

THE WORD ON WACA

NEWSLETTER OF THE WAC PROGRAM AT YORK

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THE END OF WAC...OR IS IT?

On **January 25, 1999, the CUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution** calling on each college to “intensify and expand its programmatic efforts to strengthen the teaching of writing in courses across the curriculum.” In support of this resolution, the CUNY Writing Fellows Program was launched, placing doctoral students in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs across campuses to support undergraduate writing. In the past two and a half decades, Fellows have worked closely with faculty to develop writing-intensive courses, lead workshops, and promote a culture of writing across disciplines.

On February 5, 2024, Karen Miller, Chair of the WAC Professional Development Committee, announced a major restructuring: Writing Fellows will no longer be a core component of WAC programs going forward.

This marks a pivotal shift in how WAC functions across the university. While the program itself is not ending—and CUNY is taking this moment to reimagine what WAC can look like—the impact of the Writing Fellows is undeniable. Their legacy is felt in classrooms, curricula, and in the many students whose writing they helped strengthen.



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The Legacy of Writing Fellows at York College

- **Tutoring:** Developed the initial CRLA-certified tutor training training for the [Collaborative Learning Center](#) tutors and served as tutors themselves.
- **Resources:** Developed supplementary materials related to writing, including faculty resources, student guides, and tutoring materials available on the [WAC website](#).
- **Promotion of WAC Pedagogy:** Curated materials related to WAC principles and pedagogy at the [CUNY Commons WAC Resource](#) site that Writing Fellows maintain.

In this final edition of the WAC Newsletter, the current (and last) cohort of Writing Fellows reflects on what this change means for them. We also hear from some old, but familiar voices as we say farewell to the program in its current form.

SAYING GOODBYE

WAC Coordinator for the Writing Fellows, Raquel Coy, and the Writing Fellows of 2024-25 reflect on WAC: looking back at their time in the program at York, examining the repercussions of scuttling the program, and look ahead to the future...

2024 - 2025 WRITING FELLOWS COHORT



Andrew Fan



Alex Viteri



Fabián Escalona



Ekaterina Kistanova



Clara Ramazzotti

RAQUEL

With the shuttering of the CUNY WAC Writing Fellows program as we know it, supporting undergraduate writing across CUNY will become an immense undertaking. The Writing Fellows were the backbone of many WAC programs on nearly every CUNY campus, particularly at York College. Just in our local program's recent past, Writing Fellows have been essential in supporting undergraduate writing by providing direct and indirect assistance to students, staff, and faculty alike at York.

Placed in the Collaborative Learning Center as writing tutors, Writing Fellows offered hands-on support with student writing.

While helping with brainstorming, drafts, research strategies, and revision techniques are all part of a tutor's job, beyond these skills, undergraduate writers also gained invaluable inspiration by seeing and hearing graduate students model strong study skills and by witnessing firsthand what they themselves can achieve in their academic careers.

Under the guidance of former WAC Coordinator Jonathan Hall, Writing Fellows kick-started our tutor professional-development series through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) certification program at the Collaborative Learning Center.

They also created and maintained practical, flexible [resources](#)—writing-tips infosheets, discipline-specific infosheets, and instructional videos—that faculty refer students to in order to improve their writing. Writing Fellows have also played a key role in faculty development, providing feedback on Writing Intensive (WI) course proposals and sharing best practices for embedding writing into the curriculum.

Despite the end of the WAC Writing Fellowship, WAC as a program will continue, radically transformed but still fundamentally committed to supporting student writing. In light of York's ongoing assessment initiatives, WAC will be pivotal in conversations about effective methods for facilitating writing conventions in various fields, collaborating closely with departments to strengthen our campus-wide writing culture.

To support these goals, we're launching several new projects. WAC Talks are the spiritual resurrection of the Writing Pod and WAC Symposium series with the purpose of exploring what writing looks like across the disciplines and how faculty facilitate student learning through disciplinary writing, as well as celebrating the work of our current WI Faculty at York College. [WAC Talks](#) debuted on April 1, 2025, with an interdisciplinary discussion featuring [Dr. Marta Daly](#) and [Dr. Robin Harper](#).

