

I. Writing Plan Cover Page

Please fill in the gray areas on this form.

Dec 1st 2015

Subsequent Edition of Writing Plan: previous plan submitted Spring 14, First edition submitted Spring 14

Sociology

WEC Unit Name

Sociology

CLA

Department

College

Teresa Gowan

Associate Professor

WEC Faculty Liaison (print name)

Title

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Email

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Writing Plan ratified by Faculty

Note: This section needs to be completed regardless of Writing Plan edition.

Date: March 30st, 2015

If Vote: 23 / 26
yes # total

Process by which Writing Plan was ratified within unit (vote, consensus, other- please explain): Two faculty voted no and one abstained. Only one person expressed verbal opposition, and this member of faculty has been opposed to engagement with WEC since the origin of the program due to frustration with earlier university decisions about restructuring the teaching of writing on the campus. His objections returned to these frustrations.

II. Unit Profile: Sociology

Please fill in the gray areas on this form.

Number of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty:

<u>15</u>	Professors
<u>10</u>	Associate Professors
<u>7</u>	Assistant Professors
<u>32</u>	Total

During the ratification vote the number of faculty was 33, since then Full Professors David Pellow and Lisa Sunhee Park have left the university, and Joyce Bell has joined as Associate.

Major(s) <i>Please list each major your Unit offers:</i>	Total # students enrolled in major as of Spring 2015	Total # students graduating with major AY 2015
Sociology BA	<u>118</u>	<u>30</u>
Sociology BA with emphasis in Law, Crime and Deviance	<u>246</u>	<u>50</u>
Sociology BS	<u>36</u>	<u>1</u>
Sociology BS with emphasis in Law, Crime and Deviance	<u>50</u>	<u>5</u>
Total:	<u>476</u>	<u>86</u>

WEC Implementation Process	Semester/Year-Semester/Year	# participated	/	# invited
			/	
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III. Signature Page

Signatures needed regardless of Writing Plan edition. Please fill in the gray areas on this form.

If this page is submitted as a hard copy, and electronic signatures were obtained, please include a print out of the electronic signature chain here.

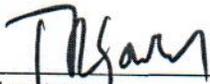
WEC Faculty Liaison

Teresa Gowan

Associate Professor of Sociology

WEC Faculty Liaison (print name)

Title


Signature

11/24/14

Date

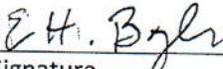
Department Head/Chair

Elizabeth Boyle

Professor of Sociology

Print Name

Title


Signature

11/24/15

Date

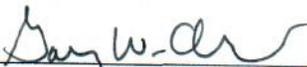
Associate Dean

Gary Oehlert

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education

Print Name

Title


Signature

12/14/2015

Date

For College of Liberal Arts units only:

CLA - Curriculum, Instruction, and Advising Committee approved Writing Plan on

12/14/2015

Date

Nanette Hanks

Assistant Dean for Curriculum

Print Name

Title


Signature

12/14/2015

Date

IV. Writing Plan Narrative, 2nd Edition

Please retain section headers and prompts in your plan.

Introductory Summary:

This is the second Writing Plan for the Department of Sociology. This edition of the plan was developed over the course of the 2014/15 academic year and builds on the qualitative and quantitative research conducted last year by the WEC RA, guided by the liaison(s), as was described in our Writing Plan, Edition 1. Subsequent discussion of that research and its implications with the faculty, clarified the future curriculum development that we seek to address with this plan.

Our current proposals represent a two-pronged strategy. First and foremost, we want to address directly the frustration and confusion expressed by many of our undergraduates about mixed messages and lack of clarity about writing expectations, models, genres, and standards. This is why we are encouraging targeted, direct education and communication with undergraduates at key points in the major. In order to achieve this primary goal, we simultaneously need to energetically foster a more coherent common language about expectations, models, and genres between faculty, graduate students, and contingent faculty. By focusing on curriculum development and working closely with many members of the department community, we expect that this phase of the sociology WEC process will seed a sustainable enhancement in our shared teaching culture.

During the next three semesters (2016-Spring 17), we propose that the faculty liaison, with the help of part-time WEC-supported RAs, focus on working with instructors to build writing skills in the lab sections of **Introduction to Sociology and Methods**, as well as consulting on curriculum and exercises with the instructors and assistants teaching the senior thesis classes. In addition we will make a call before the second and third semester for volunteer instructors and extend out into other sociology courses to work with instructors to enhance and improve writing content.

The liaison and RA (henceforth “WEC team”) should also maintain a department teaching blog with short monthly posts sent to the community lists from different faculty and graduate students.

Lastly, we propose that the WEC team facilitate one departmental teaching lunch during each academic semester of 2016, with the aim of further promoting a common language and solidarity around the project of teaching sociological writing at Minnesota.

