching credit for W-courses.
2. Teaching of expository skills in W1 courses.
3. On-going communication/discussion about the Writing Program and the Writing Center.
4. Writing referrals.
5. Additional resources for the Writing Center.
6. Administration of the Writing Program and Writing Center.
7. Periodic review of W-courses.
8. Writing course evaluation forms.
9. Other wording changes in the Writing Program legislation.
10. Continuing review of the Writing Program.

We also include discussion about the following issues which were discussed extensively but for which we do not make concrete recommendations:

11. Developmental (“remedial”) writing courses.
12. Withholding of W-credit.
13. Approval process for W-courses.

Detail about recommendations

1. **ENROLLMENT CAPS AND TEACHING CREDIT FOR W-COURSES.** We ask the administration to help us move toward caps of 15 students for enrollment in W1 classes and 20 for enrollment in W2 classes.

Rationale (abbreviated): Effective writing instruction requires time on the part of the instructor. In particular, the most important element is feedback for written work. Consequently, the amount of time that an instructor needs to spend on a writing-intensive course grows *strongly* with the enrollment; therefore, the quality of instruction and feedback in a writing course can be expected to drop with large enrollments.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has written a policy statement (see Appendix C) recommending that writing courses not have enrollments above 20 students; ideally, class sizes should be limited to 15. Many of our peer institutions (including large state universities) have caps of between 15 and 20 students for their writing courses.

A change to course sizes and teaching credit for W-courses would also send a message that the university values the teaching of these courses and would help encourage more faculty to participate in the Writing Program.

Clearly, there are challenges that are involved in any reduction of caps for Writing courses. There are W-courses which must have larger enrollments due to curricular (major-specific) issues. Any plan to move to a lower cap would have to allow for these exceptions. A possible solution is to make the caps non-binding – departments could opt out and exceed the caps for curricular reasons. In these cases, we recommend that a formula be developed to grant additional teaching credit to faculty teaching over-enrolled W courses. If additional teaching credit is granted for teaching overenrolled W-courses, the additional time needed for instructor feedback can still be available even if other circumstances make a larger enrollment necessary.

We also recognize that there are other pragmatic (mainly financial) reasons why reduction of caps and allocation of additional teaching credit for writing courses will be difficult. We do not expect that it will possible to implement this recommendation immediately. However, this goal should be included as part of the discussions during the next couple of years about development of tactical plans to support the strategic goal of enhancing the academic core of Bucknell.

A more detailed and expansive rationale for a lower cap on W-course enrollments can be found in Appendix C.

2. **TEACHING OF EXPOSITORY SKILLS IN W COURSES.** We recommend the following changes to the Writing Program legislation:

(a) The first line in criterion #3 for W1 courses should be modified as follows (underlined print represents suggested additions):

3. Teach and emphasize the importance of the following expository skills:

...

- (b) The following paragraphs should be added to the end of criterion #3 for W1 courses:

Instructors of W1 courses will stress the importance of these expository skills and students will be held accountable for demonstrating mastery of these skills in their writing. When providing feedback to students on late-stage drafts or final submissions of written work, instructors will point out recurring errors and require students to address these problems.

A standard on-line (electronic) composition handbook will be available to all students and faculty at Bucknell. As a first resource for addressing writing problems, instructors may refer students to the handbook. For more serious problems, the instructor may work with the students individually. Writing Center tutors will similarly be available to help students remedy flaws in their writing mechanics. (See Section VIII.) For wide-spread problems, the instructor may wish to use class time to point out and correct patterns of error.

- (c) The following paragraph should be added to the end of criterion #1 for W2 courses:

Instructors of W2 courses will hold students to a high standard in regard to expository skills (see Criterion #3 for W1 courses). Instructors will identify rhetorical problems and/or patterns of error and will work with students either individually or in conjunction with the Writing Center. (See Section VIII.) Instructors may also refer students to the on-line composition handbook where appropriate.

Rationale: The assumption typically is that students who are accepted into Bucknell have already mastered basic expository skills; however, faculty frequently comment that poor mechanics are still apparent, due either to (a) a lack of appropriate care or sufficient time invested on the part of students; (b) more fundamental writing deficiencies due to a lack of preparation or knowledge on the part of the student; (c) learning or language differences; or (d) difficulties in comprehension of the subject matter that are manifested in poor writing. Faculty have expressed frustration with this issue. On the one hand, it is universally agreed that expository skills in general and basic writing mechanics in particular are essential. On the other hand, many faculty do not want (or feel unqualified) to spend class time teaching writing when many or most of the students do not need this instruction. As a result, many faculty fail to address difficulties in basic expository skills.

The intention of the recommended changes is to modify the language to stress that the burden of good writing mechanics must be on the students. But there is a recognition that faculty teaching W courses still have an important role to play in teaching writing, even if little class time is used in this instruction. And there is also recognition that some students will need more help than can be provided solely by the faculty member.

As part of these changes, the University will arrange for an on-line composition “handbook” that all students and faculty will be able to access; consequently, any faculty member (in any class) can refer a student to the on-line resources for additional writing help.

3. ON-GOING COMMUNICATION/DISCUSSION ABOUT THE WRITING PROGRAM AND THE WRITING CENTER.

We recommend that steps be taken to enhance regular conversation between members of the faculty and the Writing Center staff. We recommend also that departments have regular conversations about their writing courses and how these courses fit into their curriculum.

We note that the Writing Center is already discussing ideas to implement a “liaison” system to discuss support of writing, similar to the liaison system that the Writing Center Tutoring Program uses with the mathematics and science departments. The Writing Center staff has also discussed the possibility of follow-up sessions to their successful August workshops to further discussion about writing courses. We strongly support these ideas.

Rationale: Regular conversation about writing and the teaching of writing is needed to keep the Writing Program vital and up-to-date. The program is now over 20 years old, and there is a danger of the program becoming stale if there are not continuing discussions.

In our conversations with faculty, a few things were apparent. First, many faculty simply are not aware of how the Writing Center handles writing tutoring. Writing Center staff comment that a small minority of faculty expect them to edit their students’ papers, rather than working with the students and helping them to discover for themselves the things that they need to do to improve their work.

Significantly more communication is needed for faculty and Writing Center staff to be able to work together in complementary ways to assist students with their writing. Most significantly, students need to be encouraged to take the responsibility to start their papers early enough and receive meaningful feedback in a timely manner. As discussed by the Writing Center staff, only so much can be achieved in a one-hour appointment, especially if a student comes only one hour before the paper is due.

Second, some faculty comment that Writing Center tutors (especially student tutors) are not trained to assist with discipline-specific writing. Tutors might make comments or suggestions that lead the student to make changes that run counter to the approach typically used in that discipline. A few faculty members commented that they never recommend appointments with the Writing Center specifically because of this issue.

The liaison system proposed by the Writing Center could *significantly* enhance the value of the Writing Center as it supports the Writing Program. Conversations between Writing Center staff and the faculty would help make clear to the faculty how the Writing Center operates and would provide to the Writing Center feedback that would help them better tailor their services to the needs of the faculty, particularly in regard to discipline-specific writing.

4. WRITING REFERRALS. We recommend that Section VIII (“Writing Referral System”) be replaced with the following:

VIII. Writing Referral System

In order to build on the working relationship between faculty members and student as a course progresses, a referral system is available. Faculty should seek to identify **as**

early as possible in the semester any student who would benefit from additional one-on-one writing tutoring. The faculty should meet with the student to explain the referral and to identify the areas of writing with which the student needs the most assistance. For a referral to be successful, the student must understand the need for the additional help and must be motivated to follow through with the writing tutor.

The instructor and student will jointly complete a referral form, and copies of the form will be available for the faculty member, the student, and the Writing Center. The referral form will include check boxes that identify the student's problems, some blank space in which the faculty can provide more detailed information, and a description of upcoming writing assignments in the course for which the student will need help.

The Writing Center will arrange tutoring for the student, either with Writing Center staff or with trained student writing tutors. In some circumstances, it may be beneficial for the student to work with the same one or two tutors throughout the semester to develop a relationship. The faculty member should monitor the situation during the remainder of the semester, consulting with the student and providing feedback to the Writing Center. If deemed useful, the relationship between the student and the Writing Center may continue past the end of the semester.

Rationale: Faculty members and Writing Center staff agree that the current referral/deficiency system is ineffective. The deficiency/referral check-boxes on the mid-term and end-of-semester grade reports are often considered to be punitive by both faculty and students and are therefore frequently not used in cases where students would benefit from additional help. Furthermore, in the absence of context (i.e., specific writing assignments), students are unmotivated to seek additional help.

