

September 2010

DRAFT: Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies University of Washington Tacoma

Introduction

The University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies degree program beginning Winter 2011. The degree, granted by UWT's Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS) unit, would significantly expand opportunities for writing study within the unit and the university.¹ UWT projects enrollment of about 13 FTE students the first year, increasing to about 62 FTE by the fifth year.

By the fifth year, the proposed program would produce 30 graduates per year who would be able to communicate effectively, think critically and creatively, and demonstrate proficiency with technology integral to the writing profession.² These abilities would equip graduates for jobs in organizational communications, public relations, grant writing, technical writing, literary print and online publishing, print and online information design and development, editing, and other areas. In addition, students would be well prepared for graduate studies in law, English literature, American literature, comparative literature, composition and rhetoric, popular culture studies, film studies, education, fine arts, and other fields.

Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission and the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education

According to its mission statement, UWT embraces an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge that instills problem solving and critical thinking skills for meaningful lives. It also inspires creative ways of seeing and solving problems.³ The proposed program would support these

¹ Although UWT currently offers a Communication Concentration within a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, the concentration emphasizes mass media communication and nonfiction video production. In contrast, the proposed program would focus on literary and popular forms of writing, organizational communications, written and visual rhetoric, discourse communities and creative social contexts for literacies, and technical writing for industry and sciences. A discourse community is a group of people with shared methods for writing and reading who recognize the group's form of ideas and communication as unique.

² Technology integral to the writing profession includes hardware such as computers (including handheld devices and desktop devices) and software for word processing and editing, web publishing, graphics, database and display systems, social networking, and other internet-based communication media.

³ UWT's mission statement is available at: <http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/chancellor/mission.html>.

efforts by training students to think critically and creatively. It would provide an intellectual foundation in the humanities upon which UWT can build future programs and would help UWT meet its mandate to expand the range of educational opportunities available to South Sound students.

The program would support the HECB's *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*, which calls for institutions to offer a wide array of programs that foster creativity and suit the needs of diverse learners in a changing economy. Furthermore, by training students in writing, a skill pervasive across many occupations that provide a living wage, the proposed program would support the Master Plan goal of a higher education system that drives greater economic prosperity, innovation, and opportunity.

Diversity

The IAS unit would encourage diversity by working with student organizations such as the Black Student Union, Latino Student Organization, and Muslim Student Organization to market the program to underrepresented students. It would also work with UWT Peer Advisers to identify peers/students from diverse backgrounds who might be interested. An advising and support program would be offered for students from diverse backgrounds.

Program Need

Employer demand for the proposed program is difficult to assess with conventional methods because many jobs involve writing even though the job title does not clearly indicate a writing component. Nonetheless, there is evidence suggesting at least average employment growth for writing occupations. The *2009 Statewide Employer Needs Assessment* identified a gap between supply and demand for positions in various occupations, including editors and writers.⁴ The Employment Security Department's occupational employment projections anticipate a range of growth rates across writing-related occupations, with some, such as technical writing, experiencing growth much higher than average during 2013-2018, and some, such as editing, experiencing significantly lower growth.⁵ The Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook* forecasts employment in writing and editing jobs will grow about as fast as average during 2008-18.

⁴ Higher Education Coordinating Board, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. *A Skilled and Educated Workforce: An assessment of the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand* (2009), pages 2 and 13.

⁵ The occupations examined were technical writers, writers and authors, and editors. Projected growth for technical writers is much higher than average, both statewide and in Pierce County. Projected growth for editors is much lower (and was actually negative for Pierce County). Projected growth for writers and authors is in between. Since writing is so pervasive across occupations, employer demand for the proposed program is probably broader than that indicated by the specific occupations studied here.

As evidence of student demand for the proposed program, its planners cite a Winter 2010 institutional survey of UWT students, which indicated substantial student interest in a writing major. Out of 403 respondents to a question assessing interest in a writing program, 5 percent said they would major in a writing program if offered and another 33 percent were “very interested” or “somewhat interested.” Additional evidence of student demand comes from surveys of likely transfer students at Tacoma Community College, Pierce College, and South Puget Sound Community College. Out of 571 respondents in 2008, 4 percent were interested in a writing studies program, and out of 707 respondents in 2009, 5 percent were interested.