After a full faculty discussion (with 26 of the 31 faculty in attendance) on March 3/30/2015, we agreed to move forward with the plan outlined in section 5. Only one person expressed verbal opposition, and this member of faculty has been opposed to engagement with WEC since the origin of the program due to frustration with earlier university decisions about restructuring the teaching of writing on the campus. His objections returned to these frustrations. We expected a little tension over the question of multiple models, or genres of writing, in sociology, as ours is a discipline with a long history of such tensions. There was nonetheless significant enthusiasm for the current proposal, and some of the professors involved in teaching the core curriculum targeted for the most direct interventions volunteered to be the first to pilot the new writing workshops and

exercises.

Section 1: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC WRITING CHARACTERISTICS

What characterizes academic and professional communication in this discipline?

- There have not been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan.
- There have been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan. (Discuss these explicitly.)

As elaborated in our first report, faculty discussion resulted in two main points of consensus.

First, good sociological writing marries broad intellectual vision and insight with precision and rigor. Our diverse field is held together by what C. Wright Mills once called a “quality of mind” rather than a narrow set of topical interests. This same quality of mind marks all good sociological writing. Sociologists must pay close attention to method and carefully connect their claims to data. At the same time, sociologists seek to interpret their findings within broader theoretical frameworks that reach beyond the data and help to make sense of complex human relationships, institutions and societies.

Second, there are common “modes” of writing that sociological writing draws upon and emphasizes. While no single template exists for good sociological writing, all good sociology builds from some combination of descriptive, analytic/interpretive, and critical modes of writing.

Descriptive mode

Most concretely, sociological writing is descriptive. The maxim “show, don’t tell” points out that persuasive writing must accurately outline and elucidate the basis of claims that are being made. In particular, descriptive writing seeks to:

- Clearly and accurately summarize prior theoretical or empirical work;
- Describe the data and methods being used;
- Summarize data by showing key relationships (as in quantitative work) or central themes (as in qualitative work).

Analytic and interpretive mode

Good sociological writing also seeks to make sense of the facts being described. Sociologists bring an analytic eye to their work by connecting the “trees” of individual facts with the “forest” of broader trends and patterns in the social world.

Additionally, analytic thinking fosters a synthetic vision by asking how ideas, events or cases may be related to each other. Sociologists employ this analytic mode of writing to:

- Note where a finding needs to be explained or does not fit with existing knowledge (“setting up a puzzle to be explained”);
- Note common patterns or trends and apply sociological concepts and theories to name and explain them;
- Break down broad social phenomena into smaller parts and making sense of how those parts work together (functions) or fail to do so (conflicts);
- Compare and contrast cases, events or theories;
- Connect related claims or findings in past research;
- Apply existing theories or concepts to new situations;
- Build on past research and link to new discoveries.

Critical mode

Finally, good sociological writing is often critical. It tries to see the limits of common knowledge or existing social arrangements. Instead, sociological writing tries to also see the implications (both positive and negative) of existing arguments or a given state of affairs, asking how it came to be, and what alternatives are possible. It does this by:

- Evaluating strengths and weaknesses of positions and claims;
- Seeing the broader implications of theories and claims;
- Examining the limitations of existing data, methods and theories;
- Connecting our own lives and experiences with the social realities we write about, and how they came to be;
- Reflecting upon more just ways of organizing societies and social institutions, and participating in the imagination and design of such alternatives.

Section 2: DESIRED WRITING ABILITIES

With which writing abilities should students in this unit’s major(s) graduate?

- There have not been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan.
- There have been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan. (Discuss these explicitly.)

Our first writing plan went on to discuss a group of characteristics of successful undergraduate sociological writing and no changes have been made for this edition of the plan:

Because of the diversity of writing styles and assignments, there is no single concise list of abilities that students must master that are relevant for all of their writing projects. Rather, the most important thing is that students master a set of general writing abilities and also gain confidence, experience and skill in writing within the different modes outlined above.

The outline below details sets of skills that our faculty identified as important components of general writing abilities and modes of writing. Students will not necessarily master all of these skills, but writing instruction in the department should provide a solid grounding across the range.

Writing abilities that span sociological subfields (formerly “General writing abilities”)

- Formulate a valid research question or problematic that can be addressed within the scope of the text/document;
- Present a substantive thesis;
- Introduce substantive argument(s) in introduction and both summarize and evaluate main argument(s) in conclusion;
- Locate relevant sociological literature using discipline-specific search strategies;
- Organize a paper so that it flows logically, perhaps using section headings;
- Produce engaging and grammatical prose that lacks distracting errors and makes meaning clear;
- Organize points clearly and persuasively by using logical paragraph structure;
- Extrapolate and reference sources’ main points, use direct quotations judiciously, and cite sources consistently;
- Address an educated lay audience by using and applying concepts and theory.

Describe data and methods

- Describe data and methods that inform the analysis;
- Observe patterns in quantitative and qualitative data, and discuss those patterns accurately and succinctly;
- Provide relevant evidence to substantiate arguments.

