Professional Writing Minor Annual Report, AY 2014-2015

Special thanks to all of those who taught professional writing minor courses or closely related courses on campus at UW this year, read capstone portfolios, and/or contributed to online and/or Outreach 4010. If I forgot anyone here, I apologize!

Last year's report concluded with the following agenda for AY 2014-2015:

- Monitor major development and participate in conversations re: potential track in rhetoric, noting its impact on the professional writing minor
- Convert minor courses (2035, 4000, 4025, 4075) from old USP (W) model to new USP model (C)
- Consider practical concerns of expanding online offerings in the minor
- Develop technology training and integration for courses in the minor
- Recruit students
- Host LL Smith speaker
- Move forward with adding 2005 (Writing in Technology and the Sciences) to the minor as equivalent to 2035
- Expand and enrich instructional faculty to forestall additional course staffing issues—shadowing, teacher development, etc.
- Develop programmatic assessment processes alongside USP changes and addition of 2005
- Continue capstone course development
- Consider means of recognizing student achievement

Members of the professional writing minor cohort formally met three times in Fall 2014 and once in Spring 2015 to address some of these and other issues facing the program and its students. The above agenda items will be discussed within the context of the following three broad sections of the report:

- Enrollment and Recruiting
- Program and Co-Curricular Development
- Assessment

Additional items of significance will be briefly discussed after these three sections.

Enrollment and Recruiting
Professional writing minor enrollment stayed flat during AY 2014-2015. While accurate numbers of minors are difficult to isolate, given the number of students who are functionally minors but who have yet to formally declare, and other students who have expressed interest in the minor or actually declared the minor, but then reconsider at a later date without declaring as much. Current estimates fall around 18-20 minors after the program graduated nine minors during AY 2014-2015.

We graduated more professional writing minors this academic year than ever before. This year, our nine graduates come from four different majors: English (6), anthropology, political science, and microbiology. Six of those minors are English majors, suggesting the growing importance of the

professional writing minor in the broader preparation of our undergraduate majors. Among our graduates this year, one graduated with a 4.0 overall GPA, and another earned A&S Top 20 status.

Graduates' future plans seem less clearly defined than last year. Some will further their respective educations in the immediate future: one will attend law school, one will begin an MFA program, and one will begin a PhD program. The majority of our English major graduates seem a bit less clear about future plans, with some seeking employment, others considering future graduate school options, and others continuing in jobs that they already hold. On another note, we graduated our first-ever microbiology major and our first political science major in several years.

The following table summarizes enrollment figures for professional writing minor courses during AY 2014-2015:

Table 1: 2014-2015 Student Enrollments in Professional Writing Minor Courses and Allied Courses

	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Summer 2015
PWM Courses other than 4010 (all taught on campus except single section of 4075 in both fall and spring)*	72 students/4 sections	86 students/5 sections	None offered
English 4010	311 students/14 sections (5 on campus, 8 online)	380 students/17 sections (8 sections on campus, 9 sections online)	151/6 sections
English 2005**	22 students/1 section	46 students/2 sections	None offered
Total Courses	19	24	6
Total Students	405	512	104
			Total Students Served: 1021/49 sections

*totals do not include English 4970, the professional writing internship
**During this period, English 2005 has not formally been a part of the minor but is under consideration for inclusion; it is also a minor elective for some students

Overall, four more total sections and 70 additional students were taught during 2014-2015 than in 2013-2014. This can be attributed, in large part, to five additional sections of 4010 being offered. More 4010 sections are offered online than previously. Summer offerings in the minor remain minimal, with only English 4010 and the professional writing internship available to students. No campus sections of 4010 are available for Summer 2015. Strong enrollment figures for English 2035 and 4075 suggest that these may be viable summer offerings should additional summer funding become available or instructional faculty be interested in and able to teach these courses on-load in the summer.

