

KENYON WRITES

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Jenn Fishman

with Brian D. Jones and Sarah Kahwash

*This report looks back at data from **Kenyon Writes** (2011-2013) in order to look ahead—to 2020 and beyond. Featuring faculty and student perspectives on writing instruction and the overall culture of writing on campus, this report includes recommendations for not only sustaining but also strengthening the tradition of writing excellence for which Kenyon College is widely known.*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kenyon Writes was made possible by a Mellon Presidential Discretionary Grant awarded to S. Georgia Nugent in 2011. The first two years' of grant work were supported by President Nugent, Provost Nayef Samhat, and others in the Office of the Provost. Kenyon Writes was completed during the first year of Sean Decatur's presidency and overseen by Provost Joseph Klesner along with his staff. Throughout, able assistance was provided by Jami Peele, IRB Administrator and Coordinator of Faculty Grants and Fellowships; Michelle Foster, Assistant Director of Human Resources for Benefits; and Meg Galipault, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations.

Erin Krampetz and Stacey Pigg lent their knowledge and insight to the very earliest iteration of this project, which evolved through conversations with David Lynn and Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky about the inaugural Writing and Thinking Program. The Kenyon Writes Faculty Survey was designed in collaboration with members of CPC Subcommittees on Writing in 2010-11 and 2011-12, including Noah Aydin, Chris Gillen, Drew Kerkhoff, Kim McMullen, Gregory Spaid, William Suarez-Potts, and Stephen Volz. Lee Nickoson also contributed her time and expertise, while Center for Innovative Pedagogy Director Joe Murphy provided crucial intellectual and technical support.

The great dedication and generosity of the Kenyon community were nowhere more in evidence than in the time faculty and staff spent in both formal and informal conversations about Kenyon Writes, particularly in Fall 2013 when Principal Investigator Jenn Fishman was in residence. These discussions were mutually illuminating, and they enabled targeted sharing of Kenyon Writes results. In particular, Chris Gillen and Dave Rowe were ready and regular interlocutors. They were joined by Amy Blumenthal, Jim Carson, Jennifer Clarvoe, Jane Cowles, Miriam Dean-Otting and Charlie Otting, Juan DePascuale, Gene Dwyer, Kate Elkins, Kora Radella Feller, Ivonne Garcia, Jeanne Griggs, Marcella Hackbardt, Tom Hawks, Dan Laskin, Deborah Laycock, Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky, David Lynn, Ellen Mankoff, Natalie Marsh, Ted Mason, Janet McAdams, Pashmina Murthy, Jennifer Nichols, Wade Powell, Anna Duke Reach, Reggie Sanders, Gregory Spaid, Tom Stamp, Kristen Van Ausdall, and Ceslo Villegas.

Above all, the greatest thanks goes to Kenyon Writes participants: the 88 faculty and 162 students who took Kenyon Writes surveys and the twelve students who volunteered to be part of the interview cohort.

TO THE KENYON COMMUNITY:

This report contains institutionally pertinent findings from Kenyon Writes.

A two-year, descriptive study of writing at Kenyon, Kenyon Writes collected two main types of data. The first, which features most prominently in this report, is a pair of surveys: one was administered to all faculty, the other to a random sample of students enrolled at Kenyon during the 2011-12 academic year. The second main data source is a series of interviews conducted with a dozen volunteers from the Class of 2013. These students shared not only their experiences as Kenyon writers but also examples of their writing, which provide a lasting resource for the College. As an archive of texts drawn from across the curriculum as well as the extracurriculum, students' writing can be used for both faculty development and future inquiry. To that end, all Kenyon Writes materials are available (following project-specific IRB guidelines) via the Office of the Provost.

Nationally, Kenyon Writes stands out among site-based studies of college writing. Following the early example set by Alfred Kitzhaber at Dartmouth College (1960), most similar research has taken place at Masters' and PhD granting institutions, including U Mass-Amherst (1989-1993), Kettering (formerly General Motors Institute, 1989-1995), Pepperdine (1994-1998), Harvard (1999-2001), Stanford (2001-2006), Denver (2007-2010), and the University of Arizona (begun 2014). By contrast, Kenyon Writes offers a fresh, small liberal arts perspective that brings welcome diversity to scholarly conversations while fulfilling its more local, primary aim: to provide the Kenyon community with new information about writing and writing instruction at the College.

Some readers may wonder why Kenyon Writes, commissioned as an institutional study, is descriptive rather than evaluative. Why does the study not simply and straightforwardly assess Kenyon's writing curricula and related student learning? The reason is as simple as it is situational. Early conversations about this project between Principal Investigator Jenn Fishman and President S. Georgia Nugent centered on a well-known contradiction: while Kenyon has a long and storied tradition of writing excellence, the College lacks a great deal related to writing instruction, including the institutional infrastructure and resources associated with best practices for assessment.

Nationally, Kenyon Writes stands out among site-based studies of college writing [. . .] while fulfilling its more local, primary aim: to provide the Kenyon community with new information about writing and writing instruction at Kenyon.

Without clearly articulated, scaffolded learning outcomes for student writers, it is not possible to conduct effective assessment research, inquiries that measure student learning in relation not to external standards but plainly articulated institution-specific goals. Without well-demarcated writing curricula or shared, campus-wide language for naming and discussing instructional priorities and practices, it is not evident which courses, assignments, or individuals should be assessed or when assessments should take place. Likewise, without an established history of writing assessment, there is no data readily available for comparison.

