

# **Proposal to Stabilize, Support, and Enhance The CCSU First-Year Writing Program**

## **Preface for IPC Submission**

The Integrated Planning Council proposal submission portal lists five requirements for submissions:

- 1. Proposal must clearly align with CCSU's interim strategic objectives.** As noted in the Introduction below and throughout the document, this proposal addresses two of CCSU's strategic objectives:
  - **Maintain academic excellence:** By stabilizing and improving the program chiefly responsible for one of the university's core academic subjects, we not only maintain but enhance academic excellence in a vital area where the university is currently falling behind.
  - **Increase student enrollment:** First-year writing is CCSU's only universal single-course requirement. By enhancing the first-year writing program, through which virtually all first-time students pass, we improve the academic experience of our students which improves retention.
- 2. Proposal should delineate the anticipated costs associated with the proposal in terms of personnel (including fringe benefits), facilities, technology, and operating expenses.** The proposal incurs no facilities or technology expenses. All personnel and operating expenses are enumerated below, with the exception of those that may be associated with the long-term initiatives with which the proposal concludes. In those instances, the proposal is intended to begin discussions that will produce more concrete plans, at which point costs can be delineated.
- 3. Proposal should provide a realistic timetable for the proposal's implementation.** Most of the items in the proposal involve the maintenance of activities already taking place. All others can begin implementation immediately and be in place within a year, with the exception of the long-term initiatives discussed above, the implementation of which will depend upon the plans developed. At this point, the proposal merely calls for genuine discussions to be initiated concerning those initiatives; these discussions can (and should) begin immediately.
- 4. Proposal should suggest metrics for measuring its success over time.** Most of the relevant metrics are discussed in the proposal itself: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Multi-State Collaborative (MSC), the CLASS Dean's program assessment, as well as course enrollments, Writing Center usage, Bridges enrollment and pass rates, etc. The most significant metric, of course, is the writing program's own assessment of student writing, support for which is addressed in the proposal.
- 5. Any proposed changes to the base budget of a department or division must also be reflected in your regular budget submissions.** As much of the proposal involves changes to the English Department's base budget, we submitted the proposal to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences in response to his call for changes to departmental budgets. We do not know if the Dean included all or any of our requests in the proposed CLASS budget, but we note with concern that a requirement that he have done so for this proposal to be considered by the IPC imposes a one-man veto on the proposal.

# Proposal to Stabilize, Support, and Enhance The CCSU Freshman Writing Program

## Introduction

The CCSU Freshman Writing Program, housed in and administered by the English Department, is responsible for the only course required of all undergraduate students at the university, ENG 110 Introduction to College Writing. More than simply a single course, however, the Writing Program also administers the university's writing placement test; operates the Writing Center; oversees the university's ESL classes; provides developmental writing instruction for underprepared students; and runs, with the Math Department, the Bridges Program for underprepared students in the summer before they matriculate as freshmen. Through this comprehensive responsibility for a fundamental academic skill—writing—the program makes a preeminent contribution to the university's strategic objective of maintaining academic excellence, and, given its extensive work with first-year and underprepared students, to the objective of increasing student enrollment (by means of retention).

As detailed below, in the past five years the Writing Program has made exceptional progress in turning what was in essence a small collection of loosely-related courses into a genuine program with common goals and outcomes, clear and effective placement procedures, scaffolded connections between levels of courses, exemplary assessment procedures, instructor training and ongoing professional development, and established lines of communication and cooperation with offices throughout the campus, including Admissions, the Registrar, and the advising centers. The success of these efforts is documented in the improved pass rates, GPAs, and credits earned by our students;<sup>1</sup> the impressive success rates of the Bridges program;<sup>2</sup> and the decreasing reliance on remedial instruction in favor of credit-bearing courses that speed students toward graduation.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite these successes, and despite the fact that virtually everyone on campus agrees that effective writing instruction is essential to both student academic success and career preparation, data from CCSU's participation in the Multi-State Collaborative assessment initiative indicates that while our seniors compare favorably with national averages in Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning, our Written Communication scores are below the national average.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An assessment of the first-year writing program undertaken by the CLASS Dean's Office in Fall 2017 determined that since revamping of the program that began with the introduction of the Writing Placement Test and ENG 105/105P, the pass rate in first-year writing courses increased (largely because of the excellent pass rate in ENG 105); the average GPA in first-year writing classes improved; and students taking ENG 105 earned more credits than those who did not and retained that advantage in the following semester. NB: this report has not been published and its results should be considered preliminary.

<sup>2</sup> Pass rates percentages for Summer Bridges Writing students are in the high 90s, compared with a pass rate in the high 80s for "regular" ENG 099 students.

<sup>3</sup> Since the introduction of ENG 105/105P, we have reduced the number of sections of non-credit-bearing remedial ENG 099 from 15 in AY 2014-15 to 8 in AY 2017-18.

<sup>4</sup> According to the latest MSC results, CCSU's seniors have an average Critical Thinking score of 2.3, compared to the 2016 national average of 2.0; an average Quantitative Reasoning score of 2.6, compared to the 2016 national average of 2.1; but an average Written Communication score of 2.2, compared with the 2016 national average of 2.5. See the Academic Assessment Committee's Report to the Faculty Senate on Gen Ed Assessment, Nov. 13, 2017: [http://web.ccsu.edu/facultysenate/files/Supporting\\_Documents\\_2017-18/Faculty%20Senate%20Report%20from%20AAC%20FINAL.pdf](http://web.ccsu.edu/facultysenate/files/Supporting_Documents_2017-18/Faculty%20Senate%20Report%20from%20AAC%20FINAL.pdf).

