That Was Then, This Is Now: WAC and Writing Centers in Pharmacy Education

By

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Then: 1998

• Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Building Interdisciplinary Partnerships was published.

• It included “Writing Centers/WAC in Pharmacy Education: A Changing Prescription” by Neal Lerner, then of Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, and Eric Hobson, then of St. Louis College of Pharmacy.
This was important because--

• This was a very optimistic look at the importance of writing and writing centers in pharmacy.

• Nominated for IWCA Article of the year.

• Set public perceptions, both within the writing community and the pharmacy community.
Writing Center’s role

- Central role in monitoring the status of the WAC program.
- Provide writing support to WE faculty
- Manage a writing awards program that includes awards to essays written in WE courses.
Writing Emphasis requirements

Students are required to take two Writing Emphasis (WE) courses.

- One is normally a General WE elective.
- One must be a Professional WE elective.
  - Course “must address at least one college Professional outcome.”
Professional Outcomes

• Pharmaceutical Care

• Systems Management

• Public Health
1998
Professional electives

Topics in Therapeutics: Primary Care
Geriatrics/Neurology/Psychiatry
Introduction to Pharmacy Entrepreneurship
Current Topics in Infectious Disease
Topics in Pharmaceutical Care: Community Service
Scientific Literature Evaluation
Geriatric Pharmacy
Introductory Clinical Clerkship
Leadership: Coaching and Counseling
Biomedical Ethics
1998
General Electives

International Politics
Science and the Media
History of the Cold War
Psychology of Personality
Abnormal Psychology
Shakespeare
Social Psychology
World Religions
Culture Studies: Japan
Basic Problems in Philosophy
Flash forward . . .
Radical change!

• Pharmacy education has moved away from technical education and training to patient counseling, research, and evidence-based patient care.

• Number of pharmacy schools has exploded:
  – in 1993, 80 schools.
Accreditation standards

• Concerned about this explosion, the American Council of Pharmacy Education [ACPE] has enacted much stricter standards.
• Requirements for coursework, for bench research, and for faculty qualifications have risen dramatically.
• Ongoing curricular change is a nightmare.
At STLCOP

- Administrative support for WE courses flagged in Pharmacy Practice division over time.

- Faculty were pulled out of WE courses to support required courses with bigger enrollments.

- Responsibility for teaching WE courses shifted to the Liberal Arts and Basic Sciences.
2009
General electives

Shakespeare
The Art of Film
World Religions
International Relations/World Politics
Psychology of Personality
Abnormal Psychology
History of Medicine and Pharmacy
History of Mental Illness
Studies in Social Psychology
Personal Financial Management
Mind, Media, and Culture
2009
Professional Electives

Biomedical Ethics
Topics in Pharmaceutical Care: Community Service
Nutrition for Pharmacists
Intercultural Communication in Health Care
Current Topics in Infectious Disease
Selected Topics in Pathophysiology
Leadership in Healthcare Organizations
Writing for Health
Advanced Health Communication
Doing Research in Public Health
Concerns emerged . . .

• How can we have a Professional elective requirement when only one of the offerings is directly based in pharmacy?

• Many faculty, especially Pharmacy Practice faculty, questioned the desirability of maintaining a WAC program, given the difficulties of maintaining it.
Three catalysts to change

1. Provisional reaccreditation in 2008. This triggered a massive curricular redesign.

2. Too few Professional WE courses to serve increased enrollment.

3. Report on the status of writing at STLCOP expressing concern about students’ lack of training in writing for a professional audience.
2012
General electives

Mind, Media, and Culture
The Art of Film
Shakespeare
World Religions
International Relations/World Politics
Psychology of Personality
Abnormal Psychology
History of Medicine and Pharmacy
Studies in Social Psychology
Personal Financial Management
Social Foundations of Religion
The Fate of Our Planet: Man’s Impact on Earth
The Science in Science Fiction
Extreme Physiology
2012
Professional Electives, Part I

Advanced Health Communication
Topics in Pharmaceutical Care: Community Service
Topics in Pharmaceutical Care: International Service Learning
Nutrition for Pharmacists
The Global Pharmacist
Intercultural Communication in Health Care
Writing for Health
Current Topics in Infectious Disease
Selected Topics in Pathophysiology
Doing Research in Public Health
2012
Professional Electives, Part II

Public Health Research: Perspective in Pharmacy
Care for the Homeless
Introduction to Drug Development
Advanced Leadership
Epidemiology and Public Health
Drug Addiction Education and Counseling
Illness, Identity and Inequality in History of US
Healthcare and Pharmacy
Pediatric Pharmacotherapy
Introduction to Pharmacy Entrepreneurship
Leadership in Healthcare Organizations
Pharmacogenomics
It ain’t over till it’s over.

- The good news is this infusion of fresh talent and new ideas has revitalized the WE curriculum.
- The bad news is learning to write for a professional audience demands a bona fide Writing in the Disciplines [WID] objective. STLCOP’s requirement still specifies “writing to learn” as the objective for all WE courses.