

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE MAJOR IN PROFESSIONAL AND
DIGITAL WRITING AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

by

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March 4-6, 2020

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recommendation #1:** Conduct recruitment to the major as a deliberate campaign.
- Recommendation #2:** Develop a full suite of campaign materials, including stories of alumni, and engage students in creating and circulating them. Create a separate webpage for the major.
- Recommendation #3:** Develop plan for courses two years out and market them; also systematically trace enrollment.
- Recommendation #4:** Consider dropping (or moving to dormant status) courses that have not been offered in the last three years; review currently offered courses to assure they align with outcomes for the major; consider what courses students are requesting (e.g., editing and publishing) as well as what courses they may need within a multi-year window.
- Recommendation #5:** Require an internship of all majors.
- Recommendation #6:** Rotate teaching of the capstone so that a wide range of faculty participate in helping students complete the major; archive capstone portfolios; align the portfolio scoring guide with program outcomes.
- Recommendation #7:** Create strong relationships on campus and off, first between FYW, the Major, and the Writing Center, which can go a long way toward strengthening the ethos of the department, and second with other units including Engineering, Education, STEM and Media Arts Departments in the College of Arts & Sciences for the purpose of developing shared & interdisciplinary curriculum as well as specifying “migration pathways” for students who may find transferring to the Major or adding a Minor attractive. Develop relationships, and possibly articulation agreements, with local community colleges.
- Recommendation # 8:** Create connections with alumni of the program and establish an Alumni Board.

INTRODUCTION

We would like to begin by thanking all the faculty, students, and administrators who met with us during our visit to Oakland University. We found a department and a set of programs at Oakland that have been remarkably successful at building a quality curriculum and establishing an intellectually coherent and productive culture among faculty and students. And it has all been done in a very short amount of time. We agree that the department and programs at Oakland, as well as the faculty there, are intellectual leaders among regional public institutions in the U.S.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The story of the Department of Writing & Rhetoric at Oakland is one of a successful startup operation. An ambitious group of faculty, with strong support from the Dean's office, has established a new major, built a coherent first-year writing program and given it a new institutional home, and has nurtured a generation of early-career faculty successfully through the next phases of their careers.

The mode of growth, as is typical of startup operations, has been opportunistic rather than rigorously systematic. Owing to both the ingenuity of the faculty and the mission of the unit to serve students, the department has also experienced growing pains, including problems with shared governance. Early on, the small cadre of founders were each empowered to be as entrepreneurial as possible to help the department thrive. But as the department grew and there were larger, programmatic goals to attend to along with more faculty joining the ranks, entrepreneurial activity on the part of individuals led to some fragmentation of effort, perceived inequities in a few spots, and an overall lack of transparency with regard to the groups' mission and goals.

This review, and the committee's request for advice regarding growing enrollment in the major, offers a chance for the department to begin a new era of systematic planning and consensus building. We hope that this moment can not only inspire growth in the number of undergraduate majors in the department, but also be a catalyst for creating new habits of shared governance with the values we heard echoed in our meetings with faculty: transparency, trust, inclusion, and shared accountability.

We think it is also important to mention that we found the institutional environment at Oakland to be favorable for the changes we recommend. Here are three reasons why:

- 1) With changes in leadership that will include a new Provost, Dean, and Department Chair for Fall 2020, now is a good time for strategic planning.
- 2) A renewed institutional focus on student success and enrollment management puts majors such as Professional & Digital Writing in a good position because it can appeal to students with liberal arts and humanities backgrounds who are also looking for clear career pathways in areas such as health care, technology, engineering & design, editing and publishing, and others. None of these pathways conflicts with the intellectual foci that PDW provides and, in fact, your current students are already quite adept and eager to make the connections between the value of a rhetorical education and their ability to contribute to career communities they care about.

3) Based on our conversations with the Dean, we see that the budget model at Oakland does not disincentivize partnerships with other units, growing minors vs. majors, or otherwise pit one college against another in a competition for resources based on a reductive model of credit hours vs. FTE. Robust partnerships and revenue sharing options are possible with no zero-sum implications.

The remainder of our report will hew closely to the requested focus from the department. But these broader items help to explain why we are optimistic that the steps we outline below can lead to success. Here is the focus prompt that the department provided:

Requested focus: We are looking for external reviewers to provide input in the following areas related to the major, in order of priority:

1. past, current, and future marketing efforts;
2. curriculum for the major and minor;
3. faculty governance within the major and department;
4. perceptions of the major from outside of the department; and
5. any other factors contributing to our major enrollment.