Kenyon is not unique in its paradoxical relationship to writing. While other small liberal arts colleges may not have the same standout faculty and alumni writers or the living legacy of *The Kenyon Review*, they nonetheless share with Kenyon a great deal, as findings from research conducted by Jill Gladstein (Swarthmore) and Dara Regaignon (Pomona) indicate. In 2009 these two scholars surveyed 109 SLACs across the United States. (Kenyon did not participate.) Their findings demonstrate how the intimacy and community associated with residential life at many SLACs combines with small class sizes and low faculty-to-student ratios to create a context in which writing instruction can seem widespread even when curricula and campus resources for writing are not. Their research, published in *Writing Administration at Small Liberal Arts Colleges*, "helps us understand why writing instruction seems to pervade education at small colleges" even while the same institutions may lack formal writing curricula and related administrative structures. Their work also identifies recent trends, including growing interest at SLACs "not simply in committing further to writing across the curriculum but also to [placing] more explicit emphasis on writing and communication throughout students' educations" (20).

Looking back to look ahead, this report aims to help the Kenyon community know itself better with regard to writing and, as a result, set the strongest possible agenda for next steps. Thus, if readers of this report are satisfied with Kenyon Writes findings, the College might continue on its current path of largely unstructured writing instruction. By contrast, this report may motivate readers to make changes that can better enable faculty to help student writers achieve appropriate, appropriately ambitious learning goals.

Focusing on a horizon rife with possibilities, this report asks readers to consider the following questions: *Are current priorities for writing instruction satisfactory? How can faculty and administrators translate current or revised priorities into learning goals and teaching practices that can be implemented campus wide? How can the Writing Center play a more contributory or central role? Should Kenyon have designated writing leadership or administration? If so, who should fill such roles? What credentials and responsibilities should they have? Should Kenyon follow examples set by other schools, or should the College aspire to make changes that would make Kenyon an exemplar?*



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Throughout this report, these colors represent the following information:

Fine Arts:		Strongly Agree/More		Faculty
Humanities:		Agree		Students
Natural Sciences:		Neutral		
Social Sciences:		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree/Less		

All photo credits in this report belong to Jenn Fishman. The word cloud on the cover was generated via Tagxedo (www.tagxedo.com). The statements on writing included on pages i and 22-23 are students' responses to the final survey prompt: "Kenyon has a long and storied tradition of writing. Describe the primary role you believe writing plays today in the overall life and culture of the College." The statements on writing included on pages 24-25 are faculty members' responses to the same prompt.

Kenyon
Writes

ONE: DEFINITIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

That college writing defies easy definition should come as no surprise. After all, both "college" and "writing" are complex concepts. As Kathleen Yancey reminds us, "[C]ollege occurs in multiple sites—physical and virtual, informal and formal, official and just in time—that are defined explicitly or function de facto as collegiate" (4). By the same token, **definitions of writing vary widely**. The first entry in *Webster's Dictionary* defines writing as "the activity or work of writing books, poems, stories, etc.," while writing scholars Marvin Diogenes and Andrea A. Lunsford argue:

[Writing is a] technology for creating conceptual frameworks and creating, sustaining, and performing lines of thought within those frameworks, drawing from and expanding on existing conventions and genres, utilizing signs and symbols, incorporating materials drawn from multiple sources, and taking advantage of the resources of a full range of media. (144)

To get to know writing at a particular college or university is to get to know an institution's teachers and students along with courses the former offer and the writing the latter do. Kenyon Writes got to know writing at Kenyon by collecting information directly from both groups, asking questions about everything from participants' attitudes toward writing to their perceptions of what writing assignments are for and what writing instruction should prioritize.

The Kenyon Writes surveys were designed in close consultation with members of the 2010-11 and 2011-12 CPC Subcommittees on Writing, and **they reflect faculty members' abiding interests and concerns**, particularly with regard to students' preparation for writing in both lower- and upper-division courses and students' demonstration of satisfactory writing expertise across the curriculum. (See Appendix 1)

In design and scope, **Kenyon Writes also reflects the idea that college writing includes all of the writing students do during their college years**. Accordingly, the student survey posed questions about students' experiences as both academic and nonacademic writers. (See Appendix 2)

Often, visualizations of written communication portray a triangle that connects writers, readers, and the texts they share. The Kenyon Writes surveys triangulate demographic data about student writers and faculty readers with information about what students write, including the genres faculty assign and the tools and technologies students use to complete writing assignments.

FACULTY

In Spring 2011 all Kenyon faculty were invited to take the Kenyon Writes survey, and 88 individuals responded. This group represents all four of Kenyon's main academic divisions: Fine Arts (n=10), Humanities (n=39), Natural Sciences (n=22), and Social Sciences (n=16). (See Figure 1)

Faculty participants were evenly divided among men (50%) and women (49%) with one individual opting not to self-identify. They also have a range of Kenyon-based teaching experience (See Figure 2)

Notably, only 34% of survey respondents report having any formal preparation to teach writing. However, a majority (92%) report feeling prepared for the writing instruction they currently offer. (See Figure 3) These data raise questions: How do faculty become prepared, especially given the differences in their training? And how do faculty maintain preparedness over time, particularly as students, writing, and curricula change?

