

TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRICULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER

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Pre/Views

by Vicki Tolar Burton, WIC Director

Being on sabbatical last year brought me rest and research and also a fresh appreciation for all the good work, good teaching, and good writing that is going on at Oregon State. I am very grateful to Lisa Ede for taking on the role of Acting WIC Director in my absence and to Graduate Teaching Assistant Tracy Ann Robinson for assisting Lisa, especially in completing the Bac Core review of Writing Intensive courses.

The reports in this issue from 2001 WIC grant holders offer further evidence of the energy and ideas supporting student writers at OSU. I hope you will browse and learn as you read. The thoughtful and well-developed guide to writing in Microbiology is the first writing guide in the biological sciences. The report from AIHM offers a model of faculty collaboration on curricular revision and an especially interesting model of hiring students to provide feedback on course syllabi and writing assignments. The use of Focus Questions in BI 315 provides an opportunity for students in a lab setting to use informal writing to think about links

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OSU 2007 and Faculty Governance: *Do Not Delete*

by Vicki Tolar Burton, WIC Director

November 15 is the release date for reports from the OSU 2007 committees, groups initiated by the upper administration to recommend changes in the university in response to changing times and financial difficulties.

Just when we have finished sorting out the Oregon Voter Initiatives. Just when we are making end-of-term syllabus adjustments in the rush toward final exams. Just when it's time to figure out who is bringing the sweet potatoes to Thanksgiving dinner. Just then—on Friday, November 15—we receive, probably in an email, notice of the availability of the reports of over 400 faculty and staff working in numerous committees, recommending to the Provost and President how OSU should change by 2007. We have a short time to respond.

*****DO NOT DELETE.*****

CHOOSE TO ENGAGE THE REPORTS.

The academic life of the university is at stake. The life of teaching and learning as we know it could change significantly as a result of these recommendations. If the changes are for the better, support them. If they are for the worse, register your specific objections in forums and in writing. We dare not delete.

The key 2007 report affecting teaching faculty is that of the Curricular Issues (CIPT) groups. A closed preview (the CIPT groups were told not to consult with those affected by proposals because jobs are at risk) included, for example, a recommendation that OSU be reduced to three (3) or four (4) colleges. The four-college recommendation seems more likely since the three-college option has no obvious place for Liberal Arts or Sciences. This is big. These are faculty issues.

One issue that has received little explicit attention is

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2002 WIC Grants Announced

Congratulations to the following departments and faculty, who have been awarded Department Development Grants from the Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC) Program for the 2002-03 academic year.

Department of Mathematics

John Lee and Lea Murphy, Proposers

Goal: To develop a new WIC course on mathematical modeling. Instead of taking an existing math course and layering the WIC requirements onto it, the course developers will build a class into which the WIC philosophy and goals are fully and organically integrated. This WIC course will be open not just to mathematics majors but also (on a space-available basis) to students in the COS who minor in mathematics while majoring in other areas such as the biological sciences and general science. Adjunct project goals include commencing development of a departmental library of WIC resources and initiating work on a departmental writing guide.

Center for Writing and Learning

Wayne Robertson, Proposer

Goal: To complete studio and on-site filming for a "writing across cultures" video production in which international students speak about how writing is taught in their home countries and describe adjustments they have had to make as writers at OSU. The video will also include interviews with several writing teachers experienced in working with international students, as well as with several cultural studies experts. It will be used to inform Writing Assistants and WIC faculty about strategies for helping international students as writers.

OSU Libraries

Jeanne Davidson, Proposer

Goal: To conduct a study that will help determine which library resources and collection-building strategies best facilitate student research and guide students in their use of print and electronic library resources. The study will involve analyzing student papers from 10 randomly selected WIC courses in COS and CLA, to assess student use of electronic information sources.

Department of Forest Resources

Norm Johnson, Proposer

Goals: To complete a departmental writing guide; tabulate writing requirements in all required courses for the department's three majors; and hold a one-day faculty retreat during the summer of 2002 for the purpose of organizing the department's approach to student writing as an overarching theme of undergraduate education in the department. Specifically, the retreat will involve reviewing the new writing guide and current writing requirements within the department, articulating the WIC philosophy for the department, defining writing goals and outcomes, and discussing ways to better align teaching of writing within the department with those goals and outcomes. Strategies developed at the retreat will be presented to the full department in the fall, for approval and adoption.