Generally, programs thrive with an appropriate mix of humans, materials, and partners; we used this schema ourselves in thinking about the PDW major.

HUMANS

During our visit we met with all of the department leadership, incoming and outgoing, as well as full time faculty & special lecturers, students in the major, Dean Kevin Corcoran, and Shannon Esselink in the College of Arts & Sciences Advising Office. A full itinerary is included in the appendix. We thank all of these people for their time and generosity in answering our questions.

MATERIALS

Prior to our arrival, the Department completed a detailed self-study that we were able to review, along with the current curriculum and department website. The self-study contained a detailed account of enrollment trends in the department as well as the groups' efforts, to date, to attract new majors. To help put these data into a statewide context, we also reviewed reports from the last five years of the Michigan Association of State Universities enrollment trends report. In all, we found that the cyclical decline visible in enrollment in PDW is parallel with similar declines in the College as a whole. Oakland, as an institution, fares a bit better than its regional peers in terms of enrollment, with dips in some areas compensated for by strong growth in the College of Engineering. All in all, there is no shortage of students at Oakland to recruit to PDW even when we consider the departments goals of increasing enrollment five-fold.

PARTNERS The Department has several partners, some currently silent, with whom to collaborate. The A&S Advising Office and the Writing Center, with whom we met, are two partners eager to be more active in recruiting for the major and interfacing with the Department. Students and alumni are currently silent partners; students were explicit in wanting to assist in strengthening the major, and we suspect alumni will be as well.

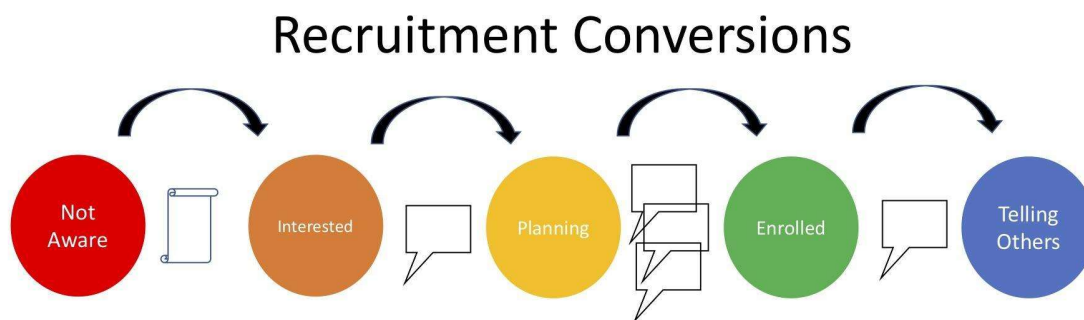
Below we explain our recommendations; while they are listed separately, many of them work together, as you will see.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Conduct Recruitment to the Major as a Deliberate Campaign

The process of recruiting new students requires several interactions with prospective students. If the department can be more deliberate and strategic about this process, we see the recruitment goals it has as being very realistic and achievable.

Here is a general idea of what the process looks like, along with a few key questions presented as a means to help faculty, staff, and students envision the process of a recruitment campaign.



- 1) How can you reach students in each category?
- 2) What are the key messages that you need to develop? What do students need to know and who should they interact with at each stage?
- 3) How can you evaluate your delivery of these messages to track conversions and revise your messages when needed?
- 4) How long is this lifecycle? What is your conversion rate? How big does your funnel need to be?

Each of the circles in the chart represents a specific and countable number of students you want to reach. The goal of the campaign is to move the students along from one circle to the next, eventually landing on the blue circle – which means these folks are not only enrolled in the major but they are also enthusiastically telling others about it as well.

What does it take to move students from one circle to the next? These are called conversions, and the activity there is a bit of communication – an advertisement, a conversation, etc.

A strategic campaign does three specific things that we recommend the department take up:

1) Set some goals for each of the circles that allow you to create effective messages aimed at the conversion you are targeting.

Example: Goal: “Invite the 3,000 students in first year writing in AY 2020/21 to follow the major’s social media account or sign up for the email newsletter.”

This activity is framed as a Red to Orange conversion, with a specific population of students, and with a measurable outcome. Out of the 3000, some number will sign up for one or the other (or both!) messaging channels. This will give you a population to reach out to for an Orange to Yellow conversion.

