Colby Writing Program

Spring 2014: Writing in the Disciplines Curriculum Development Grants

The Colby Writing Program grew out of recommendations made by the Communication Skills Working Group, part of the 2009 strategic curriculum review initiated by President Adams. The Working Group identified a clear need for Colby students to receive more and improved writing instruction throughout their time at the College. They recommended that the College create a Writing Across the Curriculum program and become more innovative in communications pedagogy. Subsequently, the Dean of Faculty’s Office convened a faculty steering committee to consider ways to revise the teaching of writing at the College. The group received a grant from the Davis Foundation in 2010 to initiate a writing program.

The first phase of the development of the Colby Writing Program involved faculty across the curriculum in creating writing-intensive courses for first-year students (the W1s) and a new first-year writing requirement. The second phase is focused on developing the upper-level writing curriculum within the disciplines at the intermediate (W2) and advanced (W3) levels. The Dean of Faculty’s office will be asking all departments and programs to develop their W2- and W3-level course offerings together through “backwards design” (i.e., articulating senior-level departmental writing/research goals and working backwards to identify the W3- and W2-level writing experiences and competencies necessary for students to achieve those goals).

With the generous support of the Mellon Foundation, the Colby Writing Program is offering “Writing in the Disciplines Course Development Grants” of $1,500 (supplemented with 2 workshop stipends to bring the grant total to $2,000 per award). The grants could support faculty members across disciplines in (1) developing upper-level writing-intensive courses or (2) substantially revising the writing component of existing courses. Grant-funded courses should be developed with the express purpose of first piloting, then integrating new courses into regular departmental offerings. A grant may support an individual faculty member or a faculty team.

Grant proposals could be for the development of W2 or W3 courses. At a minimum, students in these courses must write regularly, revise their work, receive individual feedback from faculty, and learn the conventions of writing and research in particular fields (see Faculty Guidelines for Upper-Level Writing-Intensive Courses pg. 3).

Successful grant recipients will be expected to:

- Teach their grant-funded course in 2014-15 and at least once more by 2016-17.
- Participate in a stipended year-end assessment of student writing during spring reading period (May 12-13, 2014).
- Participate in the Writing in the Disciplines curriculum development workshop before fall classes begin (end of August, 2014).

Faculty participants will receive a $250 stipend for each of these workshops.

Submit proposals of no more than 1,000 words to Stacey Sheriff, Director of the Colby Writing Program. Proposals will be reviewed by the Writing Across the Curriculum Advisory Committee and the Dean of Faculty. (See Submission Requirements next page).

Proposal Deadline: February 14th, 2014
Grant Submission Requirements
A complete grant proposal must include the following:

1. Description of the writing-intensive course with supporting materials such as sample syllabi and writing assignments.

2. Statement of course assessment methods (and/or rubrics) and the potential for applying these methods to other courses within the departmental curriculum.

3. Letter from the department chair/program director explaining how the course will fit in their curriculum as well as plans for offering the course regularly.

4. Brief timeline for course design and implementation (in list form, including AY2013-14).

5. Contact information for all participating faculty and staff.
Guidelines for Upper-Level, Writing-Intensive Courses

W2 Common Understandings

Upper-level, writing-intensive courses teach, not just assign, writing and research practices appropriate to a particular discipline or field of study. W2 courses build on the W1 student learning outcomes and common understandings. Courses will be capped at 18 students (or an approved equivalent such as a lab or discussion session) to allow for individualized feedback and revision.

In addition, W2 courses will:

1. Introduce students to field-specific stylistic, research, and format conventions.
2. Use some class time for writing instruction.
3. Scaffold writing as a process across the semester, i.e., students work on writing projects in stages over time (proposals, research sources, sections, drafts,) guided by faculty feedback.
4. Explain and give students practice in constructing sound arguments, supported by reasoning and evidence, appropriate to the field(s) of study.
5. Have students substantively revise at least one writing assignment on the basis of faculty feedback.
6. Give students practice in finding, evaluating, and integrating varied research sources for at least one writing assignment. (Departments/programs may adapt this understanding to fit their research expectations for their students.)
7. Substantially weight writing assignments in students' final course grades. Total word count and pages required will vary by discipline.
8. Articulate realistic, writing-related goals for the semester on the course syllabus and provide assessment guidelines for major assignments.
9. Introduce students to delivery and presentation formats appropriate to the discipline.

W3 Common Understandings

As culminating experiences in the majors, W3 writing-intensive experiences build on the learning outcomes and common understandings for W1 and W2 courses. W3 courses are intended to increase students’ understanding of the purposes, forms, and conventions of communication in a field of study and to provide practice in advanced writing and research. To allow for individualized faculty feedback, W3 courses also will be capped at 18 students. Some departments and programs may choose to structure W3s as in-depth independent projects, group projects, or performance/art pieces accompanied by a substantial written component.