Launching Curricular Reform in First-Year Composition: Navigating the Terrain between Buy-in and Burnout

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Recently, I was attempting to describe my duties as a first-year composition director (often referred to as a WPA, or writing program administrator) to a colleague in another department. In order to describe the diverse, varied—and often chaotic—nature of my work, I was trying to think of apt metaphors which would best capture my experience. It struck me that many of the metaphors I kept coming back to had to do with fire. For example, WPAs often attempt to "light fires" under instructors to encourage them to revise or improve their pedagogy and classroom performance. Equally, WPAs are often asked to put out fires, like when an upset student comes to us to complain about an instructor, or a campus administrator tells us we need to (often immediately) develop a plan to increase the pass rate in our first-year courses. Ultimately, at the risk of stretching this metaphor too far, all of this playing with fire can leave a WPA burning the candle at both ends. This potential "burnout" too often prevents otherwise talented WPAs from enjoying their work and creating meaningful change in the composition programs they're charged to develop and oversee.

One of the most taxing duties of a WPA, and one that is likely to cause the most burnout, is initiating curricular reform, an initiative often met with pushback and resistance. Within the literature on curriculum reform in first-year composition, this resistance seems to arise from a

complex web of issues related to institutional power, status, and collaboration. First, as Richard McNabb explains, on many campuses, writing is viewed as a "skills-based subject" and therefore its administration is "not considered intellectual work" (65). Second, because of the low status of WPA work, the authority and expertise of the WPA—when it comes to curricular reform— is often challenged or contested. Relatedly, WPAs, regardless of their background, training, or expertise, often cannot unilaterally institute change, but must collaborate with a diverse mix of colleagues to both develop and enact new curriculum or programmatic efforts. Finally, complicating such matters of collaboration is the tricky issue of buy-in: settling on a common vision of first-year composition that all stakeholders can agree upon. As WPA Erin O'Neill puts it, when reflecting on her own experience working with departmental colleagues to launch curricular reform, "I soon realized that…consensus with respect to what was best for our freshman writing program was simply impossible" (75). O'Neill's experience is common among many WPAs; as compositionist Patti Kurtz points out, WPAs often face the most resistance from within their own departments, a place where, on the face of it at least, they "expect the most support" (61). Despite many of these daunting challenges, however, curricular reform need not be an exercise in futility or insurmountable frustration. Weaving my own recent experience—the good, the bad, and the ugly—with existing literature on the topic, I will offer WPAs some advice for navigating that often tricky terrain between getting buy-in and getting burned out when launching curricular change.

Tip #1: Strike While the Iron is Hot, but Know When to Let Things Simmer

Most of us who teach rhetoric are familiar with the concept of kairos, an ancient rhetorical term which refers to the "right" or opportune moment. Jerry Blitefield argues, though, that "kairos is more than a vital rhetorical term: it is quintessentially a term of ethical agency. Matters of right timing and due measure, or any of their offshoots, imply a doer poised at the rhetorical crossroads of doing" (70). When it comes to launching curricular reform, kairos is everything to a WPA. In my own situation, I had to wait a few years before finding the right kairotic moment. In 2007, my fourth year as a faculty member at my institution, I was approached by the coordinator of our campus's Teaching and Learning Center to see if I might want to pursue an Academic Transformation Project (ATP) grant which would allow me to pilot curricular reform in our first-year composition program.

At the time, our English department had no WPA position at all; I was merely chair of a Freshman English Committee and possessed very little authority or time to devote to administrative work. In my first year of hire at my institution, while I knew that our composition program hadn't undergone a formal revision in over 20 years, I also knew that trying to initiate curriculum reform as an unseasoned, *very* junior professor—without release time or a formal administrative title—could have been disastrous. For, as Patti Kurtz notes, with an absence of release time, a WPA is hard-pressed to keep current with the field in ways that will help establish meaningful change or curriculum reform (59). Further, Kurtz argues, while "the WPA should be seen as an expert in the areas of composition theory and writing," the lack of a true administrative title "works against this perception" (61). The lack of a formal, institutional title and position is even more troublesome given McNabb's observation that even the work of WPAs

with titles and release time is often not respected or considered as "intellectual" labor on many campuses (65). I saw the ATP grant, therefore, as a golden opportunity, an important first step, in overcoming some of these obstacles which Kurtz and McNabb outline.

