

Engaging Teacher Collaboration in Writing Across the Curriculum

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Abstract

Holy Cross of San Antonio offers education for grades 6-12 in the historic West Side of San Antonio, Texas. Located in one of the traditionally underserved college preparatory neighborhoods in San Antonio, Holy Cross faces the ongoing challenge of preparing its students for college. The school administers placement tests, rather than entrance exams, to incoming students; a great part of the school's mission is to provide quality education to students who willingly strive to live the Holy Cross Code. The Code embodies the mission of Blessed Fr. Basil Moreau, which indicates that students should develop their hearts as well as their minds, and become citizens who are the embodiment of Christian morality. One of the main aspects of this challenge remains the development of student articulation skills, particularly writing skills, which often measures below 70% of the national average, according to standardized test results. This action research project uses a mixed-method research design to study how the teachers at Holy Cross utilize writing in their curriculum, and how willing they are to develop strategies to integrate and improve writing in their classes. The study, which included a Likert-style survey, lists and commentary, indicated that that teachers at Holy Cross want to see an improvement in their students' writing, but that non-English/language art teachers feel unsure how to integrate writing in their curriculum. However, results also indicated that educators at Holy Cross are willing to develop strategies that will help improve students' writing articulation improve.

Introduction

Holy Cross of San Antonio opened in 1957 with an ambitious mission: to provide college preparatory education to young men on the impoverished West Side of San Antonio. The school, founded by the Brothers of Holy Cross, is deeply rooted in the mission of Blessed Fr. Basil Moreau: to educate the whole student, and not to educate the mind at the expense of the heart. Its location is no accident; the West Side of San Antonio has been a historically underserved area in terms of college preparatory education, especially religious-based education and formation. The West Side also has some of the lowest household incomes for the city. Holy Cross is one of eight high schools in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The Archdiocese of San Antonio has more than 700,000 Catholics, and more than 13,000 students in the archdiocese attend Catholic schools ("Fun Facts: Archdiocese of San Antonio," n.d.). Holy Cross is the only high school geographically positioned to serve the West Side of San Antonio.

Even the founding of Holy Cross was met with some controversy. Given the education and household income of families on the West Side, the congregation initially planned to open a trade school on the West Side. The brothers insisted that Holy Cross needed to open a college preparatory school to advance the education of area residents, and to promote the ideal that education ends poverty (Culotta, 2013). Holy Cross follows the Moreau mission of education, which states that the mind will not be educated at the expense of the heart, and that Holy Cross educators have the obligation to help mold students into useful, Christian citizens:

The mission of Holy Cross, within the education ministry of the Catholic Church, is rooted in the Moreau Tradition of Education. Holy Cross welcomes students of different backgrounds and prepares them to integrate Christianity into their learning and living, to address the challenges of society, and to acquire virtues for effective service to others.

Despite this initial challenge, and others (e.g., fluctuating enrollment, near closure in the late 1960s, a shift to co-education in the early 2000s), Holy Cross continues to educate the hearts and minds of low-to-middle class students in the San Antonio area, always maintaining its original mission of providing college preparatory education to the families of the West Side of San Antonio. However, some major issues continue to face the school. As noted, the mission of Holy Cross embraces the concept of inclusivity of all backgrounds, educational and otherwise. This is, in fact, the major charism of our school; however, it also provides our greatest educational challenge. Students at Holy Cross do not take an entrance exam; rather, incoming students take a placement exam to determine their academic strengths and weaknesses. In addition, many teachers administer simple projects at the beginning of each year to determine their students' skill set, and to inform their teaching strategies. Despite teachers' best efforts, the year-end standardized testing shows less than stellar results. Reading and vocabulary scores hover as low as 45-50% in some cases. While this shows an improvement over the scores for the same sections in 2003 (where ELA scores dropped as low as 30 percent for some grade levels), the standardized test scores still fall far below levels that the school would like to attain.