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between new information and what they already know.

Writing in Design is the most beautifully designed Writing Guide yet, thanks to the talent of Graphic Design professor Andrea Marks. With the Writing-Across-Cultures video, Writing Center Coordinator Wayne Robertson continues to demonstrate his com-

mitment to educating the OSU teaching community about the writing experiences of our international students.

Engaging the OSU 2007 reports before they are public is difficult. I hope my musings on the role of faculty governance will encourage faculty to engage the reports and the larger issues they address.

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the question of faculty governance in the 2007 process. Here are some key issues for teaching faculty and others to consider, especially as they relate to faculty governance:

☐☐☐ Faculty control the curriculum. Departments, colleges, curricular committees of the Faculty Senate, the Senate executive committee, and the Faculty Senate make policy on curricular issues and oversee all changes in curriculum. This is our process.

☐☐☐ Many of the changes recommended in the Curricular Issues report will affect the academic curriculum. They are not just matters for the President and Provost to decide, but matters that must go through the process of faculty governance. Although the 2007 groups include faculty, these groups do not replace the official channels of faculty governance in control of curriculum.

☐☐☐ The OSU community will have a brief opportunity between November 18 and January 15 to respond. We must read the reports, and we must respond.

☐☐☐ Remember that stakeholders may not have been consulted regarding changes. For example, the WIC director was not asked for input on the specific recommendations affecting WIC.

☐☐☐ Find the key sections that affect your interests, respond, and tell other stakeholders. WIC is impacted by the recommendations of Curricular Issues groups. In draft, the report affirms the need for students to communicate well but at the same suggests changes that would effectively weaken the WIC offerings, for the sake of being more “flexible” and “diverse.” When the final version appears, faculty who care about WIC will have a chance to read the recommendation thoughtfully and speak out in favor of excellence in student writing and a strong Writing Intensive requirement for all OSU students.

☐☐☐ WIC is also impacted by the recommendation of the Student Experience-Enrollment Management group that the curricular approval process and the University Catalog be moved from Academic Programs to the Registrar’s Office. Faculty control of curriculum argues for keeping the curricular approval process and

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2001 WIC Grant Reports

In spring 2001, five WIC development grants were awarded to OSU faculty and staff members, for projects to be initiated during the 2001-02 academic year. The following reports, contributed by the grant recipients, describe these five projects in terms of both what has been accomplished thus far and what remains to be done.

Scientific Writing Guide for Microbiology Majors

*by Linda Bruslind, Mary Burke, and Walt Ream
(Microbiology)*

The idea for this project grew from our observation that many students in our 400-level microbiology courses were consistently making errors in their writing. We decided that it might be helpful to give students a standardized manual when they took the 300-level departmental WIC course, the first course majors take after General Microbiology. The guide could serve as an important reference manual for the WIC course and then be utilized in all subsequent microbiology courses. With this goal in mind, we developed a writing guide that illustrates the various fundamental principles and considerations of scientific writing. While we focused primarily on matters relevant to preparing scientific laboratory reports, we maintained a broad perspective on what kinds of information to include. In addition to addressing elements of lab report format and style, we included information on handling specific types of data, finding relevant background information, and considering ethical issues. We also included a section aimed at assisting students in the work of reading and extracting information from primary literature articles, a much-needed skill in the sciences.

We distributed copies of the writing guide to other Microbiology faculty during fall term 2001 to solicit their opinions and suggestions. We then used the guide during winter term 2002 as part of the Microbiology WIC course laboratory manual. The guide is now also available online at the Microbiology website: <<<http://osu.orst.edu/dept/microbiology/WICOct16.htm>>>.

We consider the guide to be a work-in-progress that will evolve based on continued student and faculty

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feedback. For example, we hope to mount a formal assessment after this year's winter WIC course, to determine what information students found helpful or lacking in the guide and expand sections as needed.

