# Helping the UMS Outcomes Statement Take Root

## Context

During the 2017-2018 academic year, writing program administrators (WPAs) from six UMS campuses held four face-to-face meetings -- some of us meeting each other for the very first time. Our mission was to collaboratively develop a set of shared outcomes for first-year writing across the University of Maine System and to begin campus plans for professional development for our teaching corps.. To briefly recap the process, we first engaged in a structured audit of each program’s unique circumstances, identity, and working conditions, then we identified mutual and overlapping (if often differently worded) curricular priorities, and finally through a collaborative rearticulation of these priorities into shared outcomes. These outcomes were released in our 12/15/17 report to VCAA Neely. In our second set of meetings, we developed plans to introduce these outcomes locally and to coordinate PIF-funded professional development on these outcomes for our respective teaching corps. This year of PIF-sponsored work will find the first-year writing programs on each participating campus in a position to begin piloting new assessment work based on the UMS Outcomes Statement (UMS-OS).

Finding that there is simply no substitute for face-to-face interaction for relationship-building and perspective-taking -- not to mention counteracting the isolation endemic to academic professionals -- we propose to continue this important work in AY 2018-19 with a concerted effort to help these outcomes take root on our respective campuses.

## Proposed Program Description

Accordingly, we propose to leverage the relationships we have developed and the precedent of inter-campus collaboration in 2018-2019 by:

* introducing these outcome and professional-development opportunities at new campuses within the UMS;
* holding workshops and meetings that help teachers translate these outcomes into more of their teaching practices; and
* scaling up assessments initiated in Spring 2018.

In our Fall meeting, we will establish year-long plans for implementing new assessments and determine what expertise from which WPA is most suited to the different workshops and other professional development activities on each campus. In our Spring meeting, we will check in on the progress of our campus-specific work: troubleshooting issues arising and capitalizing on unanticipated possibilities. This process will allow us to revise our plans as necessary to ensure that, by the end of the semester, the first-year composition program on each campus is working with the UMS-OS in its courses and assessments. Below, we detail the current work of the 2017-2018 program innovation program, detail the goals for the current proposal, and outline the final report to the VCAA in May 2019.

## *Ongoing, On-Campus Projects to be Completed by June, 2018*

**Augusta & Augusta-Bangor*.*** In Spring 2018, faculty & administrators across the UMA community will be invited to attend a talk from Dylan Dryer (UMO) introducing them to threshold concepts of writing studies. Full-time and adjunct faculty of writing will then have the opportunity to attend a workshop considering how articulating these concepts might inform their approach to first-year writing syllabi, assignment design, and grading. The workshops will take place on both the Augusta campus and the Bangor campus, and adjunct instructors’ participation will be supported through Program Innovation funding.

Additionally, the UMA WPAs (Jessica Winck – Bangor, Elizabeth Powers – Augusta) will revise the outcomes for ENG 100, a course for students underprepared to directly enter ENG 101. The revision will take into consideration the new UMS Outcomes, and work to align ENG 100 and ENG 101 as a scaffolded sequence of first-year writing courses. Both the professional development workshops and the outcomes revision will prepare UMA first-year writing for the next step, program assessment.

**Farmington.** In spring 2018, UMF’s WPA will lead a workshop in which first-year writing instructors explore pedagogical approaches to a learning outcome that they consider especially challenging. In June 2018 an even more in-depth, multi-day workshop will be led by the WPA for first-year writing instructors and instructors beyond the first-year writing program who want to devote extended time to revising course assignments and activities while simultaneously exploring the relation between teaching writing in our first-year writing course and in courses in the disciplines.

**Machias.** In spring 2018, UMM plans to revise the course description for ENG 101 to better align with the new UMS Outcomes Statement, and to pass the revision through the division, curriculum committee, and faculty. We will hold a development session in the spring or early summer that will be attended by Dylan Dryer and/or Ryan Dippre and full-time faculty and part-time instructors teaching ENG 101. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss how the new UMS Outcomes Statement will influence approaches to teaching ENG 101 and will present some of the threshold concepts of the Outcomes Statement and about the Writing-about-Writing curriculum that UMM has been transitioning to. We will use funds from the Program Innovation project to provide a additional compensation to part-time faculty for attending this development session. Conversations about the long-term revision of the composition requirement have commenced in the Arts & Letters Division and in conversations with administrators. We are discussing the possibility of expanding the requirement from one composition course to two specific composition courses (one in the first year, the other in the second year) and a writing-intensive course in the students’ majors. We will also collect final essays in composition classes this spring to use as data to analyze the effect that the new Outcomes Statement will have on student learning and student skills in the future. Administrators will request this data. Tessa will work on revising the one-semester WAW and Stretch WAW composition curriculums with feedback from Dylan and Ryan.

