



# THE WORD ON WAC

## NEWSLETTER OF THE WAC PROGRAM AT YORK

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Reflections on WAC: its past, present & future
- WAC Support & Resources



### WAC AT YORK: A REFLECTION

**The CUNY Writing Fellows Program** was established at CUNY in 1999 following a Board of Trustees Resolution that acknowledged the importance of writing in university education and advocated for its integration across the curriculum. Since its approval by the York College Senate in May 2001, the York College Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program has aimed at supporting student writing at York. In order to achieve this objective, Writing Fellows at York collaborated with faculty, staff, and students in ever-evolving roles.

Throughout its history, the WAC Fellowship has undergone numerous changes, both in its structure and in its implementation locally at York. In its current manifestation in Spring 2024, the Fellowship exists as a compulsory component of the Graduate Center student's curriculum. Currently, the Graduate Center seems to be reassessing the role, structure, and implementation of the WAC Fellowship once again. As the WAC Fellowship adapts to changing needs, it remains a vital force in nurturing effective communication skills among CUNY students.

#### *The Ever-Evolving Roles of Writing Fellows at York*

- **Individual Tutoring:** Writing Fellows engage in one-on-one tutoring sessions with students, providing personalized guidance to enhance their writing skills at the [Collaborative Learning Center](#).
- **Resource Development and Consultation:** They also consult with faculty on WI materials, collaborate with instructors to develop supplementary materials related to writing, including faculty resources, student guides, and tutoring materials available on the [WAC website](#).
- **Promotion of WAC Pedagogy:** Previous Writing Fellows at York have curated materials related to WAC principles and pedagogy at the [CUNY Commons WAC Resource](#) site that current and future Writing Fellows maintain.

Therefore, in this issue, our current cohort of Writing Fellows will be sharing their reflections on the connections between WAC pedagogy, the current realities of the WAC Fellowship, and the potential upcoming changes.

## PERSPECTIVE: WAC FELLOWSHIPS & INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

BY ALEX VITERI

Over the years, I've been fortunate to receive support from York's Writing Across the Curriculum fellowship, which has enabled me to focus on writing my dissertation while enhancing my teaching philosophy.

**My time at the CLC** has allowed me to interact with students from diverse academic backgrounds and disciplines and to learn from their concerns, questions, and perspectives. I've listened to their academic inquiries, as well as their thoughts on important social and global issues. Hearing the topics they are most passionate about and eager to explore is inspiring and revealing. In my dissertation, I delve into dance practices that attune to planetary processes and nurture relationality over possession. My research explores how we might imagine and enact more harmonious and sustainable futures through dance's multi-sensory, improvisatory, and choreographic structures. I also delve into the idea that mountains, plants, roots, and other living organisms actively create and compose a dance's meaning. For the writing of my final chapter, I've joined Jennifer Monson, an American dancer and choreographer, on the

project *Move Thing* emerging at *Los Jardines* Institute (The Gardens Institute). *Los Jardines* honors land-based and grassroots ways of knowing and is at the forefront of environmental and economic justice based in Albuquerque's South Valley, part of Tiwa People's homeland.

*"Los Jardines honors land-based and grassroots ways of knowing and is at the forefront of environmental and economic justice based in Albuquerque's South Valley, part of Tiwa People's homeland."*



In partnership, *Move Thing* delves into how dance can contribute to reparative projects in communities affected by toxic contamination from resource extraction (uranium and coal mining) and industrial effluents (chemicals, particulates, carbon monoxide, and heavy metals).

## WAC-Y MYSTERIES: A WAC FELLOW'S PERSPECTIVE

BY ANDREW FAN

“What’s WAC?” This question is one of the inevitable responses from people whenever WAC or WAC-at-Large fellows try to explain what they’re doing for a living. Then, if they’re anything like me, their response to this question is a look of embarrassment followed by a clumsy explanation of either what WAC fellows are (admin? support staff?) or, better yet, what they do. But where does this inability to succinctly spell out the function of WAC fellows come from?

**One probable factor** might be an unwillingness to fully engage with the program and its pedagogical philosophy. Another must lie in the variance of responsibilities and obligations proceeding from program to program. For example, [a 2013 survey](#) of WAC programs classified the Writing Fellow activities into twelve discrete options (some as specific as ‘website development,’ others as vague as ‘administrative support’). The same survey also accounted for the different goals each program set for itself: again, these ranged from ‘faculty development’ to ‘community building’ to ‘Writing Fellow development.’ All of this makes sense and likewise the degree to which the work done by WAC fellows appears contingent upon the specific needs of specific programs. But the variety of program goals offered by CUNY WAC programs demonstrates that the only real coefficient between fellows is, to use the [university’s own description](#) of the role, the caveat where fellows “cannot teach as part of their fellowship.” And here we broach a

potentially sore topic: the WAC fellowships come only after many graduate students have already spent years (usually four) teaching within the CUNY system. I have heard some of my peers ask the inevitable question, “why now?” which opens up not only the timing of the fellowship to questioning but also the role it plays for Graduate Center doctoral students with respect to their studies.

My own experience with WAC has been positive; I count myself among the GC graduate students who have benefited from the skills and knowledge cultivated by these programs as well as the reduced workload from not having to teach for a year. Currently at York College in a WAC-at-Large position, the opportunity to work with and in administrative lines equips me with a valuable perspective and experience when it comes to the functioning of academic departments and the non-teaching roles academics have to take on in their careers. Yet what is for me a boon is a bane for others. Many of my doctor-

"I have heard some of my peers ask the inevitable question, 'why now?' which opens up not only the timing of the fellowship to questioning but also the role it plays for Graduate Center doctoral students with respect to their studies."

-al student colleagues have expressed misgivings about the structure and necessity of the fifth-year WAC fellowship. Because it is mandatory, because WAC is itself a specific pedagogical philosophy that doesn't always jive with every disciplinary expectation, because it conducts professional training and development for a particular career path (that of the, hopefully tenured, professor). There is no doubting the spirit of public service and concrete advancements produced as a result of the participation and labor of WAC Writing Fellows. But despite the uncertainty and unease produced by the announcement of imminent changes to the GC's relationship to the CUNY system's WAC programs, it cannot be said that change itself is universally unpopular. A speculative and perhaps overly optimistic view can see these changes as motivated by a concern for the best interests of GC graduate students. Another perspective might highlight the vagueness of proposed changes as opening the door to further exploitation of overworked and underpaid graduate students. Ultimately, whatever outcome the university is planning with regard to how Graduate Center doctoral students spend their fifth fellowship year, the interests of students themselves must be taken into account.





# WAC SUPPORT

---

## CLC Writing Workshops for Students

May 2nd at 12 pm

- Vetting and Using Sources

May 3rd at 10 am

- Overcoming Writer's Block

May 6th at 5 pm

- APA Citation Style

May 9th at 2 pm

- Close Reading

Faculty, would you like some feedback on your writing intensive materials? Then consider taking the self-paced online [WI Faculty Seminar](#).

Or, take the [WAC program survey](#) to provide feedback and suggestions!

If you have a more targeted request of the Writing Fellows, then email Raquel Coy at [rcoy@york.cuny.edu](mailto:rcoy@york.cuny.edu).