The Hostos Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Initiative is now in its third year, and we continue to make strides in opening up campus-wide dialogue on the role and value of writing across disciplines. We continue to work with faculty to integrate writing in their courses, along with supporting faculty in the creation of Writing Intensive (WI) courses. To date, faculty in Behavioral/Social Sciences and Natural Sciences have developed four Writing Intensive sections to be presented to the College-wide Curriculum Committee this semester.

This year marks the arrival of five new Writing Fellows in addition to a returning Fellow, Kathy Harris. "From the Writing Desk" introduces these new writing collaborators at Hostos and describes some of the work being done by faculty and Writing Fellows this academic year. Our manual, Making Meaning, Making Sense: A Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum is also being distributed, and we hope you will find it a useful resource. Fellows, Ese Burlingame and Carolina de Luca, have constructed our official WAC website. Please visit our website at http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/wac.

Please let us know if you are interested in working with a Writing Fellow. And of course, we continue to welcome all ideas, questions, or comments with regard to the WAC Initiative at Hostos.

—Linda Hirsch, WAC Coordinator
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Meet Our Writing Fellows

Ese Burlingame: Health and Human Services

Fellow Ese Burlingame was introduced to the power of writing and learning while still an undergraduate student at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia where she became a much needed writing tutor her senior year. After graduating in 1996, Ese moved to New York and began her graduate studies in Anthropology, first at Hunter College and then at the CUNY Graduate Center. During this time Ese was pleased to tutor students at New York Technical College and teach Anthropology classes as an adjunct at Lehman College.

Ese is pleased to be working at Hostos as a writing fellow. She hopes that her extensive experience with Writing-Across-the-Curriculum will help both the believing and the skeptical faculty and students with whom she may be working. For Ese, the power of writing in the classroom is not only a matter of how it can be a tool for teaching and learning, but also how it encourages both the professor and the student to see writing as a process which, like learning new material, can be highly fraught with error at the beginning, but which becomes clearer and more proficient as classroom material is better understood.

Tom Cerasulo: Humanities

Tom Cerasulo is a doctoral candidate in the English Department of the CUNY Graduate Center. He has also completed the Film Studies Certificate and has served on the Film Studies Advisory Board, as its student member, since 1998. His dissertation, written with the support of a Grace Calder Fellowship, traces the careers of an interrelated group of "highbrow" writers who wrote for -- and in many cases about -- the motion picture industry during the studio era.

Tom is currently working with Professor Sol Miranda on developing writing activities for her "Public Speaking" and "Voice and Diction" courses. He comes to Hostos this semester after many years of teaching at Lehman College, where he successfully utilized WAC principles in his Freshman Year Initiative courses. He has also taught classes in American Literature, Business Writing, and Film.
Carolina de Luca: Humanities and Nursing

Born in Rome, Carolina began to learn English at the age of eight at the American Overseas School of Rome. By the time she was ten, she was bilingual in Italian and English. Carolina went on to study at Rome’s Liceo Linguistico Internazionale in the ninth grade with the goal of becoming a simultaneous translator. After several years, she returned to the American School for her senior year. There, Tony Brophy, an Irish professor, taught her to enjoy reading literature. He was a dedicated, inspiring professor and sparked a passion for literature in Carolina which has shaped and directed her life to this day.

Carolina moved to New York City straight out of high school in 1989. After receiving her B.A. in English Literature from Hunter College, Carolina enrolled in the Comparative Literature Ph.D. program at the CUNY Graduate Center. In addition to her studies, she has taught Italian language and literature at Hunter College and NYU for the last four years. A CUNY product through and through, she is honored today with the chance to help students and professors here at Hostos.

Kathy Harris: History, Biology, Psychology, Public Administration

Kathy Harris joined the Hostos Writing Fellows last year and enjoyed co-editing the manual, "Making Meaning, Making Sense: A Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum," with WAC Coordinator Dr. Linda Hirsch. (Look for this publication coming to your mailbox soon!) Kathy is currently working on her dissertation in English Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, a project which spans three centuries of the production of the book as both a material object and as the new-type of digital product in the 21st Century. She came to Hostos with the experience of teaching in Lehman College’s Freshman Year Initiative Program, their introductory literature courses and NYU’s Expository Writing program.

When not editing, “technologying,” collaborating or running between subways, Kathy spends her time jet-setting to conferences or preparing articles for publication. Don’t worry, she occasionally takes time to relax by scaling 800 foot vertical walls of rock and ice at various cliffs around the world.