2) Make each bit of messaging an effective and measurable intervention; involve faculty, students, alumni, and staff in your campaign. The conversations that need to happen to convert green to blue are not all between faculty and students. They may not involve faculty that much at all, in fact! They may involve students talking with one another or with former students. But having an energized group of blue dots is gold. It will drive your enrollment goals like nothing else.

The first way to get all these groups together is a step towards making the diagram above more specific. It is, right now, very generic. A better version would reference the specific journey your students take from Red to Blue. There is a User Experience research method called “journey mapping” that you can use to discover the specific moments that constitute decision points for your students (when and where do they move from one step to another) as well as what information or guidance they need to make those steps.

Making a campaign specific to Oakland and tailored for one or more groups of students is probably your best first step. And it will necessarily involve having your faculty talk to current students, recent graduates, and prospective students too.

The groups of students we heard that we recommend putting at the center of your journey mapping work are:

- a) First-year students selecting majors
- b) Students who are in other departments that may want to change majors
- c) Students transferring from area community colleges
- d) Degree completion students who may be interested in the online major

3) Commit to the campaign as a learning experience. The first goal is to get to know the students who you wish to recruit really well. The more you know, the better your efforts to engage them will be because you won’t just be advertising, you’ll be offering to help them in ways that will really address their own goals.

Frame every recruitment activity such that you will know

- a) if it worked or not
- b) if it did not work, why it failed (so you can revise it)
- c) if it did work, you can do it again

One final word about goals. We heard faculty mention a goal of attracting 100 majors. If you do the things listed above, at the end of one academic year you likely will have learned a lot about your students and how they decide to become majors in your department. You’ll have specific numbers for each of the colored dots – how many people are in each of these points in their journey. And you’ll know something about what your department is doing well to help students make the journey. But you likely won’t have 100 majors yet.

See the first year as a learning experience, and take it seriously. Then do what rhetoric and writing people do best: revise, revise, revise, and get better. You'll have real progress when you see your prospects list grow as folks move from red to orange and orange to yellow. You'll have ways to predict turnout at information nights when you know how many "yellows" you have at any given time and what message brought them from orange to yellow. These indicators are really valuable because they will help you reach your longer term goals of more green and blue students.

Recommendation #2: Develop a full suite of campaign materials, including stories of alumni, and engage students in creating and circulating them. Create a separate webpage for the major.

So that students will understand what you are recruiting them *to*, you'll want to create a (continuing) communication plan that introduces them to the major, that continues to update it (for example, about forthcoming courses and events like student showcases), and that fosters a sense of community. To do this, you'll need to create multiple documents interfacing with each other.

- The first is a website specific to the major that has a clean visual design and is easy to navigate, a model in fact of the kind of text some of your graduates may be creating as professional writers. This site might include a welcome to the major note or letter as well as an invitation to join the PDW majors club. Students told us that it's often difficult to distinguish between the PDW major and the major in Communication, so it might also be wise to indicate how PDW is both distinctive and unique in terms of its offerings and opportunities, an appeal to potential majors as well. Another component of the website might include stories of current students and alumni: perhaps a student is engaged in a fantastic internship or provocative undergraduate research project; perhaps an alum is a professor or a health science writer. Such stories bring to life and make visible the opportunities available in the major both while students are on campus and once they have graduated. Collectively, they are the stories of the major. Not least, the website might also indicate how students and potential students can talk with a faculty member since a human touch is important for all majors: making it easy for them to contact and visit with you makes it more likely that they want to take classes with you.
- You'll also want to have multiple social media sites linked to this website, and to the departmental website, beginning with Facebook, Instagram (very popular with students right now, I'm told) and Twitter. The visual design for these sites' needs, of course, to repeat that used in the website for the major; you'll want to use tags that assure widespread circulation of content; you'll want to monitor new social media platforms to add new ones as appropriate; and you'll need to keep current social media sites active.
- You may also want to create some print documents reiterating campaign themes. Postcards and brochures, which can be shared with advisors, FYC instructors, and the PDW club, are common genre for this purpose: in addition to pointing to the web, their value, in part, is that students walk out with something material about the major in their hands, something that advisors also often appreciate.

- Another print document that you might consider is a departmental newsletter, posted on the major website, that includes information and feature items, especially on students and on faculty. It might even begin as one-pager with two sides—so a reader-friendly document--and further developed as needs suggest; it could be designed by a student intern or as a project in a class.
- Toward a kind of branding of the PDW major, you might also think about a logo and/or a slogan; Florida State’s Editing, Writing, and Media major, for instance, early on identified itself as “re-conceiv[ing] the English major for the 21st century.” Because the relationship between college degrees at Oakland and occupations they lead to is so important, the branding—and the campaign itself--may well want to incorporate attention to how the major, and certain courses in particular, map onto kinds of positions—among them, technical writer; editor and publisher; and academic.