Above all else, successful tutoring depends on the motivation of the student. A student who perceives a need for tutoring and is involved in the referral process is much more likely to benefit from tutoring. The proposed referral system is intended to empower and motivate the student to seek the help s/he needs and to keep the faculty member involved in the process. Students are much more motivated when they receive help during the semester and in the context of particular assignments. The goal is to arrange for additional tutoring as early as possible and for that tutoring to continue (as needed) throughout the semester.

The referral system is not intended to replace or curtail in any way the current practice of having writing tutors available on a regular basis for any writer (whether student, faculty or staff member) who would like feedback at any time during the semester. The expectation is that this new referral system – if successful – will increase the number of students who take advantage of the tutorial assistance that is available to them. In addition, this system may increase the logistical workload needed to match students with tutors. Consequently, a successful referral system may not be possible without additional resources for the Writing Center (see recommendation 5 below) and the ability to identify, train and supervise a larger pool of potential writing tutors.

This approach will replace the current “Writing deficiency” reports that are submitted with grade reports. However, the mid-term grade reports will still have “Poor Written Work” as an optional reason for submitting mid-term grades of D or F.

5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE WRITING CENTER. We recommend that the administration make a long-term plan to enhance the resources provided to the Writing Center.

Specific recommendations include:

- (a) Hiring additional professional staff to allow more time for writing instruction and faculty development.

The responsibilities of the Writing Center staff have expanded greatly since the inception of the Writing Program in 1983. Additional duties include increased faculty development efforts; increased workshops both in and out of the classroom; support for oral communications; and recruiting, training and supervising tutors in mathematics and sciences. This limits the amount of time that they can spend setting up additional workshops and working with faculty members or students one-on-one. Furthermore, if the writing referral system improves, then the work-load at the Writing Center will increase, possibly significantly.

- (b) Providing resources to make the Writing consultant positions more attractive for recruiting and retaining writing professionals.

A study needs to be undertaken to determine what salaries are appropriate for Writing Center staff. This is not trivial, considering the range of responsibilities for Writing Center staff at Bucknell. Bucknell needs to commit to providing salaries that are at an appropriate level to attract and retain qualified writing and faculty development professionals.

Writing Center staff provide instruction at Bucknell. They should be treated in a professional manner and should be given a real voice in discussions about the academic mission of the university, since their work relates so directly to this mission.

- (c) Additional staff are urgently needed specifically with expertise in ESL (English as a second language) and LD (learning disabled) instruction.

- (d) Improving facilities.

We encourage the university to consider different paradigms about how the Writing Center could be configured, potentially alongside a *Teaching and Learning Center* if built. At the very least, the Writing Center needs to be renovated to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); currently, the Center is not handicap-accessible.

- (e) An increase in the Writing Center and Writing Program budget.

Additional funds could be used for incentives for faculty to attend workshops on the teaching of writing across the curriculum. W-course summer grants should also be considered for faculty developing new W-courses or modifying existing ones. This could inject some new energy into the Writing Program. (Note: “Curricular and

Instructional Development Grants” are currently available, but no mention is made of development or modification of writing courses in the guidelines for these grants.)

6. **ADMINISTRATION OF THE WRITING PROGRAM AND WRITING CENTER.** We recommend that Section X (“Administration of the Writing Program”) be modified as follows (underlined sections are changes or additions):

X. Administration of the Writing Program and Writing Center

The Composition Council will determine policy for the Writing Program and will coordinate its activities. The Council will have ~~seven~~six members who will be appointed by the Committee on Instruction. One ~~Two~~ of these members will come from the Department of English*, one from the College of Engineering, and one from the Library. The other three will be chosen from three different divisions in order to gain the widest University participation. In addition to these ~~seven~~six members, the Council will have as permanent voting members the Director of the Writing Program and the Director of the Writing Center, who will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the Academic Deans, the Department of English, and the Composition Council. The Director will be attached to the Vice President’s office. The Council of Deans will appoint non-voting consultants to the Composition Council from the College of Arts and Sciences and from the Engineering College. The Composition Council will be a sub-committee of the Committee on Instruction. Terms of the six non-permanent members will be for three years. By default, the chair of the Composition Council will be the Writing Program Director; if the Writing Program Director is unable to serve as chair, then the Council will elect a chair.

The Writing Program Director and Writing Center Director will both be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Academic Deans, the Department of English, and the Composition Council. The Writing Program Director will be a member of the faculty and the Writing Center Director will be a member of the Writing Center staff. Both the Writing Program Director and the Writing Center Director will report directly to the Provost.

(* ~~The number of representatives from English was changed from two to one by former VPAA Dan Little.~~)

The functions and duties of the Composition Council will include:

1. approving plans for assessing student writing the writing of entering students;
2. ~~approving plans for evaluating the writing of graduating students;~~
2. reviewing the assessment data and evaluating the effectiveness of the Writing Program;
3. maintaining criteria for designating courses as W1 or W2;
4. assisting the various departments and faculty members with the design of their writing courses;
5. reporting annually to the Committee on Instruction on the operation of the Writing Program and proposing, for faculty action, any changes in the Writing Program that it wishes to recommend.

The Director of the Writing Program, as a member of the Composition Council, will share in the duties enumerated above, and in addition will:

1. implement the policies determined by the Composition Council;
2. serve as a liaison between the faculty and the Writing Center;
3. consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses;
4. ~~administer the Writing Program budget.~~
4. report regularly to the Provost (and annually to COI and to the faculty) about the status of the Writing Program.
5. work with the Writing Center Director to provide support to faculty teaching writing courses.

The Director of the Writing Center, in addition to his/her normal Writing Center duties, will:

1. administer the day-to-day operations of the Writing Center and supervise Writing Center staff;
2. administer the Writing Center budget;
3. report regularly to the Provost about activities of the Writing Center;
4. work with the Writing Program Director to provide support to faculty teaching writing courses.

The Composition Council charges the Writing Center with the following:

1. ~~from time to time, to assess the writing abilities of entering classes;~~
1. to provide individual assistance, remedial tutorials, and workshops for students;
2. ~~on request, to hold seminars and workshops for faculty and teaching assistants in the teaching of expository prose;~~
2. to conduct faculty development workshops to assist faculty in the teaching of writing courses.
3. to consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses.
4. ~~from time to time, to evaluate the writing of graduating students as a check on the effectiveness of the entire program;~~

Rationale: Many of the changes listed here codify changes that have been made in the past 20 years by the VPAA and by COI. The most significant of these changes occurred in the Spring of 2003 when the Provost – in conjunction with the Composition Council – decided to split what had been a single position of Writing Program/Center Director into two Co-Directors, one for the Writing Program and one for the Writing Center. This approach has been followed for the past three years on a trial basis. We recommend that this change be made permanent. Before the change, it was difficult for the Provost to convince a member of the faculty to accept the position of Writing Program Director, due (to a great extent) to the previous responsibilities of that director for managing the day-to-day affairs of the Writing Center. In fact, neither of the previous two Writing Program directors were faculty members.

We consider it important that the Writing Program Director be a member of the faculty. Faculty status gives the director the ability to talk with other members of the faculty in a frank and open way about the Writing Program. Furthermore, it reinforces the statement that the Writing Program is a faculty program.

Removal of the day-to-day administration of the Writing Center from the Writing Program Director also gives that person time to concentrate more on programmatic issues related to the

Writing Program. As an example, the review conducted here was possible only because of this change in the director's position.

We also consider it important that the Writing Center be administered by a member of that staff. To run the Writing Center effectively, the Director needs to be there regularly and needs to be intimately familiar with the duties of the staff. The Writing Center Director needs to be experienced in Writing Center administration, the teaching of writing, and best practices in tutoring.

7. PERIODIC REVIEW OF W-COURSES. Section XI of the legislation says:

Regularly offered 'W' courses will be re-announced each year, and reviewed by the Council every three years to assure the integrity of the Writing Program.

We recommend no change in this language at this point, but recommend that review of W courses be suspended for three years until we have some writing assessment results.

Rationale: Currently, W courses are *not* reviewed by the Composition Council every three years. Consequently, a recommendation of suspension of periodic review does not change the current approach of the Council. Historically, once a course is designated as a W-course, it remains that way indefinitely as long as the same professor continues to teach the course. Concern has been expressed that courses may “drift” over time, diminishing their effectiveness as W-courses. On the other hand, the view was also expressed that the Council needs to trust that faculty members teaching the W-courses will not diminish the writing component of a W-course. Revocation of W-status could engender ill feelings which could ultimately be damaging to the Writing Program. Furthermore, the task of reviewing 1/3 of the writing courses each year would be unduly burdensome on members of the Composition Council.

