A Writing Intensive Learning Community (WILC) is a course pairing in which both courses are focused on teaching the habits of mind and writing conventions of a specific field. One course, usually an English 102, is taught by a Writing Fellow, and the other, usually a 100- or 200-level course that introduces a particular discipline, is taught by a faculty member interested in developing strong writing habits among his or her students. For example, a WILC consisting of an English 102 and a Linguistics course is currently teaching the habits of mind and writing conventions of Linguistics by having each student invent and describe her/his own unique language. As of now, the WILCs are a pilot project administered by the Department of English, the College of Arts & Sciences, and University College, with participation from faculty in the School of Law, the Department of Emergency Medicine, and the School of Fine Arts. Faculty from various disciplines have expressed strong interest in teaching future WILCs, pending continuance of the program, including Sustainability Studies, Women Studies, Africana Studies, and Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies (LLSS).

As a pilot program, the WILCs are in the process of gaining coherence, which includes developing a guiding philosophy and a set of teaching and learning outcomes. A current draft of each is included below. It should be noted that these values and outcomes are for the program as a whole, and that current WILC courses are not required to adhere to them because they are being developed as the courses themselves are offered for the first time. However, the final assessment of the pilot program will recommend future actions according to how closely the pilot courses are able to adhere to and achieve these outcomes.

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Guiding Philosophy

A short list of observations and values form the purpose and justification of the WILCs:
- Participation in learning communities³ and guided, meaningful writing tasks⁴ increase students' overall engagement and success.
- Cognitive and personal development among students is more likely when instructors make priorities of "student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning."⁵
- Transferring knowledge and skills from one course to another, particularly when they are in different fields, is hard for students. But they are more likely to do so when cross-disciplinary faculty work together to make skill-transfer a Learning Community goal.
- Student success is tied to instructors' high expectations,⁶ an important element of which are the higher-order learning skills encompassed in "integrative learning."⁷

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Courses and curricula that emphasize the value of human diversity, including ethnic, cultural, and disciplinary diversity, which further includes methods of inquiry from different fields and subfields, increase likelihood of students' academic and professional success.  

**Teaching-Partnership Goals for Instructors**

- Instructors will articulate to one another and to students the habits of mind that are most valued in their field of study.
- Instructors will articulate practices of knowledge-making of the disciplinary communities.
- Instructors will articulate how these habits of mind relate to the writing practices, such as genre conventions and rhetorical moves, most relevant to students being introduced to their field.
- Instructors will work together to create assignments that help students understand, develop and articulate these field-specific habits of mind and writing practices.
- To facilitate transfer of students' skills between and beyond WILC courses, instructors will show students how their fields' habits of mind and writing practices both overlap with and are distinct from those of other fields.
- To facilitate transfer of students' skills between and beyond WILC courses, instructors will help students identify the cross-cultural literacies they already possess, and to use this knowledge to facilitate their transition into academic discourse communities.

**Learning Goals for Students (in addition to course outcomes specified by departments)**

- Students will articulate their progress on the habits of mind and writing practices, such as genre conventions and rhetorical moves, valued in their field of study.
- Students will use methods of posing questions, finding answers, and presenting their findings, that are appropriate to their field of study, and they will reflect on these methods.
- Students will use and reflect on a variety of methods for planning, pre-writing, composing and revising in order to find a writing process that works best for them.
- Students will articulate how the writing skills they learn in their WILC can be applied to other areas of their academic, professional and civic lives.
- Students will discuss the rhetorical nature of Standard Written American English (SWAE), recognize and revise departures from it in their own writing, and discuss the consequences and value of these departures in different rhetorical situations.

**A Brief Guide to WILC Teaching Partnerships**

From the long-running FLC program, national scholarship on Learning Communities, and even from the single semester of WILCs, we’ve observed a number of things that teaching partners can do to achieve the goals of the program and to maintain satisfying working relationships for everyone involved. Below are a set of general principles and more specific recommendations for teaching partners. These are important enough to the program that if you have serious reservations about or don't understand any of them, please discuss this with your teaching partner or a program administrator.

