The following proposal is an effort to articulate and address the concerns about the state of academic writing at Ramapo and make recommendations that will address our students’ needs for effective critical writing instruction in every area of our program. Many faculty indicate a growing concern about the readiness of first year students to negotiate Ramapo’s rigorous academic curriculum. Others suggest that greater emphasis must be placed on using student writing to evaluate and assess student performance in our courses. Everyone is in agreement that there is a critical need for student writing to be an essential ingredient in our assessment efforts.

There is strong agreement among the faculty at Ramapo that efficient and effective methods of providing academic support in writing for our students must be an active part of our academic mission. To succeed, Writing At Ramapo must be a four part shared responsibility: 1) support and funding from the senior administration (Provost’s Office); 2) a faculty defined instructional core in writing; 3) a designated skilled writing program administrator (Director of Academic Writing); and, 4) a college- wide faculty commitment to monitor and assess writing in our programs and our courses. This proposal is a first step in that direction.

This report is not a finished product. There will be and should be a number of changes that need to be part of this recommendation. The document reflects the contributions and endorsement of the College English Convening Group. It is a request that the faculty at Ramapo College be given and accept responsibility for its academic programs. It is a request that the Faculty Assembly accept responsibility for providing leadership and direction in the development, maintenance, and assessment of the writing needs in the academic program. It is a request that the Provost give the faculty the necessary support to complete the tasks recommended here by providing a viable and necessary new direction of support for our students.

Donald Fucci
Professor of Literature,
School of American and International Studies
14 May 2010
Assumptions

- The current state of recognition of the place of writing and the writing needs of our students is insufficient for our needs.
- The current state of writing support in our academic programs is insufficient for our needs.
- There is a lack of coordination, efficiency and effectiveness in our current writing support services and our current writing course structure.
- The role of the Center for Academic Success (CAS) must be reconsidered in order to be able to provide a more meaningful service to the college community.
- The remedial/developmental program in writing needs to be reworked in terms of definition, design, application and assessment.
- The coordination between college courses and academic support is tenuous at best. Efforts must be made to develop a stronger and more effective bridge.
- There is little assessment of the role of writing currently in our academic programs.
- The schools must take an active role in the recognition of the writing needs of its students, complete with sharing responsibility for a college-wide effective and efficient writing program that reinforces the academic mission of each school.
- Assessment of writing practices and programs must be designed and implemented for our academic programs throughout the college. The results of these assessment procedures must be disseminated on a regular basis. These assessment data must provide the basis for effective strategies of productive growth and, when necessary, change.
- The role of Writing At Ramapo must be acknowledged as essential and a responsibility shared by faculty and administration.
I
Writing At Ramapo: a faculty responsibility

WARC: Writing at Ramapo Committee
We recommend that a Faculty Assembly Committee that parallels ARC in importance, scope, and rigor be constituted with responsibility for providing leadership, direction, review, and assessment of writing at Ramapo (WARC). It is further recommended that in addition to a faculty representative from each school, the Director of Academic Writing sit on the committee as a continuous member. It will be the responsibility of the Director of Academic Writing to prepare and present an annual writing assessment report for the Provost and the WARC Committee; WARC will meet at least once each semester and will report annually to the Faculty Assembly. The chair of the committee will be voted upon to serve for a two year period (reelection possible).

Analysis. It is imperative that the faculty embrace the commitment to critical and effective student writing as part of Ramapo’s liberal arts mission. That mission, once defined by an academic unit, the Division of Basic Studies, requires constancy, diligence and assessment of results to remain effective. The recommendations contained within this document cannot be instituted nor can any realistic goal of effective writing by our students be realized without active participation by the entire faculty. The Faculty Assembly must play an integral role in its development, maintenance, and assessment.