**Orono.** UMO plans to discuss and integrate the new outcomes in several stages. During Spring 2018, the composition program is holding several discussions with English 101 teachers in which they “crosswalk” the current outcomes of the *Portfolio Assessment Rubric* tothe new UMS Outcomes for First-Year Writing. . This crosswalking will help the program identify the overlaps and divergences between the two sets of outcomes, and prompt discussion about how the new aspects of the UMS-OS should be taken up in the program. Some of these new aspects of the UMS Outcomes fall outside the realm of expertise of UMOs WPA Team, so WPAs from Southern Maine (Jessica Ouellette) and Augusta (Elizabeth Powers) will be invited to campus to discuss these items with UMO instructors.

Using feedback from these discussions, a group of five instructors (a mix of adjuncts, first-year teaching assistants, and second-year teaching assistants) will—with additional compensations courtesy of a grant from the UMaine Office of Assessment—develop a revised *Portfolio Assessment Rubric* that is in line with the UMS Outcomes. The new rubric will be introduced at the start of Fall semester 2018 and drive English 101 courses and the assessments that follow.

**Presque Isle.** In Spring 2018 UMPI will hold two faculty development meeting with full time and adjunct faculty who teach Eng 100, 101, and 121. The meetings will focus on assessing how the proficiencies of our General Education Learning Outcomes (GLOs) align with the new UMS outcomes. These workshops will also provide an opportunity to examine syllabi and sample essays. We will discuss a possible pilot project--either a group portfolio assessment process or a group of three or more willing to use a common textbook and curriculum for ENG 101. Funds from UMS First Year Composition PIF grant will allow us to provide aduncts with a small additional compensation to participate in this long overdue professional development.

The goal will be to meet again in late August to discuss syllabi and assignments, and towards the end of the fall semester to entertain any changes we would like to propose for our ENG 100/101 GLOs and rubrics in light of UMS outcomes and pilot project.

**Southern Maine.** USM plans to focus on revising the current College Writing curriculum based on the new learning outcomes we developed this past year. We will do so in two stages: (1) we will look over the current college writing curriculum (including syllabi and assignments from part-time instructors) to find places of connection/disconnection in terms of the new learning outcomes; and (2) we will revise the current curriculum based on our assessment of those connections/disconnections.

In addition, USM plans to provide several professional development opportunities for instructors of College Writing. We hope to offer one or two workshops during this spring semester (Spring 2018), as well as a summer orientation in late August. Lastly, we are in the process of forming a USM writing committee to address new media writing and multimodality, as we would like to incorporate multimodal writing projects in College Writing and other upper-level writing courses.

## *Program Innovation Funds, Round 2 Goals*

**Goal 1: Expand Piloted Assessment Projects.** As the above section suggests, each campus has begun to incorporate the UMS-OS in ways that respect program culture and work within the realm of the possible.. The primary goal of this second round of funding is to cement the incorporation of these outcomes. As is always the case in institutional reform, each local roll-out will have to negotiate both expected and unanticipated complications. This team has already demonstrated that it works collegially and learns from differences; program innovation funds will provide the resources needed for us to continue helping each other address these difficulties and ensure the long-term success and implementation of the new outcomes.

**Goal 2: Increase Cooperation and Resources Among UMS Campuses.** The first year of program innovation work among the WPAs at various campuses demonstrated how effective inter-campus support can be for strengthening first-year composition programs. This inter-campus support, however, is just getting started in a number of ways: avenues of communication, pockets of expertise at various campuses, and optimal methods of cooperative work continue to be worked out among the WPAs. The additional year of support will stabilize these resources further and expand them to include the new members (UMA-Bangor; Fort Kent; USM-Lewiston) of the group.

## *Final Report, May 2019*

At the conclusion of two semesters of further work together, the writing program administrators involved in the project will be able to report on the following deliverables:

* A review of the incorporation of the outcomes at each campus;
* A review of assessment procedures developed in response to the outcomes at each campus; and
* Mechanisms for inter-campus support.

