The Writing in the Disciplines Program and the Writing Center

Annual Report, 2010-2011

The Writing in the Disciplines Program serves faculty and students across the University of Vermont campus. For faculty, WID provides a range of professional development programs that support individuals and departments. For students, the Writing Center offers direct support for writing, most often one-on-one but also in groups. Within the Writing in the Disciplines Program, the Writing Center and WID exist as equal partners. This report highlights the accomplishments of the Writing Center and WID, summarizing the ways we have worked independently and together to provide support for both students and faculty. It addresses the following information:

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1 Since the Writing Center joined the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) Program in 2009, the name “WID Program” has referred to both the combined student support and faculty develop programs and to just the original faculty development program. In this report, we use “Writing in the Disciplines Program” to refer to the combined units and “WID” to refer to the faculty development program only.
Mission and History

WID and the Writing Center share missions dedicated to promoting writing across campus with a focus on undergraduate education.

WID’s mission is to make writing a significant part of undergraduate students’ education beyond the foundation of the first-year experience. In order to nurture a vibrant writing culture on campus, we work with departments as well as individuals. We partner with departments and programs in identifying how writing can be central to achieving learning outcomes for their majors. In addition, we offer open programming for faculty and graduate students who are interested in thinking about the ways writing works in their teaching. Started in 2008, the WID Program has been establishing itself on campus, building ties with individuals and units, becoming part of the campus' central infrastructure for faculty development.

The Writing Center’s mission is to help UVM students discover writing as both a fulfilling activity and a tool for effectively creating and communicating ideas—a tool that will help them excel while at UVM and after they graduate. While all students can benefit from talking with other writers, a target audience of the Writing Center is students making the transition to college-level writing. Many first-year students are surprised to discover that expectations for college writing are different from those they encountered in high school. Students coming to campus from diverse literacy backgrounds and/or with diverse ways of processing language may feel especially challenged. Created in 1983 as a Living/Learning faculty-designed program, the Writing Center joined with the TRIO/SSS Program in 1984 to form the Learning Cooperative, where it was located for 25 years. In July 2009, the Writing Center became part of the Writing in the Disciplines Program.

The Writing in the Disciplines Program and Institutional Priorities

In selecting highlights from this year’s report, we have featured ways that both WID and the Writing Center have contributed to core institutional priorities. Faculty development and direct student support for writing carry many inherent benefits for those who participate in them, of course, but it is also important to note the ways in which our programming helps support and develop institutional initiatives.

Developing and supporting general education

- **Support for students acquiring expertise in writing in the major:**
  We continued to pilot the WID Mentor Program, placing mentors in 13 classes and learning more about how WID mentors can support student writers and how to ensure mentors are used effectively.

- **Support for faculty who are developing and revising courses**
  We continued to offer a varied calendar of workshops, some in conjunction with the Center for Teaching and Learning, that address core topics in college pedagogy. The development of the Mini Institute format for workshops this year created opportunities for small groups of faculty to meet throughout the semester to address specific topics. This more in-depth model of workshop brings a new dimension to WID programming.
• **Participation in the work of the Joint Committee on General Education**
The WID Advisory Board sent detailed feedback on the evolving general education outcomes to the Joint Committee. Susanmarie Harrington was an active member of the Joint Committee in 2010-11.

• **On-line resources by students and for students on writing in a variety of majors**
We continued to transform tutor-created tip sheets on writing in various disciplines into on-line resources available to all students. Sue Dinitz received an Instructional Incentive Grant for 2011-12 to complete this project.

• **Research project investigating the role of disciplinary expertise in tutoring sessions**
Susanmarie Harrington and Sue Dinitz presented results of their research on disciplinary expertise and tutoring (approved by the IRB) at two conferences and then wrote an article based on their research which is currently under consideration by *The Writing Center Journal*.

**Supporting the first-year experience**

• **Support for first-year writing courses**
The Writing Center continued to support writing in English 1 and TAP classes, engaging these students in conversations about writing through 21 class workshops, 17 class presentations, and hundreds of individual tutorials.

• **Participation in the work of the First Year Experience Task Force**
Susanmarie Harrington served on the First Year Experience Task Force. With J. Dickinson, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, she developed programming targeted for teachers of first-year students.

**Internationalizing the student body**

• **Support for English Language Learners (ELLS)**
One of the Writing Center’s areas of focused effort and growth this year was in supporting English language learners. Through our new Writing Partners Program, 48 ELLs received regular tutoring, plus many additional ELLs made appointments at the Writing Center on their own. Just the group who came for 8 sessions or more accounted for 32% (613) of our individual tutoring sessions. We also provided tutoring support for a new course designed to help ELLs develop their conversation skills (English 95: Conversation Circles), and for the USPP Summer Bridge Program.

**Creating an engaging academic experience for students**

• **Opportunities for student writers to become more engaged with and through writing**
NSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement, has found that students who engage with others in the process of completing writing assignments report more deep learning occurring in the course of their studies. The Writing Center provided such an opportunity to 1,684 UVM students, in 3,929 contacts.

• **A service-learning experience for 45 tutors**
The Writing Center provided an opportunity for engaged learning for some of UVMs most outstanding students. In addition to tutoring in the Writing Center and through the WID Mentor Program, various tutors gave class presentations and workshops, presented at the International Writing Centers Association about their tutor exchange with the Fashion Institute of New York,
served as mentors for the Young Writers Project, wrote essays to be included in the common reader for English 1, and designed many new materials for our Writing Center.

- **Collaboration with other faculty development units**
  WID, CTL, and CUPS have organized informal meetings of faculty development units at UVM. In 2010-11, this informal network—still in search of a name—began meeting monthly with Associate Provosts Brian Reed and Rachel Johnson. Regular communication among faculty development units is crucial for supporting institutional initiatives, as well as for coordinating programming. In addition to offering co-sponsored workshops and supporting Blackboard Jungle 3, the professional development network collaborated on a successful application for a Burack lectureship for Fall 2011. Internationally recognized education scholar Stephen Brookfield will visit UVM in October.

**WID: Support for the Teaching of Writing**

**Establishing an Institutional Framework**

WID has now finished its third year of operation, and in that time has created an evolving model for WID that is suited to a campus whose curricular structures are in flux. The diverse nature of general education at UVM and the lack of a fixed structure for writing requirements across the curriculum means that WID has needed to adapt itself to the workings of different parts of campus. By creating quality workshops for faculty, seeking departmental partnerships, offering program tailored to the needs of particular constituencies (such as faculty teaching first year students) and participating to the fullest extent possible in the campus conversations about reshaping undergraduate education and assessment, we seek to prepare WID for expanding once the campus reaches clarity about how to institutionalize students’ writing experiences. Without such clarity, there is no external motivation for faculty or departments to work with WID, and our programs attract mainly those who are already motivated to attend to writing.

Our departmental partnerships and other programming have offered us the chance to create and revise a model for WID that is suited to a campus whose curricular structures are in flux. This model brings together expertise from WID with disciplinary expertise across campus in order to address the problems, opportunities, and challenges around writing identified by individual faculty members and/or academic units.

What has emerged from this balance is a model for WID that relies on the following assumptions:

- For now, effective WID work will grow out of faculty-identified local needs. In the absence of an institutional driver that organizes campus attention to writing, WID must be responsive to the experiences of faculty in the disciplines. Faculty who are already exploring changes to how writing works in their courses or units are ripe for collaborating with WID.

