Transforming the University

Final Recommendations of the
Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing

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Revised version, based on open comment period
Date: February 3, 2006
I. Executive Summary

Writing is the articulation of thinking. Indeed, all intellectual and creative work in every academic discipline relies on the ability to think critically, read carefully, and write in a manner that demonstrates strong logic, understanding, and analytical skills. Practice and the resulting confidence in one’s ability to express ideas in writing can be a source of great personal satisfaction and even enjoyment. For the University to achieve its promised standing, excellence in writing instruction is critical. Therefore, a commitment to improving student writing must be a distinguishing feature of a baccalaureate degree from the University of Minnesota, across all majors and all disciplines of study. Effective education based on writing not only enhances students’ academic and workplace success, but it also serves the University’s land-grant mission to create a well-informed citizenry. The rise of digital technology and the resulting increase in informal, everyday writing make this need even more apparent. All students, regardless of ability, background, or major area of study, need to take challenging writing courses when they first begin their studies and then to progress through a well-sequenced curriculum that develops writing ability through all courses in their discipline.

Implementing the Baccalaureate Writing Initiative will define us as the leading university for undergraduate writing instruction, curriculum, and research. Taken as a whole, this Writing Initiative will strengthen the overall University writing experience for all undergraduate students. To realize this goal, the University of Minnesota should implement the following four interconnected recommendations.

1. Writing-enriched Baccalaureate Degrees. Building on the writing-across-the-curriculum philosophy that writing instruction is central to students’ learning in all disciplines, we recommend that the University endorse writing-enriched baccalaureate degrees. Faculty in each major should create a comprehensive curriculum of writing-enriched courses based on both central guidelines for effective writing instruction and departmental assessment of writing objectives (including appropriate assignments and evaluation criteria). This approach will set us apart from other research universities in its comprehensive nature and full involvement of the faculty. This curricular approach should:
   • Require that first-year students have a full year of writing instruction through a designated composition course and a second course that emphasizes writing instruction in an introductory-level course in a discipline or in a freshman seminar.
   • Have each department develop a “Baccalaureate Writing Plan” to define the writing goals of its majors from the introductory course through the senior project, and then provide appropriate sequenced courses for all four years.
   • Manage class enrollments to ensure that writing is assigned, responded to, and evaluated thoughtfully and systematically in all writing-specific courses.
   • Provide increased professional development for instructors at all levels.
   • Create significant awards for students and incentives for instructors to encourage excellence in writing and writing instruction.

2. Strong, centralized leadership. We recommend strengthening the Provost’s office’s active, centralized support for all elements of writing instruction and assessment. Because writing
instruction is the responsibility of all colleges and departments, this central leadership is essential to the success of any writing initiative. Central leadership should:

- Convene a University-wide Advisory Council of faculty, staff, students, and outside experts to plan, implement, and sustain this writing initiative.
- Coordinate and work to fund research and assessment projects on writing, as well as assessment of our current writing and writing-intensive curriculum.
- Engage the entire campus—colleges, departments, centers, libraries, and support services—to leverage resources.
- Work with appropriate groups and individuals to assess the current and future roles of digital technologies related to undergraduate writing.
- Work with the colleges and central administration to create initial and recurring budget plans as part of the biennial proposals.
- Actively seek major extramural grants and private-sector and endowment funding.

3. **Campus-wide Writing Studies.** Because an excellent undergraduate writing program depends on rigorous research and scholarship, we recommend the University create a new university-wide academic unit in Writing Studies, which would bring together the many valuable faculty and staff across campus who engage in the study and teaching of writing. Writing Studies should:

- Invite current writing faculty and instructional staff to be members of Writing Studies, and search for additional faculty with high achievement and potential in this field, as well as for “cluster hires” who would contribute expertise in writing in the disciplines.
- Teach first-year composition and other expository writing courses, provide individualized writing instruction, and teach graduate-level courses in writing studies.
- Address and support the special requirements of English language learners or who are under-prepared.
- Provide meaningful professional development of faculty, instructional staff, and graduate students who teach with writing.
- Reach out to the wider communities interested in writing, including K-12 teachers, the business and professional world, and service organizations in the Twin Cities.
- Conduct and support writing research and assessment to maintain high quality writing instruction and advance knowledge about writing.

4. **Campus-wide student support partnerships.** We recommend that the University increase support for and coordination among existing writing centers, learning centers, libraries, and other student support services, in order to make one-to-one writing instruction more widely available to students and to share collaborative teaching methods. This approach should:

- Coordinate efforts to create a “one-stop” common look that makes support resources more visible to students.
- Develop accessible spaces that encourage independent and group learning.
- Support adequately online tutoring and just-in-time writing and learning resources.
- Strengthen training and professional development for all tutors, drawing on the rich field of writing pedagogy.
- Create situations where writing tutors and discipline-specific tutors work side-by-side to enhance writing across the curriculum.
- Conduct research on student learning and effective teaching of writing.
II. The University of Minnesota’s Baccalaureate Writing Initiative: Introduction

**Mission:** To provide world-class, comprehensive writing instruction throughout the undergraduate years, with a goal of ensuring that every undergraduate upon graduation can write sustained, analytical papers with clarity, coherence, and grace in the context of his or her major area of study.

In the six months since the Academic Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing was convened, we have been struck by the passionate dedication to improve writing that unites people on and off campus. We are convinced that superior writing instruction will be a hallmark to differentiate the University of Minnesota and its graduates and thus will contribute to the University’s ambitious goal. Students desire consistent and connected writing instruction; many say they would take more writing courses if they could. Employers agree that skillful writing is a prerequisite for success and advancement, a claim supported by the most recent study by the National Commission on Writing. From students to staff, faculty to alumni, business leaders to high school teachers, everyone cares about writing and wants to see a University-wide plan to make it much better. Faculty who are not writing experts tell us they long for professional development and other resources related to their instructional goals. Teaching assistants have innovative ideas about the teaching of writing. Writing faculty and instructors, referred to in the original task force report as “pockets of expertise,” have been waiting a long time for this chance to work together and think big. Our task force has taken on this charge with due seriousness and buoyant enthusiasm.

Cogent writing is vital—not only in college but also in life after graduation. In fact, a commitment to writing is a re-commitment to the University’s fundamental role as a land-grant institution. Writing is and has always been crucial for strong citizenship and vibrant democratic life. In reaffirming the importance of writing, the University claims a dynamic role not only within our academic mission but also in the life of our society.

The University of Minnesota already has many of the elements of an excellent program for improving the writing of its students: our substantial writing-intensive requirement is more ambitious than that at many institutions, and we have faculty and staff dedicated to high-quality writing instruction, writing and tutoring centers, a rich K-12 outreach program, and a strong desire for cross-college collaboration. Moreover, the Twin Cities is a national hub for good writing, with the Loft Literary Center, the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, several important independent publishing houses, and other nationally recognized programs. What is needed to make our approach to writing instruction the best in the nation is to bring together and to build upon what we have, under a more comprehensive, centrally supported plan, to ensure that all undergraduates learn to write sustained, analytical works with clarity, coherence, and grace in their areas of study.

A commitment to writing should be a distinguishing feature of all degrees, across all majors and all disciplines of study; this feature would become part of the University of Minnesota “brand.” We recommend a systematic and comprehensive change in undergraduate writing so that writing instruction is woven throughout a student’s undergraduate curriculum, not inserted in pieces, and so that writing support is accessible for students, on or off campus. With proper funding and a
plan for long-term sustainability, writing will be so ubiquitous that a University graduate in any field will be known as an educated citizen who can write commanding prose and do so with a clear sense of audience and purpose. Students will seek to enroll in the University for that strong education and preparation.

The task force studied the current situation in terms of three elements that make up writing instruction. These are:

- First-year writing and other dedicated writing courses
- Writing across the curriculum and in the disciplines
- Writing instruction outside the classroom

This approach was useful insofar as it helped us analyze what is in place. But we recommend an approach in which all three elements are connected under a unified vision and mission through central leadership and visibility, adequate resources, a robust base of scholarly research in writing, and regular assessment of outcomes and needs.

It is clear that the University will need to make a substantial and recurring investment to support our recommendations. Most significant, however, is the comprehensive nature of our recommendations, with the goal of involving the faculty, students, and staff in a central mission. Their time, thought, and dedication will be considerable, and it will require a major shift in current culture for undergraduates and for the faculty, instructors, and graduate students who teach them. Learning to write well—and learning to teach well—demands sustained practice and substantial assessment and support. But the result will be a dramatic improvement in undergraduate education. As a premier research university, we owe it to students across the disciplines to embed the teaching of writing—the teaching of analytic thinking and its clear expression—into their undergraduate experience.

III. Response to Deliverables: Writing as Central to Research-based Education

| Recommendations regarding how to create a research-based model with one mission and central direction to establish the University of Minnesota as a national leader in undergraduate writing in all of its forms, including freshman writing, technical writing, writing across the curriculum, senior writing projects, and tutoring. |

| Recommendations on how to design, organize, and structure a campus-based writing program that leads and coordinates writing across colleges and departments. |

A single, campus-wide writing program needs both leadership and support from the central administration, and an anchor in an academic unit that serves the entire campus.

**Recommendation: The Provost’s office, working with a cross-collegiate Advisory Council, should provide initial and ongoing leadership for this Writing Initiative.**

Strong central leadership in the Provost’s office will ensure that the Writing Initiative thrives across all colleges and undergraduate majors. The Provost should convene an Advisory Council, chaired by a senior tenured professor with administrative and leadership skills and academic
expertise in the teaching of writing, and made up of members representing Writing Studies and other disciplines, and the workplace. Central support based in the Provost’s office will be critical to provide both credibility and centrality to facilitate, coordinate, connect, and align all University faculty, students, and staff, as well as external constituencies. Leadership at the Provost level will send a clear message from the University that this Initiative is valued and supported at the highest level, thus strengthening the University's commitment to writing.