Conversion of BI 315 to a WIC Course

by Indira Rajagopal (Biochemistry)

BI 315 is an introductory molecular biology laboratory course in which students conduct experiments designed to acquaint them with the basic techniques used in modern molecular biology. A potential problem in a laboratory course is that students often concentrate on the details of a protocol and miss the underlying concepts or experimental strategies. Students also tend to look for an imaginary "correct" answer instead of determining what inferences may be drawn from the data they obtain in an experiment. Finally, they frequently have trouble describing and discussing their experiments coherently. With these points in mind, I designed the following writing exercises:

Focus questions: These are interspersed throughout the assigned readings, which students complete prior to each laboratory session. Students are asked to answer these questions (in writing) in the first 10 minutes of the laboratory period. The questions are designed to encourage active, thoughtful reading and to help students see the links, not readily obvious to novices, between the new information and what the students already know.

Problem sets and data analysis: For each experiment, students are given a data set to analyze or a problem(s) relating to the experiment to solve. These have two general purposes. The first, which is basic to doing science of any kind, is to provide students with practice in extracting meaning from experimental data. The second is to require students to use recently introduced ideas to reason their way through a problem. This practice hones their reasoning skills and, as they put their thought processes into words, can help identify gaps in their understanding.

Short reports on the experimental data obtained in the laboratory: This is the "learning to write" component of BI 315. After learning how a scientific paper is organized, students are required to write a brief formal report on each major experiment. As well as providing practice in writing formal scientific reports, this assignment serves as a challenging exercise in which students must first decide which data from their experiments are relevant and then present and

discuss these data appropriately and offer their own interpretations and conclusions.

We tried out these exercises during the spring term 2002 offering of BI 315.

Writing in Design

by Andrea Marks (Art)

Graphic Design is the most ubiquitous of all the arts. It responds to needs at once personal and public, embraces concerns both economic and ergonomic, and is informed by numerous disciplines including art and architecture, philosophy and ethics, literature and language, politics and performance. . . it is complex combinations of words and pictures, numbers and charts, photographs and illustrations that, in order to succeed, demand the clear thinking of a particularly thoughtful individual who can orchestrate these elements so that they all add up to something distinctive, or useful, or playful, or surprising or subversive, or in some way truly memorable. Graphic Design is a popular art, a practical art, an applied art and an ancient art. Simply put, it is the art of visualizing ideas.

—Jessica Helfand,
graphic designer/author

Often students are surprised to encounter writing in a major such as Graphic Design. Though letterforms and words are inherent to the practice of graphic design, the actual act of writing can become an obstacle for many students. Yet, the processes of writing and designing are not as different as many people think; in fact, there are many close parallels between these two processes. If graphic design students see these parallels, they are apt to feel more comfortable with the writing process and more confident about their own writing. The writing guide I developed this year for use in the Art Department's WIC course, *Contemporary Issues in Design*, helps make this connection.

I began development of the *Graphic Design* writing guide with a half-day retreat for all art department faculty. This off-campus retreat helped initiate dialogue and ideas for the writing guide. It also helped our department define innovative ways to bring writing into studio classes, including having students peer-review their classmates' studio projects through written critiques, assigning reaction papers, and introducing composing techniques such as mind-mapping, word-list generating, and freewriting as part of the design process.

The first section of the 80-page guide focuses on

the writing process and its direct relation to the design process, in order to help students see the connections between these two creative endeavors. The second section provides specific examples of how writing and design work together in a variety of textual genres including resumes, cover letters, project briefs, portfolio descriptions, printing specifications, design manifestos, opinion pieces, book/CD/Website reviews, and researched articles. The final section contains information on design organizations and publications, library research and writing resources here at OSU, nonsexist language usage, and citation guidelines

Graphic Design and Writing: A Student Guide, in hard copy only, will be available to all art students and will be used as a textbook in Contemporary Issues in Design beginning fall term 2002.

Writing-Across-Cultures Video

by *Wayne Robertson (CWL)*

The WIC grant I received last year allowed me to begin production work on a 30-minute film that addresses some of the issues and challenges of writing-across-cultures. Specifically, the film documents international students' experiences of learning to write to an American academic audience. In the film, a number of international students discuss writing in their home countries and the ways in which they have found that experience to differ from the writing expectations and requirements they've encountered in an American university. In addition, the students talk about the ways professors here respond to their writing, describe strategies they've developed to become better writers, and offer suggestions for ways in which faculty and writing assistants can help international students adjust to writing in the American academy.