Sharing all these materials with the advising staff and communicating with them on a regular, planned basis—once a semester, perhaps, or perhaps more often--is, of course, key: two of the students we met, for instance, became majors through the astute guidance of the advising staff.

As to creating and composing this campaign: the current officers of the PDW majors club told us that they are very interested in helping to develop this campaign; asking them to play a continuing role as well could be good for the major and good for students, who would have both a line-item on their resumes and current observe-able writing they could cite. Likewise, offering such campaign composing as an ongoing internship for a student in the major could assure that social media activity is current and alive; could provide for updating of all the accounts; and could potentially enable some user-experience research on the campaign itself.

As important, engaging with students on this effort can lead to insights critical to the design of the campaign and to recruitment more generally. The students we met with, for example, recounted how difficult it has been to locate information about Writing and Rhetoric in the college catalogue because it’s been located at the bottom of the list of majors—which of course is the kind of situation students are more sensitive to and one that can inform campaign design.

Recommendation #3: Develop plan for courses two years out and market them; also systematically trace enrollment.

As the self-study indicates, the recent history of the major is one of change designed to stabilize and increase the number of majors and to consolidate offerings given current enrollment. The enrollment in courses, however, has not been systematically tracked, nor has it informed plans for future courses, while at the same time, the department has supported the development of new “special topics” courses, especially those developed by new faculty, which can then be added to the list of course offerings. What this means is that the list of past course offerings does not provide a helpful index to future course offerings, which in turn makes it more difficult for students to plan. Students need to know which courses will be offered *and* in which semesters; without this information, planning is a frustrating exercise. Likewise, students also need to know how combinations, or assemblages, of courses, might equip them for their future plans, be they professional or academic (a point elaborated on below). Toward these ends, we recommend that the department come together to identify which courses should be offered during the next two years;

such planning will assure that required courses are available in a timely way, and will enable the department to think together about which elective and special topics courses should be offered during this time and why, especially keeping in mind course assemblages critical to students' progress to degree. And toward the end of departmental course planning, you might also consider surveying the current majors to see which courses they are interested in: survey results would not oblige you to offer specific courses, but they would usefully inform your thinking. Then, once the course offerings for the next two years are identified, staffing matters can be considered, preferably in a transparent way.

In addition, we recommend that the PDW major program begin systematically tracking enrollments in its courses, especially in elective courses, to see which ones officially-declared PDW majors are taking in order to meet the requirements of the major. The resulting data might be useful in determining which courses are perceived by students as integral to their designed major and which are not. Likewise, it would also be useful to know which of these courses are attracting minors, and whether or not any of the minors decided to major. The results of all course-enrollment tracking should be shared yearly, as an update, and every other year as part of the course planning process.

Not least, as faculty consider engage in this course planning process, it would be useful for the department to create both curricular journey maps and major prototypes, which serve the same end of helping demonstrate the coherence and progress of the major. A journey map shows chronological curricular development: the courses that a student takes over time, including courses outside the major, that contribute to a specific instantiation of a major. Major prototypes, which indicate how different assemblages of courses can contribute to different emphases within the same a major—in technical writing, for instance, or in editing and publishing, two areas in the major that some of the students we met expressed interest in—demonstrate to students what is possible.

Once developed, the two-year course plan, the curricular journey maps, and the major prototypes can be used for recruitment, shared with advisors, and circulated via the major website and social media.

Recommendation #4: Consider dropping (or moving to dormant status) courses that have not been offered in the last three years; review currently offered courses to assure they align with outcomes for the major; consider what courses students are requesting (e.g., editing and publishing) as well as what courses they may need within a multi-year window.

The students we met with spoke in unison about the difficulty they have experienced with planning their degrees: electives were not offered; classes have been cancelled; and a class on editing one student wanted was, she said, taught ordinarily by a faculty member on sabbatical and so not available. The self-study confirms the students' perceptions: "Document Design was scheduled as a Special Topics course in fall 2019 but was cancelled due to low enrollment. Other courses in this track such as WRT 3081: Science Writing have been scheduled several times but have not been able to run due to low enrollment." Other courses, including WRT 3900: Special Topics in Writing Studies, WRT 4060: Teaching College Writing, and WRT 4997: College Teaching 7 Apprenticeship, are "rarely" offered, and one listed course, WRT 4061: Writing Across the University: Language and Disciplinary Culture, has yet to be offered. Given the decline in the number of majors, it's to be expected that some courses would not be offered, but it's also so that the list of courses has not been pruned to reflect their current status.