- WID workshops and departmental partnerships can be designed in order to provide resources and assistance for faculty-led curricular development, to help address problems that have emerged in the experience of teaching particular courses or challenges that emerge in the design of new ones, and to help departments assess how to proceed as they design new experiences for their students.
• The goals and design of particular advanced writing experiences emerge from faculty leadership in the disciplines. Successful WID partnerships rely on leadership within units, as both expertise from WID and expertise from the disciplines are necessary.

• Collaboration with other faculty development units (such as CUPS and CTL) is essential in order to maximize the effects of the limited resources each unit has and to assist faculty and departments with their work.

While the current campus climate means that WID must be responsive to whatever needs faculty and departments identify, it is important to acknowledge the core message at the heart of what WID brings to any activity. These fundamental assumptions about writing guide all our activities, and cannot be fully realized until an institutional framework for writing is in place:

• Serious engagement with a range of writing tasks across their experiences at UVM will position graduates to meet the personal and professional challenges of an increasingly globalized world. Well-designed writing experiences can help deepen students’ intellectual experiences on campus and prepare them for professional experiences in a global economy post-graduation.

• Writing is essential to achieving learning outcomes in every academic discipline. Writing is both a way to learn and a way to demonstrate learning, and is an important part of almost every profession.

In the past year, WID met its goals of developing more flexible programming that would attract new participants and continuing to connect with faculty and departments. Relationships between the faculty programming offered through WID and the student support offered through the Writing Center continue to thrive and develop.

**WID Programming**

A variety of WID workshops and other activities for faculty, graduate students and staff with teaching responsibilities helped expand conversations about writing. These conversations encourage reflection, pedagogical experimentation, and assessment. Our programming offers a mix of introductory and advanced sessions. Sessions like *Grading and Responding to Student Writing* introduce fundamentals of writing across the curriculum, while programs like the Mini Institutes allow participants to pursue interests in greater depth. In addition, conversations about writing within departments were supported by our continuing department partnerships. By promoting connections across departments as well as offering units the opportunity to have focused conversations about writing in their discipline, WID programming encourages faculty to become ever more reflective about their teaching. A total of 102 individuals (including 74 faculty members, 7 staff, and 20 graduate students) attended WID programming (see Appendix A for details). Eleven people from 9 different departments requested individual consultations with Susanmarie Harrington. In addition, WID presented to faculty at New Faculty Orientation, the Sustainability Fellows workshop, and other department meetings.

**Open Programming**

Open workshops offer instructors the chance to make connections across departments. This year, 82 individuals (including 54 faculty members, 7 staff, and 20 graduate students) from 31 departments took part in WID open programming which included:

• *Programming for Faculty Teaching First Year Students*

In addition to providing workshops for faculty teaching TAP and Honors College faculty, WID participated in programming for faculty teaching any course with a high number of first year
students. While WID’s mission focuses on writing in the disciplines, we are open to assisting with programs that support writing in the first year.

- **Writing and Diversity**
  WID continues to support Blackboard Jungle; this year we offered a workshop on writing assignments and universal design for learning.

- **GTA Programming**
  In collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning, we participated in the development of the Graduate Teaching Certificate Program. This program provides feedback and encouragement for graduate students as they explore ways various high impact teaching practices can be useful in their teaching. WID and CTL twice offered a workshop on teaching in higher education specifically for graduate students.

- **Collaborative Workshops**
  WID programming this year saw an increase in co-sponsored workshops. We worked with the Center for Teaching and Learning and Bailey/Howe Library to provide team-led workshops for faculty. These collaborations resulted in programming that better emphasized information literacy, assignment design, and principles for the universal design for learning.

Given the current absence of an institutional emphasis on writing throughout the curriculum, we found it difficult to recruit as many participants to our programming as we had hoped; some of our workshops were attended by only a few faculty or were canceled due to low enrollment. Still, attendance at open workshops overall increased from last year, with 82 individuals participating (some more than once), for a total of 104 contacts. We also reached faculty from a wider variety of departments, including Engineering, Economics, German and Russian and Animal Science. Faculty members motivated to attend our workshops were happy with the programming and reported that it was of great value to their teaching.

At the conclusion of every workshop, we ask participants to fill out an evaluation to help us assess the effectiveness of the activities and to solicit suggestions for additional programming. The 71 evaluations collected this year showed that participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the workshops. Virtually all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the workshop was valuable, that discussion helped them learn, that they would use ideas from the workshop in their teaching, and that they would recommend the workshop to others. Almost 90% of participants thought the workshop met their goals and balanced presentation, activities, and discussion well.

Participants were also asked open-ended questions about what element of the workshop was particularly helpful and whether there are any other activities, materials, or programs they would like WID to offer. The most common responses to the first question were that participants appreciated the chance to learn from and connect with colleagues in other departments, the practical tools and tips for teaching that were provided, the chance to expand or develop frameworks for teaching about particular concepts (plagiarism; assignment design, e.g.), and the importance placed on course goals. (More detail on workshop attendance and evaluations is given in Appendix A.)


**WID Institute**

The WID Institute, a four-day program in May, supports full-time faculty developing or revising an undergraduate course with a significant writing component. Participants develop a clear plan for the role of writing in the course, create assignment materials and class activities, and create assessment tools and strategies. This year, thirteen faculty from 10 different programs or departments in the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Arts and Science, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, Education and Social Services, and Nursing and Health Sciences participated. Particularly notable is the fact that this year we had to establish a wait list for the Institute! Also of note this year was a new emphasis on teaching information literacy, with a special emphasis on evaluation and use of quality sources. Follow-up activities in the coming year—beginning with a fall kick-off reunion in August—will enable participants to reflect on their experiences and guide the development of additional resources or follow-up activities as appropriate for the revised approaches to teaching with writing they will be implementing.

Faculty evaluation for the 2011 WID Institute was overwhelmingly positive. Of the 9 participants who have submitted evaluation forms so far, all strongly agreed that the Institute was valuable and that they would recommend the Institute to others. They all strongly agreed that the Institute met their expectations. Virtually all participants strongly agreed that the Institute balanced presentation, activities, and discussion well. Open-ended comments reinforced the key connections that the Institute made possible, as faculty praised the quality of the materials provided, the usefulness of connecting assignment design, course design, and program design, and the importance of learning more about the ways faculty in other departments address similar challenges and opportunities. Participants noted the quick pace of the institute, with some wishing more working time available for specific segments of the Institute. (More detail is given in Appendix B.)

In 2010-11, we held Institute reunion meetings for the 2010 participants. These meetings, at the beginning of the fall and spring semester, helped participants keep in touch with each other and enhanced participants’ teaching experience. We plan to continue this practice for the future.

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**Special Workshops, Programs, and Activities**

**Mini Institutes**

WID introduced a new type of program this year, the Mini Institute. These seminars allowed faculty interested in a given topic to gather multiple times during the semester; each group received a book to function as an anchor resource, and WID provided additional resources during the semester as participants’ questions arose. The fall Mini Institute focused on grading and responding to writing; the spring Mini Institute addressed writing in large classes. Each Mini Institute attracted some new participants to WID and also attracted more senior tenure-track faculty. The breadth of academic experience within each Mini Institute group, from lecturer to full professor, was greatly valued by participants.

“We'll see what the evals say, but from my perspective his was a teaching triumph. Giving myself permission to look for certain, pre-determined things in the student writing made the stacks of drafts and papers and portfolios much less intimidating.”