First, the grant would allow me to pilot and test new goals and outcomes for our curriculum (and hopefully prove their success) before taking them to the entire department. I thought that by first proving the worth of a new curriculum through a pilot project, it would be an easier sell later on (even though I learned later that that was not necessarily the case). Second, because the grant included release time, I believed that if the pilot program was successful, I could make the case to upper administration that a formal WPA position was needed at my university to continue and grow the successes begun in the grant program.

In my attempt to be a shrewd administrator, before signing on to the grant project and just to *ensure* that the timing was right, I surveyed my department asking them to reflect on the consistency and effectiveness of our first-year composition courses—both the individual courses within the sequence and the logic and consistency of the sequence itself. Thankfully, I discovered that 70% of the department felt there was room for improvement in strengthening the program. At the time, that 70% was reassuring to me and meant that I had picked a true "kairotic" moment to begin my reform. I didn't worry about the other 30% who didn't feel change was needed because I felt I had the majority on my side; it wouldn't be until later that the 30% would become a concern to me.

Overall, the grant proved successful; for two years, I piloted new outcomes for the program, adapted from the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, with volunteer instructors from the department. Calling ourselves the First-Year English Improvement

Team (FEIT), we were a mix of faculty and adjuncts who comprised over half of all composition instructors in the department. Happily, we discovered that students in our pilot courses passed their courses at higher rates than control students (i.e. students in classes with instructors who had opted not to join FEIT). Also, according to surveys distributed and analyzed by our university's Budget, Planning, and Analysis office, students in pilot classes also reported more confidence and preparation for the next course in the sequence than students in control classes. These results were consistent for each semester we ran the pilot. In fact, sometimes the pilot group outshone the control group by as much as 20-30%! The results were so impressive that the Chancellor was persuaded to develop a formalized WPA position for me and shared the results of our project with other departments and committees on campus devoted to increasing student retention and learning.

After two years of successful piloting, I was feeling confident, and by the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year, I thought the time was finally right to bring the revised outcomes to my department for a vote. In my department, all members—from first semester adjuncts to senior tenured faculty—have voting rights, and no curricular change can be implemented without a majority vote. Prior to the meeting where the vote took place, I worked with fellow members of FEIT to devise an "advantages" document to distribute, along with the outcomes, to all department members. The "advantages" document summarized our two year statistical success and addressed all of the potential ways that utilizing the outcomes could benefit not only students but also instructors—in terms of planning, time management, clearer conceptualization of the composition sequence, etc.

Unfortunately, not everyone in the department got the memo, or if they got it, they didn't exactly see the same advantages that the FEIT group did. In fact, on the eve of the department meeting, a senior colleague—a literature professor who wasn't much interested in composition theory and was pretty happy with the status quo—unleashed an e-mail to the entire department that outlined all of his grievances with the outcomes. It was a detailed list and worse yet, he claimed he was also speaking on "behalf of others." I was blindsided. I did my best the next day at the department meeting to address his grievances, most of which were based on misconceptions about the outcomes (e.g. that they were going to take away academic freedom, discourage instructors from using any literary texts in the classroom, etc.). Nonetheless, I was rattled at the meeting, and the revised outcomes ended up passing by just a slim vote of 20-15. While relieved, this relief was short-lived, as the next day, this same senior colleague sent another e-mail to the department with a snide remark that the vote wasn't "exactly a sign of confidence" in the new curriculum. My immediate impulse was to fire off an email of my own, trying to squelch this continued cynicism and ill-will towards two years of hard-fought curricular reform. Ultimately, I refrained from responding, buoyed by some supportive colleagues who encouraged me to let things "cool off" and allow the changes to sink in a bit. I'm glad I followed this advice; starting a reactionary war of words over email would have added more fuel to the fire and ultimately would have strained relationships in my department even further.

Still upset and not sure what to do next, I set up a meeting with my Department Chair. He reassured me that the vote would stand and be honored, but he also felt that we should put the outcomes on the agenda at two subsequent department meetings in an effort to build more consensus. He revealed that in addition to the vocal disgruntled colleague, other department

members had approached him privately with their own reservations and complaints. Upon hearing this news, my heart sank. Worse, I was starting to feel bitter and defensive and not in the mood to have further exchanges with colleagues who, I assumed, apparently hadn't even bothered to read the reports of our success or voice their concerns or opinions in the two years many of us had been working hard to pilot and test these new outcomes.