Fig. 1: Faculty Participants by Division

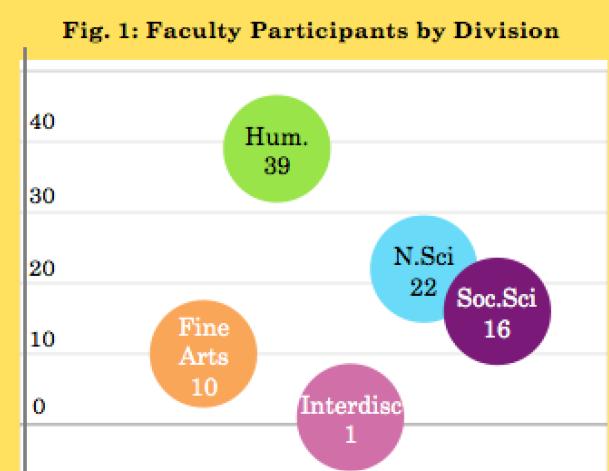


Fig 2: Faculty Participants by Years of Teaching at Kenyon

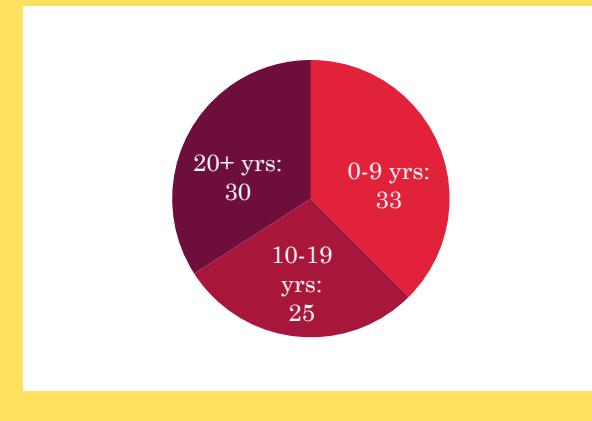
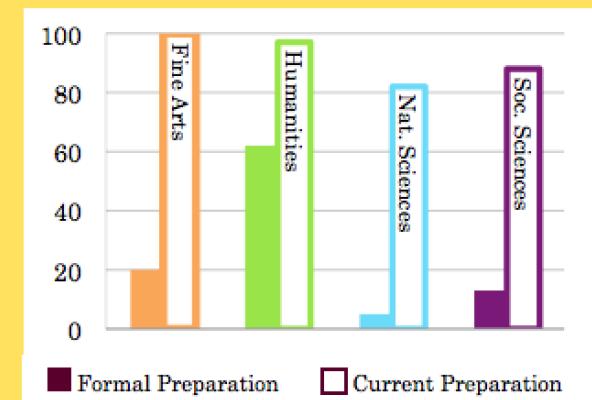


Figure 3: Faculty Preparation to Teach Writing by Division



A chi-square test of homogeneity showed no significant differences across divisions in faculty members' current preparation to teach writing. However, as this figure suggests, faculty members' formal preparation prior to arriving at Kenyon differs significantly ($p<0.0001$).

One of the guiding questions for Kenyon Writes has been: "How can this project help the Kenyon community improve writing education?" To address this question, Kenyon Writes was designed to generate information that complements everyone's "felt sense" of what works with descriptive data about what faculty teach, how and why they teach it, and whether or not they and their students are satisfied with the results.

Another guiding question has been: "How does Kenyon Writes stand to help faculty?" Members of the 2010-11 and 2011-12 CPC Subcommittees on Writing offered their responses throughout the planning stages of the project, and their work to pose the most productive questions possible is reflected in both surveys. Following data collection, faculty involved in the Writing Essentials workshop participated in ongoing conversations that inform this report. In dialogue with Kenyon Writes Principal Investigator Jenn Fishman, they discussed a variety of topics, including practical aspects of writing instruction (e.g., effective feedback strategies for struggling writers, effective grammar instruction) and curricular models (e.g., vertical writing curricula). Hopefully this report will prompt additional discussion as well as inquiry, including collaborations between faculty and students.

The Kenyon Writes question—how can this research help the Kenyon improve writing education?—was also put to Provost Joe Klesner, who responded with a single, highly specific request. He asked for analysis of survey data stratified by the number of years faculty have been teaching at Kenyon. One might expect this request to offer insight into a variety of topics, including faculty members' self-reported confidence about teaching writing. Notably, while only 34% of faculty report having any formal preparation to teach writing, 92% report feeling prepared for the writing instruction they currently offer. Figure 3 portrays this information by division, which is how information is displayed consistently throughout this report. While the differences in Figure 3 may seem striking, they are not statistically significant, nor are there statistically significant differences when the same data are stratified by the number of years respondents have been teaching.

Indeed, teaching experience appears to have limited overall impact on faculty members' survey responses, and the requested analysis yielded very few statistically significant results. Faculty with 10-19 years of experience are more likely than their counterparts to assign critiques and rough drafts, while faculty with 20 or more years of experience at Kenyon are more likely to assign public genres in lower-division courses. The same group also shows a greater propensity themselves to write for social and civic groups, even while they are less likely to assign or expect students to use Powerpoint in upper-division courses.

These differences may be intriguing, but they do not signal clear action items for targeted faculty development or other activities. Instead, the data indicate faculty respondents, regardless of how many years they have been at Kenyon, hold similar attitudes and beliefs about writing, engage in relatively uniform instructional practices, and have similar overall pedagogical priorities.

What constitutes a productive response to this information, especially if faculty development is a priority? It may be most useful to establish forums for discussing the data and asking follow-up questions: How do Kenyon faculty learn to teach writing? What motivates faculty to change their approaches? What resources do they consult for new ideas? What resources can they offer each other? What additional resources, if any, do they wish the college would provide?