II
Writing At Ramapo: a school-based academic writing program
We recommend that each school designate one faculty member to serve as writing program coordinator. Primary duties will include monitoring the effectiveness of writing objectives as defined by the School working with the WARC Committee and the Director of Academic Writing; administration of the Writing Intensive Program (WI) in the school; and administration of the WAC Program. In addition, each Writing Program Coordinator will work with the Director of Academic Writing in developing an appropriate assessment process to determine the effectiveness of said programs and make recommendations for change or improvement to the Dean and WARC, if necessary.

In addition to the writing support work done in many of the current First Year Seminar courses, we recommend that each school select one of its core courses to be designated as the School Writing Program course. This writing intensive course will serve to insure that each student in the School receives writing support activities related to the academic disciplines in each school. In addition, it is recommended that the 400 level capstone experience serve as a WI (writing intensive) experience for our students. The Director of Academic Writing will assist each unit’s writing program coordinator in developing an appropriate writing assessment procedure for each
writing-centered program. An assessment report will be created for each academic year to be forwarded to the appropriate Dean, the WARC Committee and the Provost. **Analysis.** By insisting on a shared scrutiny of our academic curriculum to determine the status and growth of our students in academic writing within each school, Ramapo becomes a liberal arts college with a mission that contains a strong responsibility to address student writing and a commitment to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of our writing initiatives. Neither the administration (Provost’s Office) nor any one appointed individual (Director of Academic Writing) can be expected to shoulder the weight of this responsibility for continued success and growth of these programs. **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) & Writing Intensive (WI) initiatives**

Largely complimentary, WAC and Writing Intensive programs address similar issues. WAC provides the structure, program commitment and faculty sponsorship necessary to integrate writing into the academic curriculum; Writing Intensive is methodology used to integrate writing as a learning tool in the classroom with a focus on instructional design and teaching effectiveness within specific courses. Writing Across the Curriculum is a writing program that had been implemented in 1999 to identify and integrate Ramapo’s students writing needs into the curriculum. The program had previously been voted into the curriculum by the Faculty Assembly and persisted for five years within the institution. Lacking administrative guidance, faculty involvement, and an effective assessment strategy, the program has been allowed to become fallow. We strongly recommend that WAC be reconstituted immediately with a renewed commitment by the Faculty Assembly; guidance and direction provided by the Director of Academic Writing, and effectively assessed on a yearly basis. Writing Intensive (WI) needs to be reconsidered, redesigned, and assessment strategies created to evaluate its effectiveness in the classroom. It is important that the college provide the faculty with funding and direction in offering Writing Intensive and WAC training. We recommend that the Faculty Resource Center be considered in this role. **Analysis.** Research has shown that many WAC programs throughout the country fall into disrepair after the initial thrust of interest and active participation on the part of the faculty. Effectively revived, WAC contains many of the pedagogical goals to provide a basic structure for efforts to include college-wide support for academic writing within its mission and scope. We strongly recommend that two documents, the WAC proposal (1999) accepted by the Faculty Assembly and Edward Shannon’s recommendations for writing intensive revision (statement to the Provost and the College Community dated May 22, 2006) provide the initial information and prospective for reconsideration, redesign, and implementation of both WAC and WI initiatives.

**III**

**Writing At Ramapo: administration and assessment**

The writing needs contained within the various programs discussed in Writing At Ramapo require support of a writing administrator who can offer consultation, guidance and direction. In addition, it is crucial that this administrator provide skilled writing assessment design and strategy to work in concert with the faculty, the Deans and the appropriate administrator from the Provost’s office in the implementation of effective assessment procedures.
Director of Academic Writing
The Director of Freshmen Writing should be renamed “The Director of Academic Writing.” The position will maintain faculty status within the School of American and International Studies, within the Writing Convening Group, but not as permanent convener.

Analysis One of the strengths of Ramapo’s convening groups is the involvement of our faculty in their administration on a revolving basis. We recommend that the new Director of Academic Writing should be defined first as a faculty member within the Writing Convening Group and the School of American and International Studies with contractual responsibility for fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of a faculty member as indicated in the Faculty Handbook before any consideration of convening group responsibility be given. At Ramapo, conveners are recommended for appointment to the Dean and serve for a limited period of time. It is important that this process be maintained within the Writing Convening Group.