Simplified review schemes were considered, based mostly on self-reporting by the faculty member and/or department. Ultimately, it was decided that we should postpone any final decision on periodic review until after we have collected some assessment data, some of which will include information about the W-courses themselves. It is possible that there isn't a problem here and that periodic review will not be needed.

8. WRITING COURSE EVALUATION FORMS. We recommend that the Composition Council re-design the evaluation forms that are used for the W-courses. The forms should be made shorter, emphasizing no more than 4 or 5 important points.

This is discussed in more detail in the assessment document.

9. OTHER WORDING CHANGES IN THE WRITING PROGRAM LEGISLATION. We recommend the following changes in the Writing Program legislation:

(a) In Section I (“Two Aims”):

Designated writing courses in the University Writing Program have two purposes: to develop expository skills and to teach the use of language writing as an means for creating and processing knowledge ~~instrument for thinking~~. Such courses aim to

develop students' ~~writers'~~ mastery of written language so that they may discover, organize, and communicate their knowledge.

Rationale: Several faculty commented that the original phrasing “the use of language as an instrument for thinking” is unclear and vague. A few said that they did not understand what it means at all. The revised text also clarifies the distinction between written and verbal language.

(b) In Section IV, criterion #2, add the following paragraph:

The writing process often varies by discipline and by instructor. Consequently, it is essential that faculty be clear about what is expected of students in the drafting/revising process as well as about the criteria by which writing assignments will be evaluated. Students should be held accountable for meeting these expectations and for treating each stage of the process with an appropriate amount of care.

Rationale: In the review, some faculty expressed frustration with the lack of care shown by some students on drafts of a major writing assignment. There is a feeling among many students that they do not need to put much effort into a draft – even one handed in for feedback – because they will have the opportunity to revise later. Worse, some students are reported to hold back intentionally on their drafts so that they can show improvement in later drafts. This is a source of frustration among many faculty, as meaningful feedback cannot be given unless the student puts an appropriate amount of effort into the drafts. Ultimately, it is the instructor’s responsibility to clarify the expectations for each stage of the draft and to hold students accountable if they fail to treat the different stages with appropriate effort and care.

Some on the review committee believe that the language should be stronger in this section to stress how important it is for students to treat each draft as their best work. A suggestion was made to add the following to the end of the above addition:

In particular, work which due to carelessness or procrastination essentially removes such a stage is inappropriate. Work at a stage in which it should be a student’s best, considered work to date may be expected to be free of mechanical errors readily identified by modern software, even if there will be further opportunities for revision.

(c) In Section IV, criteria #5:

5. ~~Teach writing to think~~ Teach the use of writing as a means of creating and processing knowledge.

W1 courses include writing assignments that cause students to engage in intellectual work. Types of assignments may include essays, abstracts, journals, emails, question formulation, field notes, lab notebooks, or short answers to prepared questions, all designed to use language as a resource for inquiry.

Rationale: Faculty were scathing in their criticisms of the phrasing of this criterion (“unclear,” “no sense,” “badly written,” “poorly delineated,” ...).

(d) In Section V, criterion #1:

1. Provide writing instruction ~~as needed~~.

Rationale: The modifications (suggested by a faculty comment) are in response to criticisms that the original wording “as needed” is unclear.

(e) In Section V, criterion #2, add the following paragraph:

The writing process often varies by discipline and by instructor. Consequently, it is essential that faculty be clear about what is expected of students in the drafting/revising process as well as about the criteria by which drafts will be evaluated. Students should be held accountable for meeting these expectations and for treating each stage of the process with an appropriate amount of care.

10. CONTINUING REVIEW OF THE WRITING PROGRAM. We recommend that review of the Writing Program be conducted at regular intervals. In particular, a review should be conducted within 5 years to assess the effects of the changes implemented here.

The remaining issues were discussed and are presented here, even though no formal recommendations are made.

11. DEVELOPMENTAL (“REMEDIAL”) WRITING COURSES. We are unable at this point to recommend the formation of developmental/remedial courses specifically for writing instruction. This is an issue with ramifications beyond the Writing Program and should be discussed at a university-wide level.

Rationale: The issue of remedial writing courses drew a wide range of opinions, both positive and negative. On the positive side, several people expressed a desire for courses to assist those students who come to Bucknell with a weak background in writing. On the other hand, other faculty commented that this is what W-courses are designed to accomplish. Concern was expressed that the availability of developmental courses might encourage faculty teaching W-courses to “pass the buck” rather than addressing writing instruction themselves. Also, the question was raised about who would teach developmental/remedial courses. None of the faculty expressed any desire to teach remedial writing courses themselves, and the Writing Center staff is overworked as it is.

12. WITHHOLDING OF W-CREDIT. There were conversations about the possibility of giving instructors of W-courses the option of withholding W-credit even for students who pass the course. Opinions both among faculty and among members of the review committee were divided on this issue. We recommend that this possibility be explored in the future, but we are unable to make a concrete recommendation for or against the idea of separate W-credit at this point.

Rationale: There are strong arguments on both sides of this issue. It is also worth noting that there was correlation (although not a perfect correlation) between the division (mathematics/sciences/engineering/social sciences versus humanities) and the faculty views on this issue.

Humanities instructors were more likely to be opposed to the idea of giving faculty the option to withhold W-credit. Several faculty commented that they did not see how a student could pass a W-course without reasonable writing skills; consequently, the issue should be moot. Strong concern was also raised about the pedagogical message that would be implied by the separation of course credit and W-credit. A fundamental principle of the Writing Program, according to this argument, is the statement that writing itself is an integral part of the acquisition and retention of knowledge. Separating W-credit from course credit sends the opposite message that course material – even in a writing course – can be mastered without significant writing on the part of the student.

Concern was also raised about whether it would be possible for the “W-fail” option to be used in a consistent manner, considering the large number of different professors from different backgrounds who teach W-courses. And summer W-courses would have to be available for those students who lose W-credit needed for graduation.

Mathematics, science, engineering and social science instructors were in general more favorable to the idea of giving faculty the option to withhold W-credit. Faculty in these divisions commented that there are other components in the course that contribute to the final grade, such as exam scores, so a student could fail in his/her writing but still pass the course with good grades in the other components. Some faculty favored the option of withholding W-credit as a means of giving the students additional incentive to work hard on the writing component of the course. According to this argument, if students can get W-credit without taking the writing seriously, then students will be more likely to leave a W-course without having benefited from the writing component. And if an instructor has the option of withholding W-credit for a student with a passing grade, then the student has a strong incentive to take the writing seriously.

Some faculty also commented that they feel that granting W-credit is a statement on the part of the faculty (certification, in essence) that a student is able to write effectively. A few faculty commented that they recall situations (not many) where a student passed their course but where they (the faculty) were uncomfortable granting this “certification.”

If withholding of W-credit were to become an option, several safeguards would have to be implemented: (a) a series of unambiguous warnings – including a mid-term grade – would have to be given to the student to alert him/her to this possibility; and (b) a faculty member would have to take several steps during the semester – including an in-semester referral – before withholding W-credit at the end.

13. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR W-COURSES. There were conversations about the role of departments in the process by which W-courses are approved. Most significantly, there were discussions about how (rare) disputes between the Council and an individual faculty member should be resolved and whether or not departments should be asked to write a letter putting a particular writing course in perspective of the major curriculum.

The first paragraph of Section XI of the legislation states:

The Composition Council will approve courses to be designated ‘W’ according to the criteria developed by the Council. Faculty members, departments, or programs may

propose individual courses for approval. The intention of the Council will be to help all courses meet the criteria. The Council will consult with instructors, departments, and programs as needed to interpret the criteria and to assure that 'W' designations have essentially common meaning across the University. No course may be designated 'W' without approval.

We decided that this language already allows for departmental input into the process. Consequently, there is no need for a change in the language.

Our discussions with the faculty and departments also make it seem prudent to remind the faculty how the approval process works. As stated in the portion of the legislation quoted here, the intention is not for the Composition Council (which is predominately a faculty committee appointed by COI) to turn down proposals but to work with other faculty "to assure that 'W' designations have essentially common meaning across the University." In practice, most W-proposals are approved by the Council without comment. For the remainder, the Writing Program Director contacts the faculty member directly to discuss the course, asking questions to clarify issues that were not clear to the Council from the proposal. Frequently, the responses to the questions are sufficient for approval of the proposal. Occasionally, the Council inquires about whether small changes can be made to the course to satisfy the remaining criteria. In most of these cases, negotiated changes can and are made and the course is approved.