STUDENTS

In Spring 2011, students were also invited to take a Kenyon Writes survey. A random sample of 240 students from each year received invitations, and the responding group ($N=162$) included majors from all four academic divisions and interdisciplinary programs. (See Figure 4) While more women (70%) than men (30%) responded, the response rate was equal across enrollment years. (See Figure 5)

In total, participating students represent 19 of 23 then-available majors with 44 self-identified double majors. (See Figure 7) Nearly one-third of students were pursuing honors and 5 were doing so in two majors. Additionally, 54 students reported having minors, and 40 reported concentrations. (See Figures 8 and 9)

Additionally, all juniors who took the survey were invited to be part of an interview subgroup. Initially 27 expressed interest, and 12 followed through, contributing 60- to 90-minute interviews and retrospective longitudinal writing portfolios.

Figure 4: Student Participants by Division

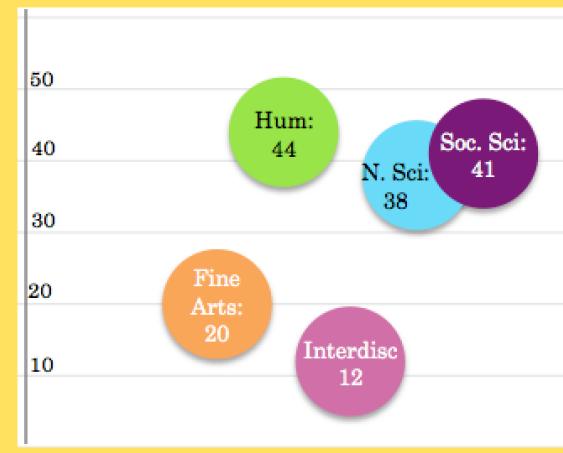
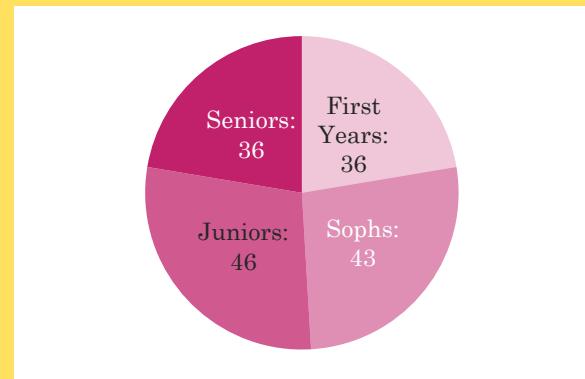


Figure 5: Student Participants by Enrollment Year



A chi-square test of homogeneity indicated no significant differences in students' participation rates across class ranks.

Figure 6: Student Interview Cohort

♀	American Studies and Sociology
♂	Anthropology
♂	Area Studies (German)
♀	Biochemistry
♀	Classics (Latin)
♀	English
♀	History
♀	Political Science
♂	Political Science
♂	Political Science
♂	Religious Studies
♀	Sociology

The Kenyon Writes interview cohort includes twelve members of the Class of 2013. By request they remain anonymous and are listed here by gender and major(s).

Kenyon faculty appear confident about their ability to teach writing. What about Kenyon students? How confident are they in their writing abilities?

Typically, students who agree to participate in writing research are confident writers. For some, confidence stems from measurable success (i.e., grades, awards). For others, confidence reflects more personal metrics developed over time and through experiences that reveal writing as a powerful means of discovery, self-discovery, and interpersonal communication. Students in the interview subgroup, for example, were highly confident, even while they were highly reflective and self-critical. By contrast, students who lack confidence of one kind or another seldom volunteer to take part in writing research.

Of course, students' confidence is not static. Research shows students at Harvard and Stanford start college highly confident—some might say overconfident—in their writing abilities. Typically, confidence drops during the first year and then rises as students gain experience, especially in their chosen area(s) of study.

In this report, the "Spotlight on Assessment" in the section on academic writing offers a snapshot of Kenyon students' confidence in their academic writing abilities.

Figure 7: Student Participants by Major
(intended and declared majors reported in aggregate)

Major	No. of Students	Major	No. of Students
Am. Studies	1	Latin	1
Anthropology	9	Latin and Greek	1
Area Studies	2	Literature (Fr., Ger., or Sp.)	1
Art History	3	Mathematics	1
Biochemistry	6	Modern Languages	9
Biology	4	Molecular Biology	3
Chemistry	2	Music	5
Classical Civilization	0	Neuroscience	7
Dance	0	Philosophy	2
Drama	8	Physics	4
Economics	7	Political Science	16
English	27	Psychology	11
Film	0	Religious Studies	1
Greek	0	Sociology	8
History	1	Studio Art	4
International Studies	8	Synoptic major	2
		Women's and Gender Studies	1

Similarly, first-year writers at Kenyon appear to be self-assured. At least participants in the Fall 2013 College Literacies Listening Tour sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English presented themselves this way. As one student explained, "I was the resident 'English major' at my high school." Another reported, "I had a very intense writing background, and I took English all four years of high school. I try to be conscious of what I'm doing, and I feel confident that I know how to write." Similarly, a third student stated, "I know that I'm a strong writer." Notably, the same student added, "I've had to work hard to get here," and she concluded: "I also expect there will be a lot to learn."

See the following section, "Attitudes and Beliefs," for a more detailed portrait of students' self-perceptions as well as their perceptions of writing at Kenyon; see also "Academic Writing" for data regarding their preparation for and satisfaction with the writing they do at Kenyon.