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Participants in the fall Mini Institute on Grading and Responding reported that they valued the opportunity to meet with a stable group of peers to explore a specific topic in some depth. The Mini Institute let faculty raise issues, use literature and best practices from the field to help frame problems and solutions, and consult with colleagues about how new approaches worked. They developed new ways of communicating expectations, new ways of describing expectations, and developed new approaches to grading and responding. Evaluation data from the spring Mini Institute on Writing and Large classes is not yet available.

New Faculty

WID joined the Fleming Museum, the Center for Teaching and Learning, Community-University Partnerships and Service Learning, and the Center for Cultural Pluralism in presenting at New Faculty Orientation. Working with George Kuh’s *High Impact Educational Practices* (conclusions drawn from analysis of decades of National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data), we introduced faculty to the high impact practices that can be controlled in the classroom—such as the provision of a writing-intensive environment—and illustrated the ways our offices can support work on those areas. This presentation brings current research to the attention of new faculty and offers the opportunity for interaction with the material and with colleagues. Continued collaboration among these offices during the academic year has resulted in plans for coordinated programming in 2011-2012.

Quantitative Literacy and Writing Series

In response to requests from faculty who teach statistics in several departments on campus, WID organized a 3-workshop series on quantitative literacy and writing. Topics addressed were assignment design, quantitative reasoning and assessment, and writing to learn. Attendance was low, but this was a first step toward programming that can engage faculty working in mathematics, statistics, engineering, and the sciences.

Summer Faculty Writing Workshop: Tuesdays at Twelve

In conjunction with the Center for Teaching and Learning, WID now offers space for faculty writing during the summer. Every Tuesday at noon, faculty are invited for a brownbag lunch, followed by three hours of quiet writing time. This program began in late May 2011 and will continue until classes begin. The opening weeks have been well-received.

Graduate Students and Teaching Writing

Although WID’s core mission involves supporting faculty, we have continued to collaborate with the Center for Teaching and Learning in order to provide support for graduate students interested in the teaching of writing. WID collaborates on the introductory workshop for participants in the Graduate Teaching Certificate Program (GTC), which was launched in Fall 2010. WID workshops are a partial requirement for the GTC Program.

Graduate Students and Teaching Writing

WID and the Center for Teaching and Learning share an interest in supporting faculty who are teaching students how to use sources and data appropriately and ethically. WID carried out a careful analysis of the plagiarism detection component of BlackBoard, SafeAssign. Testing SafeAssign’s functions and limits against published work and student essays, WID explored how SafeAssign might work in course contexts. Our basic finding: SafeAssign is reasonably reliable in assessing matches between students’
work if there is more than few minutes between submissions of students’ work, but SafeAssign is erratic and unpredictable in evaluating matches between students’ work and published source material. (See Appendix G for more detail.)

**Departmental Partnerships**

We have consistently sought opportunities to work with faculty in departments, looking at the ways WID can collaborate with groups of faculty to explore the relationships among teaching practices, writing, and disciplinary and professional expectations. These collaborations encourage faculty to identify the ways writing already functions as a natural process in the discipline, and seek to build on those disciplinary experiences to strengthen attention to writing across courses in the unit. This year, we pursued two new departmental partnerships and explored new ways those partnerships might function. Beginning with local goals, connected to work that is already underway in the department, is a promising strategy for forming new relationships with units.

**Department of History**

WID has worked with the Department of History since Spring 2009, when we began to support the department’s efforts to establish its Methods course as a requirement for all majors. In 2010-11, the department used the departmental profile WID had prepared to guide conversations about teaching. In order to support departmental assessment efforts, WID distributed another round of surveys for students in History senior seminars. Fall response rates (to an electronic survey) were poor, so in spring 2011 we moved to paper administration of the survey. Analysis of the data will resume in Fall 2011.

**The Department of Medical Laboratory and Radiation Sciences (MLRS)**

In 2009-10, WID and MLRS formed a partnership aimed at the following goals:

- Greater awareness of what writing expectations already exist in MLRS
- Development of resources to support teaching writing in MLRS
- Refinement/development of assignments, pedagogies, and expectations for writing in MLRS

The first step in this collaboration was the development of a writing curriculum map and writing profile for the department. In fall 2010, the department reviewed the profile and worked with WID to determine appropriate next steps. In Fall 2011, we will pilot a Mini Institute for a department, with a program for MLRS to focus on writing and English language learners.

**The Department of Psychology**

In 2009-10, the Department of Psychology invited Susanmarie to facilitate a workshop on responding to student writing and handling increased class size. Follow up work from this conversation led to a request for a departmental writing profile. WID research assistants helped organize and analyze data from two semesters worth of Psychology courses at the 100 level and above. The detailed profile (available in Appendix C) documents the extent of writing in undergraduate courses: writing, often extensive writing, is prevalent in the department, something that was a bit of a happy surprise to a department concerned with the effects of rising class size on writing instruction. The profile also reveals great clarity of values in the department. The literature review is clearly the pre-eminent genre for undergraduates to master. It is not only the most common assignment in the department, it is the assignment toward which many other assignments point.
The profile also identified some issues for the department to consider: the variation in assignment names and amount of writing assigned, and variation in some terms used to describe expectations. Follow-up work in 2011-12 will support the Psychology faculty as they determine how the profile can guide their curriculum development.

The TAP Program
The TAP Program provides first-year seminars for students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Susanmarie Harrington and Sue Dinitz met with CAS deans and staff to discuss how WID can support developing and implementing a plan for identifying the degree to which TAP classes as currently taught are writing-intensive. In 2011-12, TAP will be a program partner with WID and we will explore how WID can help support and extend professional development around writing in TAP.

Consultations
Tailored consulting workshops were offered with the Honors College (on grading and responding). Susanmarie offered 11 personal consultations to faculty seeking advice about writing assignments. In addition, Susanmarie and Sue Dinitz twice consulted with the staff in the College of Arts and Science on evolving support for English 1.

WID and General Education
WID was involved with the evolution of general education in several ways. Susanmarie Harrington was appointed to the Joint Committee on General Education in Fall 2010, after she participated in the UVM team attending the AAC&U conference on general education the preceding June. During the academic year, Susanmarie chaired the subcommittee tasked with developing models for general education at UVM—a subcommittee that redefined its task after it realized that models could not be developed without a clear sense of possible outcomes. Through the subcommittee and her work on the larger committee, Susanmarie provided resources relating to writing and assessment.

In addition, the WID Advisory Board evaluated the evolving general education documents and provided feedback to the Joint Committee about the ways in which writing in the disciplines might be enhanced by general education. The Board continues to support a flexible approach to writing in the undergraduate curriculum, so that departments are supported in attending to writing throughout the curriculum in ways that serve disciplinary needs. The Board also emphasized the importance of foundational writing experiences for successful disciplinary writing experiences. The Board views communication as the biggest gap in the current undergraduate experience and has expressed concern that the resource needs required to address communication skills could delay the implementation of new writing curriculum or requirements.

The Writing Center: Support For Student Writers
Talking with other writers is an integral part of the process of most successful writers. The Writing Center offers a place where any UVM student can get feedback and support at any point in the writing process. At the Writing Center, students engage in a wide range of activities, such as clarifying assignments and expectations, developing ideas, exploring ways to focus and shape an argument, sharing feedback on a draft, interpreting teacher comments, learning how to find and incorporate sources appropriately, creating more effective and powerful sentences, and finding an effective composing process. Concurrently, through carefully selecting and training outstanding students to be peer tutors, the Writing Center provides a rich service-learning experience for about 45 undergraduates each year.
The philosophical approach that guides the Writing Center in all of its programming is Universal Design. We have designed our spaces and services to be flexible, creating environments and employing strategies that are appropriate for a variety of learning styles and that serve the diverse need of each student without requiring any student to identify as “different.”