In meetings with administration and department heads, the academic leaders of Holy Cross at San Antonio have pinpointed a pronounced need among its students: increased articulation in terms of

vocabulary and writing skills. Writing Across the Curriculum offers a workable solution with a program that integrates the needs of critical thinking and analytical skills, while building writing skills. Studies indicate that Writing Across the Curriculum raises critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills (Brewster & Klump, 2004; Harris & Schaible, 1997). Initial collaborative efforts between English/Language Arts teachers and Science teachers at Holy Cross offer anecdotal evidence that this approach will work, but the school needs an integrated, cohesive plan to measure students' academic success. The biggest challenge may not be getting students to buy into Writing Across the Curriculum, but encouraging the faculty at Holy Cross, especially teachers of non-writing subjects, to participate. Without the coordinated efforts of the entire faculty to embrace the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative, test scores will remain stagnant. More importantly, students will continue to struggle academically and in their post-high school academics, and the school will have failed in its mission to provide a solid, foundational, college-preparatory education.

Purpose Statement

The ultimate aim of this effort is to encourage faculty at Holy Cross of San Antonio to engage actively in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiative, and to provide the pedagogical tools to streamline the integration of WAC across all subject areas other than English/Language Arts. As an initial step, the purpose of this action research project was to explore the level of awareness and willingness of faculty at Holy Cross of San Antonio to engage in a Writing Across the Curriculum program.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this action research project include:

1. Are faculty willing to learn more about WAC?

2. What are the faculty's concerns about integrating WAC into their standards and practices?
3. What practical issues (such as time constraints, knowledge base) may challenge non-ELA teachers in the integration of a WAC project?
4. How can professional development help non-ELA teachers to integrate WAC practices?

Literature Review

A college-preparatory high school seeks to matriculate students who can make real-world connections with core subject matter, and who can articulate those connections in a purposeful manner. An integrated Writing Across the Curriculum program seeks to provide a forum whereby instructors can work together and provide an educational landscape for student success in critical thinking, writing, and analysis of any given core subject. This review presents research that will provide insight and practical implementation regarding the following themes: a) Introducing the concept of Writing Across the Curriculum; b) Teacher induction (i.e., preparing teachers to implement WAC); and c) Teacher engagement (i.e., helping teachers implement WAC).

Introducing the concept of Writing Across the Curriculum. While many scholarly works focus on the process of creating a Writing Across the Curriculum program, few focus on an obvious, yet primary factor for success: getting other teachers, particularly teachers who are not English/Language Arts (ELA) instructors, to engage and participate in a WAC program, and to address and dispel their hesitancy because of perceived skill sets deficiencies or time constraints. Help may come from the implementation of the Common Core Standards, which encourage cross-curricular strategies and practices in pedagogy, particularly through the utilization of informational texts as they relate to core subjects (English/language

arts, mathematics, science, social studies). The mission of the Common Core states, "The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them" ("English Language Arts Standards," 2013). The success of any Writing Across the Curriculum project must begin with the cooperation and engagement of non-English subject area teachers (Norton-Meier, Hand, & Ardasheva, 2013). Fortunately, the Common Core Standards provide avenues for students and teachers to develop a more robust understanding of a content area, and to transfer essential skills (for instance, writing) across the curriculum. In their documents and examples, the Common Core Standards do provide avenues for writing across the curriculum, in order to develop a depth to understanding the subject matter: "Guiding educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge" ("English Language Arts Standards," 2013). Instructors at Holy Cross of San Antonio began to integrate the tenets of the Common Core in their lesson plans during Spring 2013 with the intent of encouraging a cross-curricular educational standard for student academic success. In addition, Norton-Meier et al. showed that developers of a Writing Across the Curriculum project can engage buy-in from other faculty members by encouraging the use of each subject's "authentic language" through consistent writing exercises.