- **First and foremost, the WILC partnership is a collaboration of equals.** Even though many pairings will be between a graduate teaching assistant or assistant professor and an associate or full professor, in the context of WILC-related duties these hierarchical designations are not relevant. Generally, one member of the partnership will bring a deep knowledge of writing, writing pedagogy, and the professional habits of mind of successful writers, while the other will bring a deep knowledge of a particular discipline and the habits of mind of its successful
practitioners. For students to reach the WILC's learning outcomes, both instructors need the knowledge that the other has.

- **All course materials for both WILC sections should be created collaboratively.** This does not mean that every handout and lecture must be crafted with both partners present. It does mean that the courses' most conspicuous documents—syllabi and major and minor assignments—should be constructed and delivered by each instructor with the knowledge of what the other is doing and how these assignments and activities contribute to the WILC as a whole.

- **This unity of instruction and the reasons behind it should be communicated to students.** Communicating this to students should have a number of positive effects: First, students will know that their instructors are collaborators on a shared project, not isolated instructors teaching separate classes. Second, students will better understand how the contents of each course relate to one another, which should result in increased likelihood of their transferring the skills learned in one course to the skills needed in the other. Third, students will understand that the high expectations for participation, professionalism and engagement that instructors hold for them (and for themselves as teachers) are equally true for both courses.

- **Communication between instructors should continue through the whole semester.** This need not be onerous, particularly if pre-semester planning has been particularly detailed. At a minimum, WILC instructors should talk about how students are progressing toward course goals and how they have responded to particular assignments and activities. Instructors may also want to change things they had planned before the semester started in response to student needs. And it's a good idea for instructors to attend one another's classes when possible, to enhance actual and perceived unity between the courses.

- **If the partnership is hard or not working, talk with each other, and talk with us.** For most of us it takes years to find a set of teaching practices that work for us and for our students. Because collaboration necessarily shakes up these practices, the adjustment can be difficult. It is not uncommon for partners to have a hard time conforming their teaching strategies to those of another person, finding time to talk or meet, or even understanding and respecting the terms of another discipline. When these difficulties show themselves, be open about discussing them with your partner, and don't hesitate to contact us to talk via email or set up a meeting.

**The Life of a WILC: A Planning Timeline**

Here is a brief description of what prospective instructors will likely need to do in order to participate in successive stages of the WILC Pilot Project, from first expressing interest to assessing the courses. **Please note,** first, that because this program is the pilot stage, this section is the most speculative in this packet. With that understanding, the below steps are based on the assumption that, because of the university scheduling calendar and the necessity of attending a WILC workshop, the earliest an instructor would teach in a WILC would be two semesters after initially expressing interest. If interest is expressed in a Fall semester, an instructor would attend the Spring WILC workshop and teach the course the following Fall.

1. **Expressing initial interest in teaching a WILC:** If the above statements of philosophy and teaching and learning goals resonate with you, please contact Dr. Michelle Hall Kells, Special Assistant to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (mkells@unm.edu), or Dan Cryer, Writing Fellows Coordinator (dcryer@unm.edu), to express your interest in teaching a WILC. From there we will arrange a meeting. At our meeting,
   a. **…if you are a faculty member,** we would like to hear about the course you would like to teach in the WILC: What discipline is it in? What learning outcomes do you have for your students? What habits of mind and writing conventions must students learn in your class? How much time and energy do you have for a teaching collaboration?
b. **...if you are a Graduate Teaching Assistant**, we would like to hear about your training as a writing instructor, your experience with UNM's ENGL 101 & 102 student learning outcomes, and your philosophies on teaching and collaboration.

2. **Informing your Director or Chair**: To preclude any conflicts with your department's mission and scheduling, and with your own long- and short-term goals and duties, please discuss your participation in the WILC with your Director or Chair. She will likely have questions about the program and its purpose and goals. Feel free to share our contact information and anything from this packet with her.

3. **Pairing with your teaching partner**: Whether you are a faculty member or a graduate teaching assistant, we will match you with an appropriate teaching partner and provide you with one another's contact information so that you can meet. We will also provide you with a set of guiding questions for your first meeting to help you stay on schedule with course planning. If you would like the Program Director or Senior Writing Fellow to attend your first meeting, we will gladly do so.