Overview of Use of the Writing Center 2010-11
Table 1 provides a snapshot of Writing Center usage this year. Through a variety of programming, writing tutors had 3,929 contacts with 1,684 students: 2,169 contacts through individual tutoring sessions, 609 contacts through group tutoring sessions, and 1,151 contacts through in-class workshops, resulting in a 6% increase overall in contacts with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of session</th>
<th>Open Programming</th>
<th>WID Mentor</th>
<th>Total Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Individual tutoring</td>
<td>1,929 (+10.5%)</td>
<td>240 (+3%)</td>
<td>2,169 (+9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Group tutoring</td>
<td>304 (+300%)</td>
<td>305 (-45%)</td>
<td>609 (+10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Class workshops</td>
<td>689 (-34%)</td>
<td>462 (+219%)</td>
<td>1,151 (-3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Contacts</td>
<td>2,922 (-5.7%)</td>
<td>1007 (+8%)</td>
<td>3,929 (+6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Individual tutoring sessions increased by 10.5% over 2009-10—an additional 183 sessions—most of which can be attributed to the new Writing Partners Program (see pp. 16-17).
- WID Mentor Program contacts increased by 8%, with about the same number of individual sessions as last year and a shift from group tutoring to class workshops.
- Group tutoring contacts increased by 10%, with less group tutoring by mentors but an increase in group tutoring through the Writing Center. Tutors worked with small groups of students in a new course designed to help English language learners practice their conversational English.
- Class workshop contacts declined slightly; fewer workshops offered through open programming were offset by more workshops conducted by WID mentors. The number of open programming workshops we offer always varies, and this year one faculty member who divides his large class into groups for workshops was on sabbatical, while another faculty member decided she only had time for our shorter presentation in her four classes.

A Service-Learning Experience for 45 Tutors
The 45 peer tutors are some of UVM’s most outstanding students, carefully chosen through an interview and application process after being recommended by a professor. The tutors then engage in extensive preparation. We carefully frame our tutor training as an academic learning experience, which begins with the two courses required of first-year tutors (English 104 and 105) and continues through regular staff development meetings both with second- and third-year tutors and with tutors serving as WID mentors. In addition to providing over 2000 writing consultations to students, tutors collaborated in the improvement and development of our services and participated in broader conversations within the field by presenting at conferences and creating materials for use in our Writing Center.

“My position as a writing tutor has given me experience that I could not have otherwise gotten in my university experience. Being in a position of authority, despite it being a kind of peer authority, has helped me to grow as both a student and as a person. It is a skill I do not otherwise develop much.” – Amanda Crisafulli
Some of the tutor highlights from this year include:

- All tutors earned certification through the College Reading and Learning Association at one of three levels (each level requiring a minimum of 10 additional hours of training and 25 additional hours of tutoring): 12 as "Regular" tutors, 13 as "Advanced," 12 as "Master," and 6 went a level beyond CRLA (and so were dubbed "Grand Masters").
- Ten tutors served as WID Mentors and helped us develop and evaluate that program.
- In November 2010, tutors Rachel Conrad and Sam Wakefield gave a panel presentation with tutors from the Fashion Institute of New York at the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing in Baltimore about our tutor exchange in Spring 2010.
- Tutors Jonathan Roketenetz and Marjorie Scarff helped design and give a workshop (for faculty) at the May 2011 WID Institute on designing effective peer review of student work-in-progress.
- Tutors helped create and improve our spaces and services this year. For example, Takeshi Horiguchi designed our new bookmarks; four tutors created online versions of some of our tutor-created handouts related to writing in various disciplines; three tutors wrote essays for English 104 (Tutoring Writing) that were chosen to be included in next year’s common reader for English 1 classes; and Emily Demico created a pamphlet for writers on procrastination.
- Tutor Marjorie Scarff served as Presentation Coordinator, organizing over 75 presentations about the Writing Center and workshops about composing styles and strategies in classes across the disciplines.
- Four tutors served as mentors for the Young Writers Project (YWP), providing feedback to student writers in grades 2-12. Kate Fallone did an Internship in Spring 2011 with Director Geoff Gevalt to extend YWP into classrooms across the state.
- Two tutors did independent projects that involved working closely with ACCESS students, coordinating with each student’s counselor to provide the appropriate support.

Individualized Writing Support

This year, tutors held 2,169 individual tutoring sessions with 924 students. Of those, 1,929 were through our open programming, available to all students for over 50 hours each week in Bailey/Howe Library. As has been historically true at UVM and nationwide, more students take advantage of the Writing Center in the fall than in the spring. Table 2 gives a historical snapshot of the growth in individual sessions at the Writing Center over the past six years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>1071 (+11%)</td>
<td>858 (+9.7%)</td>
<td>1929 (+10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>964 (+2%)</td>
<td>782 (+4%)</td>
<td>1746 (+6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>949 (+7%)</td>
<td>697 (+9%)</td>
<td>1646 (+8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>890 (-10%)</td>
<td>640 (-3%)</td>
<td>1530 (-7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>986 (+22%)</td>
<td>662 (-1.5%)</td>
<td>1648 (+11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>808 (+18%)</td>
<td>673 (-3%)</td>
<td>1481 (+8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A subset of the individual tutoring sessions were scheduled in connection with a special class project, at the request of a faculty member. Instructor Dani Walsh required her three sections of English 1 to work with a tutor to develop their rhetorical analysis of a text (68 sessions); Professor Cathy Beaudoin required her BSAD 60 students to come to the Writing Center in pairs for facilitated peer review (63 sessions); and at the request of Professor Lisa Schnell, a writing tutor held open writing workshops the night before papers were due in the first-year Honors College seminars (39 sessions).
Assessment of Individualized Writing Support:

- **End-of-session evaluations** (For a complete summary of these evaluations, see Appendix D):
  Students continue to be very enthusiastic about the usefulness of this service. At the end of each session, we ask students if they would like to fill out an evaluation form. Of those who completed the form, 97% agreed (with 83% strongly agreeing) that meeting with a writing tutor was useful, and 98% agreed (with 86% strongly agreeing) they would recommend the Writing Center to other students. We used the evaluation form to assess two outcomes for these sessions.

Outcome #1, To help students move forward with their papers: 96% of the students agreed (with 75% strongly agreeing) that the session helped them move forward, with comments that often echo the directional metaphor of the prompt:

  “I’ve got a direction now, and things I can do to improve a paper.”
  “I didn’t know where I was going before. She helped me get on track.”
  “Had a hard time making up my mind about what to say but now I know what direction to go in.”
  “Had a hard time starting the project, left with an outline and intro!”
  “My thoughts became better ordered, and my paper followed suit.”
  “I have a much clearer idea about what I can do to improve the paper as a whole.”

Outcome #2, To help writers feel more confident about their ability to complete their writing project successfully: 91% agreed (with 50% strongly agreeing) that meeting with a writing tutor increased their confidence, often expressing surprise at what they accomplished in the session:

  “I had no idea that this would be so helpful. Helped me get a clearer view of the assignment and my writing.”
  “I came in with questions and problems and they were more than answered — they were explained in depth!”
  “The session not only addressed my prime concerns but also exposed other potential issues with my paper.”
  “Dru was great and very helpful; I didn’t expect to accomplish much when I came in, but I did.”