Numerous courses in the minor enjoy a great deal of popularity with students. Without a formal capacity analysis, 2035, 4010, 4025, 4020, and 4075 all enroll at capacity, almost without exception. English 4000 and 4050 typically have some remaining seats, especially 4000. The desire to create a devoted capstone experience for students in the minor will need to be balanced with the need to create ongoing, viable enrollment in 4000. An increase in this year's enrollment in that course is promising.

English 4010
English 4010 remains a key service course and continues to reach a large number of students both on campus and beyond. The program continues to maintain great faith in the caliber of the course and its value to both the professional writing minor and the university writ large.

The emergence of USP 2015 and an attendant effort to shift Communication 3 (previously WC) instruction back to the major departments constitute conditions for a potential change in 4010 offerings, in quantity and, potentially, character. Past steady enrollments and varying levels of commitment toward teaching writing in numerous departments, as well as the history of WAC/WID on our campus, suggest that 4010 will continue to be an important part of writing instruction at UW. However, these changes may, at least in the immediate future, make it possible to contract the overall number of 4010 sections as major departments absorb more writing instruction. It will be important to monitor 4010 enrollments in the next three years or so to gauge any changes in overall demand.

An ongoing concern with 4010 is having a sufficient cadre of qualified instructors. More, at least on campus, our department's policy has been to staff other professional writing minor courses before staffing sections of 4010 in order to best serve our students in the minor. This policy was disregarded in the spring of 2014 but largely followed again in AY 2014-2015. For the health of the minor, we need to be sure it is followed in the future, as the minor does best when we offer a steady, reliable diet of 2035 sections that make entry into the minor possible, as well as numerous elective courses within the minor. As long as 4010 remains a "volume" course in our department, this balance will be challenging to strike.

Two final 4010 concerns: we continue to scramble, at times, to hire situationally—to, in essence, cover two or three sections each semester that remain unstaffed by permanent faculty. Stabilizing a pool of qualified, interested instructors or finding ways to solidify the number of sections we can reliably offer with our standing faculty in order to facilitate planning, in so far as it is possible, would be useful.

We also face rising enrollments in our online 4010 sections, as course caps are now somewhat routinely exceeded in the name of financial solvency. It is hoped that the new USP's stated course cap of 24 will energize the conversation about maintaining a rigid and practical cap in 4010 both onsite and online. Raising caps is unsustainable and compromises the caliber of the course.

Recruiting and Marketing
During AY 2014-2015, professional writing minor instructional faculty recruited new minors from their courses and through their advising. The minor coordinator supplied graduate instructors of English 1010 with information about the minor for any interested students. The coordinator also continues to maintain (sporadically) a Facebook page for the minor; Twitter is also under consideration as a means of expanding the minor's reach. Graduating seniors offered some additional suggestions in exit interviews,

including tailored communications for programs and majors around campus. In 2012-2013, the minor coordinator gave presentations to a department and student organization. Revisiting these strategies in the coming year, especially in light of exit interview feedback gathered this spring, may prove helpful in better distributing information about the minor to students in majors who might particularly benefit from it. Recruiting will take on more significance than ever in the immediate future as we work to offset the aforementioned large graduating class.

This year, for the first time, we developed criteria, solicited nominations for, and then selected a professional writing minor Student of the Year award. We hope to continue to recognize our strongest student work and raise its profile as part of our larger marketing efforts.

Program and Co-Curricular Development

PWM and Revised English Major Relationship
Members of the English Department continued discussion of possible revisions to the English major. The proposed English studies track may offer potentially beneficial points of contact with the professional writing minor. Members of the professional writing cohort need to participate in and continue to track these discussions and future program implementation to ensure that such a concentration complements, rather than detracts from, the minor.

USP
Changes to the University Studies Program have significant impact on professional writing curriculum in that five of the courses offered in the minor have historically carried a W (Writing) designation. Consequently, we worked during late spring 2014-spring 2015 to reclassify all of these courses as Communication courses. English 2035 has been accepted for C2 status, while English 4010, 4025, and 4075 have been accepted for C3 status. English 4000 will be submitted for similar approval by early in Summer 2015.