We recommend that the course list be pruned, for two purposes: (1) so that courses that have never been offered be deleted from the list; and (2) so that courses that haven't been offered in the last five years either be successfully offered in the next year—with sufficient student enrollment to run—or deleted. We also recommend that all courses be assigned a “shelf life,” after which if they have not been successfully offered, they are deleted. In doing so, you will also want to consider courses students have requested as well as the course journey maps and major prototypes you have created; they need to be in dialogue with and inform this pruning process. We likewise recommend that you consider a *periodic* pruning process, engaged in annually, specifically keyed to the addition of new courses: as each new course is added, one course should be dropped. As enrollment in the major increases, of course, the list of courses might proportionally increase: with more students in the major, you'll have more courses to teach and likely a greater diversity of courses.

In addition, we recommend that all the courses on the revised (i.e., pruned) list described above be reviewed for alignment with outcomes for the major. Where a course does not forward one or more outcomes for the major, it should be revised to do so or offered as an elective outside the major.

Recommendation #5: Require an internship or similarly robust experiential learning experience of all majors.

The major in PDW offers an option to students: that they write a thesis or complete an internship. In each case, that experience, thesis or internship, is the focus of the capstone (about which, more below). In the self-study, the way the thesis supports student progress or achievement is not identified or explained; in the assessment data, the internship is identified as the single activity in the major forwarding students' development as citizens, which is part of Oakland University's mission. In addition, the program is now titled Professional and Digital Writing, and we were told that students more often completed internships than theses. In light of these factors, we recommend that all students majoring in PDW complete an internship, which will provide practical experience complementing their academic experience. Moreover, an internship done well is considered a high-impact practice (see <<https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/internships-high-impact-practice-some-reflections-quality>>), thus contributing both to students' intellectual development and to their progress to degree. The undergraduate thesis should not be abandoned, however: students who desire to complete an undergraduate thesis should be encouraged to do so in addition to completing the internship.

Recommendation #6: Rotate teaching of the capstone so that a wide range of faculty participate in helping students complete the major; archive capstone portfolios; align the portfolio scoring guide with program outcomes.

The capstone to the major offers a culminating experience to students; potentially, it offers the faculty the opportunity to see students in action as they complete their degrees. Currently, the capstone is individualized: “Capstone experience developed in consultation with the instructor based on student interests and professional goals. Projects can include both internal and external internship experiences, research assistantships, or thesis projects. May be repeated once in a different setting.” The capstone is also “taught by the director of the major as an online course with occasional in-person meetings”: consequently, students are not engaged with each other at this culminating moment, nor are faculty witness to their experience. In addition, because the capstone is offered every term, including summer, it has been taught by the Director of the major, largely, we

were told, for budgetary reasons. We recommend that the capstone be offered with F2f meetings in a collaborative setting—thus enacting the value of collaboration articulated in the outcomes for the major—and that the teaching of the capstone be rotated among the full-time faculty, precisely so that they can see for themselves the kinds of internships students are engaged in. Likewise, with this first-hand experience, they will be better informed for curricular planning.

We also recommend that the department re-visit the outcomes for the capstone. Currently, they include six:

Learning Outcomes Student demonstrates knowledge of the following: **Yes No**

1. History of rhetoric
2. Theories of rhetoric
3. Production processes for **print** texts
4. Production processes for **digital** texts
5. Role of writing and rhetoric in the public sphere
6. Professional and/or academic possibilities for a WRT degree

It's worth noting that while two of these speak to rhetoric—the first and the second, which of course makes sense—only one speaks to professional writing—for a degree titled Professional and Digital Writing. Likewise, the outcome itself, given the word possibilities, seems oriented to students' awareness of these rather than their preparation for them. It may be that this is a misreading of the outcome, but even in that case, clarification would be wise; and a good question is whether or not more outcomes should speak to the professional dimension of a major in professional and digital writing.

We also recommend that the capstone portfolios be archived, and for several purposes, among them developing models of successful portfolios; preserving historical programmatic information; and availability for programmatic assessment.

