

## **WAC, General Education, and Outcomes Assessment An Introduction and Bibliography**

*Task:*

This report is the result of an effort to compile and analyze resources on the subject of WAC/WID, general education, and outcomes assessment and to offer suggestions based on those resources. Taken together, the texts presented in the annotated bibliography below offer a broad overview of the literature available on the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum [WAC] movement with a particular emphasis on general education and outcomes assessment; brief annotations are provided for the guidance of readers seeking more detailed information than can be found in this summary. In considering these texts, it has been the primary goal of the authors to draw together and emphasize matters of consensus rather than dispute. The quantity of writing on WAC programs is such that an exhaustive list of available publications would perhaps be counterproductive to our purposes, so the list provided should be considered as a starting place rather than a destination. Though many texts provide good information on building WAC programs from the ground up, we have focused on those that provide advice for implementing good practices and reforming already extant programs, as well as for establishing good assessment practices for those programs. This introduction precedes two short essays that document in brief the most important findings from the texts in the annotated bibliography. The first considers the integration of WAC into general education programs from both practical and theoretical standpoints and concludes that WAC can not only lead to better outcomes for both students and faculty, but can also be a key component in creating a general education program that works for the whole college community. The second essay explores the challenges faced by those wishing to assess and improve extant WAC programs and provides multiple solutions to

these specific difficulties as well as suggesting general guidelines for creating effective long-term assessment protocols.

*Findings: WAC and General Education*

In discussing the integration of WAC into general education curriculum, it is perhaps useful to begin with a brief overview of the goals and methods of the Writing Across the Curriculum movement. In short the WAC movement holds that writing plays a vital role in student learning by greatly assisting in the development of critical thinking skills, and that for this reason it ought to have a place in the pedagogies of teachers from all different disciplines. WAC seeks to expand the teaching of writing from its customary place in the English department to departments across the spectrum of college education. WAC programs encourage the adoption of writing components in all courses across the curriculum, in all disciplines and in all years of study, from freshman year to graduation. WAC generally encourages the use of both informal and formal sequenced writing assignments as writing-to-learn activities that enable students to obtain a more thorough grasp of course content while practicing discipline-specific modes of expression, but WAC does not seek to impose a monolithic pedagogy. Its methods vary widely from school to school, from discipline to discipline, and from teacher to teacher. As such it provides a flexible support system for the use of writing in courses at all levels and in all disciplines.

As studies have shown and considerable anecdotal evidence suggests, students who engage in frequent writing assignments tend to have better learning outcomes than those students who do not. For this reason it is all the more important to integrate writing into the curriculum of the crucial first years of general education. Students at the outset of their academic careers are in need of many diverse opportunities to practice and perfect the art of academic writing, both in

preparation for the more discipline-specific writing that will be required by their major and in anticipation of the multiple types of writing they will likely encounter outside the academy. Writing assignments, particularly the kind of low stakes and scaffolded assignments advocated by WAC programs, offer an opportunity for student learning, faculty-student interaction, and much needed curriculum consistency when applied across the whole of the general education program.

Alexander Astin's 1992 study "What Really Matters in General Education: Provocative Findings from National Study of Student Outcomes" suggests that these factors may be more important than the content of the curriculum itself. In 1991, Astin conducted a comprehensive study of students at 159 four-year colleges with different approaches to general education and came to the rather startling conclusion that the form and content of any given general education program had little impact on the quality of the student outcomes. The only factor that had any measurable effect on student learning was the degree to which the program encouraged faculty-student and student-student interaction. Given the diversity of the general education program formats available to colleges, it may be useful to remember that these programs have the best chance of success when they encourage these interactions and that WAC offers an excellent method for doing precisely this.

Astin himself points to writing as an important key to improving student outcomes, concluding that "the number of courses taken that emphasize the development of writing skills is positively associated with self-reported growth." In a later work, *What Really Matters in College: College Students Speak Their Minds*, Astin lists "courses that emphasize writing" amongst the key characteristics of successful liberal arts programs, alongside "interdisciplinary courses" and a "strong emphasis on diversity issues" (xii). Other researchers investigating

successful college programs have come to similar conclusions; Judith Langer and Arthur Applebee report in *How Writing Shapes Thinking* that “there is clear evidence that activities involving writing ... lead to better learning than activities involving reading and studying only,” in part because such activity prompts student engagement and fosters critical thinking (Langer and Applebee 135).