- **Class reflections on required sessions** (For the full reflections, see Appendix D):
  Instructor Dani Walsh required her English 1 students to visit the Writing Center as part of the process of writing a rhetorical analysis of a text. After the required visits, she asked the students to write a brief evaluation of their experience. Their comments testify to the excellent quality of the tutoring students receive at the Writing Center and suggest the benefits of required visits for introducing first-year students to the Writing Center.
Demographics of Students Who Came for Individualized Writing Support:

- **Class Standing: fewer first-year students:**
  For the first time in the history of the Writing Center, fewer than 35% of the students were first-year students, and fewer than 35% of the sessions were with first-year students. This decrease was made up for by a moderate increase in the percentage of students in most other categories. This pattern corresponds with the increased use by English language learners (the USPP students entered as sophomores, and several international students taking courses through CE or the Graduate College asked for partners), and anecdotal observations that less writing is happening in introductory classes, many of which have increased in size.

### Table 3: Class Standing of Students Coming for Individual Tutoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Individual Tutoring Contacts #, % of STUDENTS</th>
<th>Individual Tutoring Contacts # (%) of SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AY2011</td>
<td>AY 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>916</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **College/School Affiliation: proportionate to enrollments**
  As in the past, students from all of the colleges and schools sought individual tutoring through the Writing Center, in numbers roughly proportional to college/school enrollments. The proportion of students and sessions from the College of Arts and Sciences decreased somewhat, while the proportion of students and sessions from Business Administration, Continuing Education, and the Graduate College increased. As with class standing, this pattern reflects the increased use of the Writing Center by English language learners and, in addition, the project with Professor Cathy Beaudoin, who required her BSAD 60 (mostly sophomore) students to meet with a tutor in pairs.

### Table 4: Use of Writing Center Services for Individual Tutoring by College/School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/School</th>
<th>Individual Tutoring Contacts #, % of STUDENTS</th>
<th>Individual Tutoring Contacts #, % of SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AY 2011</td>
<td>AY 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Life Sciences</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; SS</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Math</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing and Health Sciences</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubenstein School</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate College</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>921</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Gender: more women than men**
  Many writing centers report that more women than men take advantage of their services. This is true at UVM: 37% of the students using Writing Center services were identified by Banner as male and 63% as female (a very slight improvement over last year, when 34% of the students were identified as male).

**Class Workshops: Engaging Students in Conversations About Writing**

A very effective way of informing students about the Writing Center is to have a peer tutor give a presentation in a class when the students are working on a writing assignment. Faculty can request that this presentation be extended into a workshop engaging students in a general conversation about writing, a conversation that might involve looking at a sample paper, discussing what makes writing challenging, identifying students’ styles of composing, or some combination of these topics. Tutor Marjorie Scarff coordinated 76 such presentations, given by a group of 7 specially trained tutors, reaching over 1800 mostly first-year students. Thirty-seven of the presentations included an in-class workshop, including 12 workshops for TAP classes, 9 for English 1 classes, 3 for English 4 (ESL) classes, 3 for EDSS 55 classes (for at-risk students), and 3 for TRIO students.

WID mentors conducted 12 in-class workshops on a variety of more advanced topics targeted at writing in a particular discipline, including workshops for Anthropology 140 addressing the particular challenges involved in writing each section of a research study for biological anthropology, a workshop for Elementary Education 176 on incorporating and citing sources effectively, and a workshop in Computer Science 095 on effective peer review.

**Support for Diversity and Retention**

In working with students making the transition to college-level writing, including students with diverse literacy backgrounds and language processing styles, the Writing Center helps support retention and diversity. To accomplish this, we carefully recruit a diverse group of tutors and then provide extensive preparation through which tutors explore expectations for academic writing and connections between literacy and various aspects of identity. Tutors learn how to help students build on their strengths and acquire new ways of thinking and writing without sacrificing old ones. We are aware of the many issues that complicate students’ feelings and attitudes in relation to academic writing, and so strive to make our spaces and services welcoming to all students by systematically applying the principles of Universal Design to our spaces, materials, and strategies for working with students.

**Support for English language learners, including international students**

- **Individual tutorials: Writing Partners Program**
  The Writing Center has always served many English language learners (ELLs), but this year saw a dramatic increase in this area, largely due to the USPP program. Last year, because we had many English language learners who were coming to the Writing Center frequently and meeting with a different tutor each time, we piloted a Writing Partners Program through which students could be matched with a writing tutor for weekly appointments. We hoped this program would make it easier for English language learners to connect with the Center, would facilitate the creation of a relationship between tutor and student (which can be complicated by language and cultural barriers), and would allow for continuity of services, with tutors able to build on what had been accomplished in previous sessions.
This year, without any advertising except a presentation to the USPP students and information on our website, we had 64 requests for partners, 48 of which were from English language learners. Of those 48 ELLs, 23 were USPP students, 10 were enrolled in CE courses, and 8 were graduate students. The 48 ELL writing partners came for 543 sessions, and an additional 4 ELLs came to the Writing Center 8 times or more without requesting a partner, adding up to a total of 52 ELLs coming for 613 sessions, accounting for 32% of our individual tutoring sessions. In comparison, last year we had 22 such students, coming for 307 sessions and accounting for 18% of our individual tutoring sessions. Both years, there were many additional sessions with ELLs who did not request partners and who came fewer than 8 times, but there is no way to accurately count these students or sessions. We were able to accommodate such an increase by scheduling the writing partners during our slower hours when possible, and because of the decrease in use of the Center by first-year students.

Evaluation: The Writing Partners Program met our original goals. Sixty-six students requested a partner, including, in addition to the 48 English language learners, 6 ACCESS students and several non-traditional and transfer students. Of those 66 students, 64 met with their tutors regularly, coming on average for 10.7 sessions. Only 8 students used the Writing Center 8 times or more without requesting a partner.

At the end of each semester, we emailed the writing partners and asked them to respond to a brief questionnaire, making the evaluation process as straightforward as possible. Over half (36 of the 66) took the time to email a response. All expressed enthusiasm for the program, saying the program met their expectations; 27 of the 37 described their experience as excellent or exceeding their expectations. Students explained how the program not only helped them develop their language and writing skills but also increased their confidence. The following comments are representative; to read all of the partner comments, see Appendix E.

“Having a regular writing partner is a great help for me in English writing class 001. My partner understands my situation better through these weekly meetings and gives more specific help in my writing. The encouragement and feedback from partner also improve my learning interest and efficiency.”

“Excellent! I really liked the program because it helped me improve and understand English more correctly from the real native speaker. Before I joined this program I always think to have a partner like this; it would be perfect if I had.”

“She made me know what was my mistake I usually have when using English. She helped me understand English more correctly and explained things clearly why it had to be that way.”

“I gained a better sense of confidence, want to improve and the will to constantly improve. I think that having a writing partner is great.”

“I could check and correct my papers to proper grammar and logic. Also, it was helpful to understand American culture.”

“J--- [a USPP student] is faring really well. What has helped her the most is having a writing partner at the Writing Center. She meets with her writing partner once a week to proofread her papers for grammar and her improvement has been highly visible.” – English 1 instructor
• **Group workshops: Conversation Circles**
  At our planning meeting in December, tutors noted that some English language learners were coming to the Writing Center in part to work on their conversation skills, and proposed holding some group conversation sessions in the spring. When I discussed the idea with ELL Coordinator Dana Sehovic, she observed that students would be more likely to take advantage of such an opportunity if they got credit, and proposed to CE that a new course be piloted in the spring: English 095, The Conversation Circle. The class filled so quickly that a second section was created. The Writing Center supplied and paid for 4 tutors to attend the classes each week to facilitate conversations in groups of 4-5 students. Dana provided some additional tutor training on helping English language learners with speaking English and then provided on-going supervision and training for the tutors. The experience was so successful that the class was incorporated into the new USPP students’ summer bridge curriculum, and the four tutors are serving as this year’s USPP summer bridge writing tutors.