The members of the Advisory Council must be visionary leaders with a demonstrated ability to work effectively and collaboratively across the campus and with employers and community members to create a climate and support structure that will engage faculty, instructional staff, and graduate assistants in a cooperative effort. The Council must also have strong support in the Provost’s office to ensure the implementation of this report's recommendations and to ensure the necessary collaboration to connect different departments and disciplines, leverage fiscal and intellectual resources, and develop accountability measures and benchmarks. Together these elements will underscore that writing success at the University of Minnesota is the responsibility of colleges and departments, faculty and other instructors, and, indeed, of our students.

**Recommendation:** The University should create a new academic unit, “Writing Studies,” with equally strong missions in research and teaching that serves the entire campus.

To improve undergraduate writing education across the University, Writing Studies must work across college boundaries. The research mission of Writing Studies will include traditional topics such as the study of students and teachers in writing courses, of students throughout their undergraduate years, and of theories and best practices in writing pedagogy. But “writing studies” has many more dimensions. Among these are the history of writing in the disciplines; connections between writing at the university and at the high schools at one end, and in graduate school and the professional world at the other; links among writing, critical reading, critical thinking, and research; between writing and speaking; and in new forms of electronic media; and scholarship on language and human cognition. Writing Studies will develop new knowledge in the field and create national visibility, for instance:

- By establishing a new peer-reviewed journal (tentatively called the *Minnesota Journal of Writing Studies*) with both print and electronic features
- By hosting a University of Minnesota Writing Summit, bringing together students, faculty from across the disciplines, nationally known scholars of writing studies, local and national writers (initially, to kick off the new Writing Initiative).

In order to address the breadth of these research opportunities and advance knowledge and understanding of writing, Writing Studies will need to recruit new faculty at the senior and beginning levels. Writing Studies should have a core of tenure lines; in addition, the unit should make cluster hires to forge writing-across-the-curriculum connections among departments.

The teaching mission of Writing Studies will include first-year composition, and other expository writing courses. As noted in subsequent sections of this report, Writing Studies will be chiefly responsible for the professional development of and support for writing teachers—faculty, graduate students, and academic professionals. The faculty will also teach graduate courses, leading to the development of a doctoral degree in Writing Studies.
The major assessment studies required to measure writing outcomes and to improve teaching and learning will be undertaken by Writing Studies research faculty and professional staff, often in conjunction with the University’s institutional research staff. Longitudinal studies of student writing, cross-sectional studies of writing instruction and learning across the campus, and studies of workplace writing of University graduates are promising places to begin.

In addition, Writing Studies will work with the Provost’s office to reach out to other communities and constituencies that interact with the University. Specifically to enhance the quality of writing in high schools, this unit will build on the existing Minnesota Writing Project, College in the Schools, and industry-university partnerships. It will foster links to other Twin Cities communities to provide opportunities for service learning, writing in the workplace, and internships that help students ground their writing in real-world settings.

No matter the structure or location of Writing Studies, it is important that the University’s Writing Initiative be designed to retain and build on existing areas of success and not be centralized to the point of diluting current strengths or losing local relevance for faculty and students.

**Recommendations regarding the organization of the freshman writing curriculum, other writing courses (such as technical writing) and how to encourage the widespread involvement of the faculty in writing instruction.**

**Recommendation: Bring together first-year composition courses as part of Writing Studies.**

The General College Writing Program, the Composition Program in the English Department, and the Rhetoric Department currently offer first-year composition and teach the courses under a common set of goals. Separation and tuition flows have, in the past, restricted cooperation, but the three providers have a strong desire to work together. To eliminate student confusion and raise the profile of these courses across campus, all of them should carry the same designator and be taught under the direction of Writing Studies instructional staff and faculty.

That faculty should also ensure that all instructors of first-year writing—chiefly teaching assistants, but also lecturers and teaching specialists—continue to receive consistent and high-quality training and ongoing professional development. The training, teaching experience, and mentoring of graduate students benefits their undergraduate students and enhances their capacities as instructors and future faculty members. An important result of this coordination and enhanced professional development will be that students receive a consistent, high-quality learning experience. This recommendation will leverage faculty and other resources that are now spread among the three colleges, and build on existing strengths.

**Recommendation: Require two courses with writing instruction in the first three semesters.**

A significant number of students do not have enough writing instruction in the first and second years. Entering students would benefit from a full year of writing instruction. In addition to the first-year, required composition course(s), students will take a second course with writing
instruction at the introductory level in a discipline, or a freshman seminar. Ideally these two courses would be completed in the first year, but allowing three semesters provides necessary flexibility for majors with complex first-year requirements. Additional details about this requirement are outlined in Appendix B of this report.

**Recommendation: Eliminate exemptions from first-year composition and require that highly qualified students take an intermediate composition course.**

Students who do well in tests such as the ACT and who have excellent grades in high school are often able to write fluently and carefully, but they have not yet written college-level academic arguments nor used the rich research sources of a major university library. A challenging intermediate-level writing course can enhance a student’s collegiate success. Collegiate or university courses taken by transfer students need to be reviewed, since some of those students may not be prepared for the rigors of writing at a research university.

**Recommendation: The University should continue to address the special requirements of English language learners and students who are under-prepared.**

This issue is critical if the University is committed to building a diverse body of students. Teachers of courses for non-native speakers and for under-prepared students must have an appropriate professional background. Their classes should be smaller, so that adequate attention is paid to students’ individual needs. Writing Studies, in partnership with other relevant units on campus, will develop a coherent, baccalaureate-long curriculum in writing for non-native speakers, which will have implications for the University’s commitment to international graduate students as well.

**Recommendation: Improve compensation for graduate students, and both compensation and retention of lecturers and teaching specialists.**

Teaching assistants who teach first-year and intermediate composition should be paid at a level commensurate with their responsibilities; they are currently paid at or near the low end of the University’s scale, and their pay is based on college culture, not similar work practice. To learn to write well, students must write frequently and receive effective assistance. Thoughtful, meaningful responses to student writing require time and expertise that must be respected and compensated. Lecturers and teaching specialists will continue to play an important role; the University has much to gain by committing to them for terms longer than one year.

Recommendations regarding a plan to ensure that the importance of writing and opportunities for written communication are emphasized across the University and are integrated into undergraduate education across disciplines, programs of study.

Recommendations regarding the structure of writing intensive requirements, expectations for writing intensive courses, and appropriate levels of support.
Recommendations to clarify the relation between writing intensive courses and other courses and assignments (e.g. senior design projects or papers) that involve significant writing.

**Recommendation:** Each major program should have a curricular-based *Baccalaureate Writing Plan* for its students with an appointed coordinator of writing instruction.

Writing across the curriculum (“WAC”) became established nationally in the mid-1980s and now takes different shapes at institutions across the country. Like our peer institutions, our approach has been to designate specific classes as “writing intensive” (WI), and to total these up so that students have at least the minimum number upon graduation. Although this approach is useful in that it usually requires a significant amount of writing, the courses chosen can be haphazard and disconnected. While maintaining our commitment to first-year writing and continuation of writing-intensive courses in each discipline, we propose the next-generation model of *writing-enriched degrees*, a multi-year, comprehensive approach.

Each undergraduate major should have a Baccalaureate Writing Plan in order to ensure that the teaching of writing is embedded into and woven throughout the undergraduate experience. Working from guidelines produced by the Advisory Council, each department should define the writing goals and expectations of its majors from introductory courses through the senior capstone project, and identify appropriate sequenced courses for all four years that meet the objectives of the comprehensive plan. Most majors will continue requiring at least two Writing-Intensive courses, although these will be only a partial element in most Baccalaureate Writing Plans. As much as possible, major courses with writing should take place in small classes, including “topics” courses and freshman seminars whose subject varies between sections. These courses give faculty the opportunity to teach from their research specialty and expand the curriculum in new directions. Courses with frequent but short writing assignments that meet specific goals of the major could be part of the plan, as could those with traditional term paper assignments, courses which develop a senior project, and those that use essay questions on exams. Writing is a powerful tool for assessing learning and all faculty will be encouraged to make wider use of it. Writing will be ubiquitous, integrated across a student’s intellectual development from the freshman year through graduation, creating a culture of continuous growth and improvement for student writers.

The coordinator of writing instruction for each major could be the unit-based Director of Undergraduate Studies or another faculty member with a strong commitment to student writing. In addition to overseeing the Baccalaureate Writing Plan, this coordinator should promote professional development opportunities for faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants, and will collaborate with student writing centers and the libraries to meet the students’ needs. Each college’s Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education will approve Baccalaureate Writing Plans for majors, with oversight provided by the Advisory Council and the Provost. Colleges’ successes, problems, and needs concerning writing instruction and the writing curriculum should be reported as part of the Compact process.
Recommendation: Provide central funding, especially for faculty incentives, professional development, and assistance.

The success of the writing-enriched curriculum will require faculty time, workshops, teaching assistants, incentives, and support measures for faculty in every undergraduate major. The University already has several successful programs on which to build (for example, the Faculty Writing Consultants Program and the Writing Intensive Outreach Program for Scientific and Technical Communication). Through programs like these, which have disseminated best practices for teaching writing in the disciplines, the foundation is already in place to involve many more faculty, as well as to include more teaching assistants from across the disciplines. For example, conducting several workshops each summer will be an important vehicle for adding to the number of faculty and teaching assistants who understand best practices in assigning and responding to student writing, and who feel confident of their ability to teach writing to their students. These workshops should be fully funded.

Recommendation: Colleges should reduce the size of first-year composition and writing-intensive courses and other courses with significant writing assignments.

Capping classes at twenty or fewer students ensures that each student’s writing receives adequate attention, and that instructors do not find the “paper load” so intimidating that they are reluctant or unwilling to teach the courses. The National Council of Teachers of English recommends no more than 20 students in a writing or writing-intensive class. See Appendix C for a detailed discussion.

Recommendation: Recognize excellence in writing and writing instruction across the University, at the highest levels.