## Enrollment Demand / Enrollment Projection *(provide short- and long-term evidence*

*as appropriate of program need, e.g., demand for graduates, connection to Maine*

*workforce/economic needs, connection to new directions in a discipline)*

Just as students tend to be better off completing their degree (even with loans) than dropping out before completing it, from an institutional perspective, it’s cheaper to keep the students we have than to recruit new students to replace them. The UMS-OS is not so much intended to build new programs as to better existing ones by more linking students’ communicative abilities to success in general-education and the major. First-year composition is and will remain a fixture of US higher education: 96% of the 668 institutions that have responded so far to the *National Census on Writing* (writingcensus.swarthmore.edu) offered some form of composition in the freshman year. To be sure, while some students arrive at the university with AP, IB, or dual-enrollment credit, for the foreseeable future, most undergraduates will have this experience early in their higher-ed experience. This is to the good: in FYC students find themselves in smaller classes with teachers who know their name and regularly engage with their ideas in discussion and in writing. Such settings provide a familiar space for students while they acclimate to the new social and cognitive demands of higher education while introducing students to new forms of literacy that profoundly impact their future coursework.

While the relationship between FYC and graduation is complex, larger-scale tests have shown it to interact predictively with other general-education requirements for graduation. Most recently, Garrett *et al*. found that failing a FYC course at their institution has “nearly the same impact for a student as failing a major-related class” (2017: 96; see also Brunk-Chavez & Fredricksen 2008; Goodman & Pascarella 2006). These impacts have been further documented by Anderson et al. (2015)’s analysis of NSSE data from over 70,000 first- and fourth-year undergraduates. This dataset affirms the tremendous influence of writing on the kinds of higher-order learning, personal and social growth, and growth in practical competencies that are central to a successful undergraduate experience. Done right, first-year composition is the cornerstone of a college education that promotes such deep learning experiences through writing. If these outcomes thoroughly infuse our writing programs’ curricula, pedagogies, and assessment practices, they will improve retention by:

1. making expectations and shared priorities legible to all of FYC’s many stakeholders (including Maine high schools and our colleagues in the disciplines);
2. establishing a common framework through which we can professionally develop our teaching corps and ensure meaningful transfer from campus to campus
3. connecting FYC more specifically and concretely to students’ work in the disciplines and as public citizens
4. offering critical writing-intensive courses at the sophomore and junior levels a shared base to build on in terms of assigning and assessing writing.

## Curriculum Overview / Outline

Yet we are all aware of the “document-on-the-shelf” problem in institutional reform; shared language is necessary but insufficient for the changes we seek. With the opportunity to expand on the work of the outcomes and initial assessments, we can ensure that an aligned set of first-year writing experiences for student can truly take root across the University of Maine system. These experiences will leave students prepared for the later writing demands of the university and provide them with the language, practices, and understandings they need to engage in the kinds of deep learning that promote intellectual development and encourage persistence through to graduation.

The curriculum we are proposing has two interrelated parts: a pair of day-long, UMS WPA meetings, and campus-specific, collaborative activities aimed at implementing and assessing the outcomes at each campus.

### UMS WPA Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting** | **Topic** | **Agenda** |
| Fall 2018 Meeting  | Operationalizing 2018-2019 Implementation Plans | 1. Review of the state of UMS-OS implementation and assessment;
2. Identifying campus-specific needs for implementing Outcomes;
3. Detailing times and locations for collaborative activities (presentations, workshops, campus visits);
4. Specifying end-of-semester and end-of-year goals.
 |
| Spring 2019 Meeting  | Revising Implementation Plans | 1. Review of Fall 2018 goals;
2. Review of current progress;
3. Identify further campus-specific needs for meeting end-of-year goals.
 |

### Collaborative, Campus-Specific Activities

Each campus provides, below, the general guidelines for implementing and assessing the UMS-OS in the 2018-2019 academic year. These guidelines will be operationalized in the Fall 2018 meeting: semester-specific goals will be identified; particular guest WPAs will be invited to campuses at specific times, and workshops will be planned in accordance with academic calendars and WPA availability.

