To: All Tufts Faculty

From: Jan Pechenik, Director of the Writing Across the Curriculum

Date: January 17, 2008

Hello. We hope you’ll consider joining the Writing Across the Curriculum Program. This is our 20th year! We train faculty in new ways of reaching students intellectually, and provide an ongoing forum for faculty to discuss their teaching with each other. Our faculty offer writing workshop courses that emphasize informal writing and revision to promote understanding of course material.

Please look at the one-page information sheet we have attached along with

- Some faculty and student comments on writing workshop courses,
- An article from The Observer,
- And a list of Writing Across the Curriculum Faculty.

If you would like to join our program and teach a writing workshop course next year, either in the fall or spring semester, or would like to talk with the co-directors about the program, don’t hesitate to call Jan (Jan.Pechenik@tufts.edu, x73199).

We look forward to hearing from you!
Frequently Asked Questions

What makes a course a writing workshop course?

- **Writing workshop courses meet an extra fifty minutes each week.** During the additional class time, students use informal writing to generate, develop and share ideas. This extra time also allows instructors to give students more help drafting and revising their formal papers and other assignments.

- Pre-requisites for most ww-courses are **English 1 and 2** (or their alternatives) and those defined for each course by the department concerned.

What do faculty members do in order to teach a ww-course?

- Attend a **two-day training seminar** at the end of the spring semester and a **half-day follow-up session**, generally held in the summer. They also attend **three follow-up meetings** during the semester in which they teach a ww-course. Some consider this to be one of the best aspects of the program, providing a regular opportunity for faculty to talk with each other about their teaching and to share exercises and other innovations.

How are faculty compensated for the additional planning and teaching time?

- For attending the training sessions as well as for the extra time spent redesigning courses, each faculty member receives a **one-time stipend of $1000**.

- In addition for each ww-course taught, faculty members receive a **research stipend (currently $1500)**. Alternatively, some faculty have negotiated “release time” with their department chairs.

For a more detailed overview of the program, a listing of current courses, and other useful writing workshop links, please visit our official web site.

The address is [http://www.tufts.edu/as/wac/](http://www.tufts.edu/as/wac/)
Comments From Students Who Have Taken WW-Courses

My writing has become more structured, clearer, and stronger throughout. I believe this course is amazing and should be strongly emphasized and encouraged!

The professor approached the workshop as a learning process and we did not consume our energies worrying about a grade. I found it special to get to know the teacher on a more personal level.

I think that the writing we did made course material more interesting. It definitely shed light to how what we study relates to the real world.

This class was relaxing, pleasing, calming -- you weren’t afraid to let someone read your written ideas because the professor did a great job of presenting ways to give positive encouragement.

The WW increased my desire/motivation to learn. Seeing the practical behind the theory was tremendously useful and fun.

I found the peer editing sessions most useful – it is always helpful to find out how people react to your writing, and you don’t always catch errors that the editors catch. The process helps immensely.

If not for WW, I still would not have written anything resembling a major paper. Employers want a writing sample! There should be more WW courses.

I would recommend a WW to a friend because it provides both time to help with your understanding of the basics as well as expanding the scope of what you know. In addition, you get all this in a wonderful carefree wonderful environment. Truly when learning is at its best.

My approach to writing has been transformed, in that I will likely write down my thoughts and reactions to material as I go. I have a means to write my papers carefully, instead of a last few day’s panic.

I think a WW course enables students to get more involved in the class material, because of the extra class time and supplemental info. It also provides the chance to get to know the professor better.

I was able to think and write critically with confidence. I am definitely considering many other writing-workshops in the future; my writing has improved dramatically since I first came to class.
Comments from Faculty Members Teaching WW-Courses

This has been some of the most exciting teaching I have done to date. Never have I been so involved with my students’ ideas; never have I learned so much, myself.

I think the students gained a great deal from the course, and it certainly was the most exciting teaching experience I have had in a long time.

Teaching this course is typically the most satisfying thing I do at Tufts. It’s a time-consuming way to teach, but it’s incredibly rewarding to see students develop intellectually over the semester.