• **Summer Bridge Program for USPP Students**
  Many of the USPP students used the Writing Center this year in part because they were introduced to writing tutors through the USPP Summer Bridge Program; also, Sue Dinitz met with the group at both the beginning and end of the summer to help them see the connections between their summer tutoring and using the Writing Center during the academic year. This spring, Sue continued to work closely with Janet Nunziata from Continuing Education and ELL Coordinator Dana Sehovic to plan the writing tutor support for this year’s USPP summer bridge program. Four writing center tutors will work for about 15 hours each week, holding required individual tutorials with each USPP student and facilitating weekly conversation groups. To ensure a smooth transition into the fall semester, these sessions will be held in the Writing Center in Bailey/Howe (last summer they were held in the dorms), and Sue will connect with the USPP students on several occasions: providing an introduction to Academic Support at the USPP Summer Bridge orientation (with Patience Whitworth), greeting students when they find the Writing Center during a scavenger hunt, and doing a workshop on writing and academic support at the end of their English 055 course.

• **Developing an infrastructure for ELL at UVM**
  Sue Dinitz participated in an ad-hoc committee gathered by Brian Reed to consider ELL support at UVM. As part of this group’s consideration of resources for the coming year, Sue requested $4900 to support The Conversation Circle classes and additional writing partners. Over the summer, she will meet with Bob Fox, the consultant hired to advise us about internationalizing the student body, to discuss the Writing Center’s role in supporting English language learners.

• **Faculty Development:**
  In August 2010, Sue Dinitz co-facilitated (with Sarah Turner) a day-long workshop for English faculty on responding to the writing of English language learners.

**Support for ALANA students**
  With our updated version of the Tutor Trac database, which interacts with Banner, we are able to count the number of students using the Writing Center who identify as ALANA. Two hundred and four (204) students identifying as ALANA engaged in 615 Writing Center contacts, constituting a little over 12% of the students using the Writing Center and 16% of Writing Center contacts.
Support for ACCESS students
The number of students registered with the ACCESS office who used the Writing Center has remained almost identical for the past 3 years. This year, 105 ACCESS students engaged in 267 Writing Center contacts. Six ACCESS students requested and were successfully matched with writing partners.

Support for TRIO students (first-generation college students from limited-income families)
Tutor Trac was not able to track TRIO contacts for 2009-10, but this year’s numbers match very closely the numbers from two years ago: 109 TRIO students used the Writing Center, engaging in 400 contacts. Sue Dinitz offered two writing workshops for TRIO students in the fall on the connections between academic writing and critical thinking, and Marjorie Scarff offered the workshop “A Tutor’s Tips for Successful Academic Writing” in the spring.

Growing the Writing Center In a Structure That Will Support General Education

Support for first-year writing/a foundational writing experience
Students making the transition from high school to college-level writing have always been a target audience for the Writing Center. This year, use of the Writing Center by first-year students continued to decline. While last year over 35% of the students using the Writing Center for individual tutoring were first-year students and over 35% of the tutoring sessions were with first-year students, this year only 23.6% of the students were first-years, and only 19% of the sessions were with first-year students. This decrease in use of the Writing Center by first-year students matches anecdotal evidence that many first-year students do not have a writing-rich experience. With the reduction in English 1 sections, many students do not take a writing-intensive course during their first year. Faculty attending WID programming reported that less formal writing is assigned in introductory classes due to larger class sizes at this level. Sue Dinitz met with several upper-level students referred to the Writing Center who explained that they had not written many (or any) research or formal papers at UVM, and she interviewed several first-year students recommended as writing tutors who asked if they could hand in a sample paper from high school, as they had not written anything longer than a few pages at UVM.

- Support for English 1:
  In the past, we have informed many first-year students about the Writing Center through presentations in English 1 classes, and sessions with English 1 students have accounted for 20-25% of all of our sessions. When the number of English 1 sections was cut nearly in half in 2009-10, the number of sessions with English 1 students dropped correspondingly, accounting for only 17% of all sessions. That drop continued this year to only 12% of all sessions (240 out of 1929), partly because we did fewer projects with English 1 classes involving required sessions, working with three classes instead of six. To connect with English 1 classes, Sue Dinitz did a presentation to the GTFs in August, emailed all English 1 instructors at the beginning of each semester, and served on the English Department Composition Committee, where she provided feedback about the English 1 assignment sequence based on the tutors’ experience working with English 1 students and also helped to redesign the sequence for 2011-12. Essays written by three tutors in English 104, Tutoring Writing, will be included in the common reader for English 1 next year.
• **Support for TAP:**
  We informed many first-year students about the Writing Center through TAP classes, giving presentations in 21 classes, 12 of which included workshops engaging students in a more general discussion of writing. However, individual contacts with students in TAP classes decreased dramatically, from 225 to 64, due in part to fewer projects with TAP classes involving required sessions but also reflecting our ability to more accurately capture data. In the past, we only recorded course names and numbers, while with Tutor Trac we now record the section number/letter. We found that many students were in courses with TAP numbers that were actually non-TAP sections, sessions that in the past were probably counted as TAP contacts.

• **Looking ahead to General Education and creating a foundational writing experience for first-year students:**
  Susanmarie Harrington and Sue Dinitz met with CAS Dean Joel Goldberg and soon-to-be Associate Dean David Massell in May to discuss how WID can support developing and implementing a plan for identifying the degree to which TAP classes as currently taught are writing-intensive and would meet the goals of a foundational writing experience as described in the General Education Outcomes approved by the Senate in May. We also talked with Professors Nancy Welch and Richard Parent about engaging in similar conversations regarding English 1 as part of the English Department Writing Committee agenda for next year.

**Support for Writing in the Major:**

• **Support through individual Writing Center tutorials**
  Helping students understand the expectations for writing in a disciplinary context continues to be the central goal of many Writing Center sessions. With tutors from across the disciplines who receive extensive training on writing in various disciplinary contexts, the Writing Center serves as a central campus resource for students learning to negotiate the increasingly complex expectations of writing in different disciplines. Many students came to the Writing Center to work on papers for upper-level courses: 42% of all sessions were with juniors, seniors, and graduate students, likely to be taking courses at the 100 level or above, and many of the 29% of sessions with sophomores were in courses beyond the introductory level, courses that would expect disciplinary-based writing. Many of the international students who came to the Writing Center sought help with understanding the expectations for specific types of academic writing, such as business reports.

• **Support through the WID Mentor Program**
  **Background:** In Fall 2009, WID and the Writing Center collaborated to pilot the WID Mentor Program, which attaches experienced peer writing tutors to writing-intensive courses for majors. Developed at Brown University in the early 1980s, this program has spread nationally, often supporting a curricular requirement for writing-intensive courses. The national model assigns one mentor for every twenty students and is used in courses having at least two required papers, one of which is due in the first month of the semester. Mentors read through drafts and meet with each student in the class. In Fall 2009, we experimented with this model in four classes and soon discovered each class integrated writing so differently that the national model had to be adjusted. For Spring 2010 we experimented to develop effective models for our own campus context. We continued the experimentation this year, trying to learn as much as possible about what roles, contexts and practices lead to effective use of mentors.
Advertising the program only to faculty involved in WID programming, we placed mentors in 13 classes.