**Augusta & Augusta-Bangor.** UMA is still working to build a foundation for a discipline-informed, consistent program of assessment for first-year writing. Program Innovation funds would support this work in two ways: 1) On average, half of UMA’s first-year writing courses are taught by adjuncts. PI funding would provide additional compensations to foster contingent faculty involvement with the program assessment process, and 2) As UMA seeks to establish an annual or bi-annual assessment of the first-year writing program, PI funding would provide resources needed to bring WPAs from other campuses (for instance, Ryan Dippre, UMO) in for review and consultation as assessment findings are discussed and campus stakeholders look to close the assessment loop.

**Farmington.** Beginning in summer 2018, UMF’s annual assessments of its first-year writing course, ENG 100, will focus on learning outcomes as expressed in the UMS-OS. Because the UMS-OS is confluent with ENG 100 and UMF has a strong tradition of annual assessment of ENG 100, major changes to ENG 100 and the system of assessing it are not anticipated. Instead, meetings and workshops will enable first-year writing instructors to refine pedagogical approaches to ensure robust accomplishment of the learning outcomes and will also enable instructors in and beyond the first-year writing program to work together to create resources to support UMF students and faculty. In planning these activities, UMF’s WPA will consult with other UMS WPAs.

**Fort Kent.** Program Innovation funds will allow UMFK to support implementation of the UMS outcomes for our general education writing courses. The English faculty at UMFK will examine the modification of UMFK’s Composition SLOs to more closely align with the UMS outcomes. Funding would also allow UMFK to have Dylan Dryer and Ryan Dippre lend their specialized Rhetoric and Composition expertise to our campus by reviewing and advising us on appropriate curriculum changes that may emerge from transitioning to the UMS outcomes. WPAs at other campuses will also be consulted to assist in this process.

**Machias.** UMM has significant composition needs in the coming 2018-2019 academic year. Without an official WPA and without funds budgeted for our composition program, our campus is limited in what it can accomplish to bring our out-of-date curriculum in line with national standards and the new UMaine Outcomes Statement. Continued funding would allow us to tackle a major problem with our composition curriculum: with a student body that is regularly underprepared in their reading and writing skills, UMM only has one required general education course designated to address these important skills, and the curriculum of that one required composition course is not standardized or aligned with current Writing Studies research. Tessa Mellas has begun the process of creating a new curriculum to address these shortcomings, but continued support is needed to transition the curriculum from a one-course requirement to a two-course requirement with one course required in the first undergraduate year and the second required in the second undergraduate year, and to transition the curriculum away from the current-traditional method and toward the Writing-about-Writing method that would put us in alignment with our partner institution, UMO.

Further, we would need continued funding to conduct the research assessing the skill-level shown by students before and after the implementation of the new learning outcomes. And we would need continued funding to support the professional development of all full-time and part-time faculty teaching English composition on UMM’s campus as we transition to a new curriculum. Continued funding would also allow UMM to benefit from the continued mentorship that our program is benefitting from as Dylan Dryer and Ryan Dippre lend their specialized Rhetoric and Composition expertise to our campus by reviewing and advising us on curriculum changes.

**Orono.**  Building on the work of revising the *Portfolio Assessment Rubric*, the Orono campus will hold four to six workshops throughout the year to help instructors think through the revised rubric. Orono will invite several WPAs from other campuses to co-lead these discussions with Dylan Dryer and Ryan Dippre. In addition to the workshops held throughout the year, the Orono WPA will conduct several surveys and focus group interviews to explore the ways in which the new rubric is being taken up. Sample portfolios will be reviewed at the end of each semester by Orono’s “WPA Team” to determine the impact that the new rubric has on student writing.

**Presque Isle.** Program Innovation funds will allow UMPI to continue to support faculty development, particularly for adjuncts who teach our general education writing courses. We will hold four faculty development meetings, two in the fall and two in the spring of academic year 2018-2019. By the second meeting of the fall semester we will entertain any changes we would like to propose for our ENG 100/101 GLOs and rubrics in light of UMS outcomes and our own pilot project (determined in the Spring of 2018), which would allow us enough time to file the necessary paperwork with our Academic Program Planning and Assessment Council and the Curriculum Committee. Meetings will track progress of the pilot project and may include WPAs from other UMS campuses as appropriate.