Analyze and interpret

- Interpret observed patterns and discuss their meaning;
- Move beyond personal opinions and experiences to address how or why something happens;
- Utilize theory to describe social phenomena;
- Produce clear summaries of debates in the field;
- Define concepts and use them consistently;
- Identify where important ambiguities exist in data or theory and clearly outline them;
- Interrogate how or why patterns occur;
- Choose and use appropriate pattern of logic (inductive or deductive);
- Follow observations or arguments to their logical conclusions by addressing the implications or consequences of social phenomena.

Critique

- Evaluate the consequences (positive and negative) of a given argument or state of affairs;

- Engage existing arguments by taking a position on them (with or against);
- Draw appropriately on own experiences and use them to situate interpretations of theory or evidence, or to produce new interpretations of theory or evidence;
- Evaluate scholarly claims that might be contradictory.

After further discussion with both the undergraduate committee over the course of the last year, the WEC team proposed to the full faculty that the above criteria for good writing are rich, diverse, and thought-provoking. Yet, as the first edition of our Writing Plan recognized, certainly no one paper could fulfill them all. If students tried to do so, they would become hopelessly confused. It seemed to us that the criteria need to be organized and presented in a way which is useful to students, offering different paths for writing success which are appropriate for different kinds of classes and assignments. We should therefore cultivate student understandings of different genres of sociological writing (which tend to be associated with different intellectual traditions and methodologies within the discipline (see Section 5)).

Section 3: INTEGRATION OF WRITING INTO UNIT'S UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

How is writing instruction currently positioned in this unit's undergraduate curriculum (or curricula)? What, if any, course sequencing issues impede an intentional integration of relevant, developmentally appropriate writing instruction?

- There have not been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan.
- There have been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan. (Discuss these explicitly.)

From Sociology's First Edition Writing Plan (2014):

There is a great deal of writing in Sociology classes, although it is oriented to a wide range of different types of assignment and with a similarly wide range of expectations as to the mode of writing. The central writing "event" in the major is the senior thesis paper which demands strong general writing skills as well as mastery of all three modes of sociological writing (descriptive, analytic/interpretive and critical).

In Sociology, the thesis is written in one of two settings. Honors majors are expected to engage in original research and the papers typically follow the classic "research article" format. Currently, the Honors majors have a two-semester research seminar sequence that provides structure and support for the research as well as writing. This format allows time for significant peer review and critique of writing, multiple drafts of sections, and discussion of form and tone.

Majors not in the Honors program may elect to follow a similar path (either by joining the Honors seminar or on their own). For the vast majority of majors, the research and writing of the thesis occurs in the one-semester capstone seminar. In this context, the thesis is typically based on fieldwork done through community service learning sites, reflections on the state of knowledge in a particular subfield, or reports of action projects.

Writing prior to the thesis is much more varied. Virtually all sociology classes encourage and require clear, effective writing. This occurs in different ways: engaged journals and blog posts, responses papers, short and focused formal writing assignments, longer-form seminar papers, and many others in between. The more

intensive writing assignments tend to occur in formally designated W (writing intensive) courses, but it is important to note that currently the core classes - the ones all majors typically take - are not writing intensive. Rather, the W designation has been applied to 3000- and 4000-level courses that engage with a subfield in more depth. As a result, a given student may or may not have had such intensive writing experiences by the time they begin their thesis course.

The courses also emphasize different modes of writing. While they may not currently refer to these modes by name, majors are exposed to each of three modes by the time they reach the thesis stage. As with the type and length of writing assignments, the modes may be specific to classes rather than strictly ordered within the major. A given student may have more experience with one mode of writing than the others depending upon which courses they have taken leading up to the thesis.

Two important issues must be considered in relation to any plan or intervention regarding writing in the curriculum. First, students take very different paths through our curriculum. We have a relatively "flat" curriculum rather than a strictly hierarchical one. We have only one 1000-level course, which serves as a pre-requisite (sometimes formally, often informally) for later courses. Students may take many different paths through the 3000- and 4000-level requirements and electives however. This is compounded by the fact that many of our majors declare relatively late. Second, depending upon their preferences and interests, students may have more exposure to some writing modes than others. Putting these two issues together, it is clear that a given instructor cannot expect students to arrive at her course with a uniform set of expectations and experiences regarding writing.

There are other considerations that must play into the writing plan as well. Sociology is a relatively large major, and for a host of reasons there is pressure to increase class enrollments (without simultaneous increases in TA support). Courses also include a large number of non-major students, whose experiences and expectations may be even more varied than those of the majors. Finally, even though we have a large major base, many declare their major relatively late in their studies, leading to a compressed timeline for coursework.

It should also be said that while we have many very strong writers in our major, we also serve a very diverse group of students and many of our students struggle with the core aspects of writing (the general writing abilities listed above), either due to issues with language (as with students whose first language is not English), or students who have not arrived at the University with strong prior training in the mechanics of writing. We suspect that this is an issue facing many departments, particularly at a time when support for writing is being cut back. In short, while our central goal is to encourage strong sociological writing abilities, we must first provide support for competent general writing abilities, for which we have little time or training.

