Important Reminders About Placement—Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program

As many of you may know, the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program (WSAP) is a popular destination for many freshmen, providing a common set of shared experiences amongst many first-year students. Not only does WSAP house the Writing and Speaking Centers—which allow students with varying needs to get feedback at any stage of their compositional processes—but it’s also the program that administers the Primary Writing Requirement. Below are four key ideas that will likely impact incoming students. If any questions remain after this overview, please utilize the contact information provided at the end of the document.

1. **Self-Placement Survey**
   All students must fulfill the College’s Primary Writing Requirement. This requirement stipulates that all students must prove competence in college-level writing. Typically, most students do this by taking one of the following writing course types: WRT 105, WRT 105E, WRT 105A&B, or the international student-targeted sequence of EAPP (WRT 101, 102, 103, and 104). NOTE: All students must receive a “C” or higher to ultimately meet their Primary Writing Requirement.

   In order to assist all students in making informed decisions about their writing course options, we request that they take the Self-Placement Survey. This is a three-part survey, available to all incoming students through the learn.rochester.edu portal, that aids students in determining which WRT course type is best tailored to their needs and interests. Part One includes several questions that students answer. At the end, it tethers scores to their answers, and offers an assessment on which course might best reflect the student’s writing background. Part Two includes a sample reading and couples it with a typical WRT writing assignment prompt. The student is then asked to evaluate the difficulty of this prompt. The response yields further feedback about which WRT course might be most appropriate for the student. Part Three ends with the submission of a writing sample, which subsequently results in an individualized consultation with a Writing Placement Advisor. NOTE: The Survey is intended to be informative, not prescriptive. Ultimately, selection of WRT courses resides with the student (even if this means going against the advice offered through the Self-Placement Survey process).

   We request *all* students complete Parts One and Two of the Survey prior to registering for their WRT course. International students should complete all three parts. Please remind your students to do this, as soon as possible, particularly since pre-registration has been discontinued per the College Curriculum Review Committee. If they continue to struggle with course options, even after interacting with a placement advisor, they might wish to read, in more depth, about the fundamental differences between WRT course types: [http://writing.rochester.edu/courses/WRT105.html](http://writing.rochester.edu/courses/WRT105.html). The student may also contact the Placement Coordinator, Matthew Bayne, at Writingplacement@ur.rochester.edu.

2. **Selecting a Course on the Basis of Interest**
   Alongside encouraging students to take the Self-Placement Survey, please further encourage them to read the blurbs about the various course themes offered. This information can be found on CDCS. We find, unsurprisingly, that students do better when they register for courses whose content interests them. If a course is full, they cannot be put on a waitlist, as we no longer utilize them, but they may possibly take the course, if offered, in the spring. While opting to wait to take a course of interest in the spring semester may work for some students, those who feel insecure about their writing should likely complete their course in the fall. NOTE: If we have a sizeable number of students who wish to take a WRT course, but the available sections are full, we may create new sections. The sections offered will be contingent on instructor availability.

3. **International Students**
   With an increasing presence of international students on campus, it’s likely you may advise international students. Please be sensitive when working with international students. Do not assume that if they have some usage/grammatical errors in speaking that they must be consequently unable to deal with the rigors of
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WRT 105, and thereby need to be placed in a more “supported” writing course (NOTE: WRT 105E, WRT 105A&B, and EAPP are not “remedial.” They have identical outcome criteria and assignments; they just offer more support than WRT 105). Keep in mind that these meetings may be high-stress for students who are already navigating a new school, culture, and language, all at once. These factors can impinge on their facility with speaking. Additionally, spoken language is not always determinative of writing ability. However, if you do have a student who has considerable difficulty communicating, please bring them to the attention of Paige Sloan, Director of EAPP (English for Academic Purposes Program), or the Placement Coordinator, Matthew Bayne.

4. **Timeline for Completing Primary Writing Requirement, and Petitioning**
   
   We ask that students complete their PWR’s within two semesters. Failure to do so leads to a P-Hold, preventing students from registering for the spring semester of their sophomore year. Again, the majority of students fulfill their Primary Writing Requirement by completing a UR WRT course successfully. However, students may also pursue one of two petition options PRIOR to attempting a WRT course. The Transfer Petition option is for students who have collegiate coursework equivalent to our WRT 105 experience. The student must submit a syllabus from their transfer course reflecting its equivalence to WRT 105. If accepted, the student will then have fully met their Primary Writing Requirement. *We have another petition option, that I particularly want to highlight (as students seem largely unaware of it): the Substitution Petition.* This is for students who may not have equivalent college coursework, but believe they have significant preparation with argumentative research writing and employing a writing process, and as a result find they would not fully benefit by taking WRT 105. In this petition, the student must submit a cover letter and argumentative (ideally, research-based) papers that underscore their writing strengths. If the petition is accepted, the student is then permitted to substitute a UR course that is writing-intensive in lieu of WRT 105. This can be in a discipline of the student’s interest. NOTE: Courses designated as “upper-level” writing courses are oftentimes great substitute courses. However, a student cannot use the same course to simultaneously fulfill the Primary Writing Requirement and their upper-level writing requirement(s). They will also need to receive at least a “B” in their substitute course in order for it to qualify.

CONTACTS:

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