The reasons for this unacceptable situation are, we believe, twofold. First, CCSU is the only school in the CSCU system, and one of a minority nationwide, to require its students to take only one writing course. The Connecticut Community Colleges require two freshman-level writing courses to earn an Associate's Degree (meaning that students who transfer to CCSU from the CCs are held to a higher standard than our own first-time freshmen), and all of the other CSUs require either a second freshman writing class or an upper-level writing-intensive course to complement their version of ENG 110. But while some departments at CCSU require discipline-specific writing courses and others assign their students writing, we do not have a required second writing course and have neither standards nor support for writing beyond ENG 110. We should not be surprised, then, that the results of the latest administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) revealed that while our first-year students write at rates comparable to students at other regional public master's-granting institutions, our seniors write significantly less in all measured categories.<sup>5</sup>

The second reason we offer for CCSU's writing skills deficit is the consistent under-resourcing of our Freshman Writing Program. The program, remarkably, has no budget, and all of the improvements we have made in the past five years have been funded in one of three precarious ways: (1) by shifting limited resources within the existing English Department budget, (2) through a now-discontinued internal grant from the System Office to support Summer Bridges programs, and (3) from the annual funds received from the Legislature earmarked for developmental education. This last source has been steadily shrinking; is unreliable, requiring appropriation in each biennial budget; and has been used at CCSU almost entirely to pay for part-time instructors who teach developmental math and writing courses, leaving little or nothing for initiatives to support and improve student writing. When the DevEd fund is exhausted, we rely on *ad hoc* appeals to the Dean of CLASS. The unreliability and unpredictability of these funding sources leaves us both incapable of long-term planning and commitment to multi-year or ongoing initiatives, and unable to respond nimbly to immediate needs.

This untenable situation will only worsen if left unaddressed, as CCSU works to increase enrollment to 15,000 in large part by recruiting the underserved students from our local communities who will bring with them the challenges associated with those communities. It is tempting, as we proceed with Academic and Strategic Planning, to focus attention and resources on new programs that address the perceived academic and economic needs of the moment, and on students eager and prepared to fill those programs. But if in doing so we neglect the fundamental academic requirements of all our students, including (and especially) those most at risk, we risk building an edifice without a foundation and doing an injustice to our mission as a regional comprehensive university.

The proposal that follows offers solutions to these problems in order to address the real and growing writing instruction needs of CCSU's students. Because a complex and entrenched

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<sup>5</sup> According to NSSE 2017, CCSU's seniors are assigned an average of 6.7 writing assignments of five or fewer pages (Regional Public Master's institutions average 7.7); 3.1 writing assignments between six and ten pages (RPM average 3.7); 1.6 writing assignments of eleven pages or more (RPM average 2.0; and an average of 68.5 pages of writing (RPM average 81.2). See CCSU NSSE 2017 Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons: [http://docs.ccsu.edu/oira/assessment/surveys/NSSE/NSSE\\_Frequencies\\_and\\_Statistical\\_Comparisons\\_2017.pdf](http://docs.ccsu.edu/oira/assessment/surveys/NSSE/NSSE_Frequencies_and_Statistical_Comparisons_2017.pdf).

situation like this one requires nuanced and multifaceted responses, we offer a package of measures that encompass funding, staffing, curriculum, and physical space. We understand that different university entities (Academic Affairs, Fiscal Affairs, Facilities, Faculty Senate) must address different aspects of the overall proposal, but we feel it is important to present as a whole with a variety of interdependent parts. We begin with a summary of the progress we have made and the impasse we have reached, and then offer our solutions.

## **Where We've Been, Where We Are**

**1. Staff.** Ten years ago, the Freshman Writing Program had no administrative faculty: instructors were hired and courses were overseen by the chair of the English Department, who was not a specialist in composition or writing program administration. Since then, the department has committed to devoting tenure-track faculty lines to hiring trained Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) to professionalize our writing program.

- In 2008 we used an existing faculty line to hire the university's first Director of Composition, who began the process of bringing common standards, processes, goals, and outcomes to a largely *ad hoc* group of courses taught primarily by part-time faculty.
- In 2013, as part of our response to state law PA 12-40 concerning developmental instruction at Connecticut's state colleges and universities, we were able to hire a Developmental Writing Specialist whose responsibilities included managing our ENG 099 Remedial English course, designing and overseeing a new writing placement exam, and developing and running the summer Bridges writing program.
- In 2014, following the departure of our first Director of Composition, we hired Dr. Elizabeth Brewer to fill the vacant position. Since then, Dr. Brewer has taken the lead in bringing the Freshman Writing program as far as it has come.
- In Fall 2017, after many years of requests, we were given permission to commence a tenure-track search for a Writing Center Director; the search is currently underway and we anticipate making an appointment before the end of the semester for an August 2018 start date. Given the necessity of the position, Dean Sommers allowed us to "borrow" the faculty line from another department; we will have to "repay" it when a member of the literature faculty retires. This third WPA position allows the Freshman Writing Program to meet its current needs, but leaves little room for expansion.