Duties of the Director of Academic Writing will include:
1. The Director of Academic Writing will provide leadership in evaluation design and implementation of all writing assessment initiatives including College English; remedial/developmental programs in writing/reading; First Year experience program writing goals, and School writing goals as defined by each academic unit’s writing program. We recommend that annual reports of outcome assessment of Ramapo’s various writing programs and initiatives are prepared in consultation with the Director of Academic Writing. These reports should be distributed to the appropriate Deans, WARC, and the Office of the Provost.
2. The Director of Academic Writing will work with each unit’s writing coordinator, in developing an efficient and effective Writing Intensive program.
3. The Director of Academic Writing will provide consultation and pedagogical support for each school’s attention to WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) initiatives. It is recommended that a College-wide Coordinator of WAC be appointed from the faculty to coordinate writing activities and assist the various schools in development and maintenance of the WAC program.
4. The Director of Academic Writing will work closely with the Director of the Writing Centre in providing the link between the efforts of the Writing Centre and the various writing-based instructional programs.
5. The Director of Academic Writing will receive a one course release time per semester for administrative and assessment responsibilities.
6. The Director of Academic Writing will work closely with the Testing Administrator in reviewing and assessing recommended student placement criteria in College English or College English Skills, if necessary. The placement recommendations will be reviewed by WARC and the Writing Convening Group and forwarded each year at the end of the Fall semester to the appropriate administrator in the Office of the Provost.
**Analysis** The Director of Academic Writing will monitor and assess Ramapo’s various writing-based academic programs. The Director will submit an annual report to the Provost, Dean of the School of American and International studies, and each school’s writing coordinator. It is recommended that the Director of Academic Writing meet with the Provost and the Dean’s Council each academic year to discuss writing at Ramapo.

**IV**

**Writing At Ramapo: Instructional Program**

**College English.** College English will continue to be the introductory required first-year course for all incoming students. Goals and outcomes need to be redefined and a suitable assessment procedure remains a priority for the program. The Director of Academic Writing will be responsible for development of effective assessment procedures.

**College English Skills**

1. Removal of Developmental Reading and Developmental Writing from the curriculum: It is recommended that the two courses be replaced by one four-credit course, “College English Skills,” that would combine the essential pedagogical elements of the two courses. College English Skills will be developed requiring an evaluative structure that requires a pre and post writing sample in every section. Students will be required to write a final essay and achieve a minimum level of competency to pass the course.

2. One syllabus for all College English Skills courses. The course will be developed by the writing convening group. Goals and expected outcomes will define the course design.

3. Students will be required to fulfill specific criteria consistent for all College English Skills courses including one writing sample from work performed during the course and one writing sample obtained at the end of the course. The two samples of each student’s writing will be graded holistically by two faculty members. For the first two years of the program it is recommended that the Director of Academic Writing serve as one of the two readers. Students must achieve the appropriate holistic score in order to achieve successful completion of the course.

4. Students who are unable to achieve an appropriate score in College English Skills will be required to enroll in a workshop offered in The Writing Center that will offer intensive instruction in areas of weakness. Students engaged in the Writing Centre’s program must achieve a minimum score on a holistic writing exam before enrolling in College English.

5. Funding must be provided for the holistic grading of College English Skills writing samples.

**Analysis.** The separation of reading and writing at the developmental level was part of the initial mission and purpose of the college in 1971. It was believed that the students’ needs could best be addressed with this separation of skills at the pre-college level. Current research remains inconclusive as to the best approach to developmental education A review of the academic support programs at many of the COPLAC institutions shows a commitment to a writing center or a center for academic support, but there is little evidence of a commitment to remedial/developmental courses in reading and writing. At Ramapo, well developed pre-college English courses will address both writing and reading issues. We have neither pedagogical demand nor instructional
resources to continue to offer separate developmental reading instruction. College English Skills, with appropriate development, instruction, and assessment will meet the needs of our students.