Appendix A: Charge from COI

To: Composition Council

From: Ann Tlusty, chair of Committee on Instruction (COI)

Re: Writing Program Review

COI has reviewed the Composition Council's Semi-annual report of activities, and wishes to thank the Council for their efforts and the comprehensive reports accompanying their recommendations. We are responding at this time to the first of those recommendations, and will consider the remainder of the report at a later date.

In response to the Composition Council's recommendation that a series of discussions with the Faculty about various issues concerning the Writing Program be initiated, COI charges the Council to form a sub-committee made up of faculty for the purpose of assessing faculty opinion of current Writing Program procedures, administration, and criteria, and if deemed necessary, recommending procedural changes to the Program.

Rationale: In view of the fact that the Writing Program and W-course criteria have not been reviewed or assessed by the faculty since 1987, we agree that a conversation to this end is warranted. The current climate suggests that at least some faculty are uncomfortable with current procedures. Changes, however, need to be based on a systematic canvassing of faculty opinion. Such a discussion will also inform the faculty about Writing Program procedures. Because the Writing Program was established as a faculty-owned program, the areas of concern outlined by the Composition Council were raised by the faculty, and the goal of the charge is to initiate discussion among the faculty, management of the assessment process would best be served by a sub-committee consisting of faculty members.

Appendix B: Current Writing Program Legislation

THE BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY WRITING REQUIREMENT AND PROGRAM

**Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837**

BACKGROUND

In May 1981 the Bucknell University faculty provisionally approved a new graduation requirement for writing, to be fulfilled by writing courses in the disciplines. Following two years of experimentally developing and offering such courses, the faculty in May 1983 adopted the requirement and program described below, to go into effect with the freshman class entering in August, 1983.

THE REQUIREMENT

Every candidate for any undergraduate degree must successfully complete three writing courses to be selected from courses designated W1 (one course) and W2 (two courses).

THE PROGRAM

I. Two Aims

Designated writing courses in the University Writing Program have two purposes: to develop expository skills and to teach the use of language as an instrument for thinking. Such courses aim to develop student writers' mastery of language so that they may discover, organize, and communicate their knowledge.

II. Two Types of Courses

Courses intended to fulfill the University writing requirement are of two types: foundation (W1) and practice (W2).

W1 courses are introductory. They have as one of their primary objectives the teaching of fundamental techniques in writing expository prose. These courses are not to be remedial.

W2 courses are distributive. They offer students guided practice in writing in differing fields across the curriculum. They teach the skills necessary to write for the course/discipline.

W1 and W2 courses may be offered in any department.

III. Summary of Criteria for W1 and W2

Purposes	Common Traits	Differentiating Traits	
		W1	W2
To develop expository skills	1. Writing instruction	Recurring, frequent instruction	Instruction as needed
	2. --in writing process	Introduce writing process	Support writing process
	3. --in expository skills	Teach skills	Support skills; teach techniques needed for the course/discipline
	4. Frequent and substantial writing	No Difference	
To teach the use of language as an instrument for thinking	5. Writing to learn, as well as to communicate	Introduce writing as thinking	Use writing to teach concepts in the course/discipline

IV. Specific Criteria for W1

W1 courses will:

1. Include recurring instruction in writing.

Methods of instruction will vary. There is no single model for teaching a W1 course. But whether the instructor is assisted in teaching by student peer editors or by tutors, whether to the whole class, to small groups, to individuals, or in combinations of these methods, the important aim is to reinforce the development of skills by frequent instruction (weekly, if possible).

2. Teach the writing process: planning, composing, revising, editing.

By teaching writing as stages in a process, by presenting strategies for each stage, and by allowing time for reworking, instructors enable students to improve thought and to improve communication.

3. Teach the following expository skills:

- addressing intended audiences
- achieving purposes
- organizing the whole paper, paragraphs and sentences
- choosing appropriate words
- punctuating and spelling correctly

Since the W1 course is the foundation course in composition, it should teach those expository skills that are a) generally recognized elements in higher-level discourse, and b) needed by the majority of students entering Bucknell. Analysis of a writing sample collected from the class of '86, in August 1982, indicated that students entering Bucknell need instruction and practice especially in the first four items on the above list.*

*Results of the writing sample are reported in The 1982 Writing Skills Assessment of Bucknell Freshmen and Its Implication for Writing Across the Curriculum.

4. Require frequent writing from each student. The instructor, who may be assisted by student peer editors or by tutors, should see a substantial amount of this writing.

For mastery, students need to write more than instructors alone can read. However, a substantial amount of writing should receive response to aid revision. The response need not be time-consuming, but it should be prompt and request (weekly, if possible). Response to work-in-progress should occur in addition to evaluation of finished writing for grading.

5. Teach writing to think.

W1 courses include writing assignments that cause students to engage in intellectual work. Types of assignments may include essays, abstracts, journals, question formulation, or short answers to prepared questions, all designed to use language as a resource for inquiry.

V. Specific Criteria for W2

W2 courses will:

1. Provide writing instruction as needed.

Instructors will determine which writing skills or techniques are demanded by writing for the course and will provide instruction in them. Methods of instruction will vary, but appropriate assistance must be provided by instructors, who may be assisted by student peer editors or by tutors.

2. Support the writing process.

W2 courses recognize the benefits of writing in stages to clarify meaning and improve communication. Whenever possible, the schedule of writing assignments will require drafting and re-drafting, will provide response, and will allow time for revision.

3. Teach the techniques of writing needed by students or expected in the discipline.

W2 courses recognize that students enter a course with writing skills on which to build but which may need reinforcement, development or adaptation in a new context. Instructors will teach writing techniques expected in the discipline and will provide review of strategies and methods of research as needed.

4. Require frequent and substantial writing.

W2 courses recognize the need for practice in writing. Students will write often, in multiple assignments or in preparation for one large assignment. Many types of writing (reports, abstracts, summaries, interpretive or argumentative essays, notes, documentation, manuals, fiction, poetry) are appropriate to W2 courses.

5. Use writing to teach subject matter.

W2 courses emphasize that writing enables acquisition and retention of information and ideas. Whenever appropriate, students will be required to put course materials in their own words to explore, internalize and synthesize subject matter in writing. This kind of writing should occur in addition to finished, graded work.

VI. Order of Courses

Students will take one W1 course, for instruction in the first year. They will take two W2 courses, for sustained development throughout the four undergraduate years and for guided practice in differing disciplines, including the major.

W1 courses must be taken in the first year. W2 courses should normally follow W1 courses. A W2 course will count toward the University writing requirement if it follows a W1 (or, in exceptional cases, is concurrent with a W1). At least one W2 course must be taken after the first year. Some majors may require a W2 in the last two years.

VII. Substitutions

Entering students, including those with Advanced Placement English, who wish to substitute a W2 for the W1, must petition the dean of their college to be assessed individually for permission. Such students will take three W2 courses.

VIII. Writing Referral System

A. Entering Student Referral

Entering freshmen who, in the opinion of the deans and faculty, have not clearly demonstrated competence in writing will be directed by the deans to enroll during the first year in tutorials offered by the Writing Center.

B. Mid-term Referral

In order to build on the working relationship between faculty and student as a course progresses, a formal mid-term writing referral system is available for faculty:

By means of a mid-term writing referral, which is submitted simultaneously with mid-term grades, the instructor identifies students who would benefit from consulting writing tutors. Instructors are encouraged to alert students (preferably before mid-term) that they have writing problems. Ideally the instructor provides students with as much diagnostic information about their writing problems as possible, perhaps by means of remarks on their most recent writing assignment.

Instructors may require students who receive mid-term writing referrals to visit the Writing Center regularly to work on writing assignments for the course in which the mid-

term writing referral was received. The instructor will receive the customary note from the Writing Center after each consultation.

Students who receive a writing referral will also receive a letter from the Writing Center encouraging them to consult with their instructors concerning their writing and inviting them to the Writing Center.

C. End-of-Semester Referral

End-of-semester grade reports in all courses will include a box entitled "Writing Deficiency." A check in that box will generate a letter from the deans directing the student to the Writing Center, where staff members will assess the deficiency and help the student choose an option for correcting it. In order for the Writing Center to help students improve their writing, faculty should explain why the writing referral was given and, where possible, submit a sample of the student's written work that illustrates the deficiency. A form for this explanation will be distributed to the faculty with the final grade reports and should be returned to the deans when grade reports are submitted. The deans will forward a copy of this explanation to the student and to the Writing Center.

