

University Writing Council
Report to the PSU Faculty Senate
2020-2021

From the PSU Faculty Constitution, Article 4 Section 4: University Writing Council

The Committee shall

1. Make recommendations to the Dean, Provost, and Faculty Senate on such matters as writing placement, guidelines, and staffing for teaching writing in UNST, WIC, and composition courses;
2. Offer recommendations for improving writing instruction across the university;
3. Initiate assessment of the teaching and learning of writing at PSU;
4. Support training of faculty, mentors, and WIC Assistants teaching writing;
5. Advise on budgeting writing instruction;
6. Act in liaison with appropriate committees;
7. Report at least once a year to the Senate, outlining committee activities.

Committee chair

Comer, Kate (English)

Committee members

Allen, Devon (Music & Theater)
Desilets, Michelle (Library)
DeWeese, Dan (Writing Center)
Ferey, Eowyn (IELP)
Glascott, Brenda (Honors)
Hartig, Alissa (Applied Linguistics)
Kirtley, Susan (English)
Knepler, Annie (University Studies)
Miller, Hildy (English)

UWC Meeting Documentation

- [October 6, 2020, 12:00-1:00 p.m.](#)
- [November 19, 2020, 2:30-3:30 p.m.](#)
- [January 7, 2021, 3:00-4:00 p.m.](#)
- [March 2, 2021, 2:30-3:30 p.m.](#)
- [April 22, 2021, 10:00-11:00am](#)

Completed Business

- Recommendation to President Percy and Provost Jeffords: “Linguistic diversity—and IELP faculty expertise— should be central to PSU’s Equity and Racial Justice agenda.” [See Appendix]
- Collaboration with Library in support of graduate writing workshops, including proposing possible 1-credit curriculum to RGS administration.
- Support for Bridge Program writing placement and curriculum development
- Research on writing requirements and statements at peer and Oregon public institutions

Ongoing Business

- Articulate principles of writing (practice and pedagogy) at PSU
- Review of courses that fulfill the University Writing Requirement (outside of UNST), including WIC designation criteria
- Explore possibility of WIC/WID course development within departments/programs



University Writing Council
Faculty Senate Constitutional Committee

April 29, 2021

Re: University Writing Council recommendation: Linguistic diversity—and IELP faculty expertise— should be central to PSU’s Equity and Racial Justice agenda.

Dear President Percy and Provost Jeffords:

As a Faculty Senate Constitutional Committee, the University Writing Council is responsible for making recommendations to improve writing instruction at PSU. We write today to encourage you to commit to linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of truly inclusive higher education.

The UWC stands in enthusiastic support of your Strategic Priority: Acting on Equity and Racial Justice and take seriously this opening statement:

It is time for Portland State to accelerate its effort to combat racism and advance social justice across our campus with dogged determination and long-term commitment. We will build on the work of many to engage all of PSU in this effort, applying an antiracist lens to every signal we send, every model we create, and every policy we enact.

We cannot combat racism in academic spaces without confronting how language differences, particularly in writing, have been used to exclude and oppress. Research in Composition/Rhetoric and Linguistics documents the ways in which academic standards have been used to enforce white supremacy, and it demonstrates that we will indeed need determination and innovative collaboration to change those models.

PSU has an opportunity right now to enact that commitment by leveraging the Intensive English Language Program’s expertise to foster inclusive language policies and pedagogy across the curriculum. As you consider Article 22, we urge you to remember that IELP faculty layoffs would mean letting go of the experts who directly support multilingual students *and* are best prepared to help PSU advance our antiracist goals. Below, we provide context and recommend actions that would begin this process.

Linguistic Diversity at PSU: Context and Issues

Approximately 30% of first-year students at PSU report speaking a language other than English at home (New Student Survey, Fall 2020, prepared by Andrea Garrity, Cori Loper and Kylee Saunders). This number expands if we consider the diversity of Englishes among students from different cultural backgrounds. Higher education has a problematic history of assuming deficits and enforcing standardization rather than embracing the full range of linguistic resources they bring to campus. As important as supporting students, therefore, is providing mentorship to faculty and staff to promote inclusive learning environments.

We do not suggest a return to the previous IELP model, which presented many students with barriers. The IELP has traditionally been a paid program for international students who have not yet met the university's minimum English proficiency requirements. By limiting its purview to this particular group, we have left domestic students with only a patchwork support system. This system has, at times, included the following:

- IELP faculty embedded in the PSU Writing Center—where approximately 50% of students served are multilingual—to work with students and train consultants
- Course offerings like UNST 170 (the Multilingual FRINQ/SINQ Lab) and LING 457 (Writing Workshop for Multilingual Graduate Students)
- IELP Liaison to University Studies to provide training to faculty and mentors
- Workshops through the PSU Library and Graduate School

Yet, as you know, much of even this limited investment has been lost already. There is no longer an IELP consultant in the Writing Center, and the Multilingual FRINQ/SINQ Lab has not been offered since Spring 2020. The IELP Learning Center's services are only available to PSU students through payment of extra fees, which imposes an inequitable financial burden.

Permanent Infrastructure for Equitable Pedagogy

The UWC asserts that linguistic diversity must be a core consideration in antiracist pedagogy across the university; that support for multilingual students should not be remedial in nature, but woven throughout the educational culture of PSU; and that an equitable university does not demand that the students assimilate to old models of academic discourse, but rather uses its faculty's talents to create a more inclusive and equitable future.

We know you share these values, and so we ask you to act in the following ways:

- 1) Return funding for IELP faculty to be on staff at the Writing Center
- 2) Return funding for IELP faculty to teach and develop UNST 170
- 3) Return funding for IELP faculty to serve as liaison to University Studies
- 4) Fund the IELP's English Lab proposal to support language learners and offer faculty development

Further, we call on PSU to invest in the IELP faculty, to value their expertise university-wide. For example, IELP faculty should be integrated into the PSU Learning Center; they should collaborate with OAI to develop robust faculty development around multilingual pedagogy; they should be consulted across campus as we all work toward linguistic justice.

We are proud that PSU is emerging from a difficult year with a renewed commitment to social justice, and we recognize the challenges of ongoing financial hardships. However, we hope that you, too, see this moment as an opportunity to make real change—by moving linguistic diversity from the margins to the heart of an accessible and inclusive campus of the future.

Thank you for your consideration,

University Writing Council

Kate Comer (Chair), Associate Professor, English Department, Director of Composition

Devon Allen, Professor, School of Music and Arts, Head of Acting Program, Resident Artist

Michelle Desilets, Assistant Professor, Education and Science Librarian

Dan DeWeese, Senior Instructor, English Department, Writing Center Director

Eowyn Ferey, Senior Instructor 2, Intensive English Language Program

Brenda Glascott, Associate Professor, Director of Honors College

Alissa Hartig, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics

Susan Kirtley, Professor, English Department, Director of Comics Studies, Associate
Director of Composition

Annie Knepler, Assistant Professor, University Studies Writing Coordinator

Hildy Miller, Professor, English Department