4. **Scheduling your WILC**: WILC's will be scheduled back to back, ideally in the same classroom and certainly in the same building. We will work with you and your department to make sure your course time does not overlap with other obligations you may have.

5. **Attending the WILC Workshop**: At the beginning of each semester we will hold a 1/2-day workshop with a handful of mini-lectures on program outcomes and best practices and at least an equal amount of "hands-on" time set aside for teaching partners to work together on building course materials. The focus will be on activity and team building, not on passive information-transfer.

6. **Collaboratively planning your WILC**: Over the course of the semester (and break) between the workshop and the beginning of your course, you will have plenty of time to collaborate with your partner to plan your courses. We strongly recommend a "backward planning" approach in which you **begin by articulating your overall student learning goals** (some/most of which will likely be defined by your respective departments and the WILC program's above-stated goals). After this is done, we recommend proceeding in the following order, making sure at each stage that the goals of both courses and instructors are consistently aligned:
   a. Plan each course's final, culminating assignment so that each reflects the learning goals of its course.
   b. Decide what skills and habits of mind are necessary to successfully complete these final assignments, and plan each course's major assignments to teach these skills.
   c. For each major assignment, decide what skills and habits of mind are necessary to successfully complete it and design smaller, low-stakes assignments that teach these skills.
   d. Continue to work backwards to plan the classroom-level activities that will scaffold the low-stakes assignments.

7. **Turning in your syllabi**: On the Monday before your WILC classes begin, you and your partner must send your syllabi to the Program Director and Senior Writing Fellow. In addition to standard information like course policies, these should include, at minimum, a rough calendar that includes all major graded assignments, and a statement to students about the unity between the two courses and how the assignments help achieve this.

8. **Teaching your WILC**: Throughout the semester, you and your partner should maintain weekly contact about how your classes are progressing toward your goals, about the success of assignments and activities, and about any issues students may be having. Partners should try to attend one another's classes when possible. Also, you may co-teach in any given class period or devote both sessions on a particular day to one course's subject matter, provided that in the course of the semester this time is given back to the other course.

9. **Assessing the WILC**: Mid- to late-semester during your WILC, we will take one 75-minute class period to conduct a "Small Group Instructional Diagnosis," or SGID, in which we gather
impressions from your students, without either instructor present, about how the courses are
going. About a week after this is done, we will schedule a meeting with both instructors to
discuss the results. This is not meant to be a measure of instructor performance. Rather, it
provides a chance for students to discuss what they like about the course and what they are
unclear about or unsatisfied with. It also allows instructors to see what is working, what is not,
and to plan accordingly. A full description of the SGID process can be found here. Additionally,
at the end of the semester we will provide a brief questionnaire to all WILC students and
instructors to gather impressions about the full semester WILC experience. We will also ask for
one randomly selected student's anonymized final assignment from each WILC course for the
purposes of program assessment.

Contact Us
For further information, please contact Dr. Michelle Hall Kells, Special Assistant to the
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (mkells@unm.edu), or Dan Cryer, Writing Fellows Coordinator
dcryan@unm.edu). For further information about Writing Across Communities at UNM, please visit
http://www.unm.edu/~wac

Notes

1 Please note that creating this document for the WILC pilot project has required us to imagine, in the
most informed manner possible, what this program will look like when it is fully functional. Bringing the
things described here to fruition will take a large coordinated effort – we see this document as an early
step in that direction.
2 As of Fall 2012, WILCs always include an ENGL 102 course. 102 has been chosen over 101 because the
former focuses more heavily on performing research and crafting arguments from research. In addition,
102 students have learned the basic college writing skills taught in 101.
4 National Survey on Student Engagement. Promoting Engagement for All Students: The Imperative to
NSSE2008_Results_revised_11-14-2008.pdf> on 10-4-12.
minority serving institutions: Emerging lessons from the BEAMS project." In G. H. Gaither (Ed.),
Realizing the promise of greater expectations." Liberal Education, 90 (4), 24-31.
7 AAC&U (2008) LEAP: College learning for the new global century – Executive summary, with
employers' views on learning outcomes and assessment approaches. Pg 3.
8 Ibid, pg 11-12.