The University should embark on a highly visible campaign to seek endowed funds to create major awards and scholarships for excellent writing submitted by undergraduates. (A few of these already exist in colleges and departments, for summa cum laude theses and in creative writing, for example.)

For faculty, excellence in writing instruction should be included as a category in the tenure code and in consideration for merit pay. Annual awards, similar to Morse-Alumni and Tate, should recognize the success of academic professionals, graduate students, and faculty in the teaching of writing. The Academy of Distinguished Teachers could create a standing committee to increase contact among excellent writing instructors, and to provide a forum for ongoing discussion, consultation, and visibility.

Recommendations regarding the leveraging of resources across academic units to support the writing initiative.

Recommendation: Increase support for and coordination among existing writing centers, learning centers, libraries, and other student support services to make one-to-one writing instruction more widely available.
Currently, students have access to one-to-one writing instruction through four writing centers: the Center for Writing, the SMART Commons (which includes the Online Writing Center and face-to-face tutoring in writing and research as well as in math and sciences), the General College Writing Center, and the Spanish Writing Center. Increasing coordination and communication among these centers, discipline-specific tutoring programs, libraries, and other forms of student academic support will make one-to-one writing instruction more visible and accessible to students, their advisers, and their instructors.

We recommend expanding existing student support partnerships like the SMART Commons and the Center for Writing’s locations in the libraries and residence halls. Extension of the SMART Commons model is also being recommended by the task forces on Student Support and on General College/College of Education and Human Development. In addition to improved physical spaces, academic support can be made even more accessible through online tutoring and digital resources—building on the current Online Writing Center and the online component of the Spanish Writing Center (which serves students on study abroad programs).

Effective tutoring depends on extensive training and professional development; it would be strengthened through a more coordinated effort. Like writing centers, other tutoring programs need ongoing professional development and would benefit from hiring instructional staff who specialize in working with non-native speakers of English and under-prepared students, both to meet the specialized needs of those students and to train their fellow tutors. Creating situations where writing tutors and discipline-specific tutors work side-by-side would enhance writing across the curriculum and collaborative learning. Finally, writing centers and other student support units are rich sites to study student learning, providing a laboratory for Writing Studies and education research.

**Recommendation: Assess the current and future role of digital communication technologies.**

The need is obvious: given that current and coming generations of students will expect the University to be a one-stop, any time, any place site of learning, and given that students use computers and other digital devices for writing, research, and collaboration, both in and out of college, we must support the use of digital technologies in a way that enhances the goals of the Baccalaureate Writing Initiative. The University Libraries’ recent and current programs to make their considerable electronic resources available to students and teachers of writing are a crucial foundation upon which to build, as is the work of the Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology.

The optimum result will help us integrate digital portfolios, collaboration and peer-review software, WebCT/Vista, Web portals, podcasting, online writing centers, and basic tools such as word processing and e-mail, in such a way as to integrate these communication technologies. This process should include a system-wide analysis of the computer labs and classrooms where writing is often taught. Implementing digital media to support writing at the University level, not across colleges and departments, will enhance efficiency and put the University on the leading, not the trailing edge.
Recommendations for creating a clear set of expectations for proficiency and assessments in writing, across all colleges, for undergraduates at various stages of their education.

**Recommendation:** Engage in substantial assessment of student learning (using writing as an assessment tool) and assessment of student writing at all levels: classroom, curriculum, and institution-wide.

The University does not have a strong system for analyzing the effectiveness of its current writing instruction nor for analyzing student learning overall. The creation of Baccalaureate Writing Plans and the Writing Studies unit would contribute greatly to creating a culture of continuous assessment and improvement. With support and consultation, departments and majors will identify their writing outcomes, which will be incorporated into individual instructors’ course assessments as well as departmental benchmarks. Revising the current Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) forms to include questions about writing would reveal valuable student input, indicating how writing is incorporated in courses and how students assess their own development as writers. Additional writing assessment protocols include case studies, reading and analyzing samples of student writing, classroom observation, and studies regarding the transition from the university to the workplace (for example, cohort studies of writing before and after graduation). Longitudinal studies of undergraduates’ writing recently conducted at Harvard and ongoing at Stanford are yielding promising and revealing results and recommendations, providing a valuable foundation upon which we can build. Because assessment of student learning is a strong subfield within Writing Studies, our new unit would also provide the leadership and support for these efforts.

In order to refine our models of exemplary undergraduate writing instruction, the results of this assessment will be communicated to the faculty, the departments, the colleges, and the University community at large. The University should build on the concept of existing programs that fund such efforts across departments and colleges (such as the Center for Writing’s research funding, or the Technology Enhanced Learning grants,) to make small grants available for many more non-writing faculty to participate in this research. These grants could be used to leverage larger sources of funding as well.

**IV. Priorities: Making the University of Minnesota the Best Model for Undergraduate Writing in the Nation.**

We were charged to propose a single mission and central direction that leads and coordinates writing across colleges and departments. Our proposals about research, dedicated courses, writing in the disciplines, and writing support are interlaced with each other. All need to be in place to reach the goal of having students and teachers benefit fully from this writing initiative.

We recommend that our proposals be implemented in a staged sequence.

As soon as possible after formal adoption of these recommendations:
- Create an Advisory Council to continue the consultation begun by this task force and to begin to implement these recommendations.
- Host a Writing Summit to launch the focus on writing at the University.
Secure adequate and recurring funding to support smaller classes, to increase teaching-assistant, lecturer, and teaching specialist compensation, and to provide meaningful incentives and professional development for faculty who teach with writing, and awards for excellence in student writing and in the teaching of writing.

- Develop guidelines for colleges and departments to use in designing their baccalaureate writing plans.

To be in place for the 2007-08 academic year or sooner; planning to begin in Spring 2006:
- Design and staff the Writing Studies unit.
- Place first-year composition courses under one umbrella.
- Design and implement the Writing-Enriched Baccalaureate, including departments’ baccalaureate writing plans and their approval and assessment processes.
- Design and begin long-term, comprehensive assessment.
- Support and coordinate writing centers, learning centers, libraries, and other support services to improve student access to elective instructional resources.

Ongoing:
- Communicate a clear message to promote this initiative as a central feature of a degree from the University of Minnesota.
- Communicate with high schools and other post-secondary institutions about the implications and expectations of this initiative for their students and educators.
V. Appendixes

A. Alignment with Strategic Action Areas
B. Writing Trajectory through the Four-Year Curriculum
C. Benefits for Students and Teachers in Reducing Class Size
D. Universities and Colleges Whose Writing Programs Were Studied by the Task Force
E. Looking Forward: Important Themes Outside the Scope of this Task Force’s Immediate Charge
F. Current Writing Requirements and Elements of the University’s Writing Programs
G. Selected Comments from Students, Faculty, and Others
H. Consultation and Communication
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Appendix A. Alignment with Strategic Action Areas

In fulfilling our charge, the Academic Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing has made recommendations that ensure that writing is a fundamental part of every undergraduate’s experience at the University of Minnesota. We believe this is crucial to achieving the University’s stated goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world. We have framed our recommendations for both the near and longer term around the five strategic action areas identified in the strategic positioning report, *Advancing the Public Good: Securing the University’s Leadership Position in the 21st Century*. Our recommendations’ identified alignment with each of these action areas follows below.

1. **Recruit, nurture, challenge, and educate outstanding students who are bright, curious, and highly motivated.**

   - How do the task force recommendations improve student results, including retention and graduation rates, learning, and satisfaction?
   - How do the recommendations support and advance diversity?
   - How are educational programs and curriculum enhanced?
   - How do we ensure that we are recruiting and retaining the best and brightest Minnesota students, as well as outstanding students nationally and internationally?

**Writing-enriched Baccalaureate Degrees.** Our task force’s recommendations are founded on the idea of writing-enriched baccalaureate degrees across majors; outstanding students will be drawn to the University because undergraduate writing across the disciplines will be a strong and visible part of our “brand.” We believe that this approach will correlate positively with improved retention and will increase student satisfaction and student learning. This innovative approach to research and pedagogy will also allow the University to attend to the needs of a diverse student body. All students, whether they are non-native speakers, under-prepared students, or students with strong academic backgrounds, will take a core writing curriculum to give them tools to excel as they progress through a well-sequenced curriculum that develops and hones their writing and critical thinking skills. We will also be positioning the University as an innovative leader in writing studies at the national and international levels.

**Improved Student Outcomes.** Central to our recommendations is the idea that a strengthened study of writing at the University of Minnesota will yield graduates who are better able to take on the challenges and opportunities of life after college. Students will be able to graduate with the knowledge that their work at the University has prepared them for the future. Our recommendations call for a challenging, well-sequenced curriculum to keep students progressing through their degree. Our recommendations call for a cohesive approach to writing and writing research through Writing Studies, which will permit much deeper analysis of student achievement and sound pedagogical practice to benefit students at the University. Increased attention to writing studies will allow us continually to monitor student progress and take full advantage of the latest in writing innovations, technologies, and pedagogical models to ensure student success. The recommended research agenda for Writing Studies includes increasing our
ability to assess student satisfaction rates and achievement outcomes, in parallel with responding to the expectations of communities outside the University.

2. **Recruit, mentor, reward, and retain world-class faculty and staff who are innovative, energetic, and dedicated to the highest standards of excellence.**

- How do the task force recommendations support diversity?
- Are strategic academic directions and funding streams identified?
- How do the recommendations reduce barriers to and actively advance interdisciplinary research and teaching?
- How do the recommendations reduce barriers to and actively advance national and international research collaborations?
- How do the recommendations provide for an environment that will attract, support, and reward faculty engaging in path-breaking research, world-class creative work, and innovative teaching?
- How do the recommendations provide strategies for identifying and attracting faculty and staff of the highest quality and potential?
- How do the recommendations provide for an environment that challenges, mentors, and inspires outstanding faculty and staff?
- How do the recommendations recognize and reward distinguished performance and reputation?
- How do the recommendations retain outstanding faculty and staff?
- How do the recommendations provide strategies for enforcing across the University the standards for excellence articulated in the Tenure Code?