Students receiving an end-of-semester writing referral must confer with the Writing Center before the end of the first month of the succeeding semester and select an option for correcting the deficiency at that time. The Writing Center will inform the appropriate faculty member of the action taken to address the reported deficiency. Second semester seniors are not affected by the receipt of writing referrals.

IX. Writing Course Distribution

It is expected that courses designated W1 and W2 will be widely distributed across the curriculum. Faculty advisers will therefore encourage their advisees to take W courses in a variety of disciplines.

All departments will share in offering W courses. The Academic Council will assure sufficient numbers and types of courses.

X. Administration of the Writing Program

The Composition Council will determine policy for the Writing Program and will coordinate its activities. The Council will have seven members who will be appointed by the Committee on Instruction. Two of these members will come from the Department of English*, one from the College of Engineering, and one from the Library. The other three will be chosen from three different divisions in order to gain the widest University participation. In addition to these seven members, the Council will have as a permanent voting member the Director of the Writing Program, who will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the Academic Deans, the Department of English, and the Composition Council. The Director will be attached to the Vice President's office. The Council of Deans will appoint a non-voting consultant to the Composition Council. The Composition Council will be a sub-committee of the Committee on Instruction. Terms of the seven non-permanent members will be for three years. The Council will elect its own chairperson.

(* The number of representatives from English was changed from two to one by former VPAA Dan Little.)

The functions and duties of the Composition Council will include:

1. approving plans for assessing the writing of entering students;
2. approving plans for evaluating the writing of graduating students;
3. maintaining criteria for designating courses as W1 or W2;
4. assisting the various departments and faculty members with the design of their writing courses;
5. reporting annually to the Committee on Instruction on the operation of the Writing Program and proposing, for faculty action, any changes in the Writing Program that it wishes to recommend.

The Director of the Writing Program, as a member of the Composition Council, will share in the duties enumerated above, and in addition will:

1. implement the policies determined by the Composition Council;
2. administer the Writing Center;
3. consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses;
4. administer the Writing Program budget.

The Composition Council charges the Writing Center with the following:

1. from time to time, to assess the writing abilities of entering classes;
2. to provide individual assistance, remedial tutorials, and workshops for students;
3. on request, to hold seminars and workshops for faculty and teaching assistants in the teaching of expository prose;
4. from time to time, to evaluate the writing of graduating students as a check on the effectiveness of the entire program;
5. to consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses.

XI. Identification of W Courses

The Composition Council will approve courses to be designated 'W' according to the criteria developed by the Council. Faculty members, departments, or programs may propose individual courses for approval. The intention of the Council will be to help all courses meet the criteria. The Council will consult with instructors, departments, and programs as needed to interpret the criteria and to assure that 'W' designations have essentially common meaning across the University. No course may be designated 'W' without approval.

The Council will approve new 'W' courses. Regularly offered 'W' courses will be re-announced each year, and reviewed by the Council every three years to assure the integrity of the Writing Program.

XII. Review of the Program.

The Committee on Instruction fully reviewed the writing program and reported to the University faculty in 1987.

Appendix C: Additional Rationale for Lower W-Course Caps

Any recommendation for lowering of caps for any courses at a university will naturally be met with concerns about the practical difficulties involved in such a change. However, we feel that it is absolutely essential that there be a clear statement of policy about the desirability of limiting enrollment in W-courses. There are practical difficulties involved in having low caps on Foundation Seminars and on Capstone classes; there are practical difficulties involved in having low caps on creative writing courses and on sections for foreign-language courses and on sections for different laboratory courses, etc. All of these caps were instituted, however – despite the practical difficulties involved – because of important pedagogical reasons. Similarly, very significant pedagogical reasons exist for our recommendation about writing course enrollments and teaching credit.

The main difference with writing courses is that there is not currently a low cap on enrollment, whereas these other caps are already in existence. But this is a historical accident. Low caps (and additional teaching credit for courses with necessarily-large enrollment) *should* have been instituted from Day 1 of the Writing Program; had that been the case, then we would not require this debate now and writing courses would naturally be assumed to be small, just as Foundation seminars and Capstone courses are now naturally assumed to be small.¹ Our recommendation is needed to correct this oversight and to put the issue of writing course sizes “at the same table” as that for other small-enrollment courses for any future discussions of course sizes.

In our view, it is essential that we make a statement about the necessity of limiting W-course enrollments. There are several reasons for this view:

1. **Important statement of principle.** There are very strong opinions among faculty on this issue. We have just completed a 2-year review of faculty opinion about the Writing Program. Several faculty (including the entire English Department) expressed quite forcefully their view that course sizes are the single most important issue facing the Writing Program at Bucknell. Several faculty have commented (very passionately) that the university simply cannot expect good results overall from the Writing Program without limiting the class sizes and/or granting additional teaching credit for individual faculty who teach courses that must have large enrollments.

A statement about enrollment and teaching credit for W-courses would say a great deal about the University’s commitment to the Writing Program. By contrast, there is a view held among quite a few people at Bucknell that a refusal even to try to limit W-course enrollments would send a message that the university *doesn’t* adequately value writing courses or the faculty that teach them. Some have gone so far as to say that without adequate restraints on the course sizes, the Writing requirement itself is only a “pretend” requirement, something for the students to check off without having

¹ Imagine for a moment that Foundation seminars currently had 24 students each, and a committee made a recommendation that *those* caps be lowered to 15. It is likely that that recommendation would be met with resistance: “It is a good idea in theory, but it is practically unfeasible. We don’t have the faculty to teach Foundation seminars with 15 students and would have to ask staff members to fill in. It would be prohibitively expensive from a staffing perspective. It would lead to feelings among the English department that they are being abused since they teach W1 courses for first-year students with 24 students. . . .” All of these concerns would be (and *are*) valid, and yet the pedagogical importance of small Foundation seminars cannot be denied.

any real meaning.

The writing requirement is the *only* university-wide requirement; furthermore, writing ability is always stated as the single most-valued skill listed by employers. Foundation seminars and Capstone classes are capped at 15 students each – clearly the university establishes low caps for courses that are considered of fundamental importance. The committee that conducted the review feels strongly that enrollment in and teaching credit for W-courses should be considered on an equal footing with these and other caps.

2. **Writing pedagogy.** The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has studied the issue of enrollments in writing-intensive courses and has released the following position statement:

“The improvement of an individual student’s writing requires persistent and frequent contact between teacher and student both inside and outside the classroom. It requires assigning far more papers than are usually assigned in other college classrooms; it requires reading them and commenting on them not simply to justify a grade, but to offer guidance and suggestions for improvement; and it requires spending a great deal of time with individual students, helping them not just to improve particular papers but to understand fundamental principles of effective writing that will enable them to continue learning throughout their lives. The teaching of writing, perhaps more than any other discipline, therefore requires special attention to class sizes, teaching loads, the availability of teaching materials, and the development of additional resources that enhance classroom instruction.”

<http://www.ncte.org/groups/cccc/positions/107680.htm>

”No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.”

<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/level/coll/107626.htm?source=gs>

3. **Comparisons with peer institutions.** An on-line site lists caps for writing courses at several other institutions. The URL is <http://comppile.tamucc.edu/classsize.htm>. Looking through this list makes it clear that schools with which we would like to compare ourselves have significantly lower caps on their first-year writing courses. For instance, Beloit caps at 16 students, Brandeis at 17, Cornell at 17, Dickinson at 16, Duke at 12, Harvard at 15, Haverford at 15, Johns Hopkins at 15, NYU at 15, Princeton at 12, Stanford at 15, Wellesley at 15, etc.
4. **Concern about future “sliding.”** Our committee is concerned that if a clear statement isn’t made at this stage, the possibility (and, in fact, likelihood) exists that course sizes and/or teaching credit for W-courses will get worse. This is particularly relevant now in light of the move to a 5-course teaching load. In fact, we have

already heard rumors that the Engineering College's laudatory approach of granting extra teaching credit for heavily-enrolled W-courses is already in danger from the 5-course plan.

5. **Increasing faculty participation in the Writing Program.** Several faculty have commented to us that they have been hesitant to offer W1 or W2 courses out of fear of the additional workload that that would entail. This recommendation, if implemented, would almost certainly increase the number of faculty (from a wide range of departments) who would offer W courses. As one faculty member put it: "If I knew that I could limit enrollment to 20 students, then I'd probably make one of my courses a W2 course."

Ultimately, there are both curricular (principled) arguments and pragmatic arguments when discussing caps and teaching credit. From a pedagogical perspective, the recommendation is clearly appropriate. The objections that we have heard against the recommendation are pragmatic and ultimately financial in nature. For instance, concerns about curricular issues requiring some W-courses to be heavily enrolled can be mitigated by granting additional teaching credit to faculty who teach W-courses that must have large enrollments. Additional teaching credit of this nature would also alleviate concerns about faculty who might feel abused teaching these larger courses. (It should also be noted that there are many faculty who feel abused *now* teaching writing courses with large enrollments without any additional teaching credit, so this isn't a new problem that would be created by implementation of the recommendation.)

