Proposal for an On-Going Program to Support the Disciplinary Communications General Education Requirement

I. Divisional Coordinators/Consultants (6 course equivalencies)
Three Divisional Coordinator/Consultants (one for the Divisions of Humanities and Arts; one for the Divisions of Physical and Biological Sciences and Engineering; and one for the Division of Social Sciences) will each receive two full course equivalencies to:

- Consult with departments to help them meet the goals of the Disciplinary Communications Requirement, offering workshops, developing resources (including online guides), and working with individual instructors on planning, teaching, and assessing DC courses;
- Provide training and trouble-shooting for graduate students working in DC courses;
- Assist DC instructors in making requests for undergraduate Writing Assistants and train, supervise, and evaluate these Writing Assistants. WA’s will be recruited by faculty members from among their best students and assigned to specific DC courses;
- Keep records, monitor use of tutor funds, and participate in program assessment.

Coordinator/Consultants will be Writing Program lecturers (Unit 18 members or SOE’s), who are expert teachers of writing and familiar with the academic genres and domains of knowledge represented by the divisions they are supporting. They will report to the Program Director.

Notes:
There are many arguments for drawing Coordinator/Consultants from among the Writing Program faculty, beginning with the observation made in the Writing Program’s last external review that UCSC should take greater advantage of the Writing Program’s expertise and excellence and the fact that freshman composition programs must fight provincialism to remain effective. If more elaboration is needed, I can provide it.

C/C’s may consult with faculty on all the usual topics relating to integrating instruction in writing with course content, but especially on ways to help instructors:

- better understand and more clearly articulate their goals and criteria for writing in their courses;
- transfer more teaching of writing from comments on individual papers to course design, the construction of assignments (including revision), use of models, etc.;
- devise plans for using Writing Assistants effectively;
- develop strategies for increasing the possibility that students will use what they learn in one course to write better in the next;
- enable students to take more self-reflective responsibility for setting goals and assessing their own progress;
- take advantage of assessment.

The collective experience of WAC/WID programs here and elsewhere reveals that one of the most effective ways to initiate useful relationships between course instructors and
WAC/WID consultants is to require instructors to make formal proposals in order to be assigned Writing Assistants.

TA training may take a number of different forms, for example: pre-quarter workshops for departments; meetings with the TA’s of one course or with the TA’s of a cluster of courses; a resurrection of Writing 202 (3-credit Writing and Learning seminar); a reinstatement of some version of the once-popular 5-session workshop for TA’s that provided them with a certificate rather than credit.

II. Program Leadership (1 course equivalency)
A Program Director (most likely one of the three Divisional Coordinator/Consultants) will receive one full course equivalency to provide overall leadership, coordination, and budgetary oversight and to collate data into a yearly report. The Program Director will report to the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.

Note:
In their report on “The State of WAC/WID in 2010,” (College Composition and Communication, February 2010), Thaiss and Porter state that their findings “reinforce the idea that programs are more sustainable” when they report to administrators whose campus-wide purviews reflect the campus-wide mission of the programs (559).

III. Undergraduate Writing Assistants
Undergraduate Writing Assistants will be assigned to work with students in DC courses when instructors of DC courses have submitted a request and an acceptable plan explaining how they will be used.

• Department faculties and Divisional Coordinator/Consultants will work together to recruit students who are strong writers and, when possible, have taken the DC courses with which they would work.

• When Coordinator/Consultants have determined a student is eligible to be a Writing Assistant, that student will enroll in a two-credit experiential training course taught by the Divisional Coordinator/Consultant. This course will begin with an intensive workshop at or right before a quarter’s start, to be followed by a tutoring assignment and weekly meetings throughout the quarter. This course will satisfy the Service Learning General Education Requirement.

• In subsequent quarters, Coordinator/Consultants, in consultation with DC course instructors, will assign Writing Assistants to DC courses. They will be paid per hour as tutors.

Initially, it would be reasonable to plan to provide 40 hours of tutoring per every 60 students enrolled in a DC course. (This is not a formula for allocating WA’s to particular courses but rather an estimate of overall demand.) If there are 3000 seats in DC courses,
this implies 2000 hours of tutoring. 2000 hours times $13/hour = $26,000. One would expect this figure to grow as DC instructors develop models for integrating Writing Assistants into their courses.