**Culture of Innovation.** Faculty and staff interested in improving undergraduate education will find a specific commitment to that effort in our recommendations. Diverse faculty across disciplinary interests will be assured of a rewarding and innovative model for research and writing instruction that emphasizes interdisciplinarity and cross-campus collaboration. This innovative approach identified in our report builds a new framework on our existing expertise and resources and promotes new and revelatory exchanges. Writing Studies will promote teaching and research collaborations, both across campus and across institutions. Our recommendations also identify a new academic journal that will further define the University as a center of excellence for new and important research on writing and writing instruction. Additionally, more faculty will be a part of teaching writing and involved in the departmental plan for writing within their curricula. For teaching and research, our recommendations seek to create a rich and rewarding faculty environment that will attract and retain individuals committed to educational excellence and innovation.

**Culture of Excellence.** Our recommendations seek to create a culture that values and rewards excellence in teaching writing and teaching with writing. They are grounded in a belief in strong professional development for all instructors across campus and supported by an existing desire for such an approach. Our constituents value increased emphasis on and opportunities for
professional development and innovation to both reward existing faculty and staff and help recruit new individuals eager to be part of a dynamic institution with a lively writing culture that encompasses both teaching and research. These recommendations also expand opportunities for instructors to collaborate and establish mentorships across campus. We identify in our report specific ways to recognize and reward excellence through Writing Studies awards. We further recommend adding excellence in writing instruction to the Tenure Code and as a consideration for merit pay. Our recommendations also reward excellence and provide compensation commensurate with responsibilities so that faculty and staff are encouraged to teach in innovative ways with writing.

3. **Promote an effective organizational culture that is committed to excellence and responsive to change.**

- What metrics are in place to assess our progress, and what are the most meaningful measures?
- How do the task force recommendations improve University quality and increase its responsiveness to change?
- How do the recommendations engage faculty, staff, and students in the work of transforming the organizational culture?

**Organizational Excellence.** The recommendations outline a staged process through which all areas of campus—from students to faculty and staff, academic departments to administration—will be involved in embedding writing throughout the curriculum. Students will first see this through an expanded first-year composition experience and seamlessly coordinated tutoring opportunities; faculty and staff will have richer professional development opportunities for writing instruction, greater rewards for excellence in their work, and a clearer communication that writing is a key priority for the University. Transforming an organization’s culture is a task that requires sustained and deep-rooted effort across organizational levels; we believe our recommendations promote just such a transformation.

**Responsiveness to Change.** Systematic evaluation of writing at the University is proposed as a main element in the recommendations. Writing Studies would coordinate analysis of student writing and writing instruction. Assessment would become an ongoing process that would allow for pedagogical innovation and improved outcomes for students in all disciplines. It will also allow for greater responsiveness to emerging needs related to writing and analytical skills, both from the K-12 sector and the post-baccalaureate academic and professional worlds.
4. **Exercise responsible stewardship by setting priorities, and enhancing and effectively utilizing resources and infrastructure.**

- How do the task force recommendations result in cost savings?
- How do the recommendations result in administrative efficiencies?
- Do the recommendations identify space needs and a proposed resolution to such needs?
- How do the recommendations integrate financial accounting systems?
- Do the recommendations provide a plan for sufficient research infrastructure to accommodate current and future academic directions?

**Setting Priorities.** In this report, our Task Force has identified a phased implementation plan, in which we have identified priorities within our recommendations through both a near- and long-term focus. This phased implementation allows for decisive strokes that can immediately invigorate our strategic efforts while still allowing for a thoughtful and consultative process that can effect lasting, substantive change with broad buy-in by our constituent groups.

**Leveraging Resources.** Our Task Force’s recommendations promote leveraging the University’s existing strengths in writing; this will result in efficiencies and cost savings, but more importantly build on and deepen existing areas of excellence. Writing Studies and central leadership will promote a coordination of effort and resources. Additionally, the new research infrastructure afforded by Writing Studies will bring faculty across campus together and promote further academic growth and innovation. While this effort will need ongoing funds to develop fully, it essential to fulfilling our mission of institutional excellence. The recommendations further suggest increased coordination between various tutoring and student support services. In this way, increased coordination will yield increased efficiency and efficacy for students.

5. **Communicate clearly and credibly with all of our constituencies and practice public engagement responsive to the public good.**

- Is there a plan for effectively communicating these recommendations internally?
- Are the development plans aligned with the academic priorities?
- Can alumni and friends of the University embrace and invest in these recommendations?
- How will we test the effectiveness and reach of our messages?

**Communication with Constituencies.** The Baccalaureate Writing Initiative is founded on the value of being responsive to our constituencies, both within the University and the broader public. Specifically, our recommendations call for a substantial collaboration of students, faculty, and staff to embed the writing-enriched baccalaureate deeply within the University culture. Writing Studies and central leadership will work to increase collaboration and communication, and Writing Studies will similarly bring together various areas of study. An Advisory Council of faculty, staff, students, and outside experts will ensure that our recommendations are effectively communicated. Our plan calls for the coordination of efforts by various academic, student
support, and institutional research areas to better support the learning outcomes for students at the University.

**Responsive Public Engagement.** The stated priority that motivated the task force is being addressed in innovative and responsible ways. Our recommendations encourage greater responsiveness to needs related to writing and writing preparedness from both the K-12 setting and the broader academic and professional worlds. We recommend expanding our existing partnerships in these areas to ensure that our undergraduates receive the education to prepare them solidly to enter public and professional life. In addition to University support, the Baccalaureate Writing Initiative will pursue endowment funding and other external means of support both to enhance the work done on campus and crucially to reach out to alumni and friends of the University and make them stakeholders in this approach. By making a strong commitment to writing across baccalaureate degrees, the University strengthens its land-grant commitment to preparing educated citizens fully able to take part in and shape public life.
Appendix B. Writing Trajectory through the Four-Year Curriculum

The following outlines a proposed approach for a four-year writing trajectory that would meet the recommendations of this report.

Required first-year (Freshman) composition

First-year composition students are required to explore diverse contexts and styles of reading and writing, develop a process of writing, and practice disciplines of research and study. Research has shown that students best improve their writing in small classes, with frequent commentary from instructors. These goals are shared by the General College Writing Program, the Composition Program in the English Department, and the Rhetoric Department and would be by Writing Studies.

Students who are fully prepared to write successfully in a course that focuses on university-quality writing, critical reading, and research will fulfill a one-course composition requirement. Students who are not adequately prepared will fulfill a two-semester composition requirement.

No student at the University of Minnesota will be exempt from taking a first-year composition course, unless they have taken an equivalent university course that demands research-based writing. Those who are exempt under current formulas will take one course in intermediate expository writing before the end of their third semester to prepare them for future assignments.

Students who do well on tests such as the ACT and have excellent grades in high school are often able to write fluently and carefully, but they have not yet written college-level academic arguments nor used the rich research sources of a university library. Many honors students fit into this category. The required intermediate composition course will prepare them for future assignments.

Questions have been raised about whether transfer students need a bridge course to be prepared for the writing and research demanded in major programs. These questions should be addressed by those developing the new curriculum.

Required second writing course within the first three semesters

In addition to fulfilling the first-year composition requirement (one or two courses), students will take at least one other course with writing instruction during their first three semesters, so they have a full year of introductory coursework.

This new requirement will often be met by an introductory course in a discipline that is designated Writing-Intensive with a Council for Liberal Education designated theme or diversified core. Other options will be defined. These may include Freshman seminars or new courses that reinforce and extend the work of the composition courses. They will be within a more closely defined area of study, within which analysis and research approaches are further
developed and sharpened. These courses bridge required composition and upper-division writing intensive courses.

It is likely, and it is desired, that students will take more than one course that meets this requirement.

**Writing instruction in general-education courses and courses for majors**

Students will need to work with their departmental advisor in order to craft and meet a plan for meeting the departmental requirements for writing. General education courses are often quite large; direct instruction and evaluation of writing is done by graduate teaching assistants, usually meeting with relatively small numbers of students in recitation or laboratory sections. These courses are usually the first contact that students have with writing, critical reading, and critical thinking in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. About half of the enrollments in current Writing-Intensive courses fit in this category.

Courses for majors are often much smaller. Significantly, for majors in the College of Liberal Arts and engineering majors in the Institute of Technology, one of the courses involves a senior project or design project. These are seminar size and taught by the faculty. A central goal for students at the start of the major is to introduce them to the research methods, library and laboratory resources, and the critical reading of scholarly writing. Seniors actually conduct research, and write about it in longer papers using the forms of inquiry, analysis, and argument appropriate to the field.

The goals and practices of writing instruction in the two types of courses are quite different. The differences should be taken into account as departments develop baccalaureate writing plans for their majors, and when they consider what assignments and response and evaluation approaches are most appropriate for general education students.
Appendix C: Benefits for Students and Teachers in Reducing Class Size

Currently, the maximum class size differs across the three first-year writing programs at the University of Minnesota. General College’s courses are capped at 17, Rhetoric’s at 22, and English Composition’s at 26. One of the simplest ways to bring consistency to first-year writing instruction here would be to have one maximum class size for all regular first-year writing courses. One of the most significant improvements to the student experience in those courses, including learning outcomes, would be to have the cap set at 20 students. Sections for non-native speakers of English and for under-prepared students should have a cap of 15.

As the National Council of Teachers of English notes, “class size matters” because student “achievement increases significantly in classes of fewer than 20” (NCTE). Best practices in writing instruction involve structuring a course so that students write often, frequently revising previous drafts based on response from their peers, but also their instructor. Such instructor response is not a quick matter of marking errors and assigning a grade—rather it involves engaging the text and student writer in a dialog about ideas, purpose and audience, matters of form and style, as well as conventions of genre and correctness. These issues, which nearly all writers new to the demands of college-level writing need to consider, are best engaged not in one overwhelming response, but in stages. This means that effective teaching of writing often involves multiple responses to an assignment by the writing instructor. With four major writing assignments in a typical first-year writing course, as well as frequent smaller assignments, instructors may read and respond to an individual student’s writings between 12-20 times over the term. Even assuming “only” 12 responses, this is a significant amount of time on the part of the instructor. While brief, informal writings may take only five minutes of response time, longer texts typically require at least 20 minutes for experienced instructors, usually more for less experienced instructors.