Even though I had more than half of the department "on my side," in the wake of the close vote and the charge from my department chair to build more consensus, I suddenly felt consumed by loneliness, which as Laura Micicche points out in her essay, "More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work," is a common emotion among WPAs. "Loneliness," she writes, "is more than a physical place that we occupy. It can describe the relations we build or fail to build, with others – especially with those whom we do not agree or whom we view as occupying a place of such remote difference that any relation seems impossible" (446).

David Alan Sapp echoes Micicche's sentiments in his essay, "The Lone Ranger as Technical Writing Program Administrator." While writing about those individuals hired to run technical writing programs, his reflections are relevant to all WPAs, who often operate as "lone rangers" in their departments and on their campuses. Sapp contends that WPAs often face "intellectual loneliness" insofar as many of their colleagues—no matter how well-meaning they may be—are simply not interested in, familiar with, or sometimes even respectful towards the WPA's areas of scholarly expertise: namely writing theory and pedagogy (201). Sapp further contends that WPAs "in the unenviable position of being placed in charge of programs that have been poorly constructed or negligibly managed" are especially at risk of feeling "intellectually alienated" (211). Certainly, the same argument could be made for WPAs in inaugural positions;

such WPA's don't have to contend with a former program that was "negligibly managed," but rather a historical lack of a program altogether.

Despite these institutional realities that can lead a WPA to feel like a "lone ranger," I would argue that this loneliness can become a self-fulfilling prophecy if the WPA, in response to feeling misunderstood or undervalued, decides to hole up in an office or cut off communication or relationships with resistant colleagues. To be sure, after speaking with my Department Chair, I wanted nothing more than to go up to my office and lock the door and never come out. But soon I learned that perhaps this desire to isolate myself—no matter how understandable at times—was part of the problem. This leads me to my second piece of advice.

Tip #2: You can't put out fires if you never leave the station. You need to make the rounds—the earlier the better, but better late than never.

Looking back now, I can see how I developed a false sense of security or idea that everyone in the department was on board with the new outcomes; after all, for two years I had been working almost exclusively with a team of like-minded instructors who shared my vision for the program. While that 30% of folks who initially expressed a resistance to change never left the back of my mind, I figured that they would be swayed once they saw the impressive results our pilot team had achieved—the very same stat reports that had been so impressive to the Chancellor and other high profile stakeholders on campus. I believed, as a WPA, that I had set up the pilot program wisely and had constructed very thorough and persuasive reports of the results. I had drawn upon, what Irene Ward calls one of the two major forms of power a WPA has in her

possession: "expert power," a form of credibility established by one's academic credentials, previous experience, and knowledge (64).

However, in hindsight, what I failed to rely on was the other type of power Ward says a WPA must also rely on: "referent power," credibility established by one's character which includes the perception of how much you care about or how in touch you are with others (64). Basically, in my race to appeal to logic and hone my expert power, I had abandoned any meaningful appeals to pathos, particularly the potential anxieties, fear, and resistance that some people in my department possessed about the new outcomes. Most likely because I feared resistance and pushback, I had not expressly reached out to the resistant 30% except with cold hard statistics, forgetting that they might not be as persuaded by the pilot vs. control results since they, after all, *were* the control group.

I came to discover that being a WPA, it turns out, is a lot like being a politician. As Doug Hesse writes in "Politics and the WPA: Traveling Through and Past Realms of Expertise," "Politics is the art of moving people or groups to action on matters that require their assent" (41). In gaining this assent, he reminds WPAs that "non-specialist stakeholders may be little persuaded by specialist knowledge" (42). It occurs to me now that for some members of my department, particularly those instructors whose background and specialization fell outside the realm of rhetoric and composition, I could have presented them with the most persuasive and impressive statistical reports in the world and it wouldn't have made a bit of difference. What I needed to showcase was a bit more of a human touch. For, just as politicians have constituents who do not agree with their positions or platforms, the same is true of a WPA. Yet, if they are going to avoid burnout and achieve buy-in, WPAs have to suppress any "lone ranger" tendencies

cloaked in self-pity or martyrdom; they must entertain and listen to the views of all members of the department, not just those who are part of their "team" or share similar pedagogical viewpoints. Pushback and resistance, after all, are often products of people feeling dismissed, or worse yet, altogether unheard or ignored.