Figure 8: Student Participants' 2nd Majors
(intended and declared majors reported in aggregate)

Major	No. of Students
American Studies	3
Anthropology	4
Area Studies	2
Art History	1
Dance	1
Drama	1
Economics	3
English	6
International Studies	1
Literatures (Fr., Ger., Sp.)	1
Mathematics	1
Modern Languages	5
Music	2
Philosophy	1
Political Science	3
Psychology	3
Sociology	3
Women's and Gender Studies	2
Undecided	1

Figure 9: Students Participants' Minors
(intended and declared minors reported in aggregate)

Minor	No. of Students
Anthropology	8
Art History	4
Biology	4
Chinese	2
Classics	2
History	8
Italian	4
Japanese	1
Mathematics	4
Music	6
Physics	1
Religious Studies	3
Russian	2
Sociology	1
Studio Art	4

Kenyon Writes participants declared or intended to declare the following concentrations: African Diaspora Studies (2), American Studies (1), Asian Studies (1), Environmental Studies (4), IPHS (8), Islamic Civilization and Cultures (2), Law and Society (3), Neuroscience (5), Public Policy (4), Scientific Computing (2), Women's and Gender Studies (2).

GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Faculty assign a variety of genres in their lower- and upper-division courses, including *process genres*, which help students focus on particular aspects of their own writing processes (e.g., free writing, rough drafts); *school genres*, which are specific to educational settings and used mainly to assess student learning (e.g., short-answer essay exams, take-home essays); *academic genres*, which are specific to scholarly communication in academic disciplines (e.g., lab reports, literature reviews); *professional genres* common to different workplaces; and *public genres* (e.g., op-ed pieces, journalistic blogs and essays).

The most frequently assigned genres vary across lower- and upper-division courses and academic divisions. (See Figures 10 and 11a-d) In the lower division 84% of faculty ask students to write short-answer essay exams, while in the upper division, the most frequently assigned genres are related to research, including research papers (76%), proposals (75%), and speeches or oral reports (72%). These findings suggest a peda-

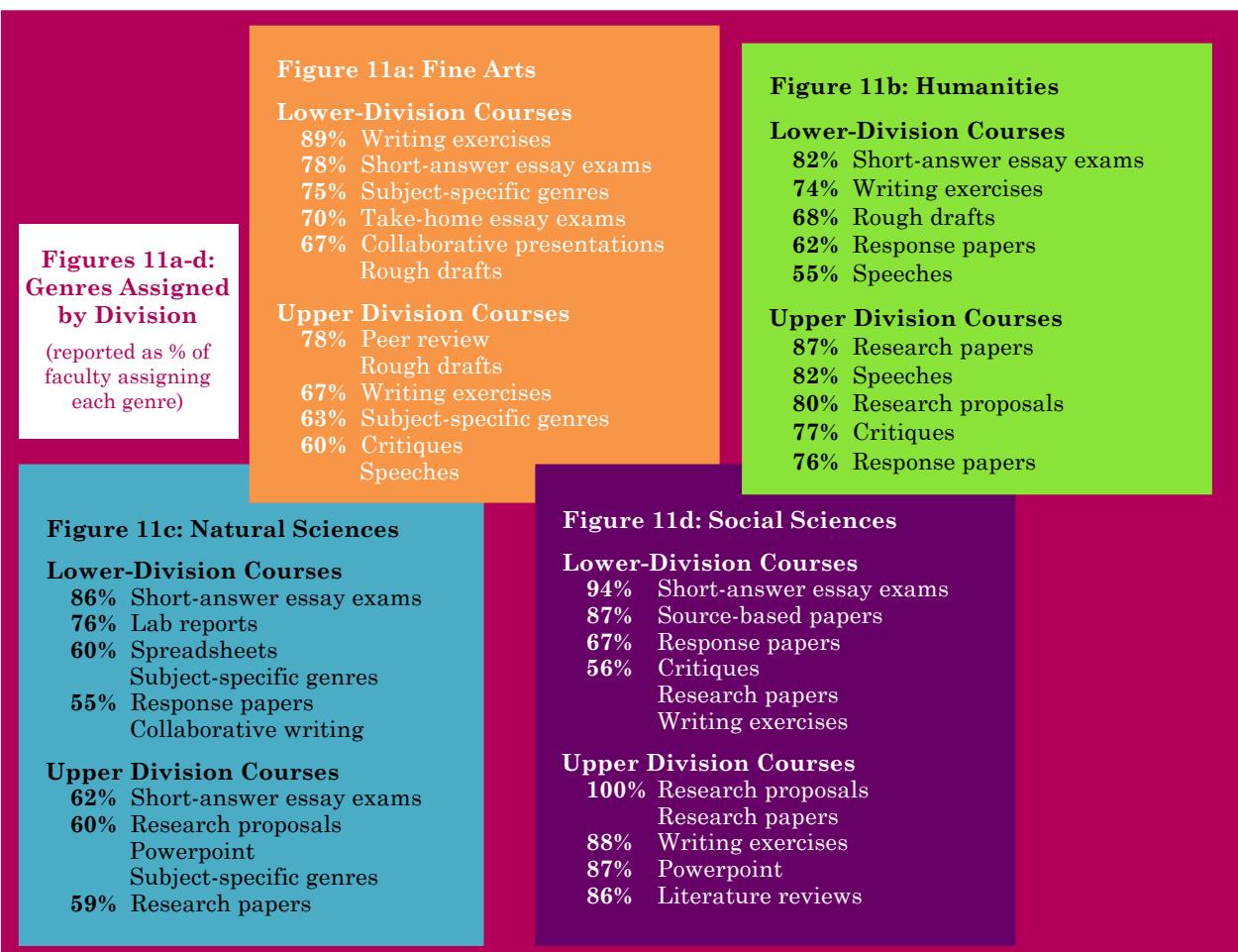
Figure 10: Genres Assigned in Lower- and Upper-Division Courses
(reported as percentage of faculty assigning each genre)