Ultimately, then, the most significant objection is financial. From that perspective, this is the ideal time to make a statement of principle in favor of limiting W-course enrollment considering that we are currently engaged in a Strategic Planning process which will be followed by a major capital campaign. The review committee does not expect that this recommendation will result in an immediate change in the W-courses. It is hoped, however, that this will raise this issue as one worthy of additional discussion during the development of tactics to support the strategic plan.

Proposed Plan for Assessing Student Writing at Bucknell

March, 2006

Tom Solomon, Physics/Astronomy (Chair, Composition Council and Writing Program Director)
Peg Cronin, Writing and Teaching Consultant
Paula Davis-Larson, Theater and Dance
George Exner, Mathematics
Loren Gustafson, Writing Consultant
Lynn Hoffman, Education
Sabrina Kirby, Writing and Teaching Consultant
Erin Jablonski, Chemical Engineering
Karen Marosi, Associate Dean of Engineering
Robert Midkiff, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences
Deirdre O'Connor, Co-director, Writing Center; Writing and Teaching Consultant
Meenakshi Ponnuswami, English
Mary Wyeth, Writing and Teaching Consultant
Judy Zebrowski, ISR

I. Introduction

The Writing Program legislation passed by the Faculty in 1983 includes language charging the Composition Council with “approving plans for assessing the writing of entering students” and with “approving plans for evaluating the writing of graduating students.”¹ To date, no such plan has been adopted, despite the language in the legislation and despite increasing pressure from external accreditation agencies; i.e., Middle States and ABET.

In April, 2004, Committee on Instruction (COI) sent the Composition Council the following charge: “COI charges the Composition Council, or a separate and overlapping sub-committee convened by the Council, with determining if it is possible and desirable to engage in a formal process by which improvement in student writing at Bucknell can be assessed.” The Council discussed this issue extensively throughout the past two academic years, consulting with Bucknell faculty and investigating outside sources of information on writing assessment.

Bucknell faculty overall are aware that external agencies (Middle States and ABET) are requiring that we implement writing assessment, and most faculty expressed a somewhat resigned acceptance that some form of writing assessment is inevitable. But there are important pedagogical reasons for assessment as well. In the concurrent review that was done on faculty opinion about the Writing Program, there was a wide range of views expressed about the ability of Bucknell students to write effectively and about the effectiveness of the Writing Program. Whereas many faculty believe the Writing Program to be effective, that view is not shared by all faculty members; for example, one department reports: “Even as we try to achieve the writing goals, many [faculty in the department] still find seniors in classes who cannot compose a simple paragraph. Perhaps the basic structure is flawed.”

Comments like this, along with the mandate from Middle States and ABET, stress the importance of having *some* campus-wide mechanism for assessing student writing. Despite the limitations inherent in any kind of writing assessment, to satisfy both internal and external constituencies, the Composition Council has concluded that an assessment plan *should* be developed. The plan presented below should be viewed as a first stage of a plan that will undoubtedly need revisions and fine-tuning with experience. The plan will be implemented in stages, first as a pilot program using sampling until any bugs in the approach are worked out. Depending on the success (or lack thereof) of the pilot program, the assessment plan will then be broadened to cover all of the writing courses.

II. Rationale and Concerns

Ideally, assessment should address *both* the question about whether graduating students have achieved proficiency in writing *and* whether or not the Writing Program at Bucknell is helping the students achieve this proficiency.

¹ In the concurrent review of the Writing Program, a recommendation is made to change the language to replace these two charges with the single charge that the Composition Council approve “plans for assessing student writing.”

The following criteria were considered essential for any assessment plan for the Writing Program:

- the plan must not be overly burdensome on faculty and staff;
- the assessment should be tailored specifically to address the goals of the Writing Program at Bucknell;
- because of the disciplinary nature of writing and because of the variety of different types of writing, assessment of writing must be considered in the context of an assigned task;
- a mechanism needs to be incorporated to allow continued analysis and discussion of the results of the assessment, with possibilities for changes in the Program based on these results; and
- the assessment plan must be sufficient to satisfy Middle States and ABET, both of which have stated very clear expectations for assessment in recent accreditations.

The Composition Council considered but ultimately rejected a few different approaches to assessment. First, timed writing prompts (e.g., for entering and graduating students) were rejected by the Council for the following reasons: (a) they typically limit the ability of the writer to follow a process of revision, one of the cornerstones of Bucknell's Writing Program; (b) they would require significant additional time on the part of some faculty or staff beyond time already spent teaching classes; and (c) there was strong sentiment expressed against such a form of assessment in the results of the faculty survey from the Fall of 2004.

The use of writing portfolios was also considered. In ideal circumstances, portfolios can be very informative; in fact, a few departments currently use portfolios for assessment purposes. However, the use of portfolios for university-wide assessment of writing was ultimately rejected for several reasons. First, someone has to look at the portfolios as part of the assessment. We concluded that the amount of additional time required to do this would be prohibitive. Second, collection and organization of thousands of portfolios could pose a logistical nightmare. Third, adequate assessment of the writing samples would have to be done by faculty with familiarity with the subject matter and with the objective of the samples. This is more easily done in class by the professor who assigned the writing in the first place.

Any assessment plan must be weighed against the following questions that were raised by the faculty in our concurrent Writing Program Review and by the Committee on Instruction:

- **Faculty time.** How can meaningful assessment data be obtained without adding significantly to the faculty work-load, especially for W-1 and W-2 courses?
- **Inter-rater variability.** How can we make meaningful comparisons between data collected by different professors in different courses and disciplines?

- **Discipline-specific variability in writing.** How will a university-wide assessment plan account for different discipline-specific types of writing?
- **Faculty anonymity.** How can we guarantee that writing assessment results will not be used to reward and/or punish faculty teaching writing-intensive courses?
- **Student confidentiality.** How can we guarantee that writing assessment results will not in any way be attached or associated with the students whose writing is the basis for the assessment?

The Composition Council consulted various sources for guidance on writing assessment, including a position statement (see Appendix) co-written by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). We reviewed writing assessment plans conducted at several other universities, and reviewed the Pennsylvania Department of Education assessment rubrics for writing. We also consulted the Committee on Assessment and Lois Huffines, who (as a former Writing Program Director) had researched the subject of writing assessment extensively.

A proposed assessment plan follows.

III. Learning Goals and Learning Objectives

A set of learning goals and objectives must be the foundation for an assessment plan. The Composition Council wrote the following goals and objectives, based on the wording found in the 1983 legislation that the Faculty passed authorizing the Writing Program at Bucknell. Consistent with the definitions typically used in assessment, a learning goal is an overarching ideal while a learning objective is an assessable outcome that relates to one or more of the goals.

Learning Goals

1. Students will develop expository skills.
2. Students will use writing as an instrument for thinking.

Learning Objectives

For Learning Goal #1 (“Develop expository skills.”)

1. Students address intended audience
2. Students achieve assigned purpose for writing
3. Students structure sentences and paragraphs into a cohesive whole.
4. Students use language appropriate to the task.

5. Students punctuate and spell correctly.

For Learning Goal #2 (“Use writing as an instrument for thinking”)

1. Students rework the paper through the writing process of planning, composing, revising and editing.
2. Students employ writing strategies that foster critical and/or creative thinking. Such strategies may include free writing, journaling, mapping, note-taking, outlining, paraphrasing, summarizing, using field notes, using lab notebooks, and/or other techniques for thinking on the page.

IV. Assessing Learning Goal #1 (“Expository Skills”)

The objectives listed under “Learning Goal #1” (developing expository skills) will be assessed within the W1 and W2 courses. Specifically, faculty teaching those courses will take one writing assignment that they are *already using* and use this assignment for the assessment. For the W1 courses, the writing assignment used should be as close to the beginning of the semester as is possible in order to get a “base-line” (pre-instruction) assessment of writing for incoming students. For the W2 courses, the assignment used should be near the end of the semester, and the results will be sorted according to the students’ time at Bucknell (i.e., first-year, sophomore, junior, senior).