The cost of training, supervising, and assessing these Writing Assistants will be covered by the Coordinator/Consultants’ equivalencies, but staff support will be necessary:

- The Writing Program Office will need to provide basic services to the Program Director and Coordinator/Consultants probably comparable to the support currently provided to College Writing Coordinators and the ELWR tutor program.
- Academic Divisions or Learning Support Services or some other unit will need to be remunerated for processing tutor hiring and payroll.

Notes:
On other campuses, when undergraduate writing tutors work directly with individual instructors in courses that satisfy disciplinary writing requirements, the tutors (aka Writing Fellows, Writing Assistants) are most commonly hired, trained, and supervised by units that cooperate with but are funded separately from Learning Centers or Writing Centers. On many campuses, tutoring programs on this model are regarded as – or are a part of – honors programs.

The Program Director and Divisional Coordinator/Consultants will coordinate their work with College Writing Coordinators, who oversee ELWR tutors, and with Learning Support Services, which currently provides tutors for writing-intensive courses in some departments. Inevitably and fortunately, these three programs will share a number of undergraduate tutors, which, we discovered in the past, makes it easier to recruit and retain excellent tutors. During the years of the Writing Assistance Program’s existence, College Writing Coordinators recruited core course tutors with an eye to their majors and potential for working as Writing Assistants in writing-intensive disciplinary courses. Also, in their initial training quarter, Writing Assistants could be assigned to do drop-in tutoring in the Academic Resource Center.

The 2-credit training course for Writing Assistants would efficiently combine the different roles of a concentrated workshop and on-going mentoring while a Writing Assistant is actually tutoring. The Service Learning credit will replace pay for a defined number of hours of tutoring during a Writing Assistant’s first quarter of training and work.

Very few of the DC proposals submitted to CEP by departments made any mention of undergraduate writing assistants. Because it is difficult to predict how fast – and to what extent – DC faculty members will incorporate Writing Assistants in their courses, it is difficult to estimate resource requirements. Moreover, the deployment of Writing Assistants to DC courses will be complicated by the diffuse nature of some departments’ Disciplinary Communications plans (for example, when the DC is spread over three courses or when a very large number of courses – or labs -- satisfy part of the
requirement). In some instances, Writing Assistants may need to be assigned to a cluster of courses rather than to individual courses.

IV. Instruction for students with significant grammar and editing problems (one lecturer course equivalency plus TA’s?)

Students with persistent challenges in using Standard Professional English would enroll concurrently with their DC course in a one-credit Writing Program course (possibly modeled on Writing 22 B) that would deal only with issues of grammar, usage, and style, using students’ writing in their DC course as the text to be worked on. A Writing Program lecturer would receive one course equivalency for one year to design this course and subsequently to supervise sections taught, perhaps, by graduate students.

- Students could enroll in this course by choice or be required to enroll in it in by a DC instructor, possibly on the basis of an initial assignment written at the very beginning of the quarter or on the basis of a recommendation from the instructor of a previous DC course.
- Sections of this course would need to be available throughout the year and probably would be most effective if segregated by division.

Note:
This course’s structure and mode of delivery need to be determined through research and experimental pilots. The goal is to provide more effective, systematic language instruction that depends less on students’ individual initiative and motivation than is usually the case in ad hoc tutoring sessions.

V. Co-Teaching

When expedient and feasible, it can be a good investment of resources (one course equivalency) to have a Divisional Coordinator/Consultant co-teach for one quarter with a department’s faculty to implement a new DC course (see, for example, Environmental Studies and Computer Engineering).

Selected References:

“Undergraduate Writing Fellows/Peer Tutors” and “Handbook for Faculty Mentors to Writing Fellows.” George Mason University: Writing across the Curriculum. http://wac.gmu/program/initiatives/writing_fellows/

Miscellaneous memos, reports, and studies written between 1984 - 1999 by UCSC Writing Program faculty members concerning Writing-Intensive Courses, the Writing Across the Curriculum Program, and the Learning Assistance Program in Writing.

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