Teacher induction in Writing Across the Curriculum. Other schools across the country have begun to assess the value of teacher cooperation in implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum program. In their action research project, Noffo, Atkins, and Williams (n.d.) recounted their initiative to implement Writing Across the Curriculum in Miami high schools by pairing non-English teachers with English teachers in their Miami school. The authors

agree that this type of pairing mitigated concerns that non-English teachers would have about integrating writing in their core subjects. They proposed that by creating this type of cooperative pairing, and by allowing the non-English teachers to participate in choosing a writing strategy that would work with their subjects, participants would see positive outcomes for students and teachers. For instance, the teaching teams valued the notion of daily review of vocabulary and lectures for their core subject matter, so they decided that daily journaling would serve as an important step to integrating Writing Across the Curriculum. The daily exercise would reinforce recall and association of the subject matter, including related vocabulary. It would also open the discussion to clarify misunderstandings of the subject matter. The authors found that the non-English subject teachers found this process valuable, and a natural extension of the oral reviews of the subject matter. Using these methods, Noffo et al. were able to proceed with an initial Writing Across the Curriculum project and develop findings about the benefits of the program for the students.

Teacher engagement in Writing Across the Curriculum. A particular concern about implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum project regards trepidation on the part of the non-English subject teacher, especially regarding two issues: time and skill set. How a non-English teacher chooses to “buy-in” to a Writing Across the Curriculum project remains important, and could be the element that separates the successful program from the unsuccessful one (Brewster & Klump, 2004; McCarthy & Walvoord, 1988). Non-ELA teachers may be reluctant to engage in WAC because of preconceptions of pedagogical skills they do not use in their classes, and because of preconceptions of extra time that participating in WAC will entail. Norton-Meier et al. (2013) maintained that how teachers frame a lesson remains as

important as the strategies for implementing a lesson. They stressed that keys to success are vocabulary and language. While much of their action research focused on how instructors frame the importance of authentic language (the language and vocabulary used in a particular subject) in non-English classes, this same approach can be used to encourage non-English teachers to participate in Writing Across the Curriculum programs. The authors encouraged a Writing Across the Curriculum process that can be as simple as writing notes for a review in a non-English-Language Arts subject:

In our guiding assumptions described at the beginning of the manuscript we recognize that there is no science without language. To meet the new literacy demands of the 21st century, we as a profession, need to think differently about instruction, curriculum design, and implementation...Literacy is often seen as isolated from the content area when in reality language processes are critical to teaching and learning in science...Because of the very nature of the framing experience—namely, the immersion into authentic language uses rather than adherence to formulaic uses of language—subsequent instruction involves teacher actions enabling students to move effortlessly between the two disciplines and ultimately enables the development of both. (Norton-Meier et al., 2013, p. 53)

If a Writing Across the Curriculum program allows non-English instructors to integrate their subject's authentic language, the process of implementing writing activities may become less alien, and may lead to greater cooperation from non-English instructors. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) suggested that a school climate that commits itself to a Writing Across the Curriculum program will be better able to engage new and experienced teachers in

such a program. A thoughtful, pedagogical strategy that considers the individual abilities and needs of teachers across the disciplines, and addresses the concerns of non-ELA teachers, can induce resistant teachers to embrace more writing in their classroom (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Peha, 2003), setting the foundation for a school-tailored pattern for success.

Method

The purpose of this action research project was to explore the level of awareness and willingness of faculty at Holy Cross of San Antonio to engage in a Writing Across the Curriculum program. The mixed-method study utilized an original survey instrument and open commentary.