**WID Mentor Usage Data:** Even with one fewer placement than last year, in 2010-11, total WID mentor contacts with students increased by 8% to 1007, with individual tutorials increasing by 3%. Several mentors experimented with offering class workshops, and so a dramatic increase in workshop contacts (from 145 to 462) offset a decrease in group tutoring contacts (from 555 to 305), a focus of last year’s experimentation.

### Table 5: WID Mentor Program Contacts, 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th># tutorials</th>
<th># group sessions</th>
<th># group contacts</th>
<th># workshops</th>
<th># workshop contacts</th>
<th>Total # contacts</th>
</tr>
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<td>CLAS 195</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLS 196</td>
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<td>CMSI 299</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total #</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>305</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>462</strong></td>
<td><strong>1007</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation:** Faculty, mentors, and students continue to be enthusiastic about this program. (For a fuller summary of the program evaluations, with selected comments, see Appendix F). Eleven of 12 faculty (92%) felt the WID mentor positively contributed to the students’ experience in the class and highly recommended continuing to develop the WID Mentor Program. One faculty member observed that the program “sends a strong and clear message that writing is not just a solitary act, it is communication and benefits greatly from peer review and constructive criticism.” Another exclaimed, “The papers were the best I have seen in 12 years of teaching this class. My experience this semester was the most enjoyable since I started teaching at UVM in 1998 in large part because of the enthusiasm and hard work of Jonathan and the 40 students in my class.” Similarly, 12 of the 13 mentors (92%) recommended continuing to develop the program. In their comments, they describe a variety of benefits provided to students and faculty, including introducing students to aspects of writing in the discipline, getting students to begin their assignments earlier and to revise, clarifying assignments and faculty expectations, providing an outside perspective on drafts, relaying students questions and concerns back to faculty, offering general advice about being successful students, and helping students feel more
comfortable with and confident about writing. Of the students filling out an end-of-semester evaluation form (some of whom never met with their mentor), 263 (78.3%) recommended the WID Mentor Program continue to be developed and 61.7% agreed that having a WID mentor was useful in completing the writing assignments for the class, with comments that echo the mentors’ comments, describing how mentors clarified expectations, taught them about aspects of writing in the discipline, provided a different perspective, forced them to revise, enabled them to talk through their ideas, helped them become organized, and made them more comfortable and confident.

Developing a WID Mentor Program Model

Where to place mentors: This year’s pilots provided helpful insights into what class/student contexts lend themselves to successful placements. In the two classes of mostly first-year students, faculty, mentors, and students were all enthusiastic about the program, noting the opportunity for the mentor to introduce students not only to college-level writing but more generally to college life. Response in the upper level classes was more divided. In 4 of the classes, while the faculty and mentor thought having a WID mentor was very beneficial to the class, the students were supportive but less enthusiastic than one would expect, given the faculty and mentor comments. Some students expressed resentment at being required to meet with a mentor and/or didn’t see the need for such a program in an upper-level class. On the other hand, in two of the upper–level classes the students were just as enthusiastic as the faculty member and mentor. In both cases, the student and faculty comments suggest that the instructor had identified particular challenges presented by the type of writing assigned, and students perceived the mentor as being able to help them address these challenges. Next year, we will continue to experiment with mentors in first-year classes and encourage faculty in upper-level classes to identify particular writing challenges and then position the mentor as instrumental in helping students meet those challenges.

Qualities of participating mentors and of faculty: Although all of the faculty and mentors felt the program was beneficial for them and for the students, we found 4 of the 13 pilots to be problematic, providing insights into qualities of mentors and faculty that can sabotage mentor placements. In two of the classes, the mentor lacked confidence and advanced expertise in the discipline, compromising their authority with both students and faculty. In another class, the faculty member had very specific expectations for the writing and was willing to work with the students herself, and so students preferred to meet with the instructor. In a fourth class, the faculty member had difficulty communicating with the mentor and integrating her into the class, partly because the mentor was not available at the time the class met, a problem also noted in one of the successful placements. For future mentor placements, we need to make sure that (a) the mentor can attend the class on occasion, (b) the mentor has enough expertise to feel confident and to establish authority with the students, and (c) the faculty member and students understand the mentor cannot be a substitute for the faculty member, but rather provides a different sort of writing support.

Effective roles for mentors: This year, several of the WID mentors experimented with giving workshops on some aspect of writing, both in class and out of class, and we gained insights into how to make these workshops effective. The most successful workshops combined instruction related to particular and challenging aspects of the assignment with peer review,
students evaluate together a sample draft (from a previous class or from a student volunteer), then their own draft in relation to those aspects, and then a peer’s draft.

Several of the WID mentors also experimented with ways to incorporate individual meetings with students. Just being a resource, available to meet with struggling students individually, worked best if mentors were able to first establish a relationship with the class, often through participating in class workshops. In smaller classes, individual sessions could be required for all students, and this worked successfully both at the beginning of the semester to introduce students to the mentor and toward the end, to work through full drafts of longer papers. In larger classes, one successful model was to let students revise and resubmit a paper only if they worked with a mentor on how to address the instructor’s comments and suggestions.

**Required sessions:** Students in upper-level classes who were required to attend individual or group sessions sometimes expressed resentment. Next year, we will emphasize to faculty and mentors that students need to understand the reasons for any requirement, and that the requirement must be presented as something that will provide a clear benefit to students and that will not be adding to the normal workload for the course.

**Impact on faculty development:** Our promotional materials about the program and the training we provide to faculty and mentors present faculty development as one of the benefits of the WID Mentor Program, and faculty in past pilots have mentioned how much they learned from their mentors. However, this semester we had two of the thirteen faculty members comment that they had learned so much from their WID mentor about creating better assignments, communicating their expectations more fully and clearly, and incorporating writing in the classroom that they now had less need of a mentor. Professor Cathy Beaudoin explained, “The WID Mentor Program allowed me the time to both experiment with, and adjust to, having a class where the writing requirements are intensive. Over the course of two years with a mentor, I feel like I can be effective at managing the revision process without a mentor in the future.”

**Current Resource and Research Projects Related to Writing in the Major**

- **Creating on-line resources by students and for students on writing in a variety of majors.**
  In many Writing Center sessions, students are looking for support connected with learning how to write in a discipline: help with understanding assignments, how to frame a topic or question, what constitutes evidence, how arguments are constructed, conventions for using and citing sources, etc. For years, tutors have taught each other about writing in disciplinary contexts in an English 104 project, for which they create a handout on writing in their major that other tutors can use in working with students. These handouts are currently organized in binders for each discipline. We have twenty-four of these binders, and tutors often refer to them during sessions. However, these resources are not in a format that is easily available or accessible to tutors or students. In Spring 2010 and Spring 2011, six tutors participated in a project to put the materials from these binders online, creating plans for a web page for each of six disciplines with an introduction, tips on a variety of aspects of writing in that major, annotated excerpts from sample papers, and links to other helpful sites and resources. Some of the results of their work can be viewed on our test website: “Writing In Your Major: Tips From Tutors,” [www.uvm.edu/writingcenter/tutortips](http://www.uvm.edu/writingcenter/tutortips).
In Spring 2011, Sue Dinitz received an Instructional Incentive Grant that will allow a tutor to spend concentrated time during the summer transforming many of the remaining binders into online resources, and that will allow Sue Dinitz to supervise this work, consult with campus experts on Universal Design to make the web pages accessible, and coordinate review of each web page by a faculty member in the discipline. While many writing in the disciplines programs have online resources for faculty and many writing centers have online tips about writing various types of papers, we know of no other site that features tips created by tutors, sharing what they’ve learned about writing in their majors. Such an approach models the collaborative, peer-to-peer learning that is the hallmark of writing centers.