Students tend to flourish in ww courses. The ww students learn to nurture their own intelligence, and thus to take their own intellectual potential seriously. They appreciate the ability to think for themselves and not for the teacher.

It’s easier to teach when I have regular ways to find out what the students are thinking. And it’s a pleasure to extend the sense of intellectual relationship that informal writing fosters.

Teaching ww-courses has had a positive effect on my teaching altogether, whether the courses are labeled ww or not.

The balance between learning that happens because the student is in contact with the teacher and learning that happens because the student is cooking away internally seems much better.

There is no question that a continuing process of paper-writing, paper defending, and hearing and reading critiques, as well as appropriate rewriting, over the course of a semester does wonders for a student’s writing ability (as well as speaking ability).

The course teaches students how to think within the discipline and gives them tools that should stay with them long after the factual material they learn is forgotten.

But what a delight it has been for me to recognize, in papers developed and written from journal entries, how excited students are about their own work.

This is the kind of effort that can set Tufts apart as a school where teaching and education really count.

The interpersonal relations in the classroom are improved, the attitude towards education is better, and the attention to subject matter and synthesis of concepts is better.

The meetings are almost always very useful, as this is one of the few venues where faculty regularly get together to discuss teaching -- and writing.

I found the experiment so rewarding that I am doing it again.
Professor Jan Pechenik takes his job as a teacher seriously. A professor of biology, he considers teaching and researching hobbies of his, as well as his profession. Here at Tufts, he finds that the university offers "the perfect balance of teaching and research," because he would not want to give up either. While he has written extensively in the discipline of biology and conducted important research, Pechenik has made a major contribution to the Tufts community by helping to develop and recently co-direct the Writing Across the Curriculum Program with professor John Fyler. When Pechenik began his career as a professor of biology at Tufts in 1978, he noticed that the writing skills of his students were not improving, despite his continued efforts with comments on papers and lab reports. He started to require more revisions and fewer assignments and realized that the difficulties of the students were not their writing skills, but their ability to take notes and read and organize their ideas. At the same time, Pechenik was involved with a committee to discuss the writing requirement for Tufts students. The committee recommended that a writing workshop be established across the curriculum for students on an optional basis to improve their thinking and interpreting skills. This would be an extension of the English 1 and 2 requirements, but the workshop would not be strictly affiliated with the English department.

During the course of these events, Pechenik began writing a book called "A Short Guide to Writing About Biology," as part of a series on how to write and develop ideas within different disciplines. The fourth edition of that book will be coming out this summer. Pechenik has been involved in the Writing Across the Curriculum program since its inception in 1987. There are many brilliant concepts utilized within this program. Not only is there a great deal of flexibility within the classes, which are usually optional for students and always taught by a faculty member, but there is also a "common denominator within all the courses: informal writing." Pechenik stresses that the WW courses are not a lot of extra work or heavy writing, but more a resource for students to use in order to further understand the material being covered in the course, and to learn how to organize their ideas through writing and discussion of that writing. The biologist says that the notion is to be able to "use writing to pin ideas down, share them, modify them and hopefully, come to a conclusion." He continued, "And even if you cannot reach a conclusion, you will be able to at least write a good question regarding hat you don't understand." The WW courses, offered as one optional 50-minute class a week; are intended to get students to think outside the classroom about the course material, instead of "right before the tests." Credit is not given for the courses, but consideration is given to students on their transcripts. As the co-director of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, Pechenik experiences one of the main advantages of the workshops. Because the faculty signs in to be sure to teach the courses, the professors teaching these workshops are truly dedicated to their students. "They are a wonderfully creative group of people," he said. Surprisingly, the faculty learns as much as the students through the WW courses, because it grows to understand how the students interpret the pre lessons, and the program also clarifies ideas in the minds of the faculty as well. Another great advantage to the courses (about 20 are offered each semester) is that the relationships between the faculty members and the students are invaluable. Pechenik has also written various books for biology, including "Biology of the Invertebrates," fourth edition, due out this summer. The text is being used in the marine biology course no. Pechenik has also written seven papers on various topics regarding marine life and invertebrates. His hobbies include playing the cello with his son, Oliver. The two began learning together two years ago and enjoy playing duets together.
Writing Across the Curriculum Faculty