The proposed program would respond to community demand by producing graduates with strong writing skills, which are important to employers and various community organizations. Furthermore, it would play a leading role in hosting community events or academic talks and would provide student internship opportunities, benefitting a wide range of organizations in Tacoma. Previous writing-related internships for IAS students have included marketing, educational outreach, and other positions at the Tacoma Arts Museum, the Washington State History Museum, and the Tacoma School of the Arts (a public high-school focused on the arts).

The proposed program would respond to employer, student, and community demand without unnecessarily duplicating existing programs. Although Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound offer Bachelor of Arts programs in English and Communication or Communication Studies, the proposed program would differ because of its curricular structure, foundational core courses, and interdisciplinary emphasis.

Program Description

The proposed program is designed to prepare students to communicate effectively, think critically and creatively, and use technology integral to the writing profession. It could be completed full- or part-time and would be delivered primarily through face-to-face instruction in a lecture/workshop format. It would complement an existing Communication Concentration within UWT’s B.A. in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences degree, and like other UWT programs, its primary target audience would include both transfer and non-transfer students.

To qualify for admission, students would need to have completed at least five credits of composition writing. Since composition is a required part of the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA), students who meet the requirements of the DTA would be admissible. Students could enroll either full- or part-time. To facilitate access for transfer students, UWT would develop articulation agreements with its primary community and technical college partners⁶ outlining transfer paths to the writing studies major.

Students would graduate after completing a minimum of 180 quarter credits. The curriculum would include 60 “major requirements” credits. The major requirements start with 10 credits of foundational core courses, including 5 credits of writing and 5 credits of cultural expressions, communication, or other “interdisciplinary craft” subjects. After the foundational core, students

⁶ Tacoma Community College, Pierce College, Highline Community College, South Puget Sound Community College, and Green River Community College.

would take 10 credits within an option (Creative Writing, Professional Writing, Technical Writing, or a faculty-approved combination of these three options).⁷ Students would also complete 25 credits of interdisciplinary study, 5 credits with a language or international focus, 5 credits with a natural world/science/environmental science focus, and a 5-credit writing studies capstone course. Internships would be encouraged but not be formally required and service learning opportunities would be available in several courses.

The proposed program would require development of 14 new courses, 11 of which would be modified versions of existing courses. Over 70 percent of the instructional effort would be provided by full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty, with the remainder provided by lecturers with a Ph.D., J.D., or equivalent. One tenured /tenure-track professor and one lecturer would need to be hired.⁸

Full-time students entering as juniors would normally complete the program after two years of full-time study, achieving all of the following broad learning outcomes:

- Students will develop strong analytical and critical thinking skills important to the composition and analysis of complex texts, media, theories, and disciplinary traditions and discourses.
- Students will develop an understanding and appreciation of the theory and practice of writing.
- Students will develop proficiency with the craft of writing, including the use of appropriate and varied technologies and aesthetic approaches. Students will have experience with all elements of the writing process, including editing, collaborative writing, and peer evaluation.
- Students will become proficient in appropriate literatures, genres, major figures, movements, and ideas in the field of writing studies.
- Students will develop proficiency in applying their writing skills in an integrated way across disciplines.

Student assessment would include multiple measures such as papers, exams, recitations, class portfolios, student peer review, and a capstone course portfolio. The capstone project would include a report presentation and peer evaluation.

The IAS unit would employ multiple program assessment measures, including student course evaluations, course content analysis, peer evaluation of classroom teaching and course syllabi, review of student capstone portfolios, entry and exit surveys, and alumni surveys. Data from these measures would be analyzed for themes or patterns and used as feedback for curriculum improvement.

⁷ Current faculty strengths are in creative and professional writing, so the Creative Writing and Professional Writing options would be offered at start-up, with Technical Writing following after it becomes possible to hire new faculty.

⁸ A new lecturer would be hired in the first year, and a new tenured/tenure-track professor would be hired by the third year. The lecturer would initially devote 16 percent effort to the program, increasing to 50 percent effort by the fourth year; and the professor would initially devote 16 percent effort to the program, increasing to 50 percent by the fourth year.