Students in smaller writing classes will benefit in the following ways:

• Students will receive more response--and more substantive response--to their written work from their instructor. Instructor response prompts students to reflect critically on their thinking and their writing, and to engage in revision that leads to gains in writing effectiveness.

• Students will receive more individual instruction, not only in the form of written response to their writing, but in the form of individual writing conferences with their instructor. The tutoring that happens in a writing center is effective in large part because it constitutes individualized conversation with students about their writing. Individual writing conferences take significant investments of instructor time, however.

• Students can feel most personally connected to a large university in small classes where the instructor knows their names and regularly engages in written and spoken dialog with them. Although the teaching of writing happens in a classroom, the most effective writing instruction in any course often happens on an individual basis, in the dialog and critical reflection that an instructor’s response to a student’s writing provokes.
• Students will learn from writing instructors who have more time to prepare for the other aspects of their teaching, more time to reflect on their teaching, and more time to pursue professional development opportunities.

References


Appendix D. Universities and Colleges Whose Writing Programs Were Studied by the Task Force

1. Harvard University
2. Indiana University
3. Louisiana State University
4. Michigan State University
5. University of Hawaii
6. University of Illinois
7. University of Iowa
8. University of Michigan
9. University of Missouri
10. North Carolina State University
11. Ohio State University
12. Penn State University
13. Purdue University
14. Stanford University
15. University of Texas
16. University of Washington
17. University of Wisconsin
18. Washington State University
Appendix E. Looking Forward: Important Themes Outside the Scope of this Task Force’s Immediate Charge

1. Spoken, visual, digital, new media, and other forms of literacy

According to Ron Bleed, in *Visual Literacy in Higher Education*, “Today's environment is highly visual—television, Web sites, video, and images dominate our lives—and visuals created with new technologies are changing what it means to be literate. The literacy of the 21st century will increasingly rely not only on text and words but also on digital images and sounds.” To address this issue, some institutions have implemented what is called “communication across the curriculum,” which includes instruction and practice in formal and informal speech, visual literacy, technological and digital literacy, and other areas.

Based on our research for this report and the mission we were assigned to address, we have focused only on writing. The National Commission on Writing, in its three major reports, confirms our recommendation, noting in particular the power of writing as part of the thinking and analytic process and the amount of writing done in the workplace. In the workplace and at the university, writing is the main form of communication, especially with the rise of email, text messaging, and global collaborations that rely primarily on the written word. In some cases, it would be appropriate for individual departments to look at speech and digital technology courses as part of their curriculum. In the future, after the Writing Initiative is in place, the University should explore ways to include more broad communication requirements, based on national models and informed by desired outcomes.

2. Portfolios

Portfolios are useful for capturing students’ writing from the time they matriculate through graduation. We find this an attractive possibility, and we are aware of efforts to make this happen at the University of Minnesota Duluth. We are also aware of the print-based portfolio in the Program for Individualized Learning, and commend it as a model.

We encourage departments to use the portfolio for their majors. At this point, the charge of attending to writing is sufficiently challenging for the University to implement in the next few years.
Appendix F. Current Requirements and Elements of Writing Programs at the University

F1. Current Undergraduate Writing Curriculum*

Composition Program, English Department, College of Liberal Arts
First-Year Curriculum (4 credits)
1001 – Preparation for University Writing (not taught recently)
1011 (H) – University Writing and Critical Reading
1012 (H) – University Writing and Critical Reading: Perspectives on Multiculturalism
1013 (H) – University Writing and Critical Reading: Nature and Environment
1014 (H) – University Writing and Critical Reading: Contemporary Public Issues
1015 (H) – University Writing and Critical Reading: Perspectives on Globalization
1016 – University Writing and Critical Reading: Community Learning and Civic Engagement
Notes: These are alternatives. “Critical Reading” was added at semester conversion in the titles
and as an emphasis in the courses. 1012-1015 originally had Council for Liberal
Education themes, but those were dropped. There are special sections for Non-Native
Speakers [NNS], and the College in the Schools program.

Also
1021 – Intermediate Expository Writing (4 cr.)
3027 – Advanced Expository Writing (4 cr.)
3029 – Professional Writing (4 cr.)
Notes: The English Department has a full curriculum in creative writing (fiction, poetry, creative
non-fiction) at the 1-, 3-, and 5-levels, but not a major.

General College
First-Year Curriculum (all courses for 3 credits)
1421 – Writing Laboratory: Basic Writing
1422 – Writing Laboratory: Communicating in Society
1423 – Writing Laboratory: Community Service
1424 – Writing Laboratory: Communication in a Diverse Society
Notes: Commanding English Program (NNS) sections of these courses are offered.
1422-1424 are alternative second courses; one is needed to complete the requirement.
College in the Schools offers 1421.

Also
1041 – Developing College Reading (2 cr. NNS)
1042 – Reading in the Content Area (2 cr. NNS)
1051 – Introduction to College Writing: Workshop (2 cr. NNS)
1085 – Academic Development Seminar: Supplemental Instruction in Composition
(1 cr.)
1573 – Introduction to Word Processing (2 cr.)

* Nearly all of the courses listed here are WI (Writing Intensive). First-year composition is not;
it is booked as a separate requirement.
Rhetoric Department, College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences

First-Year Curriculum (4 credits)
1101 – Writing to Inform, Convince, and Persuade
Also
1001 – Introduction to Scientific and Technical Communication (2 cr.)
1152 – Writing on Issues of Science and Technology (4 cr.)
3562 – Technical and Professional Writing (4 cr.)
4561 - Editing and Style for Technical Communication (3 cr.)
5664 – Science Writing for Popular Audiences (3 cr.)

Senior Projects and Advanced Composition Requirements

College of Liberal Arts (samples)
Some departments have courses to support the paper itself: Anthropology 4013 – Senior Project; Art History 3971 – Major Project; History 4961 – Major Paper; Linguistics 4901 – Senior Project; Psychology 3902 – Major Project.
Other departments have seminars: Economics 3951 – Major Project Seminar; English 3960 – Senior Seminar; Geography 3985 – Senior Project Seminar.
Note: History 3980 – Supplemental Writing in History (1 cr. added to another course)
Note: Journalism has several courses focused on written reporting – mostly for majors

Institute of Technology - Senior Design Projects (Engineering majors have senior projects, titles vary; the science majors do not.)
AEM 4331-4332 - Aerospace Vehicle Design I & II (3 & 4 cr), Bio-Based Products Engineering 4501-4502 - Process & Product Design I & II (2 & 3 cr), Biomedical Engineering 4001W-4002 Biomedical Engineering Design (3 cr. each); Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering 4114 – Capstone Design Project (4 cr.); Chemical Engineering 4501-4502 - Process Design I & II (3 and 2 cr.); Civil Engineering 4102 – Capstone Design (3 cr.); Computer Engineering 4951 – Senior Design Project (2 cr.); Electrical Engineering 4951 – Senior Design Project (2 cr.); Geological Engineering 4102 – Senior Design (3 cr.); Materials Science and Engineering 4400 – Senior Design (3 cr.); Mechanical Engineering 4054 – Senior Design Projects (4 cr.).

Carlson School of Management
Requires Business Administration 3033 – Business Communication (3 cr.)
Business Administration 3101 (1 cr.) – complement to BA 3100.

College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences
Requires Rhetoric 3562 Technical and Professional Writing (4 cr.)

College of Human Ecology
Clothing Design 4196 - Internship in DHS (3 cr.); Family Social Science 4296 - Field Study (4 cr.) or 4294 - Research Internship (4 cr.); Food Science – capstone component; Graphic Design 4365 - Senior Seminar (4 cr.); Housing Studies 4196 – Internship; Interior Design 4608 - Interior Design Thesis (6 cr.); Retail Merchandising 4196 Internship (3 cr)
### F2. Current Elements of Writing Programs at the University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Personnel, Logistics and Funding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year writing</td>
<td>• General College (2-semester sequence, also has smaller Commanding English sections)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• English Department (1-semester, variety of themes)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rhetoric Department (1-semester)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• College in the Schools (both GC and English versions) [Shared objectives, but essentially 3 separate departmental programs in terms of curriculum, staffing, and training]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing-intensive requirement</td>
<td>• Courses proposed by individual instructors and approved by Council on Liberal Education [Some courses, such as senior projects, are proposed by departments. Colleges have veto power over proposals and vary in how much it is used.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• WI Instructional funds distributed to colleges by Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Colleges decide use of funds and WI course sizes and TA loads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing courses for English Language Learners</td>
<td>• ESL courses offered by ESL Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Non-native speaking composition courses offered by English Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intermediate and advanced composition courses</td>
<td>• Offered by the English Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business writing courses</td>
<td>• Two courses offered by Undergraduate Program in Carlson School of Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- BA 3100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- BA 3101W (1-cr supplemental writing course similar to Hist 3980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical writing courses</td>
<td>• Offered in the Department of Rhetoric: Scientific &amp; Technical Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Writing</td>
<td>• Provides one-to-one writing instruction and workshops for students; professional development workshops and consultations for instructors; research grants for those studying writing across the curriculum; an interdisciplinary graduate minor in Literacy &amp; Rhetorical Studies; and professional development for pre-K–college teachers throughout the state through the Minnesota Writing Project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Housed in CLA, but open to all members of the University community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Writing Consultants</td>
<td>• Center for Writing with support from Provost, to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Personnel, Logistics and Funding</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>program</td>
<td>provide professional development and support for all instructors teaching with writing and to encourage departmental/collegiate discussions about effective WI at the U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Additional professional development for TAs and faculty who teach WI classes | • Various colleges and departments have own courses and training systems  
• Center for Writing August Teaching with Writing seminar  
• English department graduate course on Theories of Writing and Writing Instruction; courses in College of Education, Rhetoric Department  
• Center for Writing’s Teaching with Writing workshops and consultations  
    Center for Teaching and Learning Services workshops |
| General College Writing Center            | • Offers one-to-one writing instruction (both face-to-face and online).  
• Serves primarily General College students, and has formal connection to Commanding English. Open to all University students.  
• Part of General College Academic Resource Center, which includes a computer lab and Math Center |
| SMART Commons                             | • Multi-disciplinary learning Center sponsored by COAFES, CNR, CHE, and the Libraries and based on St. Paul campus. Includes face-to-face and group tutoring in many subjects as well as the University’s Online Writing Center. Open to all students. |
| Outreach to K-12 system                   | • College in the Schools (GC and English)  
• Center for Writing’s Minnesota Writing Project (site of the National Writing Project), provides summer teacher institute as well as full-year in-service workshops, consulting, and research throughout the state |
| Research in writing studies and writing across the curriculum | • Done by faculty and staff throughout the University  
• Center for Writing’s research grants in Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines  
• Literacy and Rhetorical Studies graduate minor |
Appendix G. Selected Comments from Students, Faculty, and Others