Genre	LD%	UD%	Genre	LD%	UD%
In-class free writing	41	29	Audio essay or recording	6	6
Writing exercises	67	71	Photography essay	9	7
Rough drafts	55	62	Video essay or recording	8	12
Peer-review	39	54	Annotated bibliographies	23	56
Short-answer essay exams	84	64	Literature review	26	47
Take-home essay exams	41	53	Research or project proposals	35	75
Blog or discussion board posts	15	20	Source-based papers*	48	55
Response, reaction, opinion papers	59	61	Research papers**	46	76
Journals	36	35	Lab reports	24	16
Field observations, interviews, transcripts, etc.	10	15	Mathematical proofs	9	11
Summaries of assigned materials	38	35	Spreadsheets	17	17
Critiques of assigned materials	48	63	Subject-, discipline-specific genres	53	62
Explanations (e.g., of proofs)	31	33	Professional genres (e.g., résumé)	7	14
Reflections (e.g., cover letter)	32	26	Public genres (e.g., op-ed essay)	5	1
Personal writing	26	18	Speeches, oral reports	44	72
Creative writing	28	30	Powerpoint or similar presentations	37	56
Collaborative writing	33	26	Collaborative presentations	42	58
Writing in languages o/than	12	12	Presentations in lang. o/than Eng.	11	11
—	—	—	Posters	14	8

gogical arc that makes good instructional sense. This arc moves from school genres to research genres, suggesting faculty priorities shift from teaching course content and general subject knowledge to engaging students in building and using advanced knowledge to generate and clarify their own ideas, propose research projects, synthesize multiple sources, and sustain written and oral arguments.

Since Figures 10 and 11a-sd do not display how faculty use different genres in the courses, it is useful to ask: Do faculty assign the same genres for the same or different purposes? Which genres do faculty find most effective for achieving particular pedagogical ends?

See the third section of this report, "Academic Writing," for details that complement this data and further illuminate faculty teaching practices and priorities.

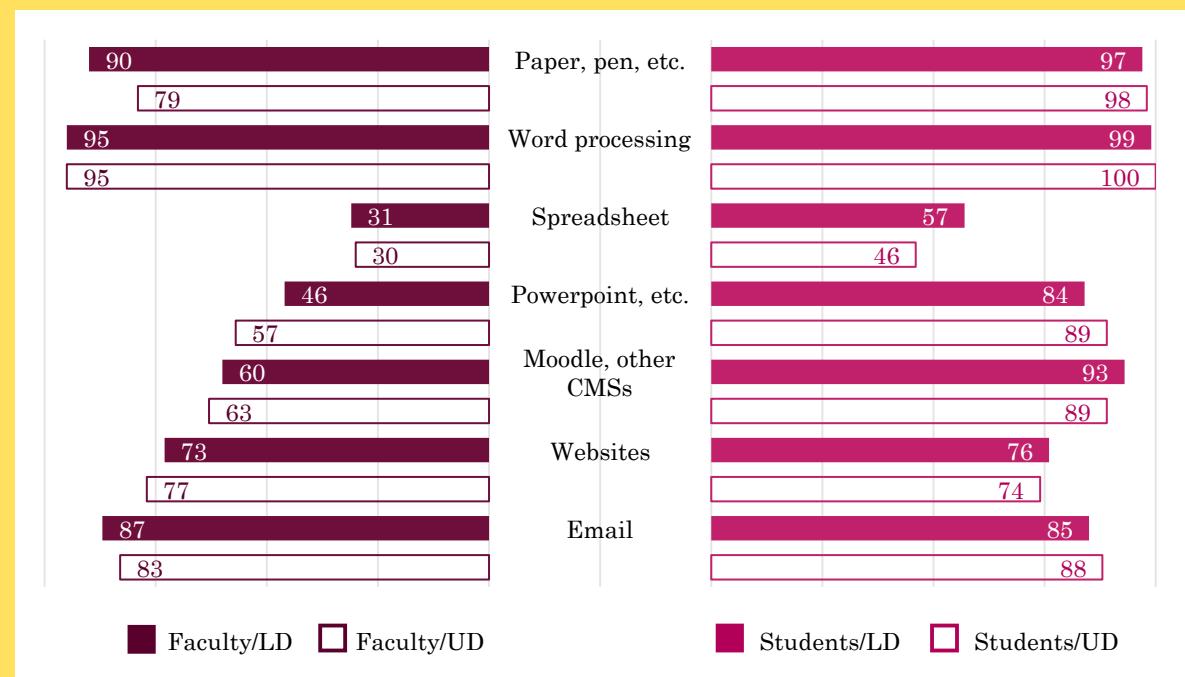


TECHNOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

It is important to remember the technologies and tools involved in writing serve more than instrumental purposes. Beyond their helpfulness and utility, they shape what writers write; they inform how writers style their ideas and arrange their arguments; and they enable writers to reach different audiences.

Perhaps not surprisingly, according to Figure 12a the technologies and tools related to handwriting and word-processing see the greatest all around use at Kenyon, followed (in the main) by technologies and tools used for transactional exchanges (e.g., emailing to make or change an appointment, up- and downloading materials to Moodle). Since it is unlikely over 70% of faculty expect students to create websites or more than 70% of students opt to do so, the data for website use signal the close integration of at least some forms of reading and writing. As literacy scholar Deborah Brandt argues in *Literacy and Learning*, there are signs all around us that the modern reading public has given way to a contemporary, participatory public that peruses print sources and surfs screens as a prelude to composing and circulating their own writing.