The film will feature interviews with several OSU professors from other countries—who also have had to change the way they write for an American academic audience—and with several experts in the field of culture and writing.

The goals of this film are (1) to help faculty and writing assistants recognize that American academic discourse is not a “natural” form of reasoning or method of communication, but is instead socially constructed, and thus, that academic discourse varies from culture to culture; and (2) to offer practical strategies that teachers and writing assistants can use to introduce international students to American academic discourse.

With last year's grant, I was able to complete seven of the student interviews, costs of which included six hours' worth of Communications Media studio charges, technician expenses, and digital video tape. I have been awarded further WIC funding for this project, and I expect to complete the film in 2003.

AIHM Faculty Retreat, Course Review, and Writing Guide Assessment

by *Leslie Davis Burns (AIHM)*

Six members of the faculty in Apparel Design and Merchandising Management participated in a two-day retreat designed to (1) explore the desired outcomes of the writing-across-the-curriculum philosophy for these two undergraduate programs, (2) review the writing components of 13 courses in Apparel Design and Merchandising Management, and (3) assess the effectiveness of the AIHM writing guide in helping students achieve the desired outcomes we articulated. Notebooks with course syllabi and writing assignment guidelines were provided to each faculty member prior to the retreat. During Spring term 2001, two undergraduate students and one graduate student were hired to review and provide feedback on the course syllabi and writing assignment guidelines in courses that faculty had asked to have reviewed. A total of nine courses were reviewed. In addition, the students reviewed and provided feedback on the department writing guide. A one-day follow-up retreat was held to review the student feedback and determine next steps in enhancing the writing components of our courses and the department writing guide.

Winter 2003 WIC Faculty Seminar: Call for Participants

Faculty interested in the winter 2003 Introductory WIC Faculty Seminar should ask their department chair to send an email nomination to Vicki Tolar Burton (vicki.tolarburton@orst.edu). The seminar, designed both for faculty who plan to teach WIC courses and for those who want to learn to use writing in non-WIC courses, will meet five Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 5 pm, beginning on January 22 and ending on February 19. Faculty who complete the seminar receive a \$250 honorarium. Only a few spaces remain in the winter seminar, so early nominations are advised.

Baccalaureate Core Committee's 2001-02 WIC Course Review: A Postscript

by Tracy Ann Robinson, WIC GTA

The spring 2001 issue of *Teaching with Writing* reported on the status of the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC)'s review of all current WIC course offerings that had been initially approved prior to 1996. At the end of spring term 2001, the BCC had approved 58 courses and temporarily denied WIC status renewal to 27 of the 80+ reviewed courses, pending curricular revisions that would bring these courses back into compliance with University-established WIC criteria. For example, some courses needed to include revision of drafts in their requirements. Others needed to incorporate informal, low-stakes writing-to-learn activities. Some were missing the required research writing component. For 23 of the 27 courses whose WIC status renewal was delayed, the proposed course modifications were due in November 2001. (Thesis courses were granted an extra year for achieving WIC compliance.)

Along with the 23 courses whose revisions were due in November, the BCC identified an additional 8 non-thesis WIC courses that had been missed during the 2000-01 review cycle. This brought to 31 the number of courses up for BCC review during the 2001-02 academic year. Of these 31 courses, 7 were de-WICed per departmental request. The instructors of the 24 remaining courses submitted course modifications; and in all cases, the BCC endorsed these modifications and granted the courses continued WIC status. At final count, then, the BCC completed a total of 108 review cycles of existing WIC courses during an 18-month period, in order to ensure these courses' continued compliance with OSU's WIC requirements.

My own participation in the review process, as WIC GTA, included reading the revised course proposals, attending Bac Core Committee meetings, communicating with the instructors whose courses were being reviewed, and working with the BCC Chair to maintain an up-to-date record of WIC course status. These experiences resulted in the following insights.

I learned, first, that there's an impressive variety of creative, rigorous, and content-rich WIC courses currently being taught at OSU by talented faculty members, each of whom is actively modeling the WIC

philosophies that students need instruction and experience in writing in the discipline of their major and that content learning/retention and critical thinking skills are greatly enhanced through writing.