Capstone
In Spring 2014 and Spring 2015, respectively, English 4000 students have compiled a final portfolio as part of a pilot project in the capstone course. The portfolio is designed to give them opportunity to demonstrate achievement of minor objectives and to serve as a possible site of broader program assessment in the future. Regarding the latter, members of the professional writing minor have read a sampling of course portfolios and offered some summative feedback to supplement feedback provided by the classroom instructor. Ongoing conversations might focus on the nature of this assignment, its curricular location, and its format/mediation, as well as how we might best continue to foster sustainable program-wide involvement in the assessment of this work, especially if it were to take on a more prominent role in program assessment. To date, we have relied on volunteer efforts by instructional faculty who are already overburdened.

Gateway
Discussion of a possible gateway course in the professional writing minor has been largely tabled as we have waited for the USP and English major conversations, respectively, to clarify. Moving forward, the cohort needs to continue to consider this question in 2015-16, focusing on potential recruiting impact, curricular impact, personnel resources, and intellectual labor distribution within the minor. It may be that the conversation shifts toward adding a mid-level course more akin to the proposed English 3999 course, which could nurture a set of literacies benefitting students as they move into their 4000-level coursework.

2005
After extensive previous discussion, English 2005 was formally added to the minor during AY 2014-2015. It will now be considered equivalent to English 2035 within the minor's curricular structure. More, it has also been evaluated and accepted for C2 designation in the USP 2015 program. In Fall 2015, we will offer the course for the first time as a formal part of the minor and will modify the course curriculum and delivery slightly to make it not only reflect the new USP requirements but also serve as an introduction to the minor and minor-related program objectives.

Professional Development
Professor White shadowed Professor Brown's 4010 section during Spring 2015 and will teach the course for the first time in AY 2015-2016. We need to continue to find ways to sufficiently compensate those involved in such work (both mentors and mentees), as well as to encourage ongoing technology integration in minor courses.

Additional Curricular Development
Preliminary discussions about offering C2s either online, in the summer, or during a proposed J-term (Dec-Jan) have been initiated and need to be considered further in terms of viability and feasibility.

Assessment
The PWM coordinator conducted indirect assessment through exit interviews with four of the nine students graduating during AY 2014-2015.

Positive Findings
Across interviews, students reported positive experiences within the minor. They consistently reported satisfaction with having opportunity to work on real-world projects and to work with written genres that project forward to their professional lives. They also noted the value of experience with presentations and editing that they were able to get through the minor curriculum. Similarly, grant writing and workplace genre exposure were cited regularly as sites of gainful offering study and experience. One student noted that she learned to "work toward quality," a nod toward the iterative, recursive process of writing featured throughout the professional writing curriculum.

Students seemed most likely to hear about the professional writing minor through their academic advisors. All would recommend the program to others and saw it as positioning them well for their future writing endeavors.

Suggestions for Improvement
Students recommended more targeted recruiting approaches, citing subsets of students and career trajectories within their respective majors that might benefit from professional writing and rhetorical education. In minor courses, they emphasized the importance of creating strong connections between readings and course projects. They also noted how taking cognate courses outside of English or taking 2000-level courses (English or cognate courses outside the department) later in the curriculum can be somewhat disorienting, suggesting that while a rigid sequencing is likely impossible within the minor, advising reminders about sequencing may be helpful, even as sequencing is often overdetermined by course offerings and availability. Two students suggested a greater commitment to a workshop model of feedback and revision in other minor courses. One student noted that a course in ad copywriting, as well as a "4010 for professional writing minors" section, be offered in the program. Another suggested that we work to raise the visibility of the internship as a curricular option.