Student engagement, an increasingly important measure of program success (Astin “Student Involvement”), is one of the primary goals in establishing a successful general education curriculum. In “WAC and General Education,” Christopher Thaiss highlights this and other unique challenges faced by those facilitating general education reform and points to the integration of WAC principles and programs as the source of potential solutions. Thaiss identifies seven obstacles to implementing successful general education programs: 1. Student resistance to “required” classes; 2. Student inexperience with college work; 3. Larger class sizes relative to college courses as a whole; 4. Student unfamiliarity with discipline-specific techniques, language, and modes of thought; 5. A high percentage of inexperienced faculty, often isolated from the college community and possessing little job security; 6. The vagueness of general education goals (e.g. develop cultural literacy, learn the scientific method); and 7. The lack of continuity from one general education course to the next. He then demonstrates how the dissemination of WAC methods through a strong WAC program can help instructors and administrators overcome each of these obstacles. For instance, low-stakes writing can be used as tool to facilitate faculty-student interaction, helping students to meditate upon the worth of “required” courses and communicate their concerns about new college experiences to their teachers (who may in turn use responses on written work to overcome the isolation of overly large classes). This method of offering welcome to new students positively affects important

concerns like first-year retention levels. In addition to providing direct benefits to students, a strong WAC program can be integral in the effort to increase consistency and job satisfaction for long-term, non-tenured faculty by utilizing panel discussions and campus-wide workshops to forge connections between faculty members across tenure lines. WAC can also offer guidelines for the creation of a common language and a shared grading system for the use of all general education faculty, bridging the gaps between seemingly isolated courses.

A shared language was particularly important in the general education reform conducted at the University of Arizona and reported on by Yvonne Merrill in “Writing as Situated Thinking in General Education.” Though Arizona does not have a formal WAC program, general education reformers there embraced WAC principles under the somewhat broader umbrella of “critical thinking.” A team of faculty and administrators together participated in year-long workshops to analyze the current system and introduce considerable improvements. Perhaps their most intriguing finding was their conclusion that concepts of critical thinking vary widely not just between disciplines but within them as well, and that it was necessary to create a common terminology for thought, so that faculty might use words like “analyze” and “investigate” in a conscious and consistent way across the disciplines. They also established a common language and marking system for student writing, one that might be used by the entire general education faculty.

The need for a common language for general education was one point on which there was widespread consensus among writers on the subject of WAC. There was also considerable agreement on the important role faculty should play in determining the goals of the general education program, a concern that also emerged in writings on the topic of WAC and assessment. Adequate funding for the program and its need for the visible approval of the faculty

and administration was a frequent topic, as was the need for a visible WAC coordinator and a definite presence on campus and on the web. But deep integration was perhaps the most important point; WAC is at its most effective when it is fully integrated into the curriculum at all levels, beginning with general education and extending upwards into the disciplines. Toby Fulwiler reminds us that “Successful programs run deep into the center of the curriculum” and act upon students at every level of their course work.

Though the specific curriculum offerings of general education programs differ widely from university to university, Thaiss offers us some questions to ask when coordinating WAC in general education: 1. Do students have regular opportunities in most general education courses to do ungraded writing to learn exercises of some kind?; 2. Are writing-to-learn assignments varied across the board (no more than two journals a semester, in-class as well as at home)?; 3. Do students take a least one course a semester in which they write one or more papers that receive response in process from either their peers or the instructor?; 4. Are assignments varied to give students practice with some diverse discipline-specific writing?; 5. Do students get opportunities to write for audiences besides the teacher — peers, professionals, the public? Richard J. Light concludes that the last is critical, that “Students identify the courses that had the most profound impact on them as courses in which they were required to write papers, not just for the professor, as usual, but for their fellow students as well” (64). The principles and pedagogies of WAC offer guidelines for the construction of an effective general education program, one that fosters critical thinking through writing and prepares students for the challenges of the disciplines.

*WAC and Assessment*

Writers on WAC are unanimous in their recognition of the need for thoughtful assessment practices to guide program development and to improve student experience. In the most comprehensive text on the subject of WAC assessment, *Assessing Writing Across the Curriculum: Diverse Approaches and Practices*, Kathleen Blake Yancey and Brian Huot argue that “assessment is an important and valuable component both of program management and of an effective educational environment” (8). However, WAC program assessment can pose many unique challenges to those aiming to create effective long-term assessment protocols. First among these challenges is the problematic nature of writing itself. Because “[w]riting is not a set of discrete skills that lend themselves to the kind of atomized testing that we see in multiple-choice texts, but rather is a way of learning and performing that is philosophical and epistemological as well as behavioral in nature,” developing methods to test improvement in writing can be difficult (Yancey and Huot 10). The kind of hard statistics traditionally favored by analysts can be hard to come by in a field in which judgments of quality are often subjective.