Participants. The faculty and administration of Holy Cross of San Antonio were invited to participate in this action research study. Except for their status as employees of Holy Cross of San Antonio, the survey respondents remained anonymous. Because members of the administration also serve as faculty members, they were included in the overall sample. An original email list consisted of 55 recipients. After the duplicated emails (staff with multiple email accounts) and non-faculty and non-administrative emails were edited from the list, 36 possible respondents remained. Of those 36 possible respondents, 19 persons, representing 53% of the faculty and staff, participated in the online survey. The respondents included instructors from the middle school (grades 6-8) and high school (grades 9-12) classes, who teach the following subjects: English/language arts/communication arts, fine arts, science, theology, technology, athletics/physical education, social studies, mathematics and personal finance. The school sections its departments by academic discipline rather than by grade level. For example, all of the theology teachers from grades 6-12 coordinate lessons and curriculum issues with the theology chair for the school. The most responses were produced by

instructors in the mathematics department (including personal finance courses) (37%), and the fewest responses came from the fine arts department (5%).

Survey instrument. The survey intended to gauge the familiarity regarding Writing Across the Curriculum among the faculty and staff of Holy Cross of San Antonio. Measured areas included how teachers integrated writing in their subjects, what subjects they taught, and what aspects of Writing Across the Curriculum challenged them the most. Although the survey was quantitative in nature, it did contain areas that asked for voluntary commentary. The original survey developed for this project contained qualitative components (Holter & Frabutt, 2011). The project utilized a 14-item modified Likert-style questionnaire that included two open responses and six list responses. The Likert scale can be used to measure the “relative intensity” of responses along a range, usually from 1 to 5, or 1 to 7 (Babbie, 2001, p. 167). The survey, generated and linked via email to www.surveymonkey.com, included the following styled questions: Likert, list, and commentary. The Likert-style questions in the survey utilized a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 rating as *not at all familiar* or *not at all satisfied*, and 5 as *very familiar* or *very satisfied*. These items assessed participants' perception of their familiarity with Writing Across the Curriculum, the importance of writing skills in their classes, their students' current writing ability, and whether a curriculum-integrated writing program would have a positive impact on their students' writing capabilities. The Likert-style questions also asked participants to rate their willingness to learn more and participate in professional development about Writing Across the Curriculum. The list-style questions offered an inventory of how participants currently rate student writing, how often they use writing skills in the classroom, and what type of writing styles they practice in the classroom. Finally, the survey offered participants the opportunity to explain how an integrated

writing program can enhance their subject curriculum, and what obstacles might interfere with effective writing practices in their classes. See Appendix A for a full version of the survey.

Procedure. The researcher announced the upcoming survey in mid-October, and reminded faculty and staff of the survey status at the end of October, the beginning of November, and second week of November. In addition, the researcher sent a text copy of the survey to the Melody Family ACE Teaching fellows and mentor for review regarding content and structure, then provided an opportunity for them to test the survey online and provide feedback before the researcher opened it to faculty and staff at Holy Cross of San Antonio. The survey went live on surveymonkey.com in late October 2013; it was scheduled for use through the second week of November 2013. The survey was made available to participants through a link sent to the participants' email. Participants were notified about survey completion in person (at a regular faculty meeting) and by email. After these announcements and multiple reminders, pre-test scores were collected by mid-November 2013.

Findings

The purpose of this research was to gauge the familiarity regarding Writing Across the Curriculum among faculty and administration at Holy Cross of San Antonio, and their willingness to engage in WAC collaboration. The researcher used an original mixed method survey. The following sections present descriptive analyses of the quantitative survey responses followed by a summary of the major themes from the open-ended survey items.

Quantitative Survey Results

The researcher used descriptive data analysis in Microsoft Excel to examine the responses to the survey. The basic findings fell into two categories: familiarity and

awareness with Writing Across the Curriculum, and willingness to further investigate writing across the curriculum. The initial findings showed that out of 19 respondents, 16 (84%) indicated a familiarity with Writing Across the Curriculum. Findings are summarized in Table 1.

Writing in the classroom currently.

More than half (58%) of the respondents answered that they integrated writing in their classroom on a daily basis. In addition, 89% indicated that writing skills are important in their classroom, and 63% marked a level of satisfaction with their students' writing skills, while 21% of the respondents indicated that they were not at all satisfied with their students' skills. The study indicated that 84% of the respondents thought that more writing would improve their students' work.