Section 4: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT WRITING

What concerns, if any, have unit faculty and undergraduate students voiced about grading practices?

Please include a menu of criteria extrapolated from the list of Desired Writing Abilities provided in Section II of this plan. (This menu can be offered to faculty/instructors for selective adaptation and will function as a starting point in the WEC Project's longitudinal rating process.).

- There have not been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan.
- There have been substantial revisions to this section of the Writing Plan. (Discuss these explicitly.)

Menu of assessment criteria (translated from our list of expected writing abilities):

Writing abilities that span sociological subfields (formerly “General writing abilities”)

1. Uses engaging, powerful prose
2. Includes a research question of reasonable scope for the paper/project
3. Presents a substantive thesis
4. Introduces substantive argument in introduction
5. Summarizes and evaluates main argument(s) in conclusion
6. Uses section headings to organize paper logically
7. Lacks distracting grammatical errors
8. Organizes points clearly and persuasively with logical paragraph structure
9. Locates relevant literature
10. References sources’ main points
11. Uses quotations judiciously
12. Cites sources consistently
13. Addresses an educated lay audience

Describe methods, data and settings

1. Describes data and methods that inform analysis
2. Discusses patterns found in qualitative data accurately and succinctly
3. Discusses patterns found in quantitative data accurately and succinctly
4. Provides relevant evidence in order to substantiate arguments

Analyze and interpret

1. Uses appropriate pattern of logic for question (deductive or inductive)
2. Applies appropriate method for question (qualitative or quantitative)
3. Looks deeply into cases, examples and contexts

4. Analyze the meanings of patterns found in data
5. Interrogates why or how patterns occur
6. Compare patterns found in different cases, contexts or times
7. Moves beyond personal opinions and experiences to address how or why something happens
8. Uses and applies concepts and theory to make sense of social phenomena
9. Produces clear summaries of debates in the field
10. Defines concepts and uses them consistently
11. Identifies where important ambiguities exist in data or theory

Critique

1. Follows observations or arguments to their logical conclusions by addressing the implications of social phenomena
2. Engages existing arguments by taking a position on them (with or against)
3. Evaluates evidence provided for claims
4. Evaluates the implications of existing knowledge or social arrangements
5. Considers alternatives to existing knowledge or social arrangements
6. Draws appropriately on own experiences and uses them to situate interpretations of theory or evidence, or to produce new interpretations of theory or evidence
7. Evaluates scholarly claims that might be contradictory.

The subset of these criteria used to to assess a set of capstone-level student papers in Summer 2014:

1. Uses engaging, powerful prose.
2. Includes a research question or thesis of reasonable scope for the paper/project.
3. Summarizes and evaluates main argument(s) in conclusion.
4. Organizes points clearly and persuasively with logical paragraph structure.
5. Cites relevant literature.
6. Addresses an educated lay audience.
7. Identifies patterns found in qualitative data accurately and succinctly.
8. Conveys cases, examples and contexts with adequate depth.

9. Interprets and explains the meanings of patterns found in data.
10. Interrogates why or how patterns occur.
11. Identifies where important ambiguities exist in data or theory.
12. Follows observations or arguments to their logical conclusions by addressing the implications of social phenomena.
13. Evaluates the implications of existing knowledge or social arrangements.

Following the concerns expressed by the 2014 raters, we suggest the next rating of student work should use a modified criteria, based on the useful proposals of the raters, who identified some key ambiguities in the above rubric.

The biggest problem, however, was that the course chosen for the rating, SOC 4966W (Spring 2014), like most versions of 4966W, does not require papers which make the kind of detailed, deeply-researched sociological arguments demanded by the above rubric. This capstone course, which has replaced the traditional senior thesis for most of our students, draws heavily from journals kept at service-learning internships, and the students are not acting primarily as ethnographers but volunteers. This structure makes it difficult (and sometimes unethical) for them to pursue fully independent intellectual research projects. In short, the course chosen for the rating is problematic if we are going to be measuring methodological clarity, analysis and critique. Exceptional students may be capable of doing such work independently, but most of our students need more support and in some cases a different kind of project.

After consultation with the teachers of the capstone course, we therefore propose that the future ratings will use the following criteria:

1. Uses engaging, powerful prose.
2. Includes a research question or thesis of reasonable scope for the paper/project.
3. Summarizes and evaluates main argument(s) in conclusion.
4. Organizes points clearly and persuasively with logical paragraph structure.
5. Cites relevant literature (raters will look for the incorporation of 4-5 academic sources).
6. Addresses an educated lay audience.
7. Identifies patterns found in qualitative data accurately and succinctly.
8. Conveys cases, examples and contexts with adequate depth.
9. Interprets and explains the meanings of patterns found in data.
10. Interrogates why or how patterns occur.