The diversity of WAC programs can pose difficulties as well. As Fulwiler and others have pointed out, WAC programs differ widely from campus to campus, even within college networks like CUNY’s, making it difficult to “borrow” assessment strategies from other institutions. WAC programs also have a tendency to change a great deal from year to year due to shifts in faculty and funding and to evolve rapidly in response to new data on student learning; this changeable nature can pose a challenge to long-term strategizing. In addition, the most thorough assessment practices can prove expensive, requiring the investment of considerable time as well as financial and human resources. However, the benefits of establishing good assessment practices far outweigh the challenges, and, thankfully, recent scholarship has

produced a number of useful guidelines for conducting responsible, useful, and cost-effective assessment.

Though writers differ, often significantly, from one another on the subject of assessment, certain points of consensus emerge upon careful reading. The most frequent is the assertion that the strategies used for assessing WAC should be developed at the local level and be determined by the specific goals set out by the individual program being assessed: “The exact focus of a specific program assessment depends on the specific program being evaluated and its institutional and evaluative context” (Yancey and Huot 11). Writers agree that, while an awareness of the strategies employed by other schools may prove helpful, assessors should not attempt to apply them wholesale to their own program. Michael Williamson notes that, above all, “evaluation research must serve the purposes of the participants in the writing program being examined” (245); the assessments goals of other localities or of institutions outside the school should not dictate the ways in which local assessment is performed. Larry Beason and Laurel Darrow are likewise adamant that assessment “goals should focus on specific concerns raised by teachers and students (as opposed to researchers, WAC directors, or state officials)” and that “data useful and available to teachers are the only data worth gathering” (98). Consensus suggests that WAC assessment should be governed by the direct needs of stakeholders in the WAC program — first and foremost, by the faculty members.

Though locally driven assessment may seem more complicated to implement, the faculty involvement such assessment demands is the key to its success. According to Cynthia L. Selfe, faculty working within the existing WAC program are likely to be the source of the most reliable information on how it currently functions, thus “contextual evaluation efforts will help provide the most useful information when they are designed and enacted locally, by groups of WAC



Program participants who have some personal knowledge of — and stake in finding out — what is happening in a particular situation.” (59). Yancey and Huot remind their readers that “WAC program assessment is as much about faculty development — about how faculty develop and monitor their teaching and about how their understanding of learning changes — as it is about student development,” so it is important that faculty members play an integral role in both the design and implementation of assessment protocols (11). Writers agree that the goals and methodologies for assessment should be established by a team that includes both administrators and faculty, and faculty members should be included in every step of the assessment process.

There is ample agreement on certain aspects of methodology as well, though the most important point of consensus on this subject is that no single method will provide a program with all the results it seeks. Multiple methods of assessment are available — including surveys, focus groups, portfolio reviews, interviews, observations, course evaluations, and artifact collection and analysis — and each has its advantages and its supporters. Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawicki favor the deep rather than broad approach offered by student portfolio reviews (79-96), while Beason and Darrow advocate for surveys because of the “bottom-up” attitude such measures convey (98). Most writers are adamant, however, that assessment methods chosen should include both qualitative measures (like focus groups, portfolio reviews, and interviews) and quantitative measures (like surveys and course evaluations). Williamson notes that “an extremely complex phenomenon” like writing can only be evaluated by way of “messy” techniques, and that a tidy analysis of student writing is likely to be a false one (237)

Too often programs employ only one or the other of these approaches, resulting in data that is either overly anecdotal (and therefore not actionable) or frustratingly equivocal. For this reason programs should develop an assessment plan that balances a variety of practices. In her

essay “Documenting Excellence in Teaching and Learning in WAC Programs,” Joyce Kinkead points to a number of assessment methods, including interviews with students and faculty, faculty self-evaluations, classroom observations, surveys of students and faculty, syllabi analysis, exit interviews with graduating seniors, (41) and alumni interviews (47); however, these are only some of the many methods available to assessors. For instance, Martha Townsend recommends the use of e-portfolios, which can be built over the course of a student’s years in college and evaluated by their department faculty to assess long-term writing development.