Based on last year's interviews, time was allocated in this spring's English 4000 section to discussing, reading, and hearing from presenters about possible career paths in professional writing. We also worked to respond to another emerging suggestion regarding the minor's accessibility to students in the sciences by adding English 2005 to the minor in hopes of reaching students in the sciences and technology-oriented fields.

With the implementation of USP 2015 and possible addition of English 2005 to the minor, curriculum mapping will continue during AY 2014-2015, with an eye toward conducting direct assessment based on results of those activities in either Spring 2015 or Fall 2015. We might also continue to consider a sciences-specific section of English 4010 as time and resources allow.

Other Notes

LL Smith/Guest Speaker
Due to a fall semester activity bottleneck and residual concerns/issues from the previous academic year, the professional writing program did not host an LL Smith speaker/scholar during the 2014-2015 academic year. We hope to coordinate with the English Department and MA program to host at least one speaker during the 2015-16 academic year.

Retirements
We wave a fond farewell to three stalwart members of the professional writing cohort. Since the program's inception, these three colleagues have served as the backbone of the program. They will be sorely missed as friends and teachers.

Hiring and Personnel Needs

Members of the professional writing minor cohort participated significantly in the hiring of English's new writing program coordinator. While her teaching and administrative duties will be largely absorbed by the first-year writing program and other curricular offerings in the new undergraduate major track, among other sites, we welcome her arrival and look forward to coordinating future curricular offerings and other initiatives with her.

In addition to the aforementioned retirements, the minor cohort experienced one resignation and two reassignments. It is a profound understatement to say that our teaching faculty resources have been dramatically compromised/depleted. At minimum, these six personnel moves represent a loss of eighteen sections of professional writing course coverage per academic year, and this is a conservative estimate. Perhaps the greatest loss here is in institutional knowledge and field-specific expertise: these six members of our teaching cohort brought/bring extensive professional experience and/or academic experience in technical and professional communication and pedagogy to their teaching and programmatic participation.

The future integrity of the program depends on hiring additional full-time instructors and tenure-track faculty. It is not sustainable to patch together a schedule semester after semester that relies heavily on adjunct teachers and temporary appointments, as such arrangements, predicated upon flexibility and discontinuity, largely preclude viable, ongoing work and investment within the program. These instructors, however qualified and oftentimes—indeed, fortunately for us, *almost always*—fantastic, are not compensated at a level commensurate with that level of participation. More, when staffing is ad hoc, we are faced with the likelihood of hiring instructors with inconsistent preparation to teach effectively—immediately—in the program. Our instructional faculty numbers are already very, very small, with many of our key instructors already deeply involved in other administrative work and/or initiatives. It is beyond the scope of the program, resourced as ours is, to provide the kind of support needed to rely exclusively on ad hoc assignments. Consequently, it is important for the department to think concretely and immediately as possible about hiring extended-term lecturers and tenure-track faculty to address basic curriculum delivery and the constantly shifting field of expertise that characterizes the field. As just one example, due to the recent attrition in minor faculty, we face an immediate and significant problem staffing 4050 and 4075. We need to be able to reliably deliver our basic curriculum.

Key tasks and challenges for 2015-2016

- Monitor potential impact of English Studies English major track on the professional writing minor
- Complete conversion of all eligible PWM courses to new USP Communication requirements
- Consider practical concerns of expanding online offerings in the minor
- Continue to recruit students in 1010 and minor courses
- Consider and implement recruiting strategies for recruiting in targeted external academic major departments
- Continue to examine possibility of a methods course or similar placed early in the minor curriculum
- Host LL Smith speaker as part of faculty professional and program development
- Offer 2005 as part of the professional writing minor
- Expand and enrich extant instructional faculty to forestall additional course staffing issues—e.g., shadowing, teacher development
- Develop programmatic assessment processes alongside USP changes and addition of 2005
- Continue and refine capstone portfolio implementation and position it for use as program assessment tool
- Continue and refine new student award/recognition student achievement