**2. ENG 105 and ENG 105P.** Prior to 2012, CCSU offered a single freshman writing course, ENG 110; students who did not place into ENG 110 were required to take ENG 099, a remedial writing course that counts in a student's GPA but whose credits do not count towards graduation. As part of our response to PA 12-40, we developed ENG 105/105P, an "embedded remediation" writing class based on the nationally successful ALP model. ENG 105 is the equivalent of ENG 110 and satisfies the university's freshman writing requirement; it differs from ENG 110 only in that students in ENG 105 are required to enroll in the corequisite ENG 105P, a two-credit class that offers extra time and assistance with writing assignments, embedding remedial instruction into a credit-bearing course rather than separating it out into a distinct non-credit course. Students needing a full semester of remediation are still placed into ENG 099, but those who do not but are still not fully prepared for ENG 110 can now fulfill their freshman writing requirement in a single semester and earn an extra two credits doing so. We piloted ENG 105/105P in Spring 2014 and fully introduced it in AY 2014-15, and in AY 2017-18 we are

offering 27 sections; in that same span, we have reduced sections of ENG 099 from 15 in AY 2014-15 to eight in AY 2017-18.

**3. Writing Placement Exam.** Prior to 2012, placement in a CCSU first-year writing course—ENG 099 or ENG 110—was based solely on a student’s SAT or ACT scores, a method acknowledged by national writing disciplinary organizations to be highly unreliable. When PA 12-40 required Connecticut schools to use multiple measures for placement, rather than including other less-than-reliable measures like class rank or Accuplacer scores, we designed our own placement test that makes use of the most reliable of measures, students’ actual writing. The exam is taken online; students are given a short essay to read and a prompt to respond to, with a two-hour time limit. Exams are scored by trained faculty members from the First Year Writing Program, placing students into ENG 099, ENG 105, or ENG 110. Initially, due to funding restrictions, we administered the exam to students above a “floor” SAT score of 400 and below a “ceiling” SAT score of 550; in Spring 2017 we secured additional funds to pay graders and were able to eliminate the “floor,” giving the exam to all students with Writing SAT scores below 550; this change has correlated with a notable decline in the number of sections of ENG 099 we have had to offer.

**4. Professional Development.** A distinct advantage to having professional WPAs administering our writing program is that they are able to offer training and professional development opportunities to a freshman writing faculty composed largely of part-time instructors. This training and professional development is essential to assuring not only that our instructors have the requisite skills and knowledge to teach composition, but that they are aware of and prepared to participate in the common expectations, goals, and outcomes that define our program and give all students a comparable experience. Our current professional development consists of the following:

- **Annual professional development day.** A day-long event, mandatory for all part-time composition faculty and recommended for all full-time composition faculty, designed to assure that all instructors are familiar with the programs norms, expectations, and objectives, to introduce new developments in the program, to answer questions, and to share ideas. The Director of Composition facilitates the English 105/110 workshop, and the Developmental Writing Specialist facilitates the English 099 workshop. Part-time faculty receive a stipend of \$150 for the day to compensate them for their time, and lunch is provided.
- **Topic-specific workshops.** Voluntary workshops on timely pedagogical issues for our program, such as teaching with the *Comp@Central* anthology, using group work in composition, and effectively responding to student writing. Participants do not receive compensation.
- **Workshops for full-time faculty who will teach composition.** Facilitated by the Director of Composition, this 90 minute workshop provides an introduction to English 105/110 for full-time faculty who typically teach literature classes. Participants do not receive compensation.
- **Individual meetings with new instructors.** The Director of Composition meets with all new instructors for English 105/110 and 202 and the Developmental Writing Specialist meets with all new English 099 instructors in order to make sure that they understand the

norms, expectations, and objectives of the program. Participants do not receive compensation.

- **Syllabus review of all English 105/110 syllabi.** Every semester, the Director of Composition provides feedback on all instructors' syllabi and requests changes to make sure all sections are aligned with course policies and outcomes.
- **Class observations.** The Director of Composition and the Developmental Writing Specialist conduct these observations once every three years for all part-time faculty, provide written feedback, and meet with the instructors. Our well-developed observation system has become a model for several departments in the wake of the new contractual requirement that part-time faculty be regularly evaluated.
- **Assessment retreat.** Day-long event open to any interested part-time and full-time faculty, to score anonymized student writing from ENG 099, 105, and 110 using our program rubric. We are piloting this as a more effective alternative to our current assessment process that asks instructors to score their own students' papers and submit scores. Anonymized scoring provides for greater objectivity and consistency in assessment. Moreover, when instructors can read others' papers, they get a sense of student writing beyond their classes, providing professional development by building community and encouraging discussion about our common goals and challenges. Participating faculty receive a stipend of \$150 for the day; lunch is provided.

**5. Resources.** Over the past five years the Freshman Writing Program has developed resources for both students and instructors where none or few existed before, in order to bring consistency—and consistent excellence—to our classes.

- **Goals and Outcomes.** Led by the Director of Composition and the Developmental Writing Specialist, the writing program developed two sets of common goals and outcomes, one for ENG 099 and one for ENG 105 and 110. Both sets were approved by the English Department. The goals and outcomes inform virtually every aspect of the program, from course design to assessment to professional development. They assure that students completing ENG 099 are prepared for ENG 110, and that all students in every section of each course emerge with a consistent set of skills.
- **Handbooks.** The First Year Writing Program has developed comprehensive handbooks for instructors in ENG 099 and ENG 105/110. The handbooks cover course policies, placement, goals and outcomes, assignments, syllabus design, and much more; they help assure consistency of instruction across sections while offering faculty ideas for maximizing their own individual strengths and interests as instructors.
- **Comp@Central.** Faced with the rising cost of textbooks and the lack of good models of student writing for classroom use, three years ago the First Year Writing Program produced the first annual volume of *Comp@Central*, an anthology of student writing from ENG 099, 105, and 110 classes. Each year, program faculty submit the best writing from their classes and the English Department's Composition Committee selects pieces for inclusion in the next year's edition, which then becomes a required textbook in all sections of 099, 105, and 110. Sold at cost to students, *Comp@Central* at once offers a low-cost, purpose-designed textbook, provides consistency of instruction across sections, and allows us to celebrate our students' best work.