Just as the writers and researchers featured in the bibliography below agree for the most part regarding positive methods for assessment, they also reach consensus on measures they do not regard as positive. Most view the use of standardized testing to gauge student improvement in writing as problematic at best. Townsend argues against the use of “gateway” writing examinations, claiming that “growth in writing is not demonstrated through standardized tests of writing or simple pre- and postwriting assessments” (Townsend *Integrating WAC* 168). Though such tests are generally fairly easy to administer, they are difficult to create and even more difficult to judge in a manner consistent with the production of actionable data. In addition, they caution against the use of methods that might challenge faculty leadership in the classroom or interfere with student learning. As Beason and Darrow are careful to note, faculty support for assessment is crucial to its success, and therefore “assessment methods should reflect a respect for teachers and students (by avoiding, for instance, methods that greatly intrude into the classroom)” (98). Sensitivity to faculty members’ time and authority and to their students’ education should be practiced at all times.

Data gathered by outside sources can be problematic as well, but still may have something to offer. At the College of Staten Island we are lucky to have access to the results of

the National Survey of Student Engagement and its recently adopted addition from the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College. While the NSSE obtains and compiles data regarding a wide variety of measures of student engagement, the writing supplement focuses specifically on the role that writing plays in the college lives of students. Students are asked to respond to a number of questions about writing ranging from the frequency of pre-writing exercises in the courses they took and the extent of feedback received to the nature and clarity of writing assignments. This data is already available and may prove a useful starting place for WAC assessment; however, because the NSSE relies on student self-reporting, it is vulnerable to criticism and should not be used alone as justification for action. As with all quantitative assessment measures, the NSSE should be paired with qualitative methods in order to form a true picture of the state of writing at CSI.

Regardless of the specific methods advocated by each of the individual writers who appear in this bibliography, all agree that WAC program assessment should be “inquiry driven,” and they support “a contextualized, purposeful use of methods and materials in which both the mode of inquiry and data are selected because they provide the best vehicle for answering the assessment questions, which of course were determined first” (Yancey and Huot 9). Faculty and administration working in partnership can establish local goals for WAC and agree upon the use of such assessment tools as best meet the needs of their specific academic environment at that specific time. In order to meet those needs it is also necessary to plan for and enact a “feedback loop” or method for disseminating the results of assessment to faculty and administrators so that they may act upon new findings. Good assessment “is assessment that focuses on the ongoing development and improvement of its program rather than a summative, final statement of value. ... the results [of assessment] are valuable and valid to the extent that they can and are used to

inform the program” (Yancey and Huot 11). With this in mind, it is especially critical that results of assessment be readily available to faculty and administrators, so that they may benefit from what is learned.

The writers also make it clear that the timing of the different modes of assessment is flexible and can be tailored to the unique needs of a particular college. Comparatively simple and inexpensive modes like surveys can be conducted with greater frequency — after workshops and WAC related classes perhaps — while more labor intensive modes like portfolio reviews and focus groups might be conducted less often — once every three years or in response to outside accreditation needs, for instance. In short, WAC program assessment should be tailored to the needs of program and of the student body that it serves; it should be the result of collaboration between faculty and administration; it should employ diverse assessment tools; and its results should be made available to all who might benefit from them.

### **Print Resources**

Allen, Mary J. *Assessing General Education Programs*. San Francisco: Anker Publishing Company, Inc., 2006

Beginning with the premise that general education forms the core and foundation of the undergraduate learning experience, Allen offers a pragmatic guide to the development, support, and assessment of general education curriculum, presenting a variety of approaches for administrators and teachers looking to make informed decisions about their own general education programs. *Assessing General Education Programs* includes a step-by-step breakdown of assessment planning and implementation, suggestions of potential assessment methods (including published tools for assessing general education and first-year programs), strategies for articulating outcomes, discussion of accreditation concerns, and advice for developing campus infrastructure to support assessment and student success, along with numerous examples of learning outcomes and assessments from over 100 colleges and universities.

Anson, Chris M., ed. *The WAC Casebook: Scenes for Faculty Reflection and Program Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

A collection of essays, primarily aimed towards writing instructors, though applicable across the disciplines, *The WAC Casebook* brings together numerous real and realistic scenarios encountered in undergraduate writing. An excellent resource for those wishing to gain a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by writing instructors in the classroom or wishing to become more reflective about their own teaching. Topics covered include, writing to learn, effective assignment design, evaluating student writing, the role of graduate students, and program development.