Figure 12a: Technologies and Tools for Academic Writing, Part 1
(reported as percentage of individuals using each item)

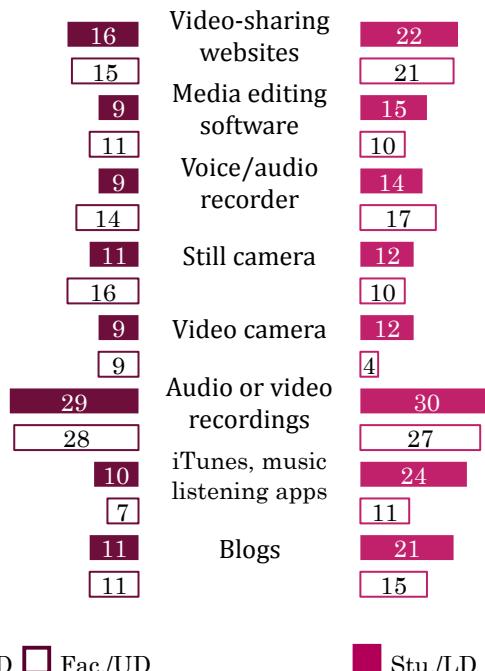


Some but not all differences between faculty expectations and student practices are statistically significant. In lower-division courses: pencil and pen, $p<0.05$; spreadsheets, Powerpoint, Moodle and CMSs, $p<0.001$. In upper-division courses, spreadsheets, $p<0.05$; pencil and pen, Powerpoint, Moodle and CMSs, $p<0.001$.

The technologies and tools involved in multimodal, multimedia composing see less use than traditional and transactional media. Historically, it is not unusual for schools to lag behind other cultural institutions in adopting new technologies, and Kenyon is not alone in its limited integration of available, still relatively new resources. Indeed, few colleges or universities meet all of the criteria Stuart Selber associates in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* with campus readiness for teaching every student, no matter his or her major(s), how available media work, how to read different types of texts, and how to write them.

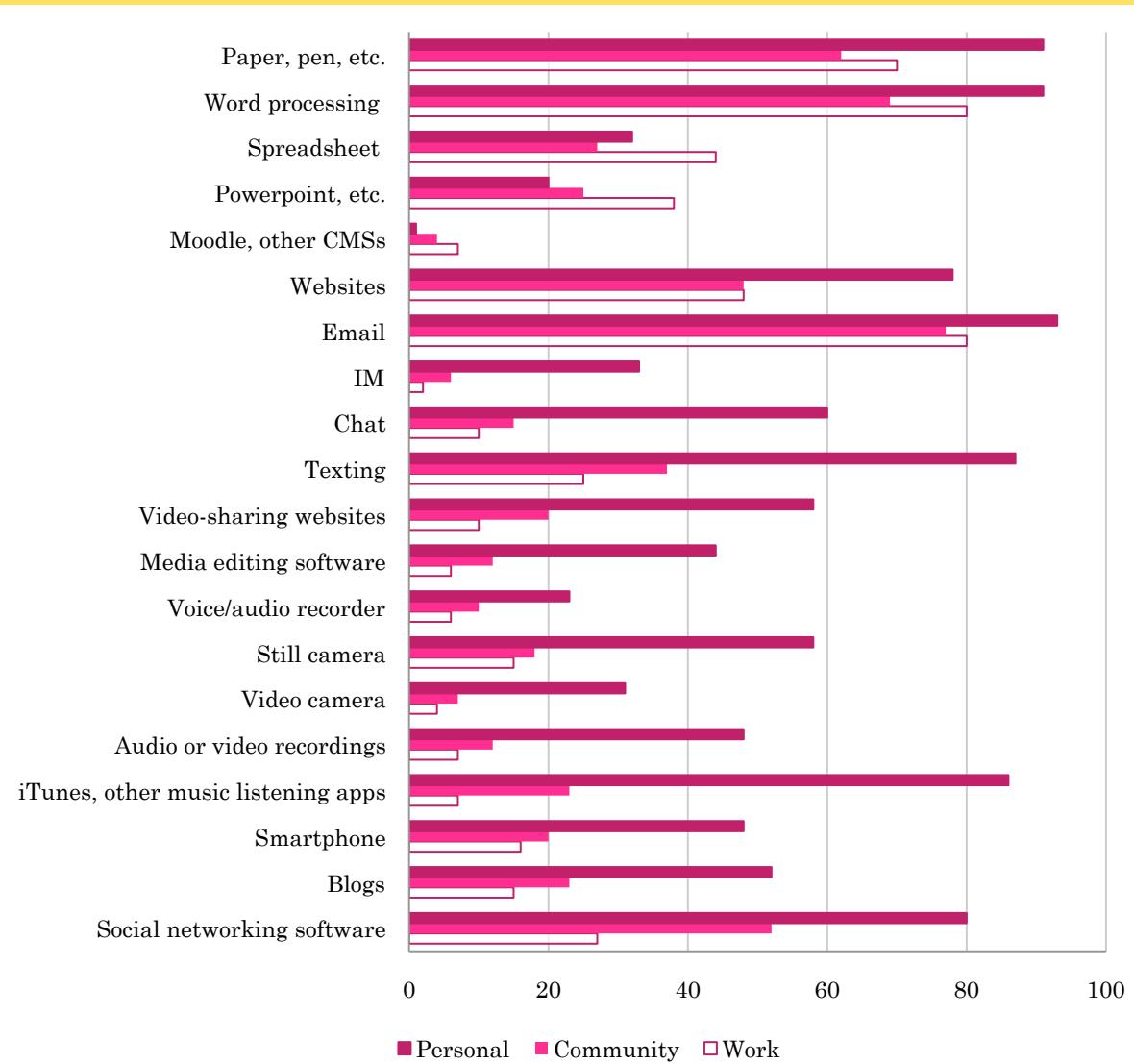
Notably, in several instances students' use of particular technologies and tools exceeds faculty requirements (i.e., Spreadsheets, Powerpoint, Moodle, blogs). Such differences indicate not only variation among Kenyon Writes participants but also differences between what faculty expect and what students know how—and prefer—to use.