Second, the BCC's review revealed not just the depth and breadth of faculty support for, and commitment to, teaching WIC courses but also the BCC and WIC Program's joint willingness to be flexible about how individual instructors choose to meet the university WIC guidelines in their courses. John Lee, BCC Chair during the WIC review process, noted that every WIC instructor who chose to meet with the WIC director and/or BCC after her/his course was initially denied reapproval was able to negotiate mutually satisfactory course modifications, that is, changes which were both acceptable to the BCC *and* allowed the instructor to continue to teach the course according to her/his preferences. The BCC's ability to think outside of the box has also contributed to changes in WIC program requirements that respond directly to individual departments' concerns and needs; for example, the committee recently approved a clarified scenario for having a department's thesis course also serve as its WIC course. Instructors who are contemplating creating a new WIC course for their department may find encouragement in this information, for it suggests that a perception circulating among some faculty members—that WIC course guidelines are inflexible and nonnegotiable—may in fact be based more in myth than reality.

Finally, my involvement last year in the BCC's WIC review increased my awareness of faculty and curricular issues campus-wide, helping me in my GTA role to be more mindful and supportive of WIC instructors' needs and teaching challenges both within and among departments across the university. I've begun thinking about possible new pedagogical considerations in WIC course design—for example, how the teaching of online reading, writing, and critical thinking skills might appropriately be incorporated into WIC courses, and in what ways the WIC program could better support students who take WIC courses as well as the instructors who teach them. (In fact, thanks to a TRF grant, one of my extra-curricular projects this year is developing a web site for students, tentatively titled "How To Survive Your WIC Course." I'll keep you posted...)

Clearly, the BCC's review, while ensuring that all OSU WIC courses continue to meet the university's standards, also pushed my own thinking about the many possibilities for teaching and learning with writing

in the disciplines. For all I learned by participating in this review, and for all the conscientious and time-consuming work done by BCC committee members and individual WIC faculty members during 2000-02, I join with both Vicki Tolar Burton and last year's acting WIC director Lisa Ede in expressing my admiration and thanks.

Reflections from Last Year's Acting Director

by Lisa Ede, 2001-02 Acting WIC Director

Last year's involvement with the WIC program was a powerful reminder of the important role that faculty who teach and support WIC classes play in the education of undergraduate students at OSU.

Throughout the year, I was impressed with the numerous faculty members who in one way or another express their understanding of the importance of writing in the disciplines. They do this by proposing new WIC courses, by revising courses already on the books, and by attending (and often themselves presenting at) WIC pizza lunch roundtables, seminars, and lectures. Most importantly, they do this when they teach WIC classes and help students with their writing.

So I want to begin this reflection by thanking all those who have supported the WIC program. For you, after all, are the program.

I also want to share a perspective on the WIC program that I have recently gained thanks to my involvement with a textbook project. Last year I agreed to write a new writing-in-the-disciplines section for the fourth edition of *The St. Martin's Handbook*, by Professor Andrea Lunsford of Stanford University. This handbook is used widely throughout the United States in first-year and advanced writing classes. Professor Lunsford wisely recognized that to meet the needs of today's students, *The St. Martin's Handbook* needed to include a discussion of writing in the disciplines, and she asked me to take this responsibility on.

As I worked last year on the seven chapters that comprise this new section, I realized over and over what an important contribution the numerous departmental writing guides developed by faculty at OSU have made to writing across the disciplines. In writing the chapter on "Writing in the Social Sciences," I was able to provide much more specific and concrete advice to students than is available in most handbooks. Typically, a handbook covers just a few of the most

typical kinds of assignments in this area. Thanks to the fine OSU sociology and political science writing guides, I was able to be much more specific.

When I sent this chapter to my editor in New York, she worried that all the writing guides mentioned in the chapter were developed by faculty at Oregon State. "Surely other colleges and universities have developed these guides," she said. "Can you see whether that's the case—and if so, add some references from guides developed throughout the United States?" With this request, I began researching the topic. Ultimately, I discovered that only a few other universities—namely Harvard, Stanford, and George Mason—have taken this important and helpful step. None of these universities has developed as many writing guides as departments at OSU have. And most of these other guides are considerably briefer than those developed at OSU.