Astin, Alexander W. "What Really Matters in General Education: Provocative Findings from National Study of Student Outcomes." *Perspectives*. 22.1 (Fall 1992): 23-46.

Astin's report on the results of a comprehensive study of students at 159 four-year colleges conducted in 1991. He demonstrates that the frequency and quality of student-student and faculty-student interactions has the greatest impact on a wide variety of student outcomes in general education; by comparison, the form and content of the general education curriculum has little to no impact on student achievement and development. He concludes that the use of writing in fostering these interactions has a beneficial effect and that "the number of courses taken that emphasize the development of writing skills is positively associated with self-reported growth."

---. "Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education." *Journal of College Student Personnel*. 25 (1984). 297-308.

An insightful article detailing Astin's theory of student involvement, an idea he developed as a result of an extensive research project. Astin posits an alternative to models of successful colleges that rely on the quantity of research, quality of faculty, or content of curriculum, instead outlining a model that reflects student outcomes as a result of what he deems "student involvement," a complex term encompassing both the quantity and quality of time spent interacting with things related to the college. He argues that "[t]he effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement." Also of note is his conclusion that "frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic ... Thus, finding ways to encourage greater student involvement with faculty (and vice versa) could be a highly productive activity on most college campuses."

Baker, Scott, Russell Gersten, and David Scanlon. "Procedural Facilitators and Cognitive Strategies: Tools for Unraveling the Mysteries of Comprehension and the Writing Process, and for Providing Meaningful Access to the General Curriculum." *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*. 17(1), 65-77.

Though this article presents evidence drawn primarily from the study of K-12 education, it offers numerous insights on the use of writing to promote general education access for learning disabled students. Focusing on strategies that can improve reading

comprehension and writing capabilities, the researchers demonstrate the success of many methods already promoted in the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement.

Barnett, Robert W. and Jacob S. Blumner, eds. *Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Building Interdisciplinary Partnerships*. Contributions to the Study of Education. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

This collection of articles examines the relationship between writing centers and Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs and argues that, contrary to popular misconception, writing centers need not be, and indeed are not, marginalized from larger writing movements campus wide. Thirteen essays, from writers ranging from composition instructors to writing center administrators, focus on fruitful collaborations between writing centers and WAC programs and provide numerous helpful models for fostering these connections across university campuses.

Banta, Trudy, ed. *Assessing Student Achievement in General Education: Assessment Update Collections*. San Francisco: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

This collection of sixteen essays addresses the challenges faced by teachers and administrators in quest of a method to reliably assess student outcomes in general education. Standardized testing, the option repeated offered by a variety of sources, is shown to be inadequate, but the essayists present a selection of other potential solutions. These articles look at the skills desired in college graduates (including effective writing, information literacy, and critical thinking) and explore the difficulties that must be surmounted if we would arrive at satisfactory measures of success.

Beason, Larry and Laurel Darrow. "Listening as Assessment: How Students and Teachers Evaluate WAC." Yancey and Huot 97-121.

An article exploring WAC assessment at Eastern Washington University. Beason and Darrow explain the methods they used in conducting an assessment of their WAC program. Of particular note is their emphasis on faculty-led assessment; assessment goals were set in collaboration with faculty and with careful attention paid to the needs of students. A combination of surveys and interviews offered a "bottom-up" approach that they highly recommend.

Bresciani, Marilee. *Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review: A Compilation of Institutional Good Practices*. Stylus Publishing, 2006.

Intended primarily for faculty and administrators responsible for outcomes-based program review, this book attempts not merely to offer an overview of the principles of assessment, but also to provide many models of good practice. Bresciani compiles the best practices of forty different institutions that have been noted for significant improvement in teaching, learning, research, and service, and a number of case studies are presented with suggestions for adopting and adapting them in different settings. The text links assessment to program review and demonstrates how assessment can have far-

reaching implications for program review, strategic planning, and accreditation.

Bresciani, Marilee J., ed. *Assessing Student Learning in General Education: Good Practice Case Studies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

This text offers more case studies of good practices in assessing general education programs. It provides a broad overview of a variety of possible approaches and suggests the strengths and weaknesses of each. Thirteen institutions noted for good practices in general education assessment are featured, and an introductory chapter points to a number of vital questions to be addressed when planning assessment strategies.