**6. Bridges.** Prior to 2012, CCSU's summer Bridges program in writing and math was little more than an opportunity for students requiring remediation to take ENG 099 and/or MATH 099 in the summer prior to their matriculation as freshmen. Spurred by PA 12-40's requirement that we offer an "intensive remediation" program to supplement our regular offerings and the hiring in 2013 of our first Developmental Writing Specialist, we took the opportunity to turn Bridges into a genuine college transition program for underprepared and at-risk students. Working with his counterpart in the Math Department, our DWS developed not only a seven-week developmental writing curriculum but also an extensive accompanying program of instruction and opportunity focusing on social and emotional learning, student skills, and making a successful transition from high school to college. This extra-academic programming draws on and introduces students to an array of offices and individuals from across campus. The program has grown steadily each year—it now serves more students than EOP at a fraction of the cost—while maintaining academic standards in line with our conventional developmental program as well as a success rate well over 90% (significantly above that of ENG 099 in general). The Bridges program has been hampered, however, by a lack of institutional and financial support that has prevented it from growing even more rapidly and from properly supporting its graduates after they matriculate and tracking their success.

**7. Writing Center.** As recently as 2014, the university's Writing Center was run by a member or members of the part-time faculty without position-specific education or training; their low remuneration (usually three credits per semester at adjunct rates) and responsibility for tutoring as well as administration of the Center imposed significant limits on the Center's hours, record-keeping, outreach, training, and professional development. The Center was understaffed, under-resourced, and—not surprisingly—underutilized. In 2015, our new Director of Composition took the Center in hand, becoming its Director along with all of her other responsibilities. Consequently, in the past two years the Center has developed a reliable scheduling and record-keeping system; provides training and ongoing professional development for its tutors; offers expanded and regularized hours; offers discipline-specific workshops for classes; embeds tutors in the Bridges program; and has developed rules, guidelines, and procedures for tutoring. In Fall 2017 we offered for the first time a new General Education class, ENG 280 Tutoring Writing, which introduces students to the theory and practice of writing tutoring so that they can apply for work as tutors in our Writing Center or elsewhere. With our new record-keeping capabilities, we can now say with confidence that the Center is providing a significant service to CCSU's students. The Center is open 31 hours a week during the spring and fall semesters with a staff of two part-time faculty, two graduate assistants, and five undergraduate tutors. In 2015-17 the Writing Center averaged 1390 individual tutoring sessions with students from 42 different academic departments. At the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year, our Director of Composition stepped away from directing the Writing Center to focus on her many other responsibilities; as a result, the Center is currently once again being run by two part-time faculty members. Fortunately, as noted above, we were given approval this year to hire a tenure-track faculty member to serve as Writing Center Director. But while hiring a full-time faculty member to do this full-time job will certainly help us to maintain the improvements we have made, the Writing Center will continue to be limited—and the new Director hindered—by a lack of institutional support, and the necessity of growth to meet the needs of our growing student population will not be possible.

**8. ESL.** Our current course offerings for English as a Second Language students, ESL 108 and ESL 109, are taught at the same time by the same instructor; until recently they were taught by adjunct faculty with no special training in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). While ESL 109 serves as an alternative prerequisite for ENG 110 for English Language Learners, the two ESL courses had no formal coordination with our writing program; moreover, they are drastically under-used, attracting perhaps 8-12 students combined in a given semester, because we had no mechanism for placing students in the courses. In the last few years, we brought the ESL courses under the joint supervision of the writing program and the TESOL program (a graduate program also housed in the English Department); they are now taught by instructors trained in TESOL, who also understand the goals and outcomes of our writing program and the expectations for students entering ENG 110. Still, the courses are significantly under-utilized: in fall 2017 CCSU had at least 76 self-identified ESL students in our entering class (based on demographic data gathered from our writing placement test; this does not include students who did not take the test, students already at CCSU, or students who declined to self-identify as English Language Learners), and only twelve students enrolled in ESL 108/109. This under-utilization is a result of our lack of a placement mechanism for ESL students: based on the results of the writing placement test, we currently can recommend, but not require, that students take ESL 108/109 instead of ENG 099, and because of the unfortunate stigma attached to ESL classes in the public schools, students prefer to take ENG 099, which they often fail because it does not address their specific learning needs. As CCSU expands its enrollment outreach to Hartford, New Britain, and other underserved communities, the extant need for ESL-tailored writing instruction will only increase. To address the existing problem and prepare for this increased need, the English Department proposed, in fall 2017, a dramatic restructuring of our courses and our placement mechanism: students who self-identify as English Language Learners will be placed not in ESL 108 or 109, but, based on the results of their placement test, in new courses ESL 100 (a new course, the ESL-specific equivalent of ENG 099), ESL 105 (a new course, the ESL-specific equivalent of ENG 105), or ENG 110 (students prepared for ENG 110 do not need an ESL-specific equivalent). Curricula of ESL and ENG equivalents will be carefully aligned to ensure equivalent outcomes, and instructors in ESL courses will be trained and offered professional development in both writing pedagogy and TESOL. These changes are currently pending before the university Curriculum Committee.