**Southern Maine.** During the 2018-2019 academic year, USM will be piloting a new college writing course that builds on the new learning outcomes (both a regular one-semester course and a year-long stretch course). Program Innovation funds will help support these changes, particularly professional development for college writing instructors. Such PD work will include a large orientation for all college writing instructors and two-three workshops on the new curriculum (during both fall and spring semesters). In addition, USM would like to host WPAs from other universities in the UMS to share their expertise on different areas in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Curriculum changes involving these new learning outcomes will be assessed based on surveys and student portfolios.

**USM - Lewiston.** USM LAC is in the process of reconfiguring the capstone requirement for our programs, this will include adding revamped writing components to early and mid-level courses. Program Innovation funds will support faculty development opportunities as we work to incorporate writing newly configured courses. We will also use the support for planning meetings as we integrate the new learning outcomes into existing courses and as we collaborate more intentionally around the co-curricular support of writing with our Portland and Gorham campuses.

## Faculty/Personnel Involved

Geraldine Cannon Becker, Fort Kent

Joseph Becker, Fort Kent

Christine Darrohn, Farmington

Ryan Dippre, Orono

Dylan Dryer, Orono

Patricia Hager, USM-Lewiston

Deborah Hodgkins, Presque Isle

Tessa Mellas, Machias

Jessica Ouellette, Southern Maine

Elizabeth Powers, Augusta

Jessica Winck, Augusta-Bangor

## Program Assessment

The results of these meetings and activities will be measured through the use of

* Assessments across UMS campuses aligned with UMS-OS;
* The development of assignments in FYC across the system that connect with those outcomes; and
* A flexible and accessible set of shared resources among all UMS WPAs.

A summary of these results will be presented in a final report in May, 2019.

## Proposal Budgets

### Pilot Activity Budget

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name and Campus** | **Additional Compensation** | **Campus-Specific Support** |
| Geraldine Cannon Becker (Fort Kent) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Joseph Becker (Fort Kent) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. Mileage for travel to UMS meetings. |
| Christine Darrohn (Farmington) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for books and catering for professional development meetings.  |
| Ryan Dippre (Orono) | $500.00 / Semester | Summer salary equivalent to one month ($6,422); $1,000.00 for faculty development |
| Patricia Hager (USM-Lewiston) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Deborah Hodgkins (Presque Isle) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Tessa Mellas (Machias) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Jessica Ouellette (Southern Maine) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Elizabeth Powers (Augusta) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |
| Jessica Winck(Augusta - Bangor) | $500.00 / Semester | $1,000 for faculty additional compensations and catering for professional development meetings. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **2018-2019 Total** |
| Lodging | $1,500 |
| Conference Room Reservation | $200 |
| Mileage Reimbursement (.44 / mile) | $2,400 |

### Full Implementation Budget

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Campus** | **Long-Term Support** |
| Augusta | The addition of more localized instructional support at University Centers (live lecturers and tutors) would foster more engagement with first-year writing students who are not close to a campus.The support of other UMS WPAs, through, for instance, a peer conducted program review, would be valuable.  |
| Augusta-Bangor | The addition of more localized instructional support at University Centers (live lecturers and tutors) would foster more engagement with first-year writing students who are not close to a campus.The support of other UMS WPAs, through, for instance, a peer-conducted program review, would be valuable.  |
| Farmington | -- |
| Fort Kent | In the long-term, we teach several online sections of FYC, particularly for the RN-BSN program. Consequently, we will appreciate extended support to help us implement and assess the online aspects of composition courses in addition to our regular on-campus FYC sections. Of particular importance is helping to synchronize the online and face-to-face sections so that students have equivalent experiences in FYC courses. |
| Machias | The reduction of full time faculty in the English program have made us quite dependent on adjunct faculty for the delivery of First Year Composition courses. Ongoing support for professional development would be beneficial to ensuring consistency in student experience.Establishment of an official WPA title for work being done toward administration of the composition program and appropriate compensation for said work would go a long ways to ensuring that adequate time is available for that work to be done with quality and care. |
| Orono | The addition of more full-time lecturer positions would stabilize the English 101 teaching corps and provide more flexible options for our English 100/106 (“Stretch”) course.In order to expand this integrated assessment and outcome work to other writing-intensive offerings throughout the University, a tenure-line hire in Writing in the Disciplines would be valuable.  |
| Presque Isle | The reduction of full time faculty in the English program have made us quite dependent on adjunct faculty for the delivery of First Year Composition courses. Ongoing support for professional development would be beneficial to ensuring consistency in student experience. |
| Southern Maine |  |
| USM-Lewiston |  |