Brown, Stuart C., and Theresa Enos, eds. *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002.

This book features thirty articles on the work and practices of Writing Program Administrators, ranging from the professional, "Writing Program Administration as Preparation for an Administrative Career" to the political "Politics and the WPA: Traveling Through and Past Realms of Expertise." *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource* confronts the challenges facing WPAs and proposes multiple solutions all pointing towards change and the ongoing improvement of writing programs across the country.

Davis, Barbara Gross et al. *The Evaluation of Composition Instruction*. Inverness, CA: Edgepress, 1981.

This book offers extensive exploration of methods and strategies for evaluating composition instruction ranging from student writing performance and attitudes about writing to training activities and program administration costs; it describes different types of evaluation, their phases and implementation and even suggests language for describing composition instruction. A case study for evaluation is offered, as well as several vignettes demonstrating the assembling of evaluation components.

Dizikes, Peter. "The Core Choice." *New York Times*. 8 Jan. 2006. p. 33.

An interesting and informative summary of five different approaches to general education, along with examples of curriculum from the universities that practice them. These include the Great Books approach (Columbia University), which emphasizes the classics of history, art, music, and literature in standardized courses; the To Each His Own approach (Brown University), in which general education is dropped in favor of student-driven education; the Balancing Science approach (Johns Hopkins University), which attempts to balance the campus-wide focus on the sciences with core courses in the humanities and social sciences and emphasizes writing in four required writing intensive courses; and the Modes of Inquiry approach (Duke University), which requires that students take two courses in each of five broad subject areas. While Dizikes summary is hardly comprehensive, it offers an overview of the possible approaches to general education along with the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Faigley, L. and S.P. Witte. *Evaluating College Writing Programs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984

A somewhat dated critical examination of evaluation practices at four major universities, this book offers practical as well as theoretical guidance for formulating assessment strategies, including key questions to ask before embarking upon program evaluation.

Fulwiler, Toby. "Evaluating Writing Across the Curriculum Programs" *Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum*. Ed. Susan McLeod. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988. 61-75.

Fulwiler addresses the difficulties inherent in attempting to evaluate the success of Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs, and he offers simple methods for overcoming them. His suggestions range from simple head counts of faculty workshop participants and quick surveys to in-depth interviews, student evaluations, and comparative experiments designed to test students' improvements in writing.

---. "How Well Does Writing Across the Curriculum Work?" *College English*. 46 (1984): 113-25.

Fulwiler's analysis of Michigan Tech's WAC program at the six-year mark. He discusses at length his experiences leading workshops with faculty and describes the various barriers to success for WAC programs — including foreign terminology, funding, and faculty resistance— as well as many of their unlooked benefits, such as improved faculty relations. He reaffirms his belief that interdisciplinary writing workshops are the best way to introduce and maintain WAC programs at the university level.

Fulwiler, Toby and Art Young. *Programs that Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum*. New York: Boyton/Cook, 1990.

An important early text on successful WAC programs, *Programs That Work* describes fourteen successful WAC programs, including those located at the Michigan Technical University, the University of Massachusetts, the Minnesota Writing Project, and the University of Michigan. Utilizing materials written by the program administrators themselves, this text details successful WAC practices on campuses ranging from two-year community colleges to four-year PhD granting universities.

Golson, Emily and Toni Glover, eds. *Negotiating a Meta-Pedagogy: Learning from Other Disciplines*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

An excellent resource for composition teachers and writing program administrators, this collection of eleven essays focuses on the training of teachers for composition instruction. Very up-to-date and informed, *Negotiating a Meta-Pedagogy* offers the latest in the "pedagogy of pedagogy."



Hartzog, Carol P. *Composition and the Academy: A Study of Writing Program Administration*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1986.

Though now outdated, this report of the results of a survey of writing programs at forty-four colleges and universities (all belonging to the Association of American Universities) provides an interesting window into the evolving practice of program assessment. Descriptions of administrative structures, program design, staffing, and campus attitudes toward writing are included, and best practices are brought to light. The results suggest that good programs are aided by writing program alliances within the university, the pedagogical skill and scholarly visibility of the director and staff, and a campus commitment to liberal education.

Haswell, Richard, ed. *Beyond Outcomes: Assessment and Instruction within a University Writing Program*. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing/JAI Press Inc., 2001.