**9. WRT 100.** Prior to 2012, ENG 099 was purely and simply a remedial writing class, teaching pre-college level skills. Since hiring a Developmental Writing Specialist, however, we have gradually enhanced ENG 099's curriculum, pedagogy, and outcomes; it now offers less pre-collegiate instruction than college-level instruction for under-prepared students needing a full semester of writing to be prepared for ENG 110. In recognition of this change, in concert with our ESL-related proposals the English Department has also proposed changing ENG 099 to WRT 100 (all ENG writing courses will, effective fall 2018, become WRT courses to differentiate them from English literature courses and reduce confusion for incoming students and their advisors). The salient difference is that while students receive no credit towards graduation for ENG 099, they will earn three credits for WRT 100, moving them more quickly to graduation and enhancing first-year retention by removing the stigma of "remedial" work. This proposal is also currently pending before the university Curriculum Committee.

**10. Writing in the Disciplines.** In October 2010, CCSU's Faculty Senate formed an *ad hoc* Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) Committee charged with exploring and facilitating WAC. The committee eventually designed a proposal for a required, discipline-based writing course to supplement ENG 110; the proposal was absorbed into a larger proposal to redesign General Education, which was ultimately rejected by the Senate in 2013. While the WAC proposal itself had widespread support, it was deemed unwise at the time to re-raise it independently in the wake of the collapse of General Education reform. Four years later, however, the need for additional writing instruction at CCSU is even clearer. Consequently, in the coming semester the English Department anticipates submitting to the university Curriculum Committee a proposal for a Writing in the Disciplines (the preferred term for the style of WAC we have in mind) requirement. The proposal will require each major to add to its curriculum a discipline-specific writing course with a prerequisite of ENG 105 or 110; while many departments already require such courses, for those unable or unwilling to do so we will create an alternative upper-level writing course for their students. The proposal will also call for a new Writing in the Disciplines Committee to oversee the requirement and develop standards and guidelines; and a WID Director, supported by appropriate reassigned time, to administer the new requirement and chair the committee.

## Where We're Going, What We Need

As noted above, most of this work to stabilize and improve our First Year Writing Program was accomplished either without funding or with one-time or otherwise *ad hoc* funds. This situation is not tenable if we are to retain and consolidate the considerable gains we have made, much less to confidently plan for the short-term and long-term future, to accommodate enrollment growth, and to make additional improvements to the program and to writing instruction at CCSU. A program of the size, complexity, and importance of our First Year Writing Program requires its own reliable annual budget and other resources based on its consistent annual expenses and other needs. What follows, then, is a list of the budget, personnel, and other resources needed to sustain the First Year Writing Program's current activities and to accommodate expected growth and support new initiatives.

### 1. Personnel.

- **Developmental Writing Specialist.** Our DWS is leaving the university at the end of the spring 2018 semester. In order to preserve the gains made in our developmental writing program described above, to prepare for the growing demand for developmental writing instruction that will accompany CCSU's expanded enrollment, and to maintain our writing placement test and summer Bridges program, all of which depend on the presence of a professionally qualified, active, and engaged developmental writing specialist, it is imperative that we be authorized to re-fill this position on a tenure-track basis as soon as possible. We ask that the administrative steps necessary to authorize a search beginning in fall 1018 be taken.
- **Full-Time Instructors.** The vast majority of our first year writing courses are taught by part-time faculty. While our part-timers are generally excellent teachers and are carefully trained and supervised by our Director of Composition, their effectiveness is limited by the fact that they are often obliged to teach at multiple institutions with differently

structured writing programs in order to earn a living; by the lack of a requirement that they hold office hours; by their transience, leaving CCSU for full-time or better-paid part-time work, forcing us to replace them; and by other difficulties endemic to reliance on part-time faculty. Even the best part-time faculty lack the knowledge of and connection to the English Department and the university that full-time faculty have. As a result, our first-year students' sole universal requirement and unifying experience is being provided by instructors unprepared—and unpaid—to guide them through their acclimatization to the college life and cement their bonds to the university. Yet when the conversation turns to new faculty positions, the focus is inevitably on new or growing economically attractive programs rather than the fundamental skills that provide the foundation of all college learning. While the question of full-time lecturers is a complex one, we feel that the conversation is overdue.

- (see also below, **Writing Center** and **Writing in the Disciplines**)

## **2. ENG 105 and ENG 105P.**

- Since the inception of ENG 105/105P, the two-credit 105P sections have been paid for with the Legislature's Developmental Education funding. While the English Department has not been privy to the total amount of funding received each year nor involved in deciding how the money is to be spent, we do know that the Dev Ed funding has been steadily reduced and is not guaranteed but must be reallocated every two years by the Legislature. At the same time, the demand for ENG 105/105P and the number of sections needed has become increasingly predictable. In the four years since its inception in AY 2014-15 we have offered 23, 24, 25, and 26 sections of 105/105P, and we expect enrollment to level off at 26 or 27 sections annually; at an average salary of \$1600.00 per credit for 27 two-credit classes, our annual cost is \$86,400.00. This predictable cost should become a regular part of the English Department's part-time faculty budget. If the university wishes to continue to use the Dev Ed funding to pay for ENG 105P, it can transfer the necessary funds from Dev Ed to the department's part-time budget, with the understanding that if the Legislature further decreases or eliminates the funding, funds for ENG 105P will still be part of the department's regular budget.

## **3. Writing Placement Exam.**

- **Grading.** Graders for the Writing Placement Test are paid \$5 for each test they score. In the past three academic years, we have averaged 1100 placement tests graded, at an annual cost of \$5500.00. We expect that cost to rise slightly in the coming years because this year we expanded the range of students that take the test: where previously students with SAT Writing scores between 400 and 550 were required to take the test, this year we required all students with scores below 550 to take it (the change has been cost-effective by reducing the number of ENG 099 sections needed). In the past, these costs have been paid for with the Legislature's Developmental Education funding, and when that funding has run out, remaining costs have been covered by *ad hoc* requests to the CLASS Dean (who, presumably, is forced to shift funds from elsewhere in the CLASS budget to fund a university requirement). Like ENG 105P discussed above, the placement test is not a provisional initiative dependent upon legislative support, but is a permanent, required part of CCSU's writing program and, like ENG 105P, should be budgeted for accordingly.