To minimize the additional time required of instructors teaching W-courses and to standardize the assessment as much as is possible, a rubric will be developed (in consultation with the English Department and others as appropriate) that will enable the instructor to complete the assessment. An approach similar to that used with teaching evaluations will be employed: there will be a list of questions to be used in all writing classes, along with optional questions that can be chosen depending on the discipline. To account for disciplinary differences in writing, departments will have the option of replacing the standard rubric with one that they feel is more appropriate for their discipline. Requests to use an alternate rubric should be sent to the Composition Council.

To minimize inter-rater variability, the Composition Council will write a set of guidelines explaining how different scores on the rubric should be assigned. The intention is for faculty to use the same criteria for all courses, regardless of whether they are W1 or W2 courses. In other words, for assessment purposes, entering students need to be judged by the same standards as graduating seniors. Obviously, this will not eliminate inter-rater variability; however, at the very least this approach will tell us what fraction of students in W-classes write sufficiently well according to their own instructors.

The Composition Council and the Writing Program Director will work with ISR and ITEC to develop an on-line data entry form and analysis program. The goals of this web-based system will be: (a) to make it easy for faculty to enter assessment data; (b) to enable sorting and analysis of the data at a later time; and (c) to enable analysis of the data while retaining confidentiality. The names of the professor teaching the course and of the students being

assessed will not be attached to any of the final data; however, some identifying information (e.g., ID number) may be used in the early stages of analysis to enable “longitudinal” analysis; i.e., to track how individual students do or do not improve their writing while at Bucknell. Any identifying information will be removed from the records after the longitudinal analysis is done; no names or ID numbers will be attached to any data that is viewed by anyone during the analysis.

A member of the staff/administration – most likely someone in the registrar’s office – will be designated as the person responsible for keeping the raw data and ensuring confidentiality. Guidance about how to collect and analyze the data will be requested from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB will also review the detailed approach to ensure confidentiality. Finally, before any assessment is implemented, the Composition Council will report to COI for approval of the approach being used and to assure confidentiality.

After an instructor finishes grading the papers (for the particular assignment to be used for assessment) according to his/her own criteria, he/she will fill out the rubric which asks him/her to rate the students’ writing ability on a 5-point scale for each of the objectives for Learning Goal #1. The instructor will enter the results from this rubric into the on-line form discussed above. (Departments who opt to replace the standard rubric with their own will need a different mechanism for entering results.)

It is expected that this approach will add 1-3 hours of time total per W-course per semester on the part of instructors of W-courses.

V. Assessing Learning Goal #2 (“Using Writing as an Instrument of Thinking”)

The objectives listed under “Learning Goal #2” (using writing as an instrument of thinking) will be assessed using questions that will be added to surveys taken by incoming first-year students and by exiting seniors. Focus groups (facilitated by the Office of Institutional Research) will also be used to assess the objectives of Learning Goal #2. Different focus groups will be assembled, some comprised of students randomly-selected from W1 courses, some comprised of W2 students, some comprised of first-year students, and some comprised of seniors.

This form of assessment will help us to learn the methods that students consider important when writing, and to compare their approach when arriving at Bucknell to their approach when they graduate.

VI. Assessing Writing Courses at Bucknell

Writing courses will be assessed using modified versions of the evaluation forms that faculty teaching and students taking W1 and W2 courses fill out at the end of each W-course. These forms will be revised significantly by the Composition Council. Specifically, the forms will be reduced; the Council will choose 4 or 5 questions of particular interest for the evaluation forms.

Once again, to protect the faculty member, no specific information will be included about either the instructor or the course itself, other than the level of the course (i.e., W1 or W2). These

forms will then be used by the Composition Council to see if the W1 and W2 courses are achieving their stated purposes.

VII. Administration of Writing Assessment

The Composition Council will be the body charged with administering writing assessment, analyzing the results, and making any recommendations based on these results. Specifically, the Council will:

- (a) report its findings and conclusions to the Committee on Instruction and to the Committee on Assessment;
- (b) recommend to COI changes in the Writing Program in response to the writing assessment results;
- (c) recommend changes in the assessment plan itself, based on the success (or lack thereof) of the plan.

Writing assessment is an iterative process. We expect that the feedback received from the first few years of assessment will indicate strengths and weaknesses of the approach. Future Composition Councils will use this feedback to recommend changes not only in the Program but also in the assessment method itself. An iterative approach to assessment such as this is also mandated by Middle States and ABET.

Appendix: NCTE/CCCC Position Statement about Writing Assessment



Writing Assessment: A Position Statement

(<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/write/107610.htm>)



Writing Assessment: A Position Statement

Prepared by the Conference on College Composition and Communication

March 1995

Background

In 1993, the CCCC Executive Committee charged the CCCC Committee on Assessment with developing an official position statement on assessment. Prior to that time, members of CCCC had expressed keen interest in having a document available that would help them explain writing assessment to colleagues and administrators and secure the best assessment options for students.

Beginning in 1990 at NCTE in Atlanta, Georgia, open forums were held at both NCTE and CCCC conventions to discuss the possibility of a position statement: its nature, forms, and the philosophies and practices it might espouse. At these forums, at regular meetings, and through correspondence, over one hundred people helped develop the current document.

An initial draft of the statement was submitted to the CCCC Executive Committee at its March 1994 meeting, where it was approved in substance. The Executive Committee also reviewed a revised statement at its November 1994 meeting. An announcement in the February 1995 issue of *College Composition and Communication* invited all CCCC members to obtain a draft of the statement and to submit their responses to the Assessment Committee. Copies of the draft statement were mailed to all 1995 CCCC convention preregistrants, and the final draft was presented in a forum at the 1995 CCCC Convention in Washington, DC. Changes based on discussions at that session, and at a later workshop, were incorporated into the position statement, which was subsequently approved for publication by the CCCC Executive Committee.

Introduction

More than many issues within the field of composition studies, writing assessment evokes strong passions. It can be used for a variety of appropriate purposes, both inside the classroom and outside: providing assistance to students; awarding a grade; placing students in appropriate courses; allowing them to exit a course or sequence of courses; and certifying proficiency, to name some of the more obvious. But writing assessment can be abused as well: used to exploit

graduate students, for instance, or to reward or punish faculty members. We begin our position statement, therefore, with a foundational claim upon which all else is built: it is axiomatic that in all situations calling for writing assessment in both two-year and four-year institutions, the primary purpose of the specific assessment should govern its design, its implementation, and the generation and dissemination of its results.

It is also axiomatic that in spite of the diverse uses to which writing assessment is put, the general principles undergirding writing assessment are similar:

Assessments of written literacy should be designed and evaluated by well-informed current or future teachers of the students being assessed, for purposes clearly understood by all the participants; should elicit from student writers a variety of pieces, preferably over a period of time; should encourage and reinforce good teaching practices; and should be solidly grounded in the latest research on language learning.

These assumptions are explained fully in the first section below; after that, we list the rights and responsibilities generated by these assumptions; and in the third section we provide selected references that furnish a point of departure for literature in the discipline.

Assumptions

All writing assessments--and thus all policy statements about writing assessment--make assumptions about the nature of what is being assessed. Our assumptions include the following.

FIRST, language is always learned and used most effectively in environments where it accomplishes something the user wants to accomplish for particular listeners or readers within that environment. The assessment of written literacy must strive to set up writing tasks, therefore, that identify purposes appropriate to and appealing to the particular students being tested. Additionally, assessment must be contextualized in terms of why, where, and for what purpose it is being undertaken; this context must also be clear to the students being assessed and to all others (i.e., stakeholders/participants) involved.

Accordingly, there is no test which can be used in all environments for all purposes, and the best "test" for any group of students may well be locally designed. The definition of "local" is also contextual; schools with common goals and similar student populations and teaching philosophies and outcomes might well form consortia for the design, implementation, and evaluation of assessment instruments even though the schools themselves are geographically separated from each other.

SECOND, language by definition is social. Assessment which isolates students and forbids discussion and feedback from others conflicts with current cognitive and psychological research about language use and the benefits of social interaction during the writing process; it also is out of step with much classroom practice.

THIRD, reading--and thus, evaluation, since it is a variety of reading--is as socially contextualized as all other forms of language use. What any reader draws out of a particular text and uses as a basis of evaluation is dependent upon how that reader's own language use has been shaped and what his or her specific purpose for reading is. It seems appropriate, therefore, to recognize the individual writing program, institution, consortium, and so forth as a community of interpreters who can function fairly--that is, assess fairly--with knowledge of that community.

FOURTH, any individual's writing "ability" is a sum of a variety of skills employed in a diversity of contexts, and individual ability fluctuates unevenly among these varieties. Consequently, one piece of writing--even if it is generated under the most desirable conditions--can never serve as an indicator of overall literacy, particularly for high stakes decisions. Ideally, such literacy must be assessed by more than one piece of writing, in more than one genre, written on different occasions, for different audiences, and evaluated by multiple readers. This realization has led many

institutions and programs across the country to use portfolio assessment.