V

Writing at Ramapo: The Writing Centre

Administration

The creation of “The Writing Centre” to accept responsibility for support services in College English, Remedial/developmental instruction, the Writing Intensive program, WAC, and other writing based student learning initiatives within the institution that would require writing support activities for our students. In addition, The Writing Centre will provide training for tutors throughout the college in all writing based tutorial service, supplemental instruction, and other subject based academic support needs of our students as required.

It is recommended that administrative responsibility for The Writing Centre be contained within the Center for Academic Advising and First Year Experience. Specific subject-area tutoring will be the responsibility of each of the schools and funding for said services will be obtained through the Office of First Year Experience. The Faculty Assembly based Writing At Ramapo Committee (WARC) will receive regular reports of the Centre’s operation, including an assessment report from the Director of Academic Writing. The Director of Academic Writing, working with the Director of The Writing Centre will develop appropriate assessment procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the Centre’s academic support program.

Analysis. Center for Academic Success (CAS).

Since the Fall of 2003 deconstruction of the Division of Basic Studies, CAS has remained separate from the schools, majors, and academic programs at Ramapo. There is a need to reconsider how the college can best support the academic community and provide essential academic support services for our students. It is recommended that CAS be dissolved and replaced; its mission and purpose be reconsidered and redefined in a structure that best suits the present needs of Ramapo’s students: The Writing Centre.

CAS is a residual structure from the previous unit, the Division of Basic Studies. CAS is, to the best of our knowledge, the only academic program that offers instructional elements in the curriculum and reports to administrators outside of Academic Affairs. CAS currently provides a remedial/developmental support program in reading, writing and mathematics. In the areas of reading and writing, the relationship between the writing convening group and the related CAS support structure is limited at best and confusing to all. Therefore, there is little, if any, structural unity or shared understanding of goals between the two groups. Furthermore, there hasn’t been a reading professional presence in CAS for a number of years. Remedial and development course content and assessment should be within the purview of the respective discipline/s. The Ramapo Writing Centre will replace CAS and the Director of Academic Writing will work closely with the Writing Centre Director in providing needed writing based academic support services and assessment.
Therefore, it is recommended that the following administrative changes occur:

- Remedial/Developmental courses will be the responsibility of the respective disciplines: Writing/reading as part of the Writing Convening Group within the School of American and International Studies, and mathematics courses as part of the Mathematics Convening Group within the School of Theoretical and Applied Sciences.
- CAS will be replaced by Ramapo’s Writing Centre. The operational elements of the Writing Centre will be the responsibility of the Center for Academic Advising and First Year Experience.
- We recommend that the college develop a more comprehensive SI (supplemental instruction) program to offer additional support services throughout the curriculum. This instructional model would be added to Writing Centre’s responsibility.
- We recommend that we explore alternative methods of recruitment of tutors including active use of teacher education candidates and credit-bearing courses for the preparation of tutors.

VI

Writing At Ramapo: 2010/2011 Faculty and staff appointments for 2011 & 2012

1. Director of The Writing Centre. We recommend that the current Writing Coordinator of CAS be appointed Writing Centre Director. This requires no new line as the current position of Writing Coordinator in CAS would be redefined.
2. Writing Centre instructor. We recommend that an additional writing center staff person be added to The Writing Centre. Given the expansion of work as described above, the line will be needed. Again, it would require no new line; it would be a replacement line for the vacated position of Director of CAS.
2. Director of Academic Writing: Faculty position, hired as an assistant/associate professor of English in the School of American and International Studies and Writing Convening Group with strong background in writing program development and assessment. Will teach a 2/3 schedule with a 1/3 schedule for administrative and assessment duties listed above. This line is the recently vacated Director of College English line.
3. Secretarial and administrative support personnel hired to support The Writing Center is needed.