Section 5: SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANS, including REQUESTED SUPPORT and RELATION TO

PREVIOUS IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

What does the unit plan to implement during the period covered by this plan? What forms of instructional support does this unit request to help implement proposed changes? What are the expected outcomes of named support?

How do the implementation plans of the 2nd edition Writing Plan relate to implementation activities from the 1st edition Writing Plan? What has been successful? What was not successful? How do implementation plans build on what was learned from the first year of implementation?

1 Short workshops co-led by the WEC team and course instructors within sections of Intro, Methods, and Senior Thesis

During 2016 the WEC team (liaison and RA) will work on the areas of weakness highlighted by students and faculty during the first stage of the WEC research through developing curriculum and developing a series of two (or three) 20 minute short workshops within selected sections of the **introduction to sociology** and **research methods**, as well as consulting with **senior project** capstone instructors.

The WEC team will meet at least biweekly leading up to the workshops, with the faculty member in charge of supporting and guiding the RA in producing materials and setting up a clear schedule for consultation with faculty well ahead of time (at least one month lead time). The RA chosen will be a senior (ABD) student with strong organizational skills as well as good experience teaching writing.

The idea is not to contract out teaching of writing in any way, but to foster dialogue on teaching writing within the department, and to support faculty and instructors who are interested in receiving such support. Some have already said that they would like to work with the WEC pilot, including Professors Schurman, DeWaard, and Abdi, who respectively teach Senior Thesis, Methods, and Intro. These teachers (and several others) have expressed the desire for more support with thesis development, for useful vocabulary and practices to develop different forms of argumentation, as well as for ways of strengthening student grammar and sentence structure in a collective setting,

The rationale for focusing on these courses is as follows.

Workshops in Introduction to Sociology; SOC 3101

In the focus groups and interviews conducted by the WEC RA the undergraduates consistently expressed frustration at the lack of transparency about goals for writing within sociology. Intro to Sociology, as the required gateway class to the major, and a class with small sections led by teaching assistants, seems like the natural place to set clearer understandings, expectations, and above all, practices, in place.

Here the emphasis will be on helping students write in ways that effectively demonstrate the criteria listed under General Writing Abilities, and teaching intro-level students to identify different genres of sociological writing (see below).

Workshops in SOC 3801 - Sociological Research Methods

Research Methods is the other class with small sections led by teaching assistants, seems like the natural place to set clearer understandings, expectations, and above all, practices, in place. Students tend to take it in their Sophomore or Junior Year, and this is an ideal time to firm up their understandings of different genres of sociological writing.

Support in the Senior Thesis/Senior Capstone Class SOC 4966W - Major-Project Seminar

For some of our students, the senior paper still seems to be very intimidating – for many students it represents the first “big” paper, and many have serious problems with genre, structure, and argumentation, if not with grammar and even spelling. Some of our senior thesis/capstone teachers have expressed the wish for discussion and support around this class, and as a faculty we agreed, as discussed above in Section 4, that there is a certain mismatch between the rigor of the “sociological research paper” modeled (but not written) in most of the methods courses and the looser form of drawing together material from a “journal” with some analysis which has become the norm for most versions of our senior capstone class, putting a heavier emphasis on community engagement and education about careers in sociology. This fall (2015) the liaison has started by talking separately and then collectively with the regular teachers of 4966W, with the goal of assessing to what extent faculty are willing or eager to re-inject a little more rigor into the writing component of this course, what obstacles they see in doing so, and in what ways the WEC team can help them with this task. As with the other core courses, it seems likely that the WEC team will be able to work with a critical mass of the instructors teaching the senior project seminars.

Content of the Workshops

Workshops will use diverse exercises to **demonstrate our criteria of good sociological writing** drawn from our de-identified student sample work to **demonstrate the criteria of good sociological writing**.

In the **Intro** course, of primary importance will be **teaching students to write a sociologically meaningful thesis, identify sociologically meaningful patterns in data, and to engage sociological argumentation**.

This not only addresses faculty desires, but highlights the areas specifically pointed out as a departmental weakness by students in our research, i.e.:

writing a thesis

learning to criticize (critically engage with) arguments

identifying patterns in data

Developing understandings of different genres of sociological writing

At the level of the 3801 - Sociological Research Methods, the writing workshops would further develop the idea of **different genres of sociological writing**. As we discussed above, the criteria for good writing that we have developed are rich and diverse – and no one paper could fulfill them all. Indeed, if students tried to do so, they would become hopelessly confused.

The criteria we developed draw to some extent from different traditions within sociology. In methods course workshops, students would apply their sharpened awareness of epistemological differences within sociology to published writing practices. We would ask students to apply subsets of our criteria to carefully selected

chapters, articles or other forms of writing, and in the process they would learn why and how a social scientific quantitative paper might have a different structure, rhetorical tone, and source of validity than a qualitative case study.

