Year-End Report of the Improvement of Writing Committee
May 15, 2009

Committee Members:
Laura Mcilvoy, Nursing (Chair)
Maria Accardia, Librarian
Uric Dufrene, Business
Gretchen Kirchner, Natural Sciences
Lee Ann Meyer, Writing Center
Robin Morgan, Social Sciences
Tom O’Neil, Arts & Letters
Diane Russell, Writing Program
Melissa Sutherland, Education
Year-End Report of the Improvement of Writing Committee

Over the last several years the Improvement of Writing (IOW) committee has worked towards producing a rubric to serve as a tool in standardizing a campus-wide writing assessment. This tool, An Assessment Grid for Capstone Papers Across the Disciplines, is keyed to the Written Communication Outcomes for General Education and was formally tested by IOW 2008-2009. The rubric, which can be modified to meet individual course needs, was introduced to faculty campus-wide spring semester 2008 and is currently available at `\se-cser-nas1\Arts_and_Letters\IOW` as Appendix A.

Ultimately the IOW committee is charged with assessing the writing quality of IUS students. Using this writing rubric, it is the plan of IOW to conduct a formal assessment of capstone writing across the disciplines of IUS. The details and timeline of the formal assessment are as follows:

**Fall & Spring 2008**

Since the faculty sessions held in 2008 to introduce the writing rubric to IUS faculty were poorly attended, the committee approached IT for assistance in increasing faculty access and knowledge of the writing rubric. They graciously posted the PDF *Writing Rubric Developed by the Improvement of Writing Committee* on their website [http://ilte.ius.edu/howclass.cfm](http://ilte.ius.edu/howclass.cfm) under the Assessment & Student Learning section. IT also provided access to the H drive for all committee members.

To provide a resource for faculty on differentiating between truly well written papers and poorly written papers within their particular discipline, the committee is working on posting examples of capstone papers of poor quality, medium quality, and excellent quality from each school. These papers are being collected and posted in the appropriate school’s folder on the IOW H drive (`\se-cser-nas1\Arts_and_Letters\IOW`). This is a time consuming process as the committee members must wait until the capstone papers have been graded within the assigned semester and gain the cooperation of fellow faculty members in supplying them. To date, these quality of writing papers have been posted within the Nursing, Social Sciences (3 examples of each range), and Arts & Letters folders. The rest of the quality of writing papers should be available by spring semester 2010. In addition to providing the papers as a resource for faculty, the IOW committee members are reading all of the quality of writing papers and scoring them using the writing rubric. This is being done for two reasons: to provide an additional resource for faculty on how to correctly use the rubric as we will be posting our cumulative scores with the papers, and to provide concrete data on the validity of the writing rubric as we will be using it in the final campus-wide writing assessment next year.
As the IOW committee members would be reading and scoring at least 3 quality of writing papers from each discipline and eventually a random sample paper from each school for the campus wide assessment, we applied for Assessment Development Project funds from the Academic Assessment Committee to support the hours of reading time over the 3 semesters. The IOW was subsequently awarded funds in the amount of $900 ($100 to each committee member) to support the time involved by committee members to complete our writing assessment plans.

**Fall & Spring 2009**

The IOW committee will continue to collect quality of writing papers and posting them on the H drive. Scoring of these papers will be completed and posted within each folder to provide a guide on how to use the writing rubric. During this time the formal campus-wide writing assessment will begin. Each committee member will obtain a random sample of capstone papers from their discipline. This will take two semesters as capstone courses occur throughout the year. Randomization will be standardized by picking the paper from the third name on the class roster. These papers will then be scored by each committee member and reported to the committee chair who will collate the results. Based on these scorings a report on the assessment technique and findings will be generated and forwarded to the Academic Assessment Committee.