Dorinda Tetens: Allied Health Professions

As a new writing fellow, Dorinda Tetens finds working at Hostos a rewarding experience. This semester she will be working in the Allied Health Professions Department with Professor Ruiz on her "Professional Practice Issues in Diagnostic Imaging" course. Both the students and the faculty are excited about using “writing to learn” strategies and developing their fundamental writing process. Dorinda invites and encourages students and faculty to use her Writing-Across-the-Curriculum expertise. WAC ideas and practices were imbedded in her academic development as an undergraduate student at Ithaca College in the late 1980s, and she has since used them as a Political Science Ph.D. student at the CUNY Graduate Center and in the Political Science and Women’s Studies classes she has taught at Queens College and John Jay College. This semester, Dorinda will also start working with Professor Drago and consult with Professor Gibbons.

Both in her academic work and in her teaching, she has always been committed to issues of equality and access. This commitment has motivated her to study and teach political science at a public institution like CUNY. Her work explores race, gender, and class relations in the context of U.S. politics and Political Theory. The more she writes about these relations through a variety of genres, the more she learns about them and the more she is then able to communicate this information to a wide audience. These are only a few of the ways in which writing is powerful for her, and she is looking forward to sharing this process with the Hostos community.

Adrian Wisnicki: Humanities and Counseling

Adrian Wisnicki is the son of Polish immigrants. He has received degrees from the University of Chicago and from the University of Virginia, and is currently studying at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is studying to be a Western literature generalist, but is especially interested in literary portrayals of deviant human psychology (such as paranoia) and hopes to write his dissertation on conspiracies and secret societies in the Victorian period. In his spare time, Adrian has written poetry, a novel, a collection of short stories, and recently translated a selection of the works of the Polish poet Adam Lisakowski. After completing his Ph.D., Adrian also hopes to try his hand at children’s fiction.

Previously, Adrian has taught at both Baruch and Hunter and especially likes the CUNY system because of the teaching opportunities it affords and because of its extremely diverse student body, elements that in his opinion distinguish CUNY from most other universities in the United States. In his own classes he has experimented with various forms of writing (critical and creative), and is fond of expanding his courses beyond the classroom.

Adrian is very excited about his writing fellowship at Hostos because it will allow him to take his own experiences and observations as a writing teacher and apply and refine them in disciplines outside his own. This semester Adrian will be working with Professors Carmen Marin and Alberto Bird of the Humanities Department, Professor Alfonso Siveris of the Counseling Department, and Professor Francisco Fernandez of the Physical Sciences Department.

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A Research Paper Assignment and Beyond

For the majority of the fall semester, Ese Burlingame worked with Professor Diane Penner in the Health and Human Services Department on the professor's Gerontology course. Ese worked on breaking down a research paper assignment into manageable bits for the students to do throughout the semester. She taught in-class workshops on research paper basics (the who, what, why, where, and how of doing a college-level research paper), introduced the students to the CUNY+ System, and prepared materials and models for both of these workshops. She also met individually with each student to talk about their topic choices and any other concerns they had with their writing. Encouraged by the professor, Ese looked at first drafts of research papers and gave students copious feedback about how they could improve what they had already written.

Along with her duties in Professor Penner's class, Ese spent the fall semester designing and creating a WAC website that was added to the Hostos web site this spring. By the end of last semester, she and her website partner, Carolina de Luca, had made a site which includes: a welcome page; a meet the Fellows and Coordinator page; a writing intensive page; a what is WAC? page; a resources and information page; a guest book; a student and faculty writing ideas page; and a page which describes what writing fellows do and don't do. There is still much left to add and revise, but please feel free to check it out at http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/wac

Other sundry duties and activities Ese performed in the fall semester included: attending a WAC conference at New York Tech in November; helping to write-up a proposal for the national WAC conference in March; and making her WF services available to help professors in the Counseling and Math Departments. It was a very full semester for her filled with much activity and success. In the semester ahead, Ese will continue her work with Professor Penner by facilitating the transformation of the professor's Gerontology course into a Writing Intensive course. She will also be working with Susan Anton in her Early Childhood Education class, as well as branching out by beginning to work with professors and classes in other departments. Finally, Ese, along with Carolina, Dorinda, Adrian and Linda Hirsch, presented at the national WAC conference in Houston in March of this year.

-Ese Burlingame

Writing Intensive Courses: The Finishing Touch

This year, Writing Fellow Kathy Harris is our "closer." She is working with faculty (who have previously collaborated with a writing fellow) on establishing Writing Intensive courses in several disciplines, including History, Biology, Psychology and Public Administration. She works closely with each faculty member to put final touches on course materials which will comply with the Hostos Curriculum Committee's approved Writing Intensive Course Guidelines. The collaboration involves tweaking the syllabus, writing assignments and classroom writing strategies. Last semester, Kathy collaborated with Professors Linda Anderson (Psychology), Les Ault (Psychology), Howard Jordan (Public Administration), Pat Oldham (History) and Amanda Bernal-Carlo (Biology) to construct Writing Intensive courses. She worked with each faculty member to create a syllabus and a series of low stakes (ungraded, informal) and high stakes (graded, formal) writing assignments which would meet the WI criteria. In the end, Kathy found that writing-across-the-curriculum issues in the content-focused classroom vary from discipline to discipline and even from course to course, but the imagination and flexibility displayed by the professors she collaborated with made her realize that there is no one answer to all of these questions.