Back in 1999, prior to launching her NY Senate race, Hilary Clinton went on a much publicized "listening tour" to meet her prospective constituents, learn about their specific concerns, and ultimately let them know that she was on their side and would fight for their interests. She smartly did this before the vote; however, I found that it can work equally well after a vote has taken place—even if it's a small scale "tour" of one's own department. After the outcomes had passed by a narrow margin and I had met with my department chair, I decided to roll up my sleeves and go door to door, talking to professors and adjuncts who had not been part of the First Year English Improvement Team, asking their opinions of the outcomes and, even though they had passed, trying to get feedback about how the outcomes might be further strengthened, enhanced, or revised. Initially, I dreaded the prospect of knocking on office doors and soliciting feedback. I was afraid that it might take the hard-fought battle back to square one, and after two years of sweat and labor, that was the last thing I wanted.

However, to my surprise, I quickly found out that no one, including the disgruntled literature professor, had any diabolical notions of dismantling or completely resisting the new outcomes. If there was a common denominator that came from my meetings with resistant colleagues, it could be summed up in one word: fear. What I discovered was that most people who had voted against the outcomes had not done so due to the content of the document so much as the perception that new outcomes equaled change, and change equaled more work, work that

many instructors, for a variety of legitimate reasons, felt nervous about taking on. Further, because I was new in my role as WPA and my department had never before had a formal Director of First-Year Composition position, there was some fear that these new outcomes were just the tip of the iceberg in some attempt to limit choice, academic freedom, and ramp up surveillance among instructors in the program.

I know that had I not gone door to door, many of these fears would never have been brought to my attention. Further, by going door to door, while labor intensive, I was able to more effectively kill rumors, allay fears, and reassure colleagues that the outcomes were not the first step in my taking over as "composition police," nor were they an attempt to create more work or labor for instructors. They were, in fact, quite the opposite. While I had made some of these same arguments in writing, nothing was as effective as having one-on-one conversations. These one-on-one conferences convinced me to change my own leadership style and also taught me an important lesson, which is my final tip for avoiding burnout and, perhaps, the most challenging tip to follow.

Tip #3: Though at Times You May Feel "Burned," Never Equate Professional Disappointment with Personal Failure

Laura Micicche notes that, often, the emotional labor of a WPA can be just as taxing as the physical/mental labor that constructs the role. She writes, "As the target of all that troubles student writing, the target sometimes too of faculty in English Departments who resist rethinking, let alone changing, the way they teach first-year composition – WPAs daily find themselves immersed in anger, frustration, and disappointment" (434). She goes on, "the

personal and professional danger of disappointment is that it may become a 'fixed' stance, eventually hardening into disillusionment, resignation, passivity in the face of new, ever-changing situations" (446).

I believe that this disappointment often becomes "fixed" for two reasons. First, I think that too many WPAs internalize and stifle their anger and frustration because they fear being seen as weak or ineffectual if they complain or express their dissatisfaction. Certainly, in my case, I fought the urge to complain too strongly to my department chair, even though I felt that some of my colleagues were behaving in unproductive, passive aggressive ways. Even my chair himself had unhelpfully introduced the debate about the outcomes as a "showdown" at one of our department meetings; although I finally admitted to him that his framing the debate as a battle wasn't particularly helpful, it took more courage than it should have to bring this to his attention. Micciche writes that "not only does the admission of disappointment make us vulnerable, but it also threatens to construct us as whiners, disruptors of the status quo, ungrateful workers in the profession" (447). Also, for those of us who occupy inaugural WPA positions, especially in very tight and contentious budget climates, many of our colleagues often see us as lucky or fortunate that we have "release time" to do work that formerly was just done by overworked faculty on committees. We may feel pressure to keep our mouths shut.

And yet, swallowing or internalizing professional disappointment or frustration can lead to bitterness and stagnation. To be effective managers and leaders, WPAs need to foster frequent and open lines of communication, particularly with their department chairs, deans, and other key university administrators. Dialogue can lead to empowerment; it can help the WPA establish

some powerful allies on campus and promote a keener understanding and appreciation of the important work of writing program administration.

The other reason disappointment can become a "fixed stance" is if WPAs take critique of their work personally, as I did. When you take critique personally, not only is it destructive to your mental health and general levels of anxiety, but it causes you to feel wounded and retreat, unable or unwilling to listen to alternative views or contemplate any sort of compromise. It hampers you from smart, strategic planning and fostering new initiatives. Irene Ward argues that WPAs are prone to burnout unless they "develop realistic expectations about what can be accomplished and carefully choose which battles" are worth fighting (59). Developing these "realistic expectations" can take time and practice, but certainly Ward's use of the term "battle" is no accident. By nature, WPA work involves change, disrupting the status quo, ensuring that instructors enact and are held accountable for best practices within their classrooms. As such, some degree of professional resistance and pushback is inherent to the position. Smart WPAs have to find ways to anticipate and productively respond to this resistance, but also to categorize this resistance as a sort of professional "par for the course," not as a sign of a character flaw or some sort of personal failing.