Through their contributions, the discussion proved to be incredibly fruitful as we explored the requirements of different genres, collaborative writing, and challenges faced in the classroom. We look forward to continuing these conversations with you! If you would like to be a discipline leader in a future WAC Talk, please let us know at wac@york.cuny.edu. Furthermore, we are in the process of transitioning to a more streamlined process of proposing WI courses. Instead of approving Writing-Intensive courses on a case-by-case basis, we propose designating individual faculty members as eligible to teach WI courses. This model will allow more flexible scheduling and ensure faculty stay current with WI requirements and best practices. With these initiatives underway and more on the way, we look forward to a renewed, col-laborative WAC community—one that continues to nurture confident, skilled writers across York College and beyond.



ALEX

I'll miss the one-on-one interactions with students. I've written before in our newsletter about how talking to students about their writing process has nourished mine, broadening my understanding of academic writing through talking to students from various disciplines—all with very similar anxieties, frustrations and fears.

In the shaping of this semester's writing workshop, perhaps because we're seeing students turn to AI to escape the pains of writing, Andrew and I wondered: How can we return to the pleasure of writing? How do we creatively respond and work within the highly standardized prompts and conventions of academic writing? In our workshop, we discussed how to create a practice of writing—constant and, with time, bountiful—that adjusts to our rhythms and is indeed enjoyable. We advocated for a return to analogue writing—facing notebooks and grabbing pencils—to stimulate our creativity and expand the way we respond to prompts. Journaling as a form of meditation and sketching to free ourselves from judgement—shoutout to Linda Barry's toolbox "What it is. Do you wish you could write?" (2008).

We'd like to see students—and ourselves—easily move from daily reflections into kickass essays and believe this might be one way. Still, a long-time WAC question lingers: how to not impose our way and instead create the conditions for students to find their way into writing? As the program mutates into new skin and re-organizes, why not intentionally structure some of it not to teach students to write good but to enjoy the ride?

ANDREW

"Why are they trying so hard to teach us how to teach?"—a friend noted to me during a discussion on the mysterious idea of our participation in something called WAC—"they should have had us do this our first year!" Evidently, the notion we call Writing-Across-the-Curriculum entails a bit more than simply 'teaching us how to teach' and likewise a bit less; smaller in scale than the capacious idea of teaching pedagogy itself but no less than a reexamination of the ways writing pedagogy is (and is not) employed in the classrooms of higher education. The name too, at first, seemed like an academic wisecrack: "Hi, I'm your neighborhood WAC[k] Fellow!" WAC, for those uninitiated, is the acronym for Writing-Across-the-Curriculum. Each of those terms—"Writing," "Across," and "Curriculum"—in turn deserve a more detailed exploration. Yet this current moment in time where WAC has been deemed in need of reconfiguring pushes me to conclude that rather than explanation, it is a moment more appropriate for taking stock of the past. My friend's complaint that afternoon was certainly erroneous in scale and scope, but his point still stands. Why were we, at that point advanced graduate teaching fellows, suddenly confronted with this obligatory institution-wide effort to



direct us toward writing pedagogy? Sure, many of us were novice educators in our first year as CUNY instructors. I was such a novice but was also fortunate enough to be offered a practicum at the college where I taught my first course. But others were not so fortunate. Nonetheless, after more than five semesters of classroom experience I could no longer be called the fresh-faced educator I had been. I had tried my share of pedagogical tricks and failed at many of them. I then succeeded in using those same tricks on the second attempt (re: the greatest lesson of teaching: no class is ever the same). This problem was borne out when I realized many of the pedagogical case studies, techniques, theories, etc. introduced as facets of WAC philosophy were all recognizable landmarks on familiar territory for me. The teaching of literature inevitably entails teaching writing. But then at some point I realized this was part of the WAC experience. All of my WAC cohorts were highly diverse in the disciplines represented. In some cases, I was the only one with writing pedagogy experience. I encountered, admired, and was even puzzled by a wide spectrum of approaches to classroom teaching.

Herein lay a second, more slightly disorienting, realization: before WAC, I had only ever discussed pedagogical issues with my fellow Comparative Literature or English department colleagues. I had no clue what concerned STEM instructors when putting together a syllabus or how Anthropology professors designed assignments or how learning objectives and assessments are meted out in Theatre courses. What I gained participating in WAC, beyond the pedagogical theory, was an intellectual and collaborative environment wherein my horizon for what resembled pedagogical success was considerably widened. And I believe this might be the biggest loss following the sunset of WAC, at least in its current iteration. Successors of this program are already operational across CUNY and will continue the important work of sharpening the university's teaching apparatus. But I believe WAC did not benefit just the institution. The unique and interdisciplinary experience of WAC pushes me to acknowledge it as a kind of "third-place" for us graduate student instructors—perhaps no longer panicked newly-minted rookies, but still in need of commiseration, fresh ideas, and even fresher perspectives.



