

Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum
Southwestern Community College

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Number 8

A note from the WAC Coordinator:

I am excited to announce that I will be moving into a full-time English instructor position in the Spring semester. This allows me to be in the classroom more, and I truly feel that teaching and working with students is what I do best. I am looking forward to the transition, even with all the new challenges it presents!

This move means that this will be the final WAC newsletter you will receive from me. I have enjoyed writing about writing over the past five and a half years, and I hope that you have been able to take something useful from these issues.

While I am shifting in the position I hold at the college, the WAC program will continue to run under the Academic Support division. We have developed a culture of writing here at SCC, and I'm eager to see that culture continue and grow.

Thank you for all of your support of student writing and learning!

Jennifer Hippensteel

Making the Invisible Visible, Part III Key Issues Facing Your Field

Each professional field has particular current issues facing it, whether it be the development of new technologies, the challenges of a weak economy, or new techniques and competencies. As instructors, we can use these issues and developments to encourage students to think deeply about what the field values and what they may encounter as professionals. We can develop rich learning opportunities that give students a chance to practice in the classroom what they will face in their careers.

Teaching Students About Key Issues in Your Field

This final installment in the “Making the Invisible Visible” series involves identifying key issues in your discipline and then using them to provide students an authentic, deep learning experience in your classroom. Remembering that our students are novices in our fields, we can intentionally design assignments that have students engage with the current issues facing our various disciplines.

The first step in making these issues visible is to identify for ourselves what

the key issues are that are facing professionals in our fields. What are those shifts or developments that are crucial to being successful in your field? Has your field undergone a “sea change” recently that affects how you prepare students?

One key way to identify these issues is to look at the research and publishing that is being done in the professional journal(s) in your discipline.

Once you have identified those key issues in your field, you can then design

assignments around those issues, giving students space to explore them, digest them, and think critically about them with your guidance.

Case studies are an effective way to have students engage in real-world scenarios. The benefits of case studies are numerous, but one clear benefit is that they allow students to engage with challenging situations in a safe, guided environment. Having students write about their responses or advice they may give regarding particular cases allows students to

engage deeply with the critical issues present in the case. This takes students’ understanding of the issues to a much more authentic level than mere lecture or discussion ever would.

We pride ourselves on preparing our students for their careers or continued studies. Considering how to engage students with critical challenges and issues in our fields allows us to prepare students who are ready to succeed in their disciplines.



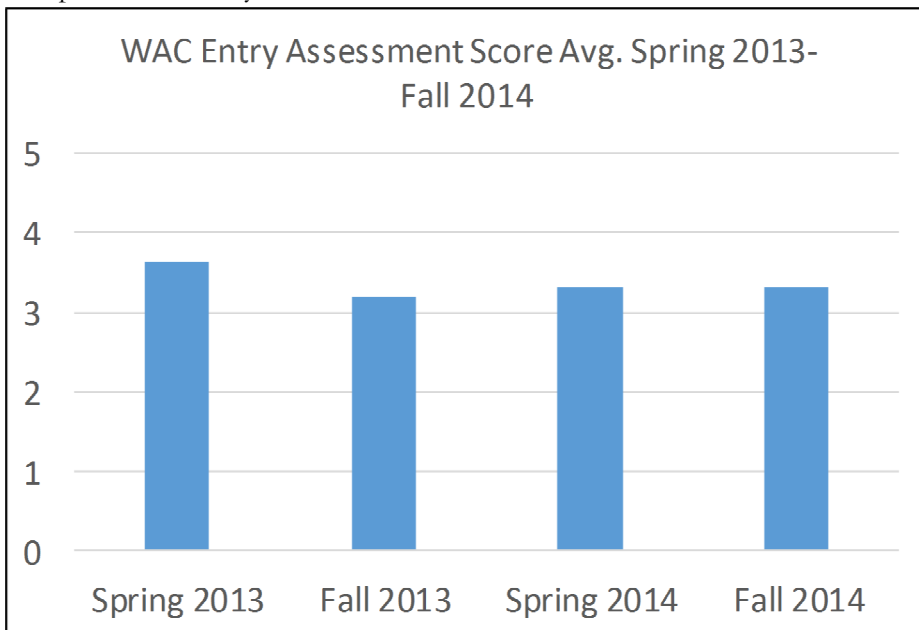
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WAC Assessment Data, 2012-2014

Graph 1 WAC Entry Assessment Data



The graphs to the left represent the average scores on WAC Assessments over the past couple of years. It should be noted that Entry Assessments are conducted every semester. Exit Assessments are gathered only in the Spring when more students are completing capstone projects or writing assignments in their second-year courses.

The Entry Assessments (Graph 1) over the time period presented averaged overall a 3.36. On the WAC Rubric used to score these assessments, that average score falls in the “ineffective/limited” range.

The Exit Assessments (Graph 2) from the same general period averaged overall a 4.18. On the WAC Rubric, that average score falls in the “adequate” range.

A broad trend in the assessment data is that students increase at least one point on the WAC rubric on average between entry and exit here at SCC. This improvement in writing skills would not be possible without all of you and your dedication to student writing, thinking, and learning.

Thank you for the work you do!

Graph 2 WAC Exit Assessment Data