FIFTH, writing assessment is useful primarily as a means of improving learning. Both teachers and students must have access to the results in order to be able to use them to revise existing curricula and/or plan programs for individual students. And, obviously, if results are to be used to improve the teaching-learning environment, human and financial resources for the implementation of improvements must be in place in advance of the assessment. If resources are not available, institutions should postpone these types of assessment until they are. Furthermore, when assessment is being conducted solely for program evaluation, all students should not be tested, since a representative group can provide the desired results. Neither should faculty merit increases hinge on their students' performance on any test.

SIXTH, assessment tends to drive pedagogy. Assessment thus must demonstrate "systemic validity": it must encourage classroom practices that harmonize with what practice and research have demonstrated to be effective ways of teaching writing and of becoming a writer. What is easiest to measure--often by means of a multiple choice test--may correspond least to good writing, and that in part is an important point: choosing a correct response from a set of possible answers is not composing. As important, just because students are asked to write does not mean that the "assessment instrument" is a "good" one. Essay tests that ask students to form and articulate opinions about some important issue, for instance, without time to reflect, to talk to others, to read on the subject, to revise and so forth--that is, without taking into account through either appropriate classroom practice or the assessment process itself--encourage distorted notions of what writing is. They also encourage poor teaching and little learning. Even teachers who recognize and employ the methods used by real writers in working with students can find their best efforts undercut by assessments such as these.

SEVENTH, standardized tests, usually developed by large testing organizations, tend to be for accountability purposes, and when used to make statements about student learning, misrepresent disproportionately the skills and abilities of students of color. This imbalance tends to decrease when tests are directly related to specific contexts and purposes, in contrast to tests that purport to differentiate between "good" and "bad" writing in a general sense. Furthermore, standardized tests tend to focus on readily accessed features of the language--on grammatical correctness and stylistic choice--and on error, on what is wrong rather than on the appropriate rhetorical choices that have been made. Consequently, the outcome of such assessments is negative: students are said to demonstrate what they do "wrong" with language rather than what they do well.

EIGHTH, the means used to test students' writing ability shapes what they, too, consider writing to be. If students are asked to produce "good" writing within a given period of time, they often conclude that all good writing is generated within those constraints. If students are asked to select--in a multiple choice format--the best grammatical and stylistic choices, they will conclude that good writing is "correct" writing. They will see writing erroneously, as the avoidance of error; they will think that grammar and style exist apart from overall purpose and discourse design.

NINTH, financial resources available for designing and implementing assessment instruments should be used for that purpose and not to pay for assessment instruments outside the context within which they are used. Large amounts of money are currently spent on assessments that have little pedagogical value for students or teachers. However, money spent to compensate teachers for involvement in assessment is also money spent on faculty development and curriculum reform since inevitably both occur when teachers begin to discuss assessment which relates directly to their classrooms and to their students.

TENTH, and finally, there is a large and growing body of research on language learning, language use, and language assessment that must be used to improve assessment on a systematic and regular basis. Our assumptions are based on this scholarship. Anyone charged with the responsibility of designing an assessment program must be cognizant of this body of research and must stay abreast of developments in the field. Thus, assessment programs must always be under review and subject to change by well-informed faculty, administrators, and legislators.

Students should:

1. demonstrate their accomplishment and/or development in writing by means of composing, preferably in more than one sample written on more than one occasion, with sufficient time to plan, draft, rewrite, and edit each product or performance;
2. write on prompts developed from the curriculum and grounded in "real-world" practice;
3. be informed about the purposes of the assessment they are writing for, the ways the results will be used, and avenues of appeal;
4. have their writing evaluated by more than one reader, particularly in "high stakes" situations (e.g., involving major institutional consequences such as getting credit for a course, moving from one context to another, or graduating from college); and
5. receive response, from readers, intended to help them improve as writers attempting to reach multiple kinds of audiences.

Faculty should:

1. play key roles in the design of writing assessments, including creating writing tasks and scoring guides, for which they should receive support in honoraria and/or release time; and should appreciate and be responsive to the idea that assessment tasks and procedures must be sensitive to cultural, racial, class, and gender differences, and to disabilities, and must be valid for and not penalize any group of students;
2. participate in the readings and evaluations of student work, supported by honoraria and/or release time;
3. assure that assessment measures and supports what is taught in the classroom;
4. make themselves aware of the difficulty of constructing fair and motivating prompts for writing, the need for field testing and revising of prompts, the range of appropriate and inappropriate uses of various kinds of writing assessments, and the norming, reliability, and validity standards employed by internal and external test-makers, as well as share their understanding of these issues with administrators and legislators;
5. help students to prepare for writing assessments and to interpret assessment results in ways that are meaningful to students;
6. use results from writing assessments to review and (when necessary) to revise curriculum;
7. encourage policymakers to take a more qualitative view toward assessment, encouraging the use of multiple measures, infrequent large-scale assessment, and large-scale assessment by sampling of a population rather than by individual work whenever appropriate; and
8. continue conducting research on writing assessment, particularly as it is used to help students learn and to understand what they have achieved.

Administrators and Higher Education Governing Boards should:

1. educate themselves and consult with rhetoricians and composition specialists teaching at their own institutions, about the most recent research on teaching and assessing writing and how they relate to their particular environment and to already established programs and procedures, understanding that generally student learning is best demonstrated by performances assessed over time and sponsored by all faculty members, not just

those in English;

2. announce to stakeholders the purposes of all assessments, the results to be obtained, and the ways that results will be used;
3. assure that the assessments serve the needs of students, not just the needs of an institution, and that resources for necessary courses linked to the assessments are therefore available before the assessments are mandated;
4. assure opportunities for teachers to come together to discuss all aspects of assessments: the design of the instruments; the standards to be employed; the interpretation of the results; possible changes in curriculum suggested by the process and results;
5. assure that all decisions are made by more than one reader; and
6. not use any assessment results as the primary basis for evaluating the performance of or rewards due a teacher; they should recognize that student learning is influenced by many factors such as cognitive development, personality type, personal motivation, physical and psychological health, emotional upheavals, socioeconomic background, family successes and difficulties which are neither taught in the classroom nor appropriately measured by writing assessment.

Legislators should:

1. not mandate a specific instrument (test) for use in any assessment; although they may choose to answer their responsibility to the public by mandating assessment in general or at specific points in student careers, they should allow professional educators to choose the types and ranges of assessments that reflect the educational goals of their curricula and the nature of the student populations they serve;
2. understand that mandating assessments also means providing funding to underwrite those assessments, including resources to assist students and to bring teachers together to design and implement assessments, to review curriculum, and to amend the assessment and/or curriculum when necessary;
3. become knowledgeable about writing assessment issues, particularly by consulting with rhetoricians and composition specialists engaged in teaching, on the most recent research on the teaching of writing and assessment;
4. understand that different purposes require different assessments and that qualitative forms of assessment can be more powerful and meaningful for some purposes than quantitative measures are, and that assessment is a means to help students learn better, not a way of unfairly comparing student populations, teachers, or schools;
5. include teachers in the drafting of legislation concerning assessments; and
6. recognize that legislation needs to be reviewed continually for possible improvement in light of actual results and ongoing developments in writing assessment theory and research.

Assessment of Writing

Assessment of writing is a legitimate undertaking. But by its very nature it is a complex task, involving two competing tendencies: first, the impulse to measure writing as a general construct; and second, the impulse to measure writing as a contextualized, site- and genre-specific ability. There are times when re-creating or simulating a context (as in the case of assessment for placement, for instance) is limited. Even in this case, however, assessment--when conducted sensitively and purposefully--can have a positive impact on teaching, learning, curricular design, and student attitudes.

Writing assessment can serve to inform both the individual and the public about the achievements of students and the effectiveness of teaching. On the other hand, poorly designed assessments, and poorly implemented assessments, can be enormously harmful because of the power of language: personally, for our students as human beings; and academically, for our students as learners, since learning is mediated through language.

Students who take pleasure and pride in using written language effectively are increasingly valuable in a world in which communication across space and a variety of cultures has become routine.

Writing assessment that alienates students from writing is counterproductive, and writing assessment that fails to take an accurate and valid measure of their writing even more so. But writing assessment that encourages students to improve their facility with the written word, to appreciate their power with that word and the responsibilities that accompany such power, and that salutes students' achievements as well as guides them, should serve as a crucially important educational force.

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Related Information:

There is no related information at this time.



*A Professional Association
of Educators in English Studies,
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