A collection of essays analyzing the development of the writing assessment and instruction program at Washington State University. The essays challenge the use of standardized placement tests as the primary mode of writing evaluation, arguing that such evaluations should evolve at the local level, and suggest useful ways of initiating dialogue between faculty, students, and administrators.

Hernon, Peter and Robert E. Dugan, eds. *Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education: Views and Perspectives*. Libraries Unlimited, 2004.

*Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education* provides material for those involved in the process of higher education outcomes assessment. The book addresses assessment from the perspective of accrediting bodies, as well as that of faculty members and administration, and provides numerous practical examples for strategizing and establishing assessment programs. Stressing the permanence of outcomes assessment regardless of its unpopularity, *Outcomes Assessment* offers a pragmatic rather than reflective approach program evaluation.

Hooper, Richard and Shannon Butler. "Student Transfer of General Education English Skills to a Social Work Diversity Course: Is It Happening?" *Journal of the Idaho Academy of Science*. 44.2 (Dec. 2008). pp. 1-10.

This scientific study challenges some of the fundamentals of WAC by suggesting that skills learned in general education English courses do not successfully transfer to later general education course work. Though the sample size was quite small, twenty-one students tracked from an English composition course to one in the social sciences, such studies provide interesting opposition to the general consensus that general education writing courses provide an adequate foundation for later general education work.

Langer, Judith A. and Arthur N. Applebee. *How Writing Shapes Thinking: A Study of Teaching and Learning*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers, 1987.

Focusing on secondary schools rather than colleges, Langer and Applebee explore the role that writing plays in critical thinking and how certain kinds of writing can be used to teach specific kinds of critical thinking. They also reiterate a point made by many researchers: that writing combined with reading and studying lead to more and better learning than reading and studying alone.

Lester, Nancy, et al, eds. "Writing Across the Curriculum: A College Snapshot." *Urban Education* 38 (2003): 5-34.

A report detailing the result of research on WAC at one urban college. This article concludes that teachers were the most common audience for student writing, and that notetaking was the most prevalent writing activity. The writers suggest that modifying assignments to include different kinds of audiences for writing and different kinds of writing activities would improve student experience.

McLeod, Susan H. and Margot Soven, eds. *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*. The WAC Clearinghouse. Online Access.  
<[http://wac.colostate.edu/books/mcleod\\_soven/](http://wac.colostate.edu/books/mcleod_soven/)>

A collection of twelve essays offering advice for WAC program designers and teachers. This collection addresses issues of design, funding, operation, pedagogy, writing-in-the-disciplines, writing-to-learn, writing intensive courses, first-year writing programs, writing and general education, and the role and development of writing centers. Includes Christopher Thaiss's very useful "WAC and General Education Courses."

McLeod, Susan H. et al, eds. *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

This collection of 12 essays both highlights the successes of WAC programs and suggests ways in which WAC must adapt to meet the challenges of the New Millennium. Of particular interest are William Condon's "Accommodating Complexity: WAC Program Evaluation in the Age of Accountability" and Martha Townsend's "Writing Intensive Courses and WAC."

Merrill, Yvonne. "Writing as Situated Thinking in General Education." *Across the Disciplines* 1 (2004). <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/merrill2003.cfm>

A case study of University of Arizona's successful attempt to integrate writing-to-learn into their general education curriculum. Merrill describes useful approaches to gaining faculty support through workshops and suggests the important of low-stakes writing assignments as a measure of students' critical thinking skills.

Olds, Barbara, Jon A. Leydens, and Ronald L. Miller. "A Flexible Model for Assessing WAC Programs." 123-129. <http://wac.colostate.edu/llad/v3n2/olds.pdf>

This article discussing the primary features of assessment — goals, program objectives, performance criteria, implementation strategies, evaluation methods, logistics, and feedback — and briefly describes some of the methods that have been found successful, including surveys, interviews, and portfolios.

Selfe, Cynthia L. “Contextual Evaluation in WAC Programs: Theory, Issues, and Strategies for Teachers.” Yancey and Huot 51-67.

Argues for a “contextual model” of WAC program assessment, one that regards faculty as major participants in, rather than merely subjects of, assessment. Selfe supports local, site-based assessments that “involve teachers in the design, analysis, and interpretation of data from multiple perspectives and using multiple methods of inquiry” (52). Smaller scale methods, such as classroom observations, are preferred above standardized tests in part because they grant teachers agency within the program, but also because teachers are in the best position to provide information about that program.