As I discovered when I made the rounds in my department, about 75% of people's resistance had to do with fear of change. The other 25% had to do with content changes people wanted to see with the outcomes, and of that 25%, I was able to compromise on about 20%. (Please see Appendix for the final draft of the outcomes). Ultimately, I made some changes to the outcomes that brought about more consensus and satisfaction among everyone in the department. When the senior colleague who had been such a thorn in my side throughout the

process later sent me an e-mail thanking me for my hard work on the outcomes and letting me know how much he valued me as a colleague, I realized that his earlier criticisms may have, indeed, been reactionary and hurtful, but they weren't personal in the way that I initially thought they were.

The political nature of the WPA role requires that we develop a thick skin—if you take every critique personally, you're sure to be burned out within a year. Change is never easy, especially with the myriad of stakeholders a WPA has to convince and persuade. We often find ourselves starting fires, burning the candle at both ends, and fanning the flames, but we can also spark meaningful and productive change in the way writing is taught and assessed on our campuses, and we don't have to and s*houldn't* let ourselves get burned in the process.

Appendix

Outcomes for UW-Stout's First-Year Composition Sequence (ENGLISH 090, 101, and 102)

Overview of Goals and Outcomes for UW-Stout's First-Year Composition Sequence

Introduction: The general purpose for most first-year college writing courses is to help students become more skilled, confident, and critical writers, readers, and thinkers – attributes which will help them succeed and grow as students, professionals, and citizens. As such, the following four umbrella goals/outcomes are designed to guide and achieve this purpose for the entire composition sequence in UW-Stout's First-Year Composition Program. The idea is that students in each writing course will be working towards fulfilling these outcomes, but to different degrees and levels of sophistication. These outcomes/goals are derived from the first-year composition outcomes designed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators: http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html; because of their flexibility and potential to add coherence and consistency to college composition sequences, the WPA Outcomes have been adapted by over 100 colleges and universities in the U.S. The adaptation of the outcomes to the specific courses in the sequence is spelled out in the individual course narratives and descriptions below.

Achieving the Outcomes: A Flexible Pedagogical Approach: While there is a minimum amount of formal academic writing required in each of the courses in the sequence (see requirements below) and each course must feature a good deal of direct writing instruction, in helping students achieve the outcomes, instructors can utilize a variety or combination of approaches and themes: e.g. cultural studies, literary, historical, classical rhetorical, and others. Further, in helping

students meet the learning outcomes for the course, instructors are free to choose their own texts and develop their own unique writing assignments and class activities.

Umbrella Goals and Outcomes for First-Year Composition Sequence

Rhetorical Knowledge: Students will understand how audience, purpose, context, and language shape the meaning and function of any text and will apply this understanding in a variety of specific writing situations.

Critical Thinking/Reading: Students will use reading and writing as a means of inquiry—that is, as a way to generate ideas and questions, to understand the social and cultural implications of complex texts and debates, and to consider and express the relationship of their own ideas to the ideas of others. Students should understand the connections among language, knowledge, and power.

Processes: Students will practice a writing process that is flexible, recursive, and responsive to the needs of specific writing situations. They will develop strategies for each phase of the process, such as: pre-writing/invention, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. They will understand this process as social and collaborative, assimilating feedback and critiquing the work of others. Students will also develop a process for conducting academic research, which involves critically utilizing an array of print and electronic sources.

Conventions: Students will gain extensive practice in various genres of writing. They will utilize the appropriate tone, documentation style, grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling demanded by specific writing situations

Narratives and Outcomes Statements for Courses in UW-Stout's First-Year Composition Sequence

English 090, Writing Workshop

Overview/Purpose: English 090 is the developmental, non-credit writing course in the first-year writing sequence that is required of students who receive an EPT score below 360**.** Through immersion in the writing process, which will include both informal assignments and formal essays, students will gain confidence and develop independent writing/thinking skills. Students will learn active reading strategies and will practice and review academic writing conventions, such as: grammar/mechanics, sentence structure, organization, and paragraph development. Additionally, students will be introduced to basic source integration and documentation practices and will develop a working vocabulary for discussing writing. Students completing English 090 with a grade of "C" or higher will have the skills and confidence to succeed in English 101, Composition 1. Students in English 090 will be asked to write a minimum of between 2000-2500 words in formal essays.