Program Costs

The proposed program would enroll about 13 FTE students the first year, growing to about 62 FTE students by the fifth year. To implement it, the IAS unit has budgeted for 1.3 FTE instructional faculty the first year, growing to 3.1 FTE by the fifth year. Current faculty would provide most of the instructional effort, but an assistant professor and a lecturer will be hired to provide 0.5 FTE each as the program grows. In addition, the IAS unit has budgeted for 0.6 FTE administrative personnel (including 0.5 FTE staff and 0.1 FTE faculty).⁹ Office, library, and classroom space needs would be accommodated through a combination of existing and anticipated resources.¹⁰

The program would be state-funded through internal reallocation of state appropriation and \$76,771 worth of tuition from new students drawn to UWT because of the program.¹¹ Program planners expect the reallocation would result in fewer seats in writing courses for non-majors and less one-on-one attention from advisors and staff but do not believe the reductions would cause significant hardship. They would try to minimize the resource reallocation impact on other programs.

Program planners budgeted direct costs of \$177,932 (\$13,687 per FTE student) for the first year, increasing to \$315,325 (\$5,086 per FTE student) by the fifth year. The fifth-year cost per FTE student lies within the range of statewide averages for arts and letters students at public institutions. According to the HECB's *2005-06 Education Cost Study (July 2007)*, the direct cost per average annual FTE upper-division arts and letters student ranged from \$4,725 at The Evergreen State College to \$7,278 at University of Washington Seattle and was \$5,364 at UWT.

External Review

Two external reviewers reviewed the program: Dr. Victoria Hay, Editor, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Office for Scholarly Journals, Arizona State University; and Dr. Ann McCutchan, Assistant Professor, Creative Writing, Department of English, University of North Texas.

Both reviewers supported the proposal overall and noted specific strengths and made specific suggestions, to which program planners responded. Dr. Hay concluded with "I strongly recommend that this program proceed." Dr. McCutchan said "In closing, let me congratulate you on an outstanding plan for a program that will surely serve as a model for universities nationwide."

⁹ The IAS unit's director and associate director would each provide 7 percent effort initially, decreasing to 5 percent each ongoing.

¹⁰ UWT is planning to expand its library space as well as add a new classroom building, the Joy Building. Neither the library expansion nor the Joy Building addition is driven specifically by the proposed program.

¹¹ Due to the current budget situation, UWT does not expect to obtain new general fund state support for the program at this time.

Both reviewers said the program's design was coherent and cited the curriculum's breadth as a strength, with Dr. McCutchan noting the curriculum is "both rigorous and flexible – a good balance that ought to attract both students and teachers to the program." She added that the program is "cutting edge" in the sense of offering greater opportunity for synthesis than many interdisciplinary programs. Dr. McCutchan saw the program as the product of organic thinking, rather a "repackage" and said it "clearly responds to current trends in the field."

Staff Analysis

The proposed program would support the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* and UWT's mission. It would also help UWT meet its overall expansion goals in a way that would strengthen writing course offerings at UWT, providing a foundation on which UWT can build future programs. Students' experience in the program would be enriched through UWT's campus-wide and departmental diversity efforts.

Although employer-demand evidence for specific writing occupations is mixed (such as a stronger demand evidence for technical writers than editors), many occupations require strong writing skills, so standard occupation-specific measures probably underestimate employer demand. Furthermore, survey evidence for student demand is sufficient to justify a program of the proposed size. Finally, the program would respond to community demand by providing internship opportunities and playing a leading role in hosting community events.

Students would be taught primarily by tenured/tenure-track faculty and would study a curriculum described by one external reviewer as both rigorous and flexible. Both student and program assessments would involve multiple measures. External reviewers supported the program, which would not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs and would be offered at reasonable cost.

After careful review of the proposal and supporting materials, staff recommends approval of the Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies at the University of Washington Tacoma. The Higher Education Coordinating Board's Education Committee discussed the proposal during its August 25, 2010 meeting and recommended approval by the full Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 10-22

WHEREAS, The University of Washington Tacoma proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies; and

WHEREAS, The program would support the University of Washington Tacoma's mission and vision, as well as the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*; and

WHEREAS, The program would respond to student, employer, and community demand without unnecessarily duplicating existing programs; and

WHEREAS, The program's students would study a rigorous yet flexible curriculum; and

WHEREAS, The program has support from external reviewers; and

WHEREAS, The program would be offered at a reasonable cost;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies at the University of Washington Tacoma effective September 16, 2010.

Adopted:

September 16, 2010

Attest:

Jesús Hernandez, Chair

Roberta Greene, Secretary