Dena Abdelkader, History Department
Behrouz Abedian, Mechanical Engineering
Paula Aymar, Sociology
Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, History
Edith Balbach, Community Health
Linda Bamber, English
Daniela Bartalesi-Graf, Romance Languages
Nancy Bauer, Philosophy
Harry Bernheim, Biology
Christoph Borgers, Math
Daniel Brown, German
Linfield Brown, C & E Engineering
William Burton, Asian Languages
Emily Bushnell, Psychology
Ann Cantú, Romance Languages
Benjamin Carp, History
Francie Chew, Biology
David Cochrane, Biology
Steven Cohen, Education
Robert Cook, Psychology
Conchita Lagunas Davis, Romance Languages
Elia De Bernardes-Clark, Chem. Engineering
Deborah Digges, English
Jeanne Dillon, Undergraduate Education
Patricia DiSilvio, Romance Languages
Virginia Drachman, History
Kevin Dunn, English
George Ellmore, Biology
Susan Ernst, Biology
Lenore Feigenbaum, Math
Ross Feldberg, Biology
Carol Flynn, English
Juliet Fuhrman, Biology
John Fyler, English
Linda Garant, Mathematics
David Garman, Economics
Gerard Gasarian, Romance Languages
Michelle Gaudette, Biology
Julia Genster, English
Nina Gerass-Navarro, Romance Languages
Marilyn Glater, Political Science
David Gute, C & E Engineering
Dale Gyure, Chemical Engineering
Marjorie Hahn, Math
Anna Hardman, Economics
Terry Haas, Chemistry
Boris Hasselblatt, Math
Sonja Hofkosh, English
Charles Inouye, Asian Languages
Yannis Ioanides, Economics
Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir, Romance Languages
Sara Lewis, Biology
Laura Baffoni-Licata, Romance Languages
Robin Kanarek, Psychology
Erin Kelly, Philosophy
Jonathan Kenny, Chemistry
Kenneth Lang, Physics
Pierre Laurent, History
Elizabeth Lemons, Comparative Religion
Stephen Levine, Civil Engineering

David Locke, Music
Margaret Lynch, Biology,
Keith Maddox, Psychology
Mohammed Mahmoud, Comparative Religion
Vincent Manno, Mechanical Engineering
Beatrice Manz, History
Steven Marrone, History
Andrew McClellan, Art History
John McDonald, Music
Kelly McLaughlin, Biology
Margaret McMillan, Economics
Gary McKissick, Political Science
Claudia Mejia, Romance Languages
Jayanthi Mistry, Child Development
Silvia Monteleone-Wasson, Romance Languages
Dan Mulholland, History
Isabelle Naginski, Romance Languages
George Norman, Economics
Colin Orians, Biology
Susan Ostrander, Sociology
Jan Pechenik, Biology
Jeanne Pevnvene, History
Lynne Pepall, Economics
Michael Reed, Biology
Peter Reid, Classics
Marion Reynolds, Child Development
Mark Richard, Philosophy
Chris Rogers, Mechanical Engineering
Christiane Romero, German
Marta Rosso-O’Laughlin, Romance Languages
Modhumita Roy, English
Anil Saigal, Mechanical Engineering
Haline E. Schendan, Psychology
Patricia Smith, Romance Languages
Masoud Sanayei, Civil Engineering
Mary Schultz, Chemistry
Rosalind Shaw, Sociology
Lisa Shin, Psychology
George Smith, Philosophy
Tony Smith, Political Science
Sam Sommers, Psychology
Alissa Spielberg, Community Health
Philip Starks, Biology
Saskia Stoessel, German, Russian, Asian L & L
John Straub, Economics
Holly Taylor, Psychology
Rosemary Taylor, Community Health
Montserrat Teixidor I Bigas, Mathematics
Agnes Trichard-Arany, Romance Languages
Roger Tobin, Physics
Monika Totten, German, Russian & Asian L & L
Michael Ullman, Music
Stephen White, Philosophy
Jeffrey Zabel, Economics
Adriana Zavala, Art and Art History