Outcomes:

At the conclusion of English 090, students should demonstrate the ability to:

- Understand that every text has a particular rhetorical context: audience, purpose, genre
- Communicate ideas in an organized, coherent manner for outside readers
- Actively read and respond to texts, including their own written drafts, and those of their peers
- Distinguish between and make connections between their own ideas and the ideas of others

- Understand that writing is a process, one which is often time-consuming and complex
- Adapt the writing process to the needs of individual writing tasks
- Produce writing that demonstrates basic proficiency in standard edited English so that meaning is not obscured by mechanical or grammatical error
- Begin adapting conventions such as format, structure, and tone to a given rhetorical situation
- Exercise basic skills in incorporating the ideas of others accurately and fairly through summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation

English 101, Composition 1

Overview/Purpose: English 101 is the introductory course in the first-year writing sequence for students who receive a score of 360-530 on the EPT. Students will practice college-level reading and writing and develop effective writing strategies and processes. Additionally, they will learn to respond to and write in a variety of genres and rhetorical situations and will be introduced to academic research, source-supported writing, and argumentation. Through course readings and writing assignments, students will engage in critical inquiry and reflection. English 101 begins a learning process that students will continue in English 102 and future classes across the college curriculum. Students in English 101 will be asked to write a minimum of between 3000-3500 words in formal essays. Students must receive a "C-" or better in English 101 to move on to English 102.

Outcomes:

At the conclusion of English 101, students should demonstrate the ability to:

- Analyze and respond to the needs of different audiences and rhetorical contexts
- Make rhetorical choices consistent with a controlling purpose
- Read texts actively and analytically, identifying the purpose(s) and audience(s) for which a given text has been constructed
- Recognize basic elements of persuasive and argumentative writing (appeals, claims, reasons, evidence, etc.)
- Make informed connections and distinctions among others' ideas as well as between one's own ideas and those of others
- Understand knowledge and information as existing within a broader situational and cultural context
- Understand and practice writing as a recursive and strategic process, utilizing prewriting/invention, drafting, revising, and editing
- Understand the collaborative nature of writing, and demonstrate the ability to critique one's own work and the work of peers
- Learn the basics of academic research:
    - Become familiar with academic databases and library search engines
    - Learn how to assess the credibility of research sites and material
    - Discover the importance of scope in selecting topics and pertinent research
    - Understand what it means to join an academic "conversation" on a topic

- Use conventions of structure, style, grammar, mechanics, and format appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Practice accurate, ethical, and appropriate usage of primary and secondary sources

English 102, Composition 2

Overview/Purpose: English 102 advances through academic research and inquiry the critical reading, writing, and thinking skills acquired in English 101. Students will continue to develop rhetorical strategies of reading and writing to enter into a larger academic discourse. Students will work with a variety of readings and texts, including imaginative literature, and will understand how such texts work together and talk to each other. All readings in English 102 support inquiry-based writing, enabling students to study subjects or themes in depth so that they can write in depth and with authority. The level of writing and research is significantly more sophisticated than in English 101, and students will acquire and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill the composition sequence. Students in English 102 will be asked to write a minimum of between 3000-3500 words in formal essays.

Outcomes:

At the conclusion of English 102, students should demonstrate the ability to:

- Showcase a sophisticated knowledge of the rhetorical situation, social/cultural/historical context, language, and consequences of a variety of texts
- Apply rhetorical knowledge to a variety of academic writing projects
- Respond thoughtfully and critically to a variety of texts

- Refine skills of summary, analysis, and synthesis
- Make effective use of the conventions of argument (appeals, claims, reasons, evidence, etc.)
- Utilize the research process effectively:
    - Identify subjects of inquiry and appropriate research topics/questions
    - Utilize academic research tools and databases
    - Identify key debates presented in the research for a selected topic
    - Formulate thesis statements
    - Select appropriate sources relevant to a research subject
    - Sustain controlled idea/argument throughout a lengthy academic paper
- Effectively integrate and document sources according to the assigned documentation style
- Edit work for clarity, style, appropriate syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

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