May 2025

CLARA

When I heard about the WAC for the first time, I thought that it was a project that could have helped the graduate students to become better teachers and better writers with their own work. While teaching and supporting students on their writing, the young scholar in the WAC could help themselves questioning its own writing. There was an issue from the beginning, though: I have always considered the idea of starting it in the fifth year as an issue. Graduate students become adjunct way before that time and they often have to rely on themselves, learning what terms like “high-stakes / low-stakes” assignments mean on their own. Sure, a quick Google search would cover that, but as we discovered tutoring students, it is not a matter of googling, it is a matter of being able to have an idea and to put it down on “paper”. With the shutting down of the project, we can notice the loss of spaces where future teachers can work on their pedagogy and working with students from various disciplines, and WAC would have been a benefit if done at the very start of our careers instead of the end, where dissertations and job applications are sucking all the air in the room. Now that it ends, we can also talk about the disappearance of support for undergrad students and for junior and/or part-time faculty members. There is an elephant in the room, the same one without air, there is, unsurprisingly,

lack of recognition: the importance of supporting and tutoring students and faculties during college is not considered a priority, so what is a priority in education now? How the end of the WAC program could influence, and probably damage, students’ writing in the Humanities, a field that is already penalized in so many ways? I have no clear answer to that, and maybe the next steps and years to come will prove me wrong, but when Covid-19 changed how we approach a classroom and a deadline, it changed also how we see schools and assignments. In the past four years I found students and colleagues going on per inerzia with their work. I am one of them. I have ideas, I consider myself a good writer (at least in my own language, Italian), and I have some time to do my work. My students at CCNY have some time to do their assignments, but it seems that no one knows why we are still doing this, why we think about academia and university like we did before, like writing and publishing an article will actually make us ready for the job. Change is encouraged, concluding the WAC is not bad news per se, but it seems that there is less and less space for the learning, a space where teachers and students alike can work on their way to express ideas, to explain them to others, and to go back to have patience while getting an education, because knowledge and talent do not come from nowhere, they need to be cultivated.

FAREWELLS FROM FAMILIAR FACES



SEAN KENNEDY

FORMER WRITING FELLOW

I enjoyed many things about my two years as a WAC fellow at York, but by far the best experience was learning how to engage a diverse spectrum of students in a variety of ways. Through our readings and research projects as scholars and by working directly with students in the Collaborative Learning Center, I became the best teacher I could be at that point in time. And that foundation continues to pay dividends today in my current job as a reading instructor for “special needs” youngsters and adults in Pasadena, California. Lifelong learning is the key to happiness in life. That ethic was permanently instilled in me at York, and for that reason, I’m forever grateful.



KATHERINE PAYNE

FORMER WRITING FELLOW

My time as a WAC fellow totally transformed the way I work with students one on one. Working as a tutor in the collaborative learning center and learning about writing center pedagogy helped me see the way students can empower themselves as writers and how institutionally we can all create that environment, regardless of classes, departments, and traditional academic hierarchies.



SANDRA MOYANO-ARIZA

FORMER WAC FELLOW

I'm so thankful for the WAC program. I was able to finish my dissertation thanks to the financial and academic support of the WAC and WAC at large fellowships. Special thanks to Matt Garley and Shereen Inayatulla for making it a wonderful and meaningful experience even in the most difficult COVID years. It was not only a professionalizing experience but a great space to think through larger academic concerns and the future of higher ed. I'm also incredibly thankful to the team in the writing center and the students it was so fun to work with all of you!



SHOBA PARASRAM

WAC COORDINATOR FOR WI COURSES | CHAIR OF THE WRITING INTENSIVE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

While I am sad that we are losing the integral support of our Writing Fellows, I am honored that I can contribute to the new shape that WAC will take at York. I am especially excited to find new ways we can collaborate with other departments across campus to highlight the value of writing in all disciplines, as well as draw on their expertise in teaching discipline-specific writing to enrich our own teaching strategies. The creation of our new WAC discussion series, WAC Talk, is the first step in this journey.