Writing Across the Curriculum

• “Graduate level writing (ex. course: Research Methods) prepared me well with regards to technical writing for research” and to “develop critical analysis skills”.
• “Important! Crucial skill for thesis / dissertation writing; critical for contributing to scientific research.”
• “Best experiences: research projects that fine-tuned assembly of research and review processes. I appreciate courses using the writing model in which students submit drafts of projects and learn about revisions to advance a higher level of writing.”
• “There’s not a logical pattern as to how you learn to write at the U. You can take a 3000 level English class as a freshman, and have never taken an English structure class that covers things like grammar because they assume you’ve taken care of that in high school. Sometimes they don’t even look at grammar in papers, just content. I’m confident because that’s my major, but I’ve always got to backtrack – I’m always going through the MLA handbook and going back to basics.”
• “Revisions are so important. You should never have to turn in a paper without a chance to revise it.”
• “How do we build the sense among faculty/staff that we all share, to some extent, the responsibility for the writing outcomes we expect for students?”

Writing Centers

• “I’m a new graduate student. As an international student, I really want to get feedback about my papers from qualified native speakers. When I attended the orientation for writing class for non-native speakers, I heard about this lab. I would like to express my deep thanks to < > because she gave me very clear instruction. I learned a lot about writing critique. Today, during the presentation with the paper, I could be very confident about my paper due to her help. And the professor and other classmates clapped their hands after my presentation. I will definitely visit and hope to work with < > again. Thanks.”
• “The writing center is a useful and important resource for our students--especially those in a writing-intensive course. It is a place where they can go to get feedback on grammar and the stylistics of their compositions. For second language acquisition, this is especially important. Often times, the best feedback is through one-on-one (person-to-person) help that cannot be replaced with the simple use of a dictionary or other tool. Information about a language and/or culture that a native or near native speaker can share is not always found in a textbook or dictionary. It is an important resource to have available to all”.
• “The Spanish Writing Center has increased awareness within our student population of the paramount importance placed by the faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies upon clear, concise and effective formal writing in Spanish. Further, the Spanish Writing Center's full-time appointees maintain flexible hours allowing students to work on papers and compositions on their own schedules throughout the week and not solely in class or during their instructor’s office hours.”
“The students from my course that have visited the Writing Center this semester have had major improvements in their writing, especially with sentence structure and verb tenses. They have also helped them with organizing their thoughts for the assigned compositions.”

**Freshman Composition**

- “From an Instructor’s Perspective: They [students] need to learn how to argue, how to critically read and review, how to write scientifically, what the business world expects of them etc. They really need 2 semesters of writing before they can attack 3xxx level “W” courses.”

**Writing Intensive**

- “I was a journalism major and I feel it was those courses, which prepared me for work after college. There I learned how to be concise and accurate. Grammar and editing was also enforced more than in other classes. That type of curriculum left me best prepared.”
- “The write-rewrite is very important because it gives the students feedback on their writing. Having just graded the "rewrite" of the first lecture-based writing assignment, I can say that many of the students benefited greatly from the feedback they got both from instructors and peers.”
- “Many writing opportunities in lecture, recitation, and lab give the students ample experiences writing in science. I find that students have difficulty focusing their writing on the assignment, writing in a scientific way (no frills, just the facts), and supporting their statements with data (the lab portion of the course.) Over the course of the semester, we see major improvements in most students.”
- “The TAs, based on the first batch of papers, all agree that the peer review process (both individual, detailed written reviews and more general small group discussions) was very beneficial. They feel optimistic about student ability to make use of instructor feedback. All also praised the student writing center as a helpful addition.”
- “Teaching a writing-intensive course continues to be an incredibly time-intensive activity for the instructors and TAs. I know the students are benefiting greatly, but the impact [is] overwhelming for many.”
- “TAs need to be trained in scientific writing and in the science so they can catch scientific errors that are due to misunderstanding the science vs. just bad writing vs. a combination of the two.”
- “Fewer students for each instructor or TA, giving more time for detailed responses to written work and individual dialogue with students.”

**Application of Writing Skills in the Community**

- “Oral and written communication skills are high on our screening list for new hires.”
- “Based on my experience, I wonder if students need more practice at lower levels of education not only in writing but in giving their thoughts and opinions on topics, in critically evaluating and in persuading. Having to do this builds skills in organization and provides a reason to learn to write and write well. Maybe this would be a good intervention point for the university—to develop a presence in Minnesota schools that would encourage these skills”
Writing Skills Sought in Graduate School
From Professor Judith Prescott, Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of French and Italian

In response to the question, to what documents do you pay chief attention in making your decisions about admitting doctoral students?

We are most impressed by the writing sample and the letter of interest, assuming that the candidate has an adequate G.P.A. and good G.R.E.s. The writing sample tells us two things: what the candidate’s command of written French is and how he or she reflects (critically, uncritically, with a level of sophistication, etc.) on literature or culture.

And, what are the qualities of writing that you look for in your most promising candidates?

We are interested in creative thinking—questions that students ask about a text or about their topic—and how well they are able to work with texts. We look for good analytical skills in general and skillful textual analysis in particular. We note especially evidence of theoretical knowledge, but it is not a requirement since many undergraduate French program do not have a theory requirement. But applicants should be capable of expressing abstract thoughts and relate those abstractions to the text or cultural phenomena under study. They should also be aware of audience in constructing their arguments.
Appendix H. Consultation and Communication

Stakeholders:
People with interest in the writing programs at the University of Minnesota include (but are not limited to) teachers of writing, teachers in all disciplines, undergraduate students, graduate students, first year students, honors students, students needing developmental writing support, international students, instructors who work with non-native speakers of English, student advisors, program directors and evaluators, and employers.

To get input from all these stakeholders, we followed the following Consultation Plan.

Consultation Plan:
The writing task force divided itself into four working groups, each focusing on a major area of writing concern: 1) first year writing and other dedicated writing courses; 2) writing intensive courses and writing across the curriculum; 3) writing instruction outside the classroom; and 4) University-wide leadership, research, accountability and assessment, and future directions.

Each working group, led by two or more task force members, invited additional people (10-12) to participate in the process. Each working group examined key questions, local and national models, best and worst practices, and specific data around these areas.

Working group members were selected by, first, taking advantage of the many people who volunteered but were not chosen to be on the task force. We also contacted Deans or Associate Deans in colleges that taught more than 2% of all writing intensives courses taught at the University, and asked them to suggest faculty in their colleges that have an interest in writing. All suggested faculty were contacted.

Task force members, who were chosen because of their broad interests and connections, were asked to suggest other members, both faculty and students, who would have something valuable to contribute to their working group, with an awareness of getting input from a wide variety of sources. In addition, each working group member was encouraged to consult widely and act as a conduit to bring in ideas from their colleagues.

Input was also sought from the teaching cohorts--lecturers and graduate instructors in English, education specialists in General College, adjunct faculty and graduate instructors in Rhetoric, and tutors in various writing centers.

The co-chairs of the task force talked with Deans and with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.

We identified corporate employer contacts by looking at the largest employers headquartered in Minnesota. Contacts at these companies were sought through professional relationships and
academic liaisons. Employer representatives were contacted through phone interviews and conference calls.

We also attended a number of open forums. We also collected input through the web-based Strategic Positioning Feedback mechanism and we coordinated with the other undergraduate reform task forces to organize Town Hall Meetings.