Slevin, James F. “Engaging Intellectual Work: The Faculty’s Role in Assessment.” *College English*. 63.3 (Jan 2001) 288-305.

An article exploring the question of how the university can put the intellectual work of its faculty back in the center of its curriculum. Primarily focusing on the first-year required composition course, Slevin argues for a more organic approach, one that views composition not as foundation but as a legitimate part of the whole of the curriculum, one that begins the student’s education, rather than simply “preparing” them for it.

Summerfield, Judith and Crystal Benedicks, eds. *Reclaiming the Public University: Conversations on General & Liberal Education*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2007.

An interesting exploration of the meaning of terms like general and liberal education, in both their historical and current context, edited by the Dean of Undergraduate Education at the City University of New York and an assistant professor at Queensborough Community College.

Thaiss, Christopher and Terry Myers Zawicki. “How Portfolios for Proficiency Help Shape a WAC Program.” Yancey and Huot 79-96.

Thaiss and Zawicki detail the ways in which they used an already extant curriculum measure, proficiency portfolios, as an indirect method for evaluating WAC program success. They argue for the importance of holistic assessment tools like portfolios and against simplistic measures of student achievement.

Ratcliff, James L., D. Kent Johnson, and Jerry G. Gaff, eds. *Changing General Education Curriculum: New Directions for Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

The 125<sup>th</sup> issue of the quarterly journal *New Directions for Higher Education*, this edition takes on the reform of general education curriculum, suggesting new and better ways to connect with students, accomplish academic goals, and provide the best collegiate experience possible. Chapters address the results of a national survey on changes in general education, four case studies of institutions undergoing such change, and the obstacles to achieving the changes suggested.

White, Edward M. *Developing Successful College Writing Programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

Writing program directors seeking to design or redesign a program can plan for organic development by taking a comprehensive view of the many separate activities that constitute a good program. Ten concise chapters examine the campus climate for writing programs (the roles of the English department, the writing program administrator, and the administration), research on existing programs, prevalent teaching methods, course designs, assessment issues and practices, instructor evaluation, administration (setting policies on placement and credit for remedial courses, setting up ESL and writing-across-the-curriculum programs), training and support of faculty, and evaluation of the program.

Williamson, Michael M. "Pragmatism, Positivism, and Program Evaluation." Yancey and Huot 237-257.

Williamson argues for a holistic approach to student and program evaluation, particularly in the form of the portfolio review, which he recommends as a "messy" but rewarding measure of student learning. The article also reviews several key mistakes made by those attempting to conduct WAC assessment; he cautions assessors against the use of multiple-choice exams and reminds them to treat faculty as partners in assessment.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake and Brian Huot, eds. *Assessing Writing across the Curriculum: Diverse Approaches and Practices. Perspectives on Writing: Theory, Research, Practice*. Volume 1. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing/JAI Press Inc., 1997.

A collection of fourteen essays addressing the issue of assessment in Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs and offering a number of informal and formal methods for conducting such assessment. Of particular interest are Martha A. Townsend's "Integrating WAC into General Education: An Assessment Case Study" and Michael M. Williamson's "Pragmatism, Positivism, and Program Evaluation."

Young, Art, and Toby Fulwiler. *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research Into Practice*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton, 1986.

Young and Fulwiler offer a detailed explanation of the nature and history of WAC programs, their challenges, and the specific WAC techniques used in the individual disciplines. The second section is particularly noteworthy as it focuses primarily upon the evaluation of the program at the six-year mark, offering suggestions for how such investigations can be conducted and describing their findings.

## **Web Resources**

*Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Speaking Across the Curriculum (SPAC).*  
<<http://www.csuohio.edu/academic/gened/courses/gened-wac.htm>>

*Writing Across the Curriculum Program website.* Lehman College, CUNY.  
<<http://www.lehman.edu/lehman/wac/>>

*Writing Across the Curriculum.* Brooklyn College, CUNY.  
<<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/undergrad/bcwac/>>

*WAC Requirements.* York College, CUNY <http://www.york.cuny.edu/wac/resources-for-students/requirements>

*WAC Program Website.* Hunter College, CUNY <<http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/wac/index.html>>

*The WAC Clearinghouse.* <<http://wac.colostate.edu/>>

*Writing Program Website.* University of Washington. <<http://www.writingprogram.wsu.edu/>>