- **Training and Norming.** National best practice for tests like this one, scored by people rather than machines, is to have two readers for each exam with a third reader used in the case of significant discrepancy. Funding has never been made available for this type of grading, however, which would more than double our current expenses. If we are to maintain our current single-grader system, it is imperative that we devote appropriate resources to training and norming graders to assure consistency and accuracy in scoring. We have in the past run training/norming sessions for graders and paid the attendees for their time: in the past four years we have provided this training to an average of 7.5 instructors each year, with a stipend of \$150.00, for an average annual cost of \$1125.00. These costs too have been paid for with Dev Ed funding and, failing that, with *ad hoc* funds from the CLASS dean. This training is both necessary and cost-effective (in that it helps us avoid the expense of multiple graders), and should not be dependent on the generosity of the Legislature or the CLASS dean.

#### 4. Professional Development.

- Much of the training and professional development provided by the First Year Writing Program incurs no cost. But because the vast majority of our instructors are part-time faculty, we must compensate them for their time if we are to require their attendance or ask them to do otherwise uncompensated work. The two activities that fall into this category, our annual mandatory professional development day and our annual assessment retreat (both described above) have been funded either through the Dev Ed fund or the generosity of the CLASS dean. With an average of 30 part-time faculty teaching in the freshman writing program in a given year, the cost at \$150 per instructor is \$4500.00; with an additional \$300.00 for lunch the total annual cost is \$4800.00. At our first annual assessment retreat in August 2017 we had seven participants, each paid a stipend of \$300.00, plus lunch (total cost \$100), for a total expense of \$2200; we hope to raise the number of participants to at least ten in coming years, which would increase expenses to \$3100.00 (including lunch). If we are to maintain the consistency and excellence of our program and fulfill our assessment responsibilities through best practices, these funds must be a permanent part of our budget.

**5. Bridges.** The writing portion of the Summer Bridges Program has appropriately been the responsibility of the Developmental Writing Specialist, but because it is a summer program and not a part of the position's contractual load credit, compensation for the work has always been problematic. Reliance on grants and unpredictable state funding, and on financial payments rather than load credit, for a program to which the university is committed has hindered the ability of Bridges to best serve our at-risk students. Our needs are fourfold:

- **Spring Funding.** In spring 2014, 2015, and 2016, we applied for and received grant funding from the CSCU System Office to support the summer Bridges program. Because the grant funds must be spent by June 30, before the summer program begins, we have used the funds to pay for necessary preparatory work in the spring. In spring 2017 the grant was not offered, and not having received the usual RFP or heard anything about the grant for spring 2018 we assume it is defunct. Nonetheless, the Bridges program must be planned each spring, recruiting must be done, instructors hired and trained, materials purchased, as well as other necessary activities requiring funding. In spring 2017 we relied on the Dev Ed fund to compensate the Developmental Writing Specialist at a rate

equivalent to three credit hours (\$5190.00) for planning, development, and training work, and paid our Bridges instructors and embedded writing tutors \$3300.00 for their time spent being trained and helping to develop the program. We also spend an average of \$600.00 on materials that we provide to the students. If the university is committed to the Bridges program, this funding should be permanent and not dependent on unreliable state or CSCU support.

- **Funds for the Summer Program.** Compared to residential programs like EOP, the Summer Bridges Program is remarkably cost-effective: students' minimal tuition of \$240.00 pays for their daily lunches, faculty and staff from around campus volunteer to participate in lunchtime programming, and the program's costs are limited to paying its directors, instructors, and embedded writing tutors. In summer 2017 this cost was \$19,300.00 (writing only; costs for Math are higher). If our planned recruitment efforts succeed and if the university's enrollment goals are met, we expect these costs to rise. In the past, these costs have been borne by the Dev Ed fund which, as noted above, is neither reliable nor controlled by the departments that manage the program. If the university is committed to the Bridges program, this funding should be a part of those departments' permanent budget allocations.
- **Reassigned Time.** As a non-residential program that serves all students needing developmental coursework, the Bridges program has considerable room to grow. Its growth is hampered, however, by a lack of staffing resources. While the EOP program, which serves fewer students, has two full-time, year-round staff and a secretary, Bridges has no one at all whose time is dedicated to the program outside its summer period of operation. In the past we used the System Office "Bridges A" grant or Dev Ed funds to pay the two directors the equivalent of three credit hours each spring for the work they do to prepare the summer program, but without reassigned time this payment does not create the time necessary to do the work required. After repeated requests for reassigned time to support the program during the year, we were given three credit hours each spring to be divided between the two directors; this was not enough reassigned time to allow either director relief from their teaching schedule, and even this small allotment has since dried up. We request three credit hours each semester for the director of the Bridges Writing program, which will enable at least two essential functions for the growth and enhancement of the program. First, it will allow the director to recruit additional students by visiting high schools, attending recruiting, orientation, and advising events, and contacting qualified students directly. In the past four years we have identified an average of 96 students eligible for Bridges Writing, and have enrolled an average of only 17 (the numbers for Math are much higher): we have considerable room for growth, which will require enhanced recruitment to bring this valuable program to the attention of eligible students. Second, dedicated time in the fall semesters following the summer program will allow Bridges to do what EOP does so effectively: to continue to support its students when the school year begins, tracking their progress, meeting with them, and creating additional programming and events. The granting of this reassigned time would also reduce the budgetary needs for spring described above, as the director would not be paid in addition to receiving reassigned time.
- **Graduate Assistant.** To assist with the work described above, we request \$3000 annually to fund a half-time Graduate Assistant. Students taking or having taken our ENG 580 Research and Pedagogical Practice in Developmental Composition are well-

qualified to help develop programming, work with students, and assemble assessment data, and their employment opportunities would be enhanced by the experience.