**The Four Working Groups**

1. **First Year Writing and Other Dedicated Writing Courses**
   Task Force leaders: Thomas J. Reynolds and Lesley Lydell

   **Members:**
   - **Maureen Aitken**  
     Senior Teaching Specialist, General College
   - **Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch**  
     Rhetoric/COAFES, Directs 1st year writing (Rhet 1101)
   - **Bradley G. Clary**  
     Clinical Professor and Director of Applied Legal Instruction, Law School
   - **Malaika Grant**  
     University Libraries General Instruction Coordinator for Humanities and Social Sciences
   - **Tim Gustafson**  
     Associate Director, English/CLA Composition
   - **Sheryl Holt**  
     English/CLA, Coordinator of non-native speakers composition courses
   - **Marianna Mendez**  
     PhD student in Rhetoric/COAFES, graduate teaching assistant and interim coordinator for Rhet 1101
   - **Robin Murie**  
     Director of Commanding English Program, General College
   - **Clancy Ratliff**  
     PhD student in Rhetoric/COAFES, graduate teaching assistant for Rhet 1101
   - **Geoffrey Sirc**  
     Professor, General College
   - **Muriel Thompson**  
     Center for Writing/CLA, Minnesota Writing Project/College in the Schools
   - **Bill West**  
     Adjunct instructor Rhetoric/COAFES, co-directs technical writing (Rhet 3562W)
2. Writing Intensive Courses and Writing Across the Curriculum
Task Force leaders: Thomas Kuehn, Neil O. Anderson, and Karyn Van Erem

Members:
Judy Beniak  Program Director, AHC
Laurel Carroll  Provost’s Office, CLE
Pamela Flash  Associate Director, Center for Writing
Ann M. Jones  Director of Undergraduate Studies, Nursing
Holly Littlefield  Senior Lecturer, CSOM
Bernadette Longo  Associate Professor, Rhetoric
Leslie Schiff  Professor, Microbiology/CBS
Leslie Sharkey  Associate Professor, Veterinary Medicine
Julia Robinson  Professor, Architecture

3. Writing Instruction Outside the Classroom
Task Force leaders: Kirsten Jamsen and Daphne Walmer

Members:
Linda Clemens  Director, Online Writing Center; Ph.D. student in Rhetoric; member, SMART Commons Advisory Group
Renata Fitzpatrick  Writing consultant and specialist in working with non-native speakers, General College Writing Center
Kit Hansen  Instructor, Non-Native Speaker Composition Program, English; writing consultant, Center for Writing
Debra Hartley  Coordinator, General College Writing Center
Claire Joseph  Undergraduate student (Journalism/English)
Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch  Associate Professor, Rhetoric; former director, Online Writing Center
Julia Kelly  Librarian, University Libraries; member, SMART Commons Advisory Group
Katie Levin  Assistant Director, Center for Writing
Maria Emilce Lopez  Coordinator, Online and Spanish Writing Center, Spanish and Portuguese Studies
Dan Obst  Undergraduate student (Political Science/Psychology)
Merry Rendahl  Staff to Task Force; former director, Online Writing Center
Jerilyn Veldof  Director of Undergraduate Initiatives, University Libraries
Steve Wang  Undergraduate student (Economics/Computer Science)
4. University-Wide Leadership, Research, Accountability and Assessment, and Future

Task Force leaders: Laura Gurak, Patricia Hampl, and Donald Ross

The two task force chairs along with Professor Hampl addressed the following: meetings with deans, associate deans, councils of chairs, dean’s councils, and related groups; organizational and structural considerations; budgets; “connecting the dots” between our key ideas and between other task forces (e.g., connecting ideas about writing centers to the Student Services task force).

List of Meetings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>Arlene Teraoka, Associate Dean, CLA</td>
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<td>Writing Group, led by Associate Provost Craig Swan</td>
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<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>CLA Council of Chairs chair, MJ Maynes</td>
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<td>Program for Individualized Learning, CCE</td>
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<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Writing Group, led by Associate Provost Craig Swan</td>
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<td>College in the Schools composition teachers</td>
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<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>Focus group on writing and digital literacy</td>
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<td>E-mail comments from teachers of large WI courses</td>
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<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>Council of Undergraduate Deans</td>
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<td>Oct. 21</td>
<td>New College Council</td>
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<td>Robert Kudrle, CLA task force co-chair</td>
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<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>Focus group with composition students</td>
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<td>Student Academic Success Services</td>
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<td>College Student Affairs Administrators</td>
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<td>Instructors of large WI courses</td>
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<td>Institute of Technology Directors and department heads</td>
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<td>Arlene Teraoka, Associate Dean, CLA</td>
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<td>Senate Committee on Educational Policy</td>
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<td>Nov. 3</td>
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<td>Nov. 8</td>
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<td>Writing researchers</td>
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<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td>Ed Schiappa, Chair, Communication Studies</td>
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<td>Center for Teaching and Learning Services</td>
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<td>Richard Beach, Professor of Education, writing pedagogy</td>
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<td>Writing Group, led by Associate Provost Craig Swan</td>
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<td>Professor Elaine Tarone, English as a Second Language program</td>
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<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>Council for Liberal Education</td>
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<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Rhetoric Department faculty</td>
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<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Journalism school faculty</td>
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**Town Hall Meetings**, scheduled in conjunction with Undergraduate Reform task forces:
- October 14, Academic Advising Network at Nolte Center
- October 17, Career Development Network at Nolte Center
- October 25, Faculty and Staff at Carlson School of Management
- October 25, Alumni at Continuing Education Conference Center
- October 26, Faculty and Staff at St. Paul Student Center
- November 1, Students at St. Paul Student Center
- November 8, Students at Coffman Union

**Data Evaluated; Other Input**
- Writing program websites (national)
- National reports and research on writing (see portal for a full list)
- 2004-2005 U of Minnesota Senior Exit Survey questions on writing
- Statistics about writing instruction and writing intensive courses at the U of Minnesota
- Information about financial support for Writing Intensive programs at the U of Minnesota
- Information on enrollments and other matters related to dedicated writing courses
- Active Voice, a blog on writing at the U of Minnesota created for this task force
- Comments received through the web-based feedback form on the Strategic Positioning web page
Appendix I. Charge Letter (from the Provost) with Attachments

September 15, 2005

TO: Provost’s Academic Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing
Laura Gurak, Co-chair, Professor and Head, Department of Rhetoric, COAFES
Donald Ross, Jr., Co-chair, Professor, Department of English, Language/Literature, CLA
Neil O. Anderson, Associate Professor, Department of Horticultural Science, COAFES
Patricia Hampl, Regents Professor, Department of English, Language/Literature, CLA
Kirsten Jamsen, Director, Center for Writing, CLA
Thomas Kuehn, Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IT
Leslie Lydell, Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, CEHD
Tom Reynolds, Associate Professor, GC
Karyn Van Erem, Undergraduate Student, Department of Rhetoric, COAFES
Daphne Walmer, Director of Technical Communications, Medtronic

FROM: E. Thomas Sullivan, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

RE: Provost’s Charge to Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the academic strategic positioning Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing, under the leadership of co-chairs, Laura Gurak and Donald Ross, Jr. The efforts of this task force will be critical to the overall success of the University’s transformative strategic positioning effort.

Attached are documents that, taken together, comprise the charge to your task force.

• Attachment A contains an articulation of the University’s overall goal and assigns to the task force the responsibility of retaining an “eye on the prize.” Each of the issues identified in Attachment A, which is part of the charge of every task force, must be addressed.

• Attachment B contains criteria to be addressed by each task force. These criteria are drawn from the action strategies identified in the strategic positioning report Advancing the Public Good: Securing the University’s Leadership Position in the 21st Century (February 2005). It is critical that each task force consider how its work can further each of the five broad action strategies.

• Attachment C contains the mission and deliverables specific to your task force, along with the date on which your task force report and recommendations are due.

• Attachment D contains the criteria for decision making, taken directly from the February strategic positioning report. Each task force should use these criteria as a framework for decision making.

• Attachment E contains a diagram of the process to be used by each task force. Note in particular the periods of required consultation with stakeholders.
There are a number of resources available to you as you pursue your charge. These include the professional staff member assigned specifically to assist your task force, the Resource Alignment Team, a toolkit of documents and templates, and the professional staff of University Relations appointed to facilitate internal and external communication of progress through the strategic positioning process. The Resource Alignment Team is a consulting group charged with providing support to all task forces in the areas of cross-functional alignment, change management, and subject matter expertise as needed. Support also is available from the Steering Committee for your strategic area. Finally, Leanne Wirkkula has been appointed to serve as a liaison between the academic task forces and me. Leanne will be able to help task force co-chairs access needed support and assistance. Leanne may be reached at (612) 625-0563, wirkkula@umn.edu.

The success of your task force will depend upon creative, forward-looking thought that maintains constant focus on the broad goals for the institution as a whole rather than the self interest of particular individuals or groups. Your effort will require consultation with all potentially affected stakeholders, from deans to students and everyone in between. It will require dedication and persistence. And together with the work of the other task forces, it will help guide the University on our journey to become one of the top three public research universities in the world.

Thank you for accepting this important challenge. I look forward to meeting with you at the kick-off work session hosted by President Bruininks this Friday, September 16.

Attachments: 5

c: Craig Swan, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
   Merry Rendahl, Staff to the Task Force on Undergraduate Reform: Writing
   Sharon Reich Paulsen, Assistant Vice President and Chief of Staff
   Leanne Wirkkula, Assistant to the Provost
The February 2005 strategic positioning report, *Advancing the Public Good: Securing the University’s Leadership Position in the 21st Century*, announced that it was the University’s goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world. The report explained that, “[i]n reaching toward our goal, we continually will advance our vision, which is to improve the human condition through the advancement of knowledge.” On March 11, 2005, the Board of Regents unanimously endorsed the strategic positioning report and the goal it articulated. Consider how the recommendations of your task force will contribute to the institutional goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world.

- How should success in achieving your mission be defined and measured?
- What are potential incentives to achieving success?
- What are potential barriers to success? How can these barriers be overcome?
ATTACHMENT B

Alignment with Strategic Action Areas

Achieving our goal to be one of the top three public research universities in the world requires an academic and fiscal accountability framework and operating assumptions to drive the long-term strategic planning process for all campuses of the University of Minnesota. As it develops recommendations specific to its topic, each task force must consider the five strategic action areas identified in the strategic positioning report, Advancing the Public Good: Securing the University’s Leadership Position in the 21st Century:

1. **Recruit, nurture, challenge, and educate outstanding students who are bright, curious, and highly motivated.**
   - How do the task force recommendations improve student results, including retention and graduation rates, learning, and satisfaction?
   - How do the recommendations support and advance diversity?
   - How are educational programs and curriculum enhanced?
   - How do we ensure that we are recruiting and retaining the best and brightest Minnesota students, as well as outstanding students nationally and internationally?