By developing greater reflexivity about the inter-relationship between different sociological questions, research methods, and forms of academic writing, students would develop a broader tool kit for future assignments. Given the uncertainty about some assignments expressed in the survey, we hope to not only help instructors create more clarity about different genres of research and writing, but to empower students themselves to ask substantive questions of their instructors if they have doubts about the kind of writing required for particular assignments, removing remaining uncertainty about specific goals and requirements.

As we reported above, some of the areas where our teaching scored lowest with students were: the ability to provide adequate detail and description, the lack of discussion of field notes and data, and an inability to identify key patterns in qualitative data. This seems evidence that the idea of qualitative case studies, in particular, could be better developed as a genre within qualitative methods and across the department in general.

The in-class workshops (in SOC 3801 - Sociological Research Methods and probable also in SOC 4966W - Major-Project Seminar) will also work with the areas highlighted by the faculty as needing work:

- reporting complex findings
- using engaging prose
- synthesizing disparate ideas
- supporting claims with adequate data
- organizing points clearly and persuasively

Summary of expected results:

Offering the co-facilitated in-class writing workshops will:

- provide faculty members with a piloted set of activities and experience facilitating them
- help students understand what instructors across the discipline are looking for - key step in increasing the transparency of expectations
- facilitate dialogue across the department about our visions for both similar and different kinds of student writing, helping to create clearer goals for students.
- The idea is that faculty will gradually take over the writing workshop units themselves and adapt them as they see fit, but we know from conversations with faculty that many of our instructors are excited to get some support, added direction and the modelling of some tried practices.

During the Fall of 2016 and Spring of 2017 we will work with remaining instructors of the core courses (we have a broad circulation of faculty teaching these courses). In addition we will make a call before the second and third semester for volunteer instructors and extend out into other sociology courses to work with instructors to enhance and improve writing content, (not restricted to writing intensive classes).

Department teaching blog

We propose that the WEC research assistant sets up a **department teaching blog** which would serve as springboard for some conversation on teaching writing within the department. This would be maintained Spring and Fall of 2016 and Spring 2017 by the WEC RA, and hopefully expanded to a general space for conversations about teaching issues. If the department finds this a successful initiative, it could be taken over by the graduate student in charge of mentoring TAs. We suggest the format would take the form of a short monthly blog post which would be automatically sent out to the faculty and graduate student lists. These blogs would be structured around how to teach the different elements of writing that the faculty have identified as Discipline-Specific Writing Characteristics, and would be tied into the content of both the ongoing workshops and the teaching lunches.

The blogs would be authored by different members of the department community, moderated by the WEC team. The WEC team would use the blog as a space for sharing useful or exciting results from the writing workshops in the core classes, and would also ask faculty and Graduate Student Instructors that students have identified as creating helpful learning structures for particular elements (eg thesis statements, rubrics, blogging practices) to contribute posts. Again, the idea would be to generate the blog in such a way as to facilitate a lively and increasingly coherent (but not dogmatic) dialogue about teaching sociological writing. Instructors with particularly successful exercises would be encouraged to contribute a post, raising the awareness of the different strategies we are taking to reach our students.

Teaching lunches with Pamela Flash

Lastly, we propose that the WEC liaison and the RA facilitate one department **teaching lunch** during each academic semester of 2016 with writing instruction expert Pamela Flash, with the aim of further articulating, clarifying, and promoting a common language and solidarity around the project of teaching sociological writing at Minnesota. (We have a history of strong attendance from faculty and graduate students at our teaching lunches in sociology.) During the months prior to the lunches the WEC team would consult with Pamela about the content for the teaching lunches, using feedback from the course workshops about areas of the greatest need.

Section 6: PROCESS USED TO CREATE THIS WRITING PLAN

How, and to what degree, were stakeholders in this unit (faculty members, instructors, affiliates, teaching assistants, undergraduates, others) engaged in providing, revising, and approving the content of this Writing Plan?

This is the second writing plan for the Department of Sociology. We began our involvement with the WEC program at the conclusion of the spring semester of 2013 with the collection of writing samples from key classes across our curriculum (specifically, our 1000-level Introduction to Sociology course, our 3000-level Methods courses, and our 4000-level Senior Projects course). The following fall semester marked the start of our broader departmental conversations about writing in the curriculum.

An online survey, designed and administered by the WEC staff, went out in September 2014 to our faculty, graduate instructors and teaching assistants, and undergraduate students. The survey allowed our department

to compare experiences and expectations of writing held by faculty and graduate students with those held by our undergraduate students.

We discussed this information and built upon it in two faculty meetings during the fall. In the first (October 28, 2014), the faculty listed and discussed the characteristics we thought marked good writing in our discipline, and how these related to specific abilities we wanted to see our majors develop and master by the time of graduation. In a series of meetings between the liaison and WEC's Pamela Flash, this discussion was codified and developed into Sections 1 and 2 above. A later meeting of an ad-hoc departmental committee helped to translate these ideas into criteria for evaluation of student writing (Section 4).