The development of undergraduate WIC writing guides at OSU is a faculty-based initiative: the first writing guide was developed in the early 1990s by faculty in the Department of Apparel, Interiors, Housing, and Merchandising, with support of a WIC Department Development Grant. Facilitating the development of additional disciplinary writing guides has become a major program goal for WIC Director Vicki Tolar Burton. With support of a WIC grant, Kathleen Dean Moore and members of the Department of Philosophy expanded the writing guide concept, including taking their guide online. Subsequent guides were developed by faculty in the departments of Anthropology, Art, Chemistry, HDFS, Microbiology, Industrial Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Political Science, Sociology, and Speech Communications. If you've not looked at these, many are available through links on the WIC website (<<<http://wic.orst.edu>>>). I think you'll be impressed. These guides demonstrate the strong commitment Oregon State faculty have to their students' success, both here and after graduation, and to the important role that writing plays in education.

This commitment made my job as Acting WIC Director much, much easier. I also want to acknowledge the important role that Tracy Ann Robinson played as WIC GTA last year. I could not have survived a year of directing two university programs without her considerable help. And finally, I am deeply grateful to Vicki Tolar Burton for her willingness to respond to questions and problems throughout the year. Knowing she was happy to do so also made my job much easier.

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catalog entirely on the Academic Programs side, where the administrator working with curricular groups is required to be tenured faculty in a discipline, someone who knows teaching and learning and program development. This person's advice is often significant in curricular development.

□□□ Ask the candidates for Faculty Senate President-elect and Executive Committee where they stand on the role of faculty governance in OSU 2007. How will they guide the university through change while maintaining curricular integrity?

Faculty governance is at stake. Teaching and learning are at stake. When the 2007 reports arrive,

*****DO NOT DELETE.*****

Note: To view the 2007 reports, go to
<<<http://oregonstate.edu.osu2007>>>

About Teaching With Writing

Editor: Vicki Tolar Burton

Assistant Editor: Tracy Ann Robinson

Teaching With Writing is the newsletter of the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. As part of the Baccalaureate Core, all OSU students are required to take an upper division writing intensive course in their major.

The content of the WIC courses ranges from radiation safety (for Nuclear Engineering majors) to golf courses design (a Horticulture option). While subject matter differs by department, all WIC courses share certain commonalities defined by the Faculty Senate:

- Informal, ungraded or minimally graded writing is used as a mode of learning the content material.
- Students are introduced to conventions and practices of writing in their discipline, and the use of borrowed information.
- Students complete at least 5000 words of writing, of which at least 2000 words are in polished, formal assignments.
- Students are guided through the whole writing process, receive feedback on drafts, and have opportunities to revise.

For complete information on WIC guidelines, contact Vicki Tolar Burton by email at vicki.tolarburton@orst.edu, visit the WIC web site at <<<http://wic.orst.edu>>>, or consult the OSU Curricular Procedures Handbook.

Check out the CWL and WIC Web Sites--Two Great Sources of Online Writing Support for Teachers and Students at OSU!

The WIC web site, at <<<http://wic.orst.edu>>>, includes a "Writing Help" page that links users to a variety of online grammar, usage, and style guides as well as to the OSU and Purdue Online Writing Labs and other resources for composing, evaluating, and citing electronic and print texts. The WIC web site also links users with all of the OSU departmental writing guides that are available online.

The Center for Writing and Learning (CWL) Writing Center web site, at <<<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/writing-center>>>, includes "Writing Tips and Handouts" and "Web Resources" pages that contain useful information and references for writers and writing teachers, including a link to the OSU Online Writing Lab (OWL). This web site also links users to "WritingQ," the CWL's online grammar hot line designed to answer brief questions about sentence mechanics, punctuation, documentation, and style.

First Call for 2003-04 WIC Grant Proposals

The WIC Program will fund from five to fifteen Department Development Grants in 2003-04. The maximum award per grant will be \$2500.00. Requests that include options for matching funds are preferred, and requests for less-than-maximum amounts may be given preference. Three types of grants are available, and all three encourage the participation of WIC seminar alums. Departments that involve WIC seminar alums in the proposed grant activity will have a competitive advantage for receiving funds, as will proposals that involve curriculum planning for including writing throughout the major. For more information, visit the WIC grant web page, at <<http://wic.orst.edu/wic_grants.html>>. Proposals are due in the WIC office by March 4th, 2003.