2. **Recruit, mentor, reward, and retain world-class faculty and staff who are innovative, energetic, and dedicated to the highest standards of excellence.**
   - How do the task force recommendations support diversity?
   - Are strategic academic directions and funding streams identified?
   - How do the recommendations reduce barriers to and actively advance interdisciplinary research and teaching?
   - How do the recommendations reduce barriers to and actively advance national and international research collaborations?
   - How do the recommendations provide for an environment that will attract, support, and reward faculty engaging in path-breaking research, world-class creative work, and innovative teaching?
   - How do the recommendations provide strategies for identifying and attracting faculty and staff of the highest quality and potential?
   - How do the recommendations provide for an environment that challenges, mentors, and inspires outstanding faculty and staff?
   - How do the recommendations recognize and reward distinguished performance and reputation?
   - How do the recommendations retain outstanding faculty and staff?
   - How do the recommendations provide strategies for enforcing across the University the standards for excellence articulated in the Tenure Code?
3. **Promote an effective organizational culture that is committed to excellence and responsive to change.**
   
   - What metrics are in place to assess our progress, and what are the most meaningful measures?
   - How do the task force recommendations improve University quality and increase its responsiveness to change?
   - How do the recommendations engage faculty, staff, and students in the work of transforming the organizational culture?

4. **Exercise responsible stewardship by setting priorities, and enhancing and effectively utilizing resources and infrastructure.**
   
   - How do the task force recommendations result in cost savings?
   - How do the recommendations result in administrative efficiencies?
   - Do the recommendations identify space needs and a proposed resolution to such needs?
   - How do the recommendations integrate financial accounting systems?
   - Do the recommendations provide a plan for sufficient research infrastructure to accommodate current and future academic directions?

5. **Communicate clearly and credibly with all of our constituencies and practice public engagement responsive to the public good.**
   
   - Is there a plan for effectively communicating these recommendations internally?
   - Are the development plans aligned with the academic priorities?
   - Can alumni and friends of the University embrace and invest in these recommendations?
   - How will we test the effectiveness and reach of our messages?
ATTACHMENT C

Undergraduate Reform: Writing
Report Due: December 10, 2005

Mission:

To provide world-class, comprehensive writing instruction throughout the undergraduate years, with a goal of ensuring that every undergraduate upon graduation can write sustained, analytical papers with clarity, coherence and grace in the context of his or her major area of study.

Deliverables:

- Recommendations regarding how to create a research-based model with one mission and central direction to establish the University of Minnesota as a national leader in undergraduate writing in all of its forms, including freshman writing, technical writing, writing across the curriculum, senior writing projects, and tutoring.
- Recommendations regarding a plan to ensure that the importance of writing and opportunities for written communication are emphasized across the University and are integrated into undergraduate education across disciplines, programs of study.
- Recommendations on how to design, organize, and structure a campus-based writing program that leads and coordinates writing across colleges and departments.
- Recommendations for creating a clear set of expectations for proficiency and assessments in writing, across all colleges, for undergraduates at various stages of their education.
- Recommendations regarding the structure of writing intensive requirements, expectations for writing intensive courses, and appropriate levels of support.
- Recommendations to clarify the relation between writing intensive courses and other courses and assignments (e.g. senior design projects or papers) that involve significant writing.
- Recommendations regarding the organization of the freshman writing curriculum, other writing courses (such as technical writing) and how to encourage the widespread involvement of the faculty in writing instruction.
- Recommendations regarding the leveraging of resources across academic units to support the writing initiative.
ATTACHMENT D

Criteria for Decision Making

If the University is to become one of the top three public research universities in the world, and to achieve excellence in our coordinate campuses and other programs, we must more clearly align the University’s mission to each of its colleges, departments, and other academic units as well as administrative functions and units. We need to ask what the essential support needs to be for core teaching, research, and public engagement and which programs and services no longer fit within our goals, reasonable expectations, and resources.

In order for the University of Minnesota to stay strong and vibrant we must be able to review programs and establish priorities based on well-established criteria. The criteria below, established over the past 20 years at the University, continue to provide a solid framework for such reviews. These seven criteria, taken together as a unified whole, offer useful measures to assess and improve the University.

1. **Centrality to Mission:** A program or service is more highly valued if it contributes significantly to the core mission of the University.

   Each program or service should be evaluated in terms of its contribution to the University’s core mission. Centrality, or proximity to the core mission, is measured by the degree to which a program contributes to the following inter-related mission components:
   
   - Teaching and learning should be an essential component of a high-quality, holistic undergraduate education or a high-quality graduate/professional education focused on deepening and broadening knowledge for the welfare of society.
   - Research, discovery, and creative work should contribute significantly to the University’s overall excellence in creating and advancing knowledge and helping to stimulate and sustain related work elsewhere in the institution.
   - Public engagement should relate to the University’s teaching and research missions and make significant connections between the needs of Minnesota, its citizens, the nation, and the world, and the University’s knowledge-based resources.

   Funding of programs and services critical to the University’s mission should be a priority.

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Key Questions

A. To what degree is the substance of the activity pertinent to agreed-upon program needs, goals, and mission?
B. How essential is the program or activity to the University’s core mission?

2. Quality, Productivity, and Impact: A program or service should meet objective and evaluative standards of high quality, productivity, public engagement, and impact.

Traditional measures for evaluating programs in higher education should be rigorously applied. For example, the quality, diversity, productivity, public engagement, and impact of the faculty and staff can be measured by peer national ratings, publications, outside funding, surveys, competitive awards, community impact, and other indices that describe important results and impact. The University also must more fully develop its own benchmarks (through the University’s annual Accountability Report) for measuring quality, productivity, public engagement, and impact.

Key Questions:

A. What are the most appropriate measures to apply?
B. Are measures being applied consistently and transparently?
C. How do we measure the quality of a program or service?
D. How do we measure output, taking into account a blend of qualitative and quantitative assessments?
E. What is the impact of the program or service? How far does it reach?

3. Uniqueness and Comparative Advantage: A program should be evaluated based on characteristics that make it an exceptional strength for the University compared to other programs in Minnesota or at other peer institutions.

The University is committed to maintaining areas of distinctive strength that academic and administrative units have built over the years while recognizing new areas of potential advantage, particularly in interdisciplinary initiatives. This criterion is focused on high-quality foundation programs and services that build on the needs and resources of Minnesota, the nation, and the world as well as areas where further investment will yield significant return in intellectual quality and capital.

Key Questions:

A. What is the rationale for the program/service at the University of Minnesota?
B. Is the program/service a strength of the University in comparison to peer institutions?
C. Does the program/service contribute to the comparative economic or cultural advantages of Minnesota?
D. Is the program/service an essential component of a unique synergy of ideas and activities?
E. What would the loss, reduction, addition, or expansion of the program/service mean to the University, the state, and the region?
4. **Enhancement of Academic Synergies:** A program/service should be organized to promote and facilitate synergies that build relationships and interdisciplinary, multicultural, international and other collaborations.

Programs and services should be structured to leverage and create new synergies and do so in a cost-efficient manner. Dynamic, accountable organizational structures can result in additional resources for the highest priority activities while creating efficiencies to maintain core academic programs at a lower overall cost. This requires careful, strategic combinations of resources that enhance natural connections.

*Key Questions:*

A. Will the proposed structure add value to the intellectual climate of the program/service as well as creating cost savings?
B. Will the proposed structure better serve students, staff, and/or faculty?

5. **Demand and Resources:** Evaluation of a program or service should consider current and projected demand and the potential and real availability of resources for funding program or service costs.

Evaluation should include short- and long-term projections of change in demand for each program or service. Other indicators might include demographic and financial trends, number of applications, quality of acceptances, services performed in support of other programs, degrees awarded, instruction of students, or research undertaken for the solution of pressing problems of society. Programs or services should also be evaluated based on a reasonable generation of resources and to meet costs.

*Key Questions:*

A. Do accurate measures project a rise or fall in demand for this program or service over the long term?
B. Considering the University’s core mission, is there a need for the program, as distinct from a simple measure of demand for the program?
C. Does the program or service have sufficient resources to support it?

6. **Efficiency and Effectiveness:** A program or service should be evaluated based on its effectiveness and how efficiently it operates.

Programs and services should be operated to efficiently and effectively adapt to ongoing changing circumstances internally and externally. Consideration should be given to whether existing administrative functions and responsibilities could operate more efficiently and effectively through shared resources (e.g., student service at multiple levels, business processes, etc.). Consideration also should be given to leveraging human capital to most effectively use the special talents and expertise of faculty and staff. A critical aspect in evaluating programs/services is whether they achieve valued results and impact, in mission-related activities, in relationship to their costs.
Key Questions:

A. Can valued functions be performed at less cost within a new structure or with the aid of alternative strategies (e.g., technology)?
B. Will functions be performed more efficiently and effectively at the unit level, with shared coordination among units, or system-wide?
C. Are the organizational outcomes achieved at acceptable levels of quality and cost?
D. What is the next best alternative use of the resources?
E. Does the program have a clear business plan and a balanced budget?
F. Does it deliver service at the right level, in a timely manner, and at the right cost?
G. Are we identifying core competencies and assigning responsibilities and designing structure based on them?
H. Are decisions being made at a level where there is expertise, experience, and information?

7. Development and Leveraging of Resources: Any new or existing program or service should be evaluated on its potential to develop new resources and leverage existing resources.

Resources needed to support academic research, education, and public engagement are derived from a wide range of public and private sources, and may include more than monetary resources. Ongoing evaluation of priorities and related, internal shifts of resources to areas of higher priority may be required.

Key Questions:

A. Will a revised or new program create new opportunities to expand the University’s quality and range of public contributions?
B. Is the program strongly connected to other academic units so that resources and opportunities are expanded for research, education, and connection of the University to public needs?
C. Are there opportunities for additional resource growth and leveraging that we are not taking advantage of?
D. Are revenues placed in the most appropriate organizational setting to achieve desired results?
ATTACHMENT E

Strategic Positioning Implementation Process

Academic Task Forces

Timeline

September-October 2005
Charge task forces
Seek input from key stakeholders
Consult with Steering Committee

November-December 2005
Analyze input from stakeholders
Seek input from key administrators regarding resources to support ideas
Executive Strategic Positioning Team

Mid-December 2005-Early January 2006
Consult with Steering Committee
Develop strategic directions report
Public comment

January 2006-forward
Finalize strategic directions

September 12, 2005
Office of the President