The second large meeting (December 2, 2014) was scheduled to map the desired writing abilities to the curriculum. This meeting was somewhat more difficult and inconclusive. It became clear that our faculty are already incorporating elements of the desired writing abilities into their courses, but also that we are collectively doing so in many different ways. It also became clear that the "flatness" of our curriculum meant that we could not tie writing abilities to the curriculum in any highly structured way – at least without major changes to the structure of the program itself.

Our next faculty meeting (March 31, 2014) was devoted to discussion of how to use the resources provided by the WEC program to implement our plan into the curriculum. The discussion was wide-ranging, but two key points emerged: the need to better and more consistently signal our expectations about writing throughout the curriculum and the parallel need to better understand how our students are moving through the curriculum. The central points from that discussion remain outlined in Sections 3 and 5 of this plan.

During the 2014-15 year, as explained in the above sections, we focused on more in-depth research with our own students, using surveys and focus groups to understand student trajectories, but also to get to the heart of the difficulties in writing for sociology courses from the students' own perspectives. Having discussed these results in the Faculty Meeting on March 30 2015, we voted to move forward on the implementation plan outlined above, subject to support from WEC.

Section 7: CONNECTION TO STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Briefly describe how the ideas contained in this Undergraduate Writing Plan address the University's Student Learning Outcomes (<http://www.slo.umn.edu>).

The University of Minnesota's Student Learning Outcomes codify an educational vision and set of values. The University states that at time of graduation, students:

1. Can identify, define and solve problems
2. Can locate and critically evaluate information
3. Have mastered a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry
4. Understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies
5. Can communicate effectively
6. Understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery and expression across disciplines

7. Have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning

The broad vision of liberal education, here summarized in points 4 and 7, is at the core of our department's deep commitment to teaching. Making sense of differing life experiences, epistemologies, and cultural arrangements is centrally what our discipline is about. This is reflected in what we teach day to day in our classes and what our students engage in their writing, but also in the curriculum itself – the courses we offer and what we expect students to engage as they master the theories and methods of the discipline (outcome 3).

In turn, our instructors and TAs see this kind of engagement as one of the most important “skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning” that will stick with our graduates. Indeed, our students come to our program in large part because they are attracted to this vision and they want to be engaged in the big issues that face our society.

The current writing plan helps us to better meet these goals by nurturing and developing the more prosaic writing skills that will help our students to be engaged in this way. We want to foster both the general writing skills (identify and define problems, locate and evaluate information), but also to gain experience and confidence in the modes of writing that will allow for such engagement.

V. WEC Research Assistant (RA) Request Form

This form is required if RA funding is requested. If no RA funding is requested please check the box below.

No RA Funding Requested

RAs assist faculty liaisons in the WEC Writing Plan implementation process. The specific duties of the RA are determined in coordination with the unit liaison and the WEC consultant, but should generally meet the following criteria: they are manageable in the time allotted, they are sufficient to their funding, and they have concrete goals and expectations (see below).

RA funding requests are made by appointment percent time (e.g., 25% FTE, 10% FTE, etc.). Appointment times can be split between two or more RAs when applicable (e.g., two 12.5% appointments for a total of 25% FTE request). Total funds (including fringe benefits when applicable) need to be calculated in advance by the liaison, usually in coordination with administrative personnel¹.

Please note that, outside of duties determined by the liaison, WEC RAs may be required to participate in specific WEC activities, such as meetings, Moodle discussion boards, and surveys.

RA Name (Use TBD for vacancies): TBD

RA Contact Information: email _____, phone _____

Period of appointment (Semester/Year to Semester/Year): Fall 2015 to Spring 2017

RA appointment percent time: 25%

Define in detail the tasks that the RA will be completing within the funding period:

Work with the Liaison and participating faculty to coordinate, develop and assess sociological writing workshops within the department's core classes: Introduction to Sociology; SOC 3101, SOC 3801 - Sociological Research Methods, and SOC 4966W - Major-Project Seminar. Set up and maintain a department writing blog which reinforces and popularizes the more successful take-homes from the workshops and the department teaching lunches.

Define deadlines as applicable (please note that all deadlines must be completed within the funding period):

By February 25th 2016 Set up the teaching blog, and send out the first posts.

Every month they will send out new posts as described in the narrative.

By February 15th 2016: Consult with the liaison and Professor Abdi about both logistics and content issues in terms of integrating the workshops into Abdi's section of Intro (our pilot for intro).

By September 25th 2016: Consult with the liaison and Professor DeWaard about both logistics and content issues in terms of integrating the workshops into DeWaard's section of Methods (our pilot for methods).

Further deadlines will depend on the schedule decided in consultation with the faculty for the timing of the

workshops. The liaison and WEC RA will meet with the faculty members at least one week before the workshops with the proposed curriculum in hand, prepared for adjustments if necessary.

Ongoing during Spring 2016 – set up meetings for teachers of SOC 4966W - Major-Project Seminar to consult about rolling out the Senior Project workshops in the Fall.