The three major issues that participants observed in their students writing were in literacy (vocabulary usage: 58%), mechanics (grammar: 63%), and organization (73%). In addition to these results, the participants also indicated a willingness to integrate and learn more about Writing Across the Curriculum. Participants noted two major obstacles in integrating Writing Across the Curriculum strategies in their classrooms: time (53%) and extra workload (35%). The respondents overwhelmingly indicated a willingness to integrate, learn more about, and participate in professional development regarding Writing Across the Curriculum. There were no *unwilling* responses to these questions. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

Willingness to integrate writing strategies in the future.

All the survey participants indicated a willingness to integrate writing strategies in their classrooms and to participate in professional development to learn more about Writing Across the Curriculum. Although 37% or less indicated neutral or somewhat of a willingness to integrate writing activities and participate in

professional development, at least 63% reported that they were *willing* or *very willing* to participate in such activities. There were no "unwilling" responses to these questions. Findings are summarized in Table 3.

Qualitative Survey Results

Open commentary about Writing across the Curriculum. Fifty eight percent of the respondents (11) took the opportunity to craft original commentary about Writing Across the Curriculum. In general, the responses reflected the idea that writing activities should not be restricted to the English/language arts teachers, but should be integrated across the disciplines. A content analysis of the responses revealed three major themes or codes.

First, what does Writing Across the Curriculum *mean* to faculty? When faculty members articulated their definition of the project, they gave examples to support their responses. One respondent commented that Writing Across the Curriculum would establish a "clear plan to teach and integrate writing skills from the time a student arrives." Second, *how* does Writing Across the Curriculum *involve* students? Faculty sought to articulate how to engage students in writing. Respondents noted that Writing Across the Curriculum would help students with the ability to "express clearly knowledge in written style," and involve a "written articulation of thoughts." Third, *how* can students *benefit* from Writing Across the Curriculum? Faculty noted specific academic benefits for students in a Writing Across the Curriculum program. Respondents wrote that benefits for students would include the ability to "communicate in written form in every subject area," and would be able to use writing abilities in a non-ELA subject such as mathematics, where writing skills would help them "solve some real-life mathematical problems." Overall, respondents noted that writing is a skill that should be presented in all classes. One

respondent noted that writing should be included in all subject areas, "even if it is just the articulation of thoughts." Some of the respondents offered commentary that touched upon two or more codes, as noted in Table 2.

Discussion and Extension

The purpose of this research was to gauge the familiarity regarding Writing Across the Curriculum among faculty and administration at Holy Cross of San Antonio and their willingness to engage in collaborative WAC activities. The researcher used an original mixed method survey.

Discussion of Major Findings

The majority of participants in the survey indicated that their students would benefit from writing strategies in their classrooms, and that as members of the Holy Cross faculty, they would be willing to participate in professional development for Writing Across the Curriculum. However, they did identify several factors that could mitigate their full participation in such a project. The respondents noted time (53%) and an increased workload (35%) as the top two issues that would create obstacles for integrating writing in their subject areas and lessons. Meanwhile, the study results indicated that no teachers (0%) integrated subject-specific reports, research projects where writing is not the primary graded skill, or bellwork as part of their curriculum. Of the 10 writing activities offered for evaluation, the category of short answers (on quizzes, texts, or worksheets) garnered the most responses, with 26% of participants engaging in this practice. Although the purpose of this study was to gauge awareness and support of establishing a Writing Across the Curriculum at Holy Cross, future studies would do well to evaluate what other types of writing non-ELA teachers integrate in their classrooms, and what types of writing they would like to integrate in their pedagogical strategies.