Four different sections of Writing Intensive courses are being submitted for approval by the Curriculum Committee. A great feat! Faculty wishing to discuss developing a WI course should contact Kathy (ryancian@mindspring.com) or Linda Hirsch (x6760). While bringing many familiar techniques to this work, Kathy recognizes the efforts already in progress with many of Hostos' esteemed faculty and looks forward to learning about writing through their experiences.

As a carry-over from last year's work, Kathy also saw the end of a very long project: The manual of writing activities, practices, how-tos and information developed by our first group of writing fellows was finally published in a beautifully bound, graphically enhanced book for the benefit of all Hostos Community College faculty members. Kathy, Linda and Carol Meyers edited and designed the publication over the course of a year and a half. This Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) manual details the assignments, syllabi and collaboration between several Hostos faculty and our writing fellows.

-Kathy Harris

Spring 2002 Newsletter

Hostos Writing Fellows • Ese Burlingame • Tom Cerasulo • Carolina de Luca • Kathy Harris • Dorinda Tetens • Adrian Wisnicki • WAC Coordinator Dr. Linda Hirsch •
Last semester Carolina de Luca had the pleasure of collaborating with professors and students from two different departments here at Hostos. She worked with Professor Marin and her Spanish speaking students in an "Introduction to the Humanities" class, and with students from the Nursing Department who were enrolled in courses taught by Professors Aguilera, Laucer and Hinds. She collaborated with Professor Marin in designing and revising writing assignments for her students and met with her students in one on one sessions in which they worked together to logically structure and/or restructure their responses to the questions asked in the assignments.

With the nursing students the process was somewhat different. Instead of focusing on writing, they worked together on reading strategies which would allow the students to get through dense and difficult reading material. These strategies were specifically geared to help them prepare for quizzes and exams. This semester she, along with her colleagues, will also provide the students with workshops on how to prepare for the CPE exam.

--Carolina de Luca

An Atmosphere of Collaboration

Writing Fellow Dorinda Tetens had a very productive first semester with Professor Ruiz and her students in the Radiological Technology Department. It became clear that Professor Ruiz and her colleagues were very committed to writing as an important means for student learning. In a discipline that could easily rely, almost exclusively, on multiple choice testing that mirrored the state licensing exams which must take, Professor Ruiz and the other professors consistently assigned writing assignments.

Building on an already existing departmental atmosphere of collaboration, the writing fellow and professor got to work right away. Dorinda started by asking several questions to determine exactly how writing across the curriculum (WAC) ideas and practices could best suit Professor Ruiz's needs. After these discussions, they decided that they would focus their attention on the research paper and also explore the possible use of low stakes practices which are non-graded reflective pieces, such as free-writes and writing-to-learn assignments. By meeting with the students regularly and occasionally attending class, Dorinda became an intermediary between the students and the professor. This was helpful to everyone involved. The students got extra help breaking down a writing assignment; the professor could work with someone who could share the students' collective concerns about the writing assignment; and the writing fellow had the opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate WAC writing methods that were helpful to both students and faculty.

--Dorinda Tetens

Working Closely with Students and Faculty

Last semester Adrian Wisnicki worked with Professors Carmen Marin and Alberto Bird of the Humanities Department. He also held office hours each week where he met with students of these two professors. In addition to introducing himself to the Humanities Department, Adrian introduced himself to other professors interested in working with writing fellows.

In Professor Bird's class (Music Appreciation) Adrian and Professor Bird worked together to create short weekly low-stakes writing assignments, low-stakes assignments that were used as notes for the midterm, and low-stakes assignments that were combined and rewritten to produce high-stakes formal assignments, such as a concert review whose individual sections went through two separate drafts. Adrian also worked to help Professor Bird revamp his grading method, to shift from numerous grammatical corrections to sparser and more structurally-oriented comments. In addition, Adrian collaborated with Professor Bird to refine his existing assignments so as to closer meet the goals of the class. As a result Professor Bird and Adrian often met to go through student papers and discuss them together.

For Professor Marin's class (Introduction to Humanities) Adrian acted in more of a consulting capacity. Professor Marin and Adrian collaborated to design a number of low-stakes assignments and to revise some of Professor Marin's existing high-stakes assignments, but primarily Adrian met with Professor Marin to discuss her class and her students, and to offer suggestions on how she could supplement her curriculum. More importantly, Professor Marin and Adrian worked together to prepare for and organize the curriculum for one of Professor Marin's classes this semester, for which she had decided to incorporate a wonderful new series of textbooks that combine history, literature, art and architecture.

--Adrián Wisnicki

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