**6. Writing Center.** The hiring of a full-time director for the Writing Center is a wonderful opportunity to support and consolidate the considerable gains made by the center in the last four years and to undertake necessary further improvements. That opportunity will be squandered, however, without appropriate resources.

- **Staff.** The new director will be the academic and intellectual as well as the administrative leader of the Writing Center. But because the director will be required to teach at least two courses each semester in addition to running the center, she will be unable to be on-site during the center's full hours of operation. To address this need, we have in the past hired two part-time instructors as assistant directors for a total of eight credit hours (equal to 24 contact hours) to manage the center in the absence of the director and to provide tutoring as well (this year, in the absence of a director, we have increased our use of part-time assistant directors to ten credit hours). We have paid them through the English Department's part-time teaching budget at an approximate annual cost of \$25,600.00 (this year the cost is \$30,520.00); this funding is, however, not dedicated and must compete with other part-time faculty needs. These eight credit hours should be a permanent addition to the English Department's budget dedicated to the Writing Center.
- **Tutors.** Currently the Writing Center's tutoring staff consists of two half-time Graduate Assistants (ten hours per week, \$1500.00 stipend per semester for each GA) and five undergraduate tutors (\$10.10 an hour, ten hours per week per student for fifteen weeks each semester), at a total cost of \$21,150.00 for a total of 70 tutor-hours per week. All of this is paid from the English Department budget, and consequently semester-to-semester staffing levels depend not upon the needs of the Writing Center but upon other demands on the department budget. With the current staffing, we are able to keep the center open for 31 hours per week, all during regular business hours; we offer no evening, weekend, or summer hours. This leaves significant segments of our student population un- or under-served, especially graduate students and working students who take evening classes or are not available for tutoring during the week. It also leaves us unable to hire more tutors to work during regular hours, limiting our ability to serve specialized populations like ESL students with trained tutors; or to reach out to the many students who need our services but do not use them, because if they were to come to the center for tutoring we would be unable to serve them at current staffing levels. We would also like to be able to provide tutoring hours in satellite locations (e.g. the Mid-Campus Residence Hall) and to offer embedded tutors in individual classes for sustained writing support over the course of the semester. Our new ENG 280 Tutoring Writing class will provide us with a reliable supply of well-trained tutors. A 50% increase in funding for tutors (\$10,575.00 annually, for an additional 35 tutor-hours) will take pressure off of the English Department budget and allow us to serve more students in need of writing assistance while also employing more CCSU students and giving them marketable skills.
- **Space.** The greatest need by far facing the Writing Center is physical space. Several years ago when the school-based advising centers were created, the Writing Center was displaced from the third floor of Willard Hall to a smaller space in the basement to make room for the Arts and Sciences advising center. When Willard was closed for

renovations, the center was moved to a still smaller space in the basement of Carroll Hall. The space designated for the center in the renovated Willard-DiLoreto building is too small for its current use, and leaves no space for expansion; our requests for additional space have been continually ignored or deferred, even when the breakup of CACE made additional space available in Willard-DiLoreto directly adjacent to the center's currently designated space. A university's use of its physical space is a good indicator of its priorities; an examination of the plans for the new Willard-DiLoreto makes clear how little regard CCSU has for writing instruction. We ask that this be rethought, and that space adjacent to the Writing Center's current footprint in the new building be assigned for its use.

**7. ESL.** The proposed enhancements to the writing program's ESL offerings described above are cost-neutral: they involve moving students from existing classes to classes that will better meet their needs, but the total number of classes and instructors should not change.

- **IELP.** The most significant challenge—and opportunity—facing ESL instruction at CCSU is the untenable situation in the Intensive English Language Program (IELP), currently housed in the Center for International Education. In addition to the program's better-known difficulties with enrollment and management, we would note as well its lack of a clear, scaffolded curriculum in line with national standards and its lack of alignment with the English Department's credit-bearing ESL classes. This is a significant missed opportunity for the university, which is able to offer international students neither the Intensive English Language Program they need nor a clear transition to enrollment in the university's credit-bearing offerings. The steps and resources needed to remedy the IELP's problems are a matter for a different proposal, but as the university's resident experts in ESL instruction, the English Department's TESOL faculty, and their partners in the Freshman Writing Program, would like to be a part of the conversation. It may well be that the proper home for the IELP program is in the English Department—where it was many years ago—in order to better integrate it into the academic side of the university.

## **8. Writing in the Disciplines.**

- Perhaps the most important proposal in this document is also the most difficult and the furthest from fruition. While few would argue that CCSU does not need a second writing course to supplement ENG 110, meet the writing needs of our students, and bring the university in line with CSCU and national standards, the work and resources to bring this about will be significant. The English Department intends to submit a proposal for a Writing in the Disciplines requirement to the Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Senate by the end of the spring 2018 semester, but making the requirement a reality will require cooperation from the university's administration. A WID program will require a director: either a new hire or an existing faculty member with appropriate qualifications, supported with appropriate reassigned time. It will also require a financial commitment to professional development for faculty from across campus who will need to be trained in course design, discipline-based writing instruction, and other related matters.