Fall 2016

By September 26th 2016: Consult with the liaison and the Professors/instructors about both logistics and content issues in terms of integrating the workshops into hopefully ass of the fall sections of the Senior Project course. (Faculty not yet assigned). Subsequent consultation with WEC staff about the best way to work with the needs of the instructor while developing sociological writing as defined by the faculty in the WEC narrative.

Work with the liaison and faculty to adjust the methods and intro curriculum based on the assessment of the previous semester's work. Organize and conduct workshops in new sections of intro and methods (to be decided), hopefully with new faculty. Design, collate and analyze student evaluations of the exercises across the different courses and sections.

The idea is that faculty will gradually take over the writing workshop units themselves and adapt them as they see fit, but we know from conversations with faculty that many of our instructors are excited to get some support, added direction and the modelling of some tried practices.

Fall 2016 and Spring 17 will have a very similar set of deadlines. We hope to extend the core course workshops to each faculty member that has not hosted them, if they are willing, and to hold meetings bringing together the teachers of each of the core units involved, and to hold meetings where they evaluate the success of the workshops and share strategies for continuing to improve student writing in the future. The RA will organize these meetings and take minutes, as well as continuing to hold primary organizational responsibility for the conduct of the workshops.

The RA will continue to organize monthly blog posts on the Teaching blog, highlighting successes in student writing or particularly useful pedagogical practices.

Describe how frequently the RA will check in with the liaison:

At least weekly by email, on Mondays, and biweekly meeting to be arranged.

Describe in detail the RA's check-in process (e.g., via email, phone, in-person, etc.):

See above.

ⁱ An example for determining funding for appointments can be found on the WEC Liaison Moodle. This is for planning and example purposes only and cannot be used to determine final budget items for the Writing Plan.

VI. WEC Writing Plan Requests

Unit Name: **Sociology**

Financial Requests (requests cannot include faculty salary support) *drop-down choices will appear when cell next to "semester" is selected*

Total Financial Request: \$16,016.91

Semester 1: Spring 2016		Semester 2: Fall 2016		Semester 3: Spring 2017	
Item	Cost	Item	Cost	Item	Cost
ABD RA 25% Tuition and Fringe	\$5,199.99	ABD RA 25% Tuition and Fringe	\$5,416.93	ABD RA 25% Tuition and Fringe	\$5,199.99
1 Workshop Lunches	\$100.00	1 Workshop Lunches	\$100.00		
Workshop Materials will be paid for by sociology - using the course		Workshop Materials will be paid for by sociology - using the course		Workshop Materials will be paid for by sociology - using the course	
Semester 1 Total:	\$5,299.99	Semester 2 Total:	\$5,516.93	Semester 3 Total:	\$5,199.99

Rationale for costs and their schedule of distribution

During the next three semesters (2016-17), the RA, with the guidance of the liason, will focus on working with instructors to build writing skills in the lab sections of Introduction to Sociology and Methods, as well as consulting with the instructors and/or assistants teaching the senior thesis classes. After the first semester we will open up the process to volunteers teaching other sociology classes. The RA will set up and maintain a department teaching blog with short monthly posts sent to the community lists from different faculty and graduate students.

Service Requests *drop-down choices will appear when a cell in the "service" column is selected*

Semester 1: Spring 2016		Semester 2: Fall 2016		Semester 3:	
Service	Qty	Service	Qty	Service	Qty
Workshop	1	Workshop	1		

Description and rationale for services

Semester 4:

Semester 5:

Semester 6:

Item	Cost	Item	Cost	Item	Cost

Semester 4 Total: \$0.00

Semester 5 Total: \$0.00

Semester 6 Total: \$0.00

Semester 4:

Semester 5:

Semester 6:

Service	Qty	Service	Qty	Service	Qty

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Office of Undergraduate Education

January 5, 2016

To: Teresa Gowan, Sociology
From: Robert McMaster, Office of Undergraduate Education
Subject: Decision regarding WEC plan and funding proposal

The Department of Sociology recently requested the following funding to support its Writing Enriched Curriculum:

Spring 2016	ABD RA 25% tuition and fringe	\$ 5,199.99
Spring 2016	1 workshop lunch	\$ 100.00
Fall 2016	ABD RA 25% tuition and fringe	\$ 5,416.93
Fall 2016	1 workshop lunch	\$ 100.00
Spring 2017	ABD RA 25% tuition and fringe	\$ 5,199.99
TOTAL		\$ 16,016.91

All items above have been approved by the Office of Undergraduate Education, for a total of \$16,016.91.

Please provide Pat Ferrian (ferri004@umn.edu) with the EFS account string in your department that will receive these funds. Pat will transfer \$5,299.99 by the end of FY 16, and \$10,716.92 at the start of FY17.

CC: Suzanne Bardouche, Molly Bendzick, Dan Emery, Pat Ferrian, Pamela Flash, Mork Hildaviktorja, Sarah Hobbie, Gary Oehlert, Rachel Rodrigue, Leslie Schiff