- **Research Project investigating the role of disciplinary expertise in tutoring sessions**
In our work to connect the Writing Center and Writing in the Disciplines, we regularly confront questions related to a tutor’s disciplinary expertise: Do we need to recruit WID mentors majoring in the discipline? Should we give preference to tutors who have specific subject area expertise? Can a tutor working in a related field, or a tutor with a minor, work successfully as a mentor? If a senior seminar student visits the Writing Center, how can a sophomore tutor from a different discipline help? Should our Writing Center website list the academic majors of our tutors and suggest that students can be matched with a tutor from their area? All of these questions, and more, turn on the issue of the role of disciplinary expertise in tutorial settings. To learn more about how disciplinary expertise, or a lack of it, shapes sessions, we collected a variety of data related to seven writing tutorial sessions in two disciplines. In addition to analyzing the session transcripts and evaluating the sessions ourselves, we asked three faculty members in the disciplines (history and political science) to assess the quality of the sessions and consider the roles played by disciplinary expertise. What we found led us to reconsider not only the impact of a tutor’s disciplinary expertise on tutorial sessions, but also the value of directive vs. non-directive tutoring and the very nature of disciplinary expertise itself. We presented partial results of our study at two conferences this year: at the International Writing Centers Association Conference in Baltimore on November 4, and at the International Writing and Thinking Conference at Quinnipiac University on November 20. In the spring, we wrote an article based on our research which is currently under consideration for publication in *The Writing Center Journal*.

- **Research Project exploring the impact of WID mentors on the student experience**
This spring, one of our WID Mentor faculty taught two sections of the same course, one with a mentor and one without. We took advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the impact of a WID mentor. We received IRB approval for this research and then (1) asked students in both classes to fill out a survey at the beginning and end of the semester about their experiences with and attitudes toward academic writing, (2) asked students in the class with a WID mentor to evaluate their experience with the mentor, (3) collected information about the teacher’s and mentor’s goals for the WID mentor sessions, and (4) made copies of the students’ graded papers from both classes, with the teacher’s comments. During the summer/fall, we will analyze this information to see what insights it provides into the impact of WID mentors.
The Writing in the Disciplines Program: Challenges and Opportunities

WID and the Writing Center stand at an interesting point in their development. Since the establishment of the Writing in the Disciplines Program, both WID and the Writing Center have developed pilot programs designed to support a campus-wide initiative to support student writing. The results of our pilot programs are encouraging. They reveal a base of interested faculty, talented tutors, and departments who are interested in helping students write effectively. As we close this year, we identify a set of institutional challenges and institutional opportunities that will shape our work for the coming year:

- **Challenge: Lack of an institutionalized writing program, including lack of a first-year writing experience for students:**
  
  It is challenging to support writing at an institution without a writing program, though this makes the Writing Center an even more crucial resource for students who may lack course-based support for improving their writing and makes WID programming a crucial resource for faculty and departments. From the Writing Center side, it is challenging to inform students about the Writing Center when we can’t introduce it in a required first-year writing course. It is challenging to identify course contexts in which to provide support for writing, as which courses include writing and how writing is included is dependent on individual faculty members’ practices and preferences. It is challenging to have juniors and seniors referred to the Writing Center who have had very limited experience with formal academic writing. From the WID side, it is challenging to attract faculty or departmental partners when there is no incentive for participation. It is challenging to address writing in the curriculum in a time of rising enrollments and budget shortfalls. Overall, there is no campus-wide conversation about writing, helping to create common expectations, experiences, and strategies for student writers.

- **Opportunities: General Education**
  
  General Education will address the challenges described above, creating a clearer, richer context in which to provide faculty development around teaching writing and support for student writers. Thanks to the resources provided to the Writing in the Disciplines Program by the Provost’s Office, we have worked to put into place a structure for supporting writing that we can expand as a communications Outcome for General Education takes shape and UVM considers how to implement it.

- **Challenge: Internationalization of the student body**
  
  The Writing Center is excited about and committed to supporting the growing number of international students on campus. These students need writing support. Without any increase in resources, we were able to provide tutoring for these students partly because fewer first-year students are in writing-intensive classes and also by scheduling writing partner meetings during times when the Writing Center is open but less busy. For next year, we have asked for $4900 in additional funds to pay for more writing partners and for tutors in English 95, The Conversation Circle. We anticipate greater demands for faculty development around internationalization. When more ELL students are on campus, faculty will need more help learning how to respond to writing.

- **Opportunities: Consultation with Bob Fox and participation in planning coordinated ELL support**
  
  These opportunities should help us plan and improve our services for English language learners, and to do that work in support of and in coordination with other new campus resources, such as additional courses for English language learners and a full-time ELL Coordinator.
• **Challenge: Tutoring Space**

When the Writing Center moved from Living/Learning to become part of the Writing in the Disciplines Program, we creatively adapted an office in 302 into a space for tutoring during the day (in addition to our small office on the first floor) and created a tutoring corner in the Fulwiler room for tutoring during the evenings. Though we love having the students and tutors be part of the WID suite, this makeshift space for tutoring does present some challenges: students have difficulty finding it and voices can be overheard by everyone working in the Writing in the Disciplines Program. Furthermore, with the new WID Mentor and Writing Partners Programs, we are rapidly outgrowing this space. WID mentors and partners who schedule their own appointments with students have nowhere to meet, and currently improvise by finding open spaces at tables on the first floor of the library or somewhere else on campus. With tutors spread out in the library, it is more difficult to create a sense of tutor community, allowing tutors to learn from and assist each other, and to create for students a sense that they are entering a vibrant, supportive writing community.

**Opportunities: A Learning Commons**

We were very excited to be invited to participate in planning for a new Learning Commons. Being part of a Learning Commons would allow us to transform our vision for a Center for Writing Excellence (included in last year’s annual report) into reality and would help address many of the challenges outlined above. It would greatly facilitate implementation of a Communications Outcome for General Education and would provide new space for a Writing Center, allowing us to finally create an intentional space for tutoring and to take advantage of common spaces for group tutoring and class workshops. The Learning Commons would also permit greater collaboration between WID and other units.

• **Challenge: Lack of summer support for the WID and Writing Center Directors**

Much of the work of the Writing in the Disciplines Program continues into the summer. With the WID Institute in mid-May, the lengthy project of writing our annual report—so crucial to analyzing the current year and planning for the future—extends into June. End-of-the-year budget planning also must happen in late May/June. Some preparation for the upcoming year has to take place in the summer, such as consulting with WID mentor faculty as they develop their courses. With the USPP Program, the Writing Center Director spends summer time coordinating the writing tutoring for the summer bridge program and connecting with the USPP students so they will take advantage of the Writing Center in the fall. August is an ideal time for faculty development workshops, programming which needs to increase in connection with any General Education communications outcome. We hope that increasing resources devoted to the Writing in the Disciplines Program, perhaps through funding connected with General Education, will allow us to be compensated for summer time devoted to WID/the Writing Center and to expand our programming in the summer.
The Writing in the Disciplines Program and the Writing Center Annual Report, 2010-2011

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Appendices are available upon request.