Recommendation #7: Create strong relationships on campus and off, first between FYW, the Major, and the Writing Center, which can go a long way toward strengthening the ethos of the department, and second with other units including Engineering, Education, STEM and Media Arts Departments in the College of Arts & Sciences for the purpose of developing shared and interdisciplinary curriculum as well as specifying “migration pathways” for students who may find transferring to the Major or adding a Minor attractive. Develop relationships, and possibly articulation agreements, with local community colleges.

During our meeting with the incoming chair Felicia Chong, we were pleased that among her highest priorities for her tenure as chair is to strengthen relationships among units on the Oakland campus and in the community. We endorse that and underscore it as a priority for boosting both the enrollment in courses that the Department offers as well as attracting more majors and minors. There are a number of relationship-building moves that we can list as specific actions for the Chair to lead but which must involve all of the faculty to be successful.

There are three centers of writing expertise on campus that are powerful influences on students, faculty and administrators, each in its own unique way: the Department, the First-Year Writing (FYW) Program, and the Writing Center. The more these three units can plan and strategize together, the better for all three.

FYW & PDW

Currently, the relationship between the Department and FYW is strong at the administrative level, but more can be done to make the parallels of the learning experience in the FYW classroom and in the major or minor clear and compelling. Students who major in PDW are drawn not only to what they learn, but how they learn: in small(er) groups, in collaboration with others, in hands-on ways, with rich feedback cultures and opportunities to engage audiences outside of class and outside the university. These qualities are present in both FYW and PDW, though they may not be obvious to students who are still making decisions about their scholarly paths.

Most of the PDW students we talked with during our visit were very clear about choosing their program of study because of a sense of mission – of wanting to contribute to something connected to the social good, while bringing their own set of talents in reading, writing, planning and designing to their respective career communities. For these folks, classrooms are practice spaces, studios, where they can develop expertise and put it into action, building knowledge as well as confidence in their own abilities.

The actions to take involve helping all of the faculty to make clear links between the way FYW is taught and the experience learners have there and the way PDW majors learn and grow over their four years. This could begin with a retreat to articulate and make explicit what these positive links are: identifying the key strengths of FYW and PDW pedagogy and how they engage learners. From that retreat could come some new ideas for messaging – perhaps revised advertising and/or events that feature students talking about these parallels? The goal would be to let more students in FYW know what learning in PDW is like and how it might help them achieve their own mission(s).

The Writing Center & The Department

The Writing Center has built a strong reputation across campus as a place that can help build student's communication and research skills. It has gained the trust of students, faculty and administrators in the STEM disciplines and provides a highly visible service for the whole campus.

It is a missed opportunity when the Department and the Writing Center are not planning and working together to project the expertise of rhetoric and writing studies across the campus through coordinated activities and messaging. We understand that the units have different institutional lines of reporting, but this too can be a strength if there is strong coordination, providing a robust set of connections to both Arts & Sciences and the Office of the Provost.

The Department & Other Colleges

Of the PDW majors we spoke to, several had transferred from other colleges. In two specific cases, these students were seeking alternative learning experiences after attempting another major and, specifically, centering written communication as one of their personal strengths. In majors like Engineering, Education, and Health Sciences, there might be scores of students like these who seek alternatives and, having been successful writers in their educational history, might find PDW a good way to keep their specific focus (e.g. a career in a health-related field) while capitalizing on talent, building expertise and skill in writing and rhetoric.

We recommend that the department engage academic advisors and undergraduate program directors from the College of Education & Human Services as well as Engineering and Computer Science, along with STEM Departments in A&S, in developing advising pathways that can become

“migration” options for students seeking alternative majors. In an era where student success is a key priority at the institutional level, all units have incentives to help students who may be struggling to find ways to become successful. Advisors have early indicator systems that help them to flag students whose performance may be lagging and to bring them in for advising. These same conversations often involve asking students to take stock of their talents and abilities and realigning these with programs where they may be better prepared to excel.

As indicated above, a priority of the department would be to have straightforward and compelling ways for advisors and faculty to recommend PDW to those students for whom it could be a good fit. This requires clear messages; an easy pathway to getting more information; and compelling stories, preferably from students and alums, of successful transitions.