## **Summary**

The Freshman Writing Program has made significant improvements over the past five years, and those improvements have laid the groundwork for additional initiatives that will help improve students' writing and meet the university's strategic goals of enhancing academic excellence and increasing enrollment (by increasing retention). Without reliable, dedicated resources, however, the improvements we have made are not sustainable, and without additional resources we will be able neither to meet the needs that will accompany expanded enrollment (particularly expanded enrollment from underserved communities and underprepared students) nor to provide the additional initiatives that our students need. What follows is a summary of what we need to maintain current standards, and what we need to implement projected improvements and new initiatives.

### **Maintenance of Current Standards** (in addition to funds already in English Dept. budget)

1. Full-time tenure-track hire to replace departing Developmental Writing Specialist (no additional funds needed beyond those already associated with position)
2. Funds to pay part-time instructors teaching ENG 105P (existing expense, currently paid from Dev Ed funds, to be moved to English part-time budget): **\$86,400.00**
3. Funds to pay for grading of Writing Placement Exam (existing expense, currently paid from Dev Ed funds or by CLASS Dean's Office, to be moved to English Department OE): **\$5500.00**
4. Funds to pay for training and norming Writing Placement Exam graders (existing expense, currently paid from Dev Ed funds or by CLASS Dean's Office, to be moved to English Department OE): **\$1125.00**
5. Funds to pay for mandatory annual professional development event for first year writing part-time faculty (existing expense, paid last year from Dev Ed funds or by CLASS Dean's Office, to be moved to English Department OE): **\$4500.00**
6. Funds to pay for first year writing assessment retreat (existing expense, paid last year from Dev Ed funds or by CLASS Dean's Office, to be moved to English Department OE): **\$3100.00**
7. Funds to support spring preparation for Summer Bridges Writing Program (existing expense, previously paid by System Office "Bridges A" Grant, paid last year from Dev Ed funds or by CLASS Dean's Office, to be moved to English Department OE; note: this amount reduced to \$3900.00 if reassigned time is granted to Bridges Writing Director): **\$9090.00**
8. Funds to run Summer Bridges Writing Program (existing expense, currently paid from Dev Ed funds, to be moved to English Department OE; note: additional funds will be needed to pay for Math Bridges): **\$19,300.00**
9. Funds to pay two part-time faculty members to serve as assistant directors of the Writing Center (existing expense, currently paid from English Department part-time faculty teaching budget at the expense of using funds to hire part-time instructors to teach; to be added to English Department part-time faculty budget to free up funds for instructors, or added to department's non-teaching personnel budget): **\$25,600.00**

### **Meet Anticipated Needs and Implement Needed Improvements**

#### Resources

1. Three credits each semester of reassigned time for the Bridges Writing Director. Approximate cost of \$9600.00 to hire part-time faculty to cover classes. But because this reassigned time would negate the need to pay the Director the current \$5190.00 stipend for preparing Bridges in the spring, the net cost would be **\$4410.00**.
2. Half-time Graduate Assistant to assist with Bridges in fall and spring: **\$3000.00**.
3. Funds for additional Writing Center tutors: **\$10,575.00**.
4. Additional space for the Writing Center, in the room adjacent to the room currently assigned to the Writing Center in the renovated Willard-DiLoreto. Other than furnishings (the cost of which is part of the renovation budget), this additional space will incur no additional cost, yet is imperative to the center's ability to meet demand and expand offerings.
5. In addition to these specific funding needs, we note that as CCSU meets its five-year enrollment target of 15,000 students, the First Year Writing Program will incur proportionate additional expenses which, as first year writing is mandatory for all undergraduates, must be met. We do not ask for these additional funds now, but ask that CCSU's budgeting process plan for them in the near future. They include:
  - a. Additional funds to staff first year writing classes, to meet demand for additional sections. A specific number is difficult to predict, as the need for sections will depend on the percentages of students of particular types we recruit (graduate students do not need ENG 110; transfer students often bring credit for a first year writing class; under-prepared students are more likely to need ENG 099 in addition to ENG 110, or ENG 105/105P instead of ENG 110)
  - b. Additional funds for scoring a larger number of Writing Placement Tests.
  - c. Additional funds for Bridges. If our recruitment efforts draw significantly on under-prepared students and under-represented communities, more students will be eligible for Bridges, requiring more instructors who will have to be paid and trained.
  - d. Additional funds for Writing Center tutors. The additional funding for tutors discussed above is intended primarily to allow the Center to expand its hours and offerings to meet the needs of our current student population while allowing some room to accommodate additional demand accompanying additional enrollment. It may be the case, however, that meeting our ambitious enrollment goals will require additional tutoring hours and programs.

### Initiatives

1. Explore hiring of **full-time instructors to teach first year writing**. We currently offer roughly 35 sections of ENG 110 each semester; hiring five instructors would cover 20 of those sections.
2. **Expand Bridges to a year-round program**, like EOP. Much of this proposal could be accomplished through the reassigned time and GA requested above, used to track and support Bridges students during their first year at CCSU. This support might also include a one-credit class in either the fall or fall and spring of the students' first year, on the model of the course offered by EOP.

3. Resolve the difficulties surrounding the **IELP** program in a way that addresses the needs of the students, the enrollment goals of the university, the expertise of faculty, and the contractual rights of the unions.
4. Design and implement a **Writing in the Disciplines** requirement. This will require faculty buy-in and curricular approval, and also the financial support of the institution.