Application of Findings

This study revealed that there is a strong willingness for faculty at Holy Cross of San Antonio to increase their students' writing ability in ELA and non-ELA subjects. Additionally, the study revealed that faculty are willing to engage in professional development in order to develop successful writing strategies in their classes. These findings coincide with a new mandate from the Archdiocese of San Antonio that all schools begin a 10-year implementation process of the Common Core Standards, which emphasizes the integration of informational writing across the disciplines (West, 2013). It is my recommendation that this study continue to research the particular needs and goals of each ELA and non-ELA subject discipline to determine how best to help them determine their writing outcomes.

Dissemination

This researcher will share the results and final report of this action research project with the president, principal, academic dean and other Holy Cross administrators. In addition, this researcher will share the results with members of the Holy Cross faculty, including the department heads of each academic discipline, who will be key players in the integration of a Writing Across the Curriculum program.

Limitations

The study encountered limitations in terms of how many faculty responded to the survey. The survey was made available online via surveymonkey.com and by paper copy, which was placed in the message box of each faculty member. Although 53 percent of the faculty responded by email, there were no responses by paper. The faculty received reminders via emails and announcements at faculty meetings to participate in the survey at their own discretion. Setting aside a dedicated time segment during a faculty meeting for faculty as an agenda item to participate in the

survey might increase the response rate in future studies.

Future Directions

Beginning in the summer of 2014, this researcher will work with the principal and academic dean to design a preliminary WAC project that will address the concerns of integrating writing for all disciplines at Holy Cross of San Antonio. The project will include a program by which both ELA and non-ELA students can create practical in-class writing structures that will enhance the subject content and serve to improve student writing skills.

Holy Cross of San Antonio is a private Catholic school that prides itself on detaching itself from a perceived "elite" status often attached to private schools. The school follows the Moreau code and mission of education, which states that society needs people of morality and faith as well as people of scholarship: "Holy Cross seeks to develop well-rounded students to become productive citizens by striving toward the ideals of the Venerable (Blessed) Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, 'While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for eternal life.'" ("Our mission," n.d.). For more than half a century, Holy Cross has remained true to its mission, and yet prepare its students for success as a college preparatory school. The results and proposals in this study will help the school continue its mission to serve students on the West Side of San Antonio.

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Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, Response Count, and Frequency for Faculty Responses – Current Skills

| Item | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Satisfaction with writing skills | 2.61 | 0.06 | 4 (21%) | 11 (57.9%) | 3 (15.8%) | 1 (5.3%) | 0 (0%) |
| 2. Students work would show improvement with more writing | 3.78 | 0.14 | 0 (2.3%) | 1 (5.3%) | 3 (15.8) | 14 (73.7%) | 1 (23.4%) |

Response scales:

Item 1: 1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat satisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Item 2: 1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = neutral, 4 = would improve, 5 = would show much improvement

Table 2

Major Collapsed Codes with Representative Quotations from Commentary Question: What does Writing Across the Curriculum Mean to You?

| <i>Code</i> | <i>Number of references</i> | <i>Representative quotation</i> |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| What does Writing Across the Curriculum mean? | 11 | "It means...all disciplines should challenge students to convey their thoughts through writing." |
| How does Writing Across the Curriculum involve students? | 6 | "Students have the ability the express clearly knowledge in written style." |
| How can students benefit from Writing Across the Curriculum? | 1 | "Students benefit from being required to communicate in written form in every subject area." |

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation, Response Count, and Frequency for Faculty Responses – Current Practice

| Item | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Familiarity with Writing Across the Curriculum | 3.26 | 0.28 | 1 (5.3%) | 6 (31.6%) | 2 (10.5%) | 7 (36.9%) | 3 (15.79%) |
| 2. Importance of writing skills in the classroom | 3.89 | .024 | 0 (0%) | 3 (15.8%) | 2 (10.5%) | 8 (42.1%) | 6 (31.6%) |

Response scales:

Item 1: 1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat familiar, 5 = very familiar

Item 2: 1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, 5 = very important