The Department & Other Units in A&S

Our discussion with Dean Corcoran of the College of Arts & Sciences revealed a few partnership opportunities within the college among departments and programs that, broadly speaking, contribute to media arts scholarship and careers. The Dean mentioned three possibilities that his office was looking to remove obstacles to pursuing:

- 1) interdisciplinary programs – certificates and minors shared between one or more units – in areas with broad appeal to students
- 2) collaboratively taught courses – individual offerings with interdisciplinary foci, cross-listed and – with balanced enrollment across the two course numbers – relatively easy to run
- 3) non-credit options for generating revenue via community outreach and lifelong education – writing studies has several options that we’ve seen do well, including some the department is already offering such as non-fiction writing, and others that could be developed such as grant and proposal writing

We recommend that the incoming Director of the Major lead efforts to build relationships with the other A&S units as a key priority, beginning with the planned collaborative recruitment efforts coordinated by the Dean’s office.

Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges

We understand that there have been good relationships with several community colleges in the past and that students coming from these schools are well-represented among current PDW majors and alums. We had the chance to speak with two students who came from Macomb CC and found the program largely through their own search efforts. Both were very happy with their choice but felt that the path could be smoother to identifying PDW as a good option for continuing their studies.

Several of the area CCs have writing and rhetoric faculty among the staff who might be good contacts, including Macomb and Mott. A deliberate effort to create articulation agreements would be, we understand, supported and welcomed by Oakland’s advising office and the Office of the Dean.

Related to this effort is the opportunity to develop online courses for the major, up to and including the full experience completed online, for students seeking a degree completion option. Not all CC students will be in this category, but the ability to take some online courses that could count toward

that major might be a helpful incentive to attract CC students who wish to continue on from a 2-year degree to earn a 4-year degree.

Recommendation # 8: Create connections with alumni of the program and establish an Alumni Board.

One potential untapped resource the major can draw on is its developing network of alumni; we recommend that this network be fostered and included in courses and program events. We recommend tapping this resource by tracking alumni and creating and supporting a formal PDW alumni network. Such a network, facilitated by electronic communication and including live f2f events, can provide space and opportunities for alumni to interact with each other; members of such a group can provide advice to each other as well as contacts for new positions. In addition, members of this formal network could be invited to speak to students in different courses; "visit" with students in different courses via listserv or other electronic communication; invited to attend PDW gatherings; and invited to present at career fairs. As they participate in these events, alumni can provide a kind of informal mentoring to students and demonstrate what life as a PDW graduate looks like. In addition, alumni, as they advance in their careers, might well have internships that they could make available to PDW students. And were relationships developed with the employers of these alumni, feeder internship sites might also be created; routinizing such feeder-ship sites could also help support internships for students. Finally, an Alumni Advisory Council for the PDW major could be created; such a council could help departmental faculty and leaders understand changing professional writing composing practices (as demonstrated, for instance, in the recent Lauer and Brumberger *CCC's* article "Redefining Writing for the Responsive Workplace") and could provide response to proposals to enhance the major; and an annual meeting, even if held virtually, could provide an opportunity for alumni and current students to meet. In sum, the PDW alumni are a valuable resource that, when organized, can enhance the PDW major considerably as alumni also benefit. Not least, the recommendations listed here are not sequential: the Department could begin by creating an Alumni Board. What is important, however, is that this effort be systematically developed and implemented on behalf of the major.

KEY PRIORITIES

The recommendations here are meant to provide a roadmap for the department's renewed efforts at planning, together, for a dynamic future for PDW and for the unit as a whole. We see a few of the steps referenced here as top priorities coming into the Fall Semester 2020:

- 1) Connect with your students and alums. Bring them into the process of imagining recruitment differently. Students are your best resource for getting other students to come check out PDW. Building formal structures like the PDW Advisory Board will help ensure consistent communication with students and alums.

- 2) A department retreat to begin planning a new recruitment campaign as described in Recommendation #1. The plan should be to use what you learn from engaging students and alums as much as possible.

3) Coming into the Fall, adopt a deliberate focus on new habits of shared governance that emphasize transparency and accountability. Start this with the curriculum mapping exercises described in Recommendation #3.

4) Develop a plan to build and/or strengthen new relationships, as outlined in Recommendation #7, led by the new Chair with the help of the faculty and with regular updates on progress.

5) Create and implement communication plan, as described in Recommendation #2, so that you begin to increase enrollments by spring and fall 2021.