MATT GARLEY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR | DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, YORK COLLEGE | LINGUISTICS
PROGRAM, THE GRADUATE CENTER

As a former WAC coordinator for Writing Fellows, I really appreciated the unique skillset and diverse perspectives each cohort of Fellows brought to York. The Fellows planned and executed exciting projects that made lasting contributions to writing pedagogy across the disciplines and within the disciplines at York, and while I'm sad to see the Fellows program in its current form (and this newsletter) sunset, I remain optimistic about the future of WAC at York, and grateful for all the contributions the Fellows have made over the years.



SHEREEN INAYATULLA

PROFESSOR | YORK COLLEGE, CUNY | WSQ GENERAL EDITOR

The WAC Writing Fellows have been a stalwart presence at York College, and it's difficult to imagine what our campus will be like in their absence. Each cohort of Writing Fellows brought enthusiasm and expertise to their collaborations with faculty, writing pedagogy workshops, work as writing tutors in the CLC, and contributions to the WAC newsletter. I am grateful to have worked with so many brilliant Writing Fellows in my 15 years at York and hope for another iteration of this program in the future. Thank you and best wishes to all of you!



JONATHAN HALL

PROFESSOR AND CHAIR | DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH | YORK COLLEGE, CUNY

I've been involved in WAC, here and at a previous campus, since 2004. One of the things that always strikes me is that WAC, perhaps more than any other initiative, needs to be re-thought and re-launched every few years. This is important even when WAC has already been institutionalized, as is the case at York—perhaps especially then. Because writing is always new, and the relation between writing and thought and knowledge is always changing. The current change from course evaluation to faculty certification, which makes sure that a professional development component is a part of every faculty member's preparation to teach a writing intensive course, is an idea that has been around in the program since even before I got here, and now we're finally getting there, thanks to the development of the online development modules developed by WAC Coordinators in the interim. Each of us makes our contribution to the program at the time we are there, and then the next person in the relay race takes the baton. Finally, I was WAC Coordinator for WAC Fellows for a number of years, and I always enjoyed working with grad students and inviting them to find ways to leave their mark on the future of the program. It's rather sad to see that particular aspect of the program come to an end, but WAC lives, at York, at CUNY, and elsewhere, and it will continue to develop and change as students and faculty and the way the world writes continues to change.

May 2025

WAC TALK

Our aim with this series is to explore what writing looks like across the disciplines and how faculty can facilitate student learning through disciplinary writing.

If you would like to be a discipline leader in a future WAC Talk, please let us know at wac@york.cuny.edu.



*April 1, 2025
WAC Talk*

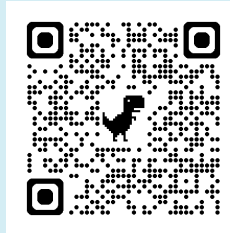
WAC RESOURCES



WAC Newsletter Archives

Hosts the past Writing Fellows-driven newsletters with thoughtful explorations on a variety of topics, ranging from AI, to student engagement, and more.

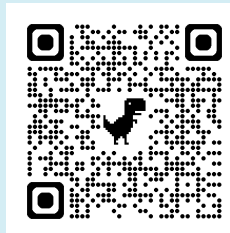
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WI Faculty Seminar

Provides foundational instructional tools to faculty who are proposing or teaching Writing Intensive (WI) courses at York College

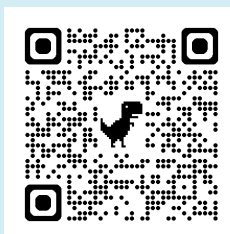
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Videos on Writing Strategies

Accommodates visual learners with videos on writing tips and techniques.

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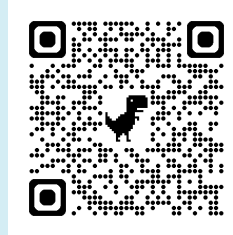
WAC RESOURCES



Infosheets

Offers help with a variety of general writing topics and discipline-specific topics.

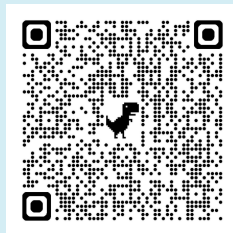
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WI Advisement

Advises students about the transferability of WI courses across CUNY campuses.

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CUNY Commons

Online forum designed for collecting, categorizing, archiving and annotating the materials related to WAC principles and pedagogy.

Scan here



Visit the Writing Across the Curriculum program on the web at york.cuny.edu/wac