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation, Response Count, and Frequency for Faculty Responses – Teacher

Willingness

| Item | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Willingness to integrate writing strategies in the classroom | 3.73 | 1.04 | 0 (0%) | 3 (15.8%) | 4 (21%) | 7 (36.8%) | 5 (26.3%) |
| 2. Willingness to learn more about Writing Across the Curriculum | 3.78 | 0.14 | 0 (2.3%) | 2 (10.5%) | 4 (21%) | 9 (47.4%) | 4 (21%) |
| 3. Willingness to participate in professional development in Writing Across the Curriculum | 3.68 | 1.00 | 0 (0%) | 3 (15.8%) | 4 (21%) | 8 (42.1%) | 4 (21%) |

Response scale:

1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat willing, 3 = neutral, 4 = willing, 5 = very willing

Appendix A

Writing Across the Curriculum -- Faculty Survey

October 2013

Survey: The following survey will measure how familiar members of the Holy Cross of San Antonio faculty are regarding "Writing Across the Curriculum." Your responses will help gauge the overall comfort levels among faculty regarding the integration of writing in the classroom. It will also guide professional development activities regarding writing in the classroom. The results will be collected, analyzed, and utilized in an action research project for the Melody Family ACE Teaching Fellowship program coordinated through the University of Notre Dame.

Instructions: Please circle your responses.

1. How familiar are you with the term, "Writing Across the Curriculum"?
Not at all Somewhat familiar Neutral Familiar Very familiar

2. How do you currently integrate writing in your classroom? (Please circle all that apply.)
 - Bellwork
 - Note-taking
 - Journal writing
 - Short answers on tests, quizzes, or worksheets
 - Essay writing (short, 1 paragraph)
 - Essay writing (3-5 paragraphs)
 - Research projects (writing is not the primary-graded skill)
 - Research papers (writing is the primary-graded skill)
 - Subject-specific reports (such as scientific observations, etc.)
 - Other (please explain):

3. How often do you integrate writing in your classroom?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Quarterly
 - Per Semester
 - Never

4. How important are writing skills in your classroom?
Not at all Somewhat important Neutral Important Very important

5. Are you satisfied with your students' writing skills?
Not at all Somewhat satisfied Neutral Satisfied Very satisfied

6. Do you think your students' work would improve/show improvement with more writing in the classroom?
Not at all Somewhat Neutral Would improve Much improvement

7. What issues do you observe in your students' writing? (Please circle all that apply.)
 - Spelling
 - General vocabulary usage

- Integration of subject-specific vocabulary
 - Grammar issues
 - Punctuation issues
 - Content issues
 - Organization issues
 - Lack of theme/thesis statement
 - Other (please explain):
8. What obstacles do you find in integrating writing in your subject area? (Please circle all that apply.)
- Time factor
 - Extra workload
 - Knowledge factor
 - Grading factor (unsure of how to grade)
 - Not sure if writing fits into my subject curriculum
 - Not sure that my students would benefit from writing
 - Other (Please explain):
9. How willing are you to integrate writing strategies in your classroom?
- Unwilling Somewhat Neutral Willing Very willing
10. How willing are you to learn more about Writing Across the Curriculum?
- Unwilling Somewhat Neutral Willing Very willing
11. How willing are you to participate in professional development that focuses on “Writing Across the Curriculum”?
- Unwilling Somewhat Neutral Willing Very willing
12. What subject area(s) do you teach? (Please circle all that apply.)
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ○ English/Language | ○ Athletics/Physical Education |
| ○ Arts/Communication Arts | ○ Social Studies |
| ○ Fine Arts | ○ Foreign Language |
| ○ Science | ○ Mathematics |
| ○ Theology | ○ Personal Finance |
| ○ Technology | |
13. What grade level do you teach? (Please circle all that apply.)
- 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
14. Commentary: What does “Writing Across the Curriculum” mean to you?