APPENDIX A: VISIT SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 4

- 9:22 AM Kathi's flight arrives DTW, car to campus 9:30-10:30
ODH Conf Rm Reserved 10:00 - 12:00
- 10:30 AM Crystal meet Kathi at car; provide printed schedule
Lori's office and Conf. room available if needed for quiet time, freshening up, etc.
- 11:00 AM Bill arrives; provide printed schedule; lunch in OC on campus with Crystal and Josie
- 12:00 PM Crystal VanKooten's Digital Storytelling class
 - Kathi and Bill lead discussion with WRT majors 12:35-1:07
- 1:07 PM Visit Wilson Hall classrooms, walk to library, short break
- 1:30 PM Faculty visits / office hours style
Kresge Library Rm 328 & 429 Reserved 1:15 - 2:45
- 1:30 (Kathi 328): Crystal VanKooten
1:30 (Bill 429): Megan Schoen
1:45 (Kathi): Josie Walwema
1:45 (Bill): Crystal VanKooten
2:00 (Kathi): Betsy Allan
2:00 (Bill):
2:15 (Kathi): Roger Chao
2:15 (Bill): Josie Walwema
- 2:30 PM Walk to O'Dowd Hall / Break
ODH Conf Rm Reserved 2:00 - 5:00
- 2:50 PM Meet with Jim Nugent, director of the major
- 4:00 PM Reviewers meet together, ODH Conf Room
- 4:30 PM Megan escort to dinner
- 5:00 PM Dinner with Roger Chao, Josie Walwema, and Megan Schoen,
WRT faculty (Megan will escort to dinner, Josie will escort to hotel)

Thursday, March 5

(Breakfast at hotel, please save receipt)

- 8:30 AM Josie escorts Kathi to the Dean's office
- 8:45 AM Kasia escorts Bill from O'Dowd Hall to Dean's office

9:00 AM Meet with Kevin Corcoran, Dean of College of Arts and Sciences

9:30 AM Walk to library, Kasia escorts and key check-out

9:40 AM Meet with Betsy Allan re: Embedded Writing Specialist program
Library Rm 328 & 429 Reserved 9:30 - 12:00

10:00 AM Visit Writing Center / meet with Sherry Wynn Perdue, director

10:30 AM Megan escort to 328; Break

10:45 AM Faculty visits / office hours style
Library Rm 328 & 429 Reserved 9:30 - 12:00
10:45 (Kathi): Felicita Arzu Carmichael
10:45 (Bill): Felicita Arzu Carmichael

11:45 AM Betsy escort to Wilson Hall

12:00 PM Majors pizza lunch, Wilson Hall 400

- Kathi and Bill lead discussion with WRT majors 12:15-12:45
- Gift card raffle at 12:45

12:50 PM Walk to O'Dowd / Break
ODH Conf Rm Reserved 1:00 - 4:00

1:30 PM Meet with Marshall Kitchens re: prison writing program and Meadowbrook Writing Project (O'Dowd conference room)

2:00 PM Recruitment Strategy meeting (all full time faculty) (O'Dowd conference room)

3:00 PM Meet with Felicia Chong, incoming chair (O'Dowd conference room)

3:30 PM Break

3:45 PM Meet with CAS advising, Shannon Esselink (130 O'Dowd)

4:15 PM Meet with Lori Ostergaard via Google hangouts (Lori's office)

4:45 PM Escort to dinner if needed: Felicia Chong

5:00 PM Dinner - reviewers together (Josie escort back to hotel after dinner if needed; Josie's cell 248-495-5290)

Recommended nearby restaurants:

- *Kruse and Muer*, pasta, meats, and seafood; 134 N. Adams Rd., Rochester Hills, MI
- *Bravo! Cucina Italiana*, Italian food, 286 N. Adams Rd., Rochester Hills, MI
- *Red Ox Tavern*, upscale sports bar, 3773 E. Walton Blvd, Auburn Hills, MI

Friday, March 6

(Breakfast at hotel, please save receipt)

- 8:10 AM Felicia Chong escorts Kathi to the Oakland Center, Kathi check out
- Kathi's bags can be stored in Lori's office if needed or in OC 128
- 8:30 AM Group meeting with WRT Full Time Faculty, coffee and fruit
OC Rm 128 Reserved 8:00 - 11:00
- Reviewers can ask faculty for more information about the following:
 1. past, current, and future marketing efforts;
 2. curriculum for the major and minor;
 3. faculty governance within the major and department;
 4. perceptions of the major from outside of the department; and
 5. any other factors contributing to our major enrollment.
 - Reviewers can share any feedback or findings from the review if desired at this time
- 9:30 AM Break
- 9:45 AM Perspectives Exchange: Q&A with reviewers about their work and experience (reviewers share past experiences, info about own programs, best practices for majors/minors in the field)
- 10:20 AM Kerri meets with Kathi and Bill to collect receipts
- 10:30 AM Visit concludes