Figure 12b: Technologies and Tools for Academic Writing, Part 2
(reported as percentage of individuals using each item)



Tools and technologies used by under 10% of faculty and students are not pictured. They include texting, IM, chat, social networking software, and smartphones. The difference between faculty expectations for texting (0%) and students' actual use (8% in LD courses, 7% in UD courses) is nonetheless significant: $p<0.05$, as is the difference in faculty expectations and student use of music listening apps in lower-division courses: $p<0.05$.

Figure 13: Technologies and Tools for Nonacademic Writing, Students Only
(reported as percent of students indicating use of each item in each context)



While the phrases "academic writing" and "college writing" may seem interchangeable, they are not. Academic writing is most accurately understood as a subset of college writing, which also includes personal, community, and workplace writing. This distinction matters, as does acknowledging the capaciousness of college writing and the range of related opportunities students have to learn about writing while they are in college. To be sure, formal instruction may be concentrated around coursework as well as required or special academic projects (i.e., summer science, comps, honors theses). Yet students also learn important lessons about writing through nonacademic college-time activities, and any institution interested in improving writing education would do well to conduct a truly inclusive environmental scan.

Thinking comprehensively about college writing is especially important for understanding students' experiences with available media. Today, writing expertise includes not only knowing how to use different writing technologies and tools but also knowing how to adapt as new resources become available and their use either expected or required. Scholarly communication reflects this trend even while it remains possible for successful academics to ignore or reject new means of writing. Almost everyone has a colleague who adamantly refuses to use course management software or who relies on department administrators for an increasing number of writing-related tasks. As educators, it is important for everyone should ask: How do personal media choices, made in professional settings, affect students' learning? How do they shape students' attitudes toward writing and their expectations for both college and post-graduate work?

Even when formal learning is at its most dynamic, co- and extracurricular activities can enhance writing education. (See Figure 13) Students who work during the school year and in the summers may learn new kinds of multimedia writing, while others may learn to use already familiar media in new ways. In the Kenyon Writes interview subgroup, for example, a student who worked on a national political campaign learned to encapsulate and explain his candidate's positions via social media, while another student participated in a high-stakes company presentation that gave him a new understanding of both spreadsheets and Powerpoint.

Likewise, students who are active in campus, local, and/or national organizations have unique opportunities to learn firsthand how different media can be used to build and maintain relationships, advocate on behalf of others, and move people to action. One student in the interview subgroup used Facebook not only to publicize events for her sorority but also to earn a living one summer as the social media coordinator for a small, women-run business. Another student spoke at length and with pride about the webwork he contributed to on-campus protests against outsourcing Kenyon labor to Sodexo.

Personal writing also invites students to gain experience with different media, especially communicative technologies and tools, as Figure 13 indicates. Reviewing these data it is fair to wonder whether and how students' high use of such resources actually benefits them. How does texting a great deal help someone learn to paraphrase a source or cite it correctly? What can iTunes teach student writers? The answers may be surprising. The student adept at IMglish may be primed to learn the conventions that regulate other specialized discourses, including citation systems. Students with extensive iTunes archives may have valuable, transferable skills relevant to researching and managing large amounts of information. Students with multiple social media accounts may know how to decide what medium is best for communicating different messages. And so on.

The ways faculty can put this data to use are numerous. To begin, readers of this report might ask how they can help students recognize what they do—and do not—know about the technologies and tools they already use. Faculty can also work to create academic contexts in which students are challenged and encouraged to expand their media knowledge and put it to good use.

FIVE: LOOKING AHEAD

What lies ahead for writing at Kenyon?

Would it were possible to conclude this report by suggesting Kenyon Writes data can ultimately be read as tea leaves, allowing the Kenyon community to discern in the previous pages a clear and simple answer to the question, "What lies ahead for writing at Kenyon?" Would that any writing research were imbued with such preternatural, predictive power. Instead, this report presents findings from Kenyon Writes along with scholarly commentary and questions. Meant to inform the campus community about the current state of writing and writing instruction, this document is also designed to promote discussion, particularly among faculty and administrators who will play leading roles in determining what comes next. Instead of a series of tantalizing images flashed in a crystal ball, then, the tens of figures and thousands of words above constitute a set of new, hopefully useful perspectives on the familiar landscape of writing education "on the hill."

For this final snapshot, picture Middle Path framed by the College Gates, stretching toward Old Kenyon. Writing runs similarly through the center of the College, and talk of possible changes to writing education incites responses not unlike impassioned debates about resurfacing Middle Path. In both cases, objections often sound the loudest. Replacing what *The Alumni Bulletin* has called "the sacred gravel" with "exposed aggregate" or any other material would, so the arguments go, destroy not only the trees along the path and one's experience of walking on it; making any changes would also damage the integrity of the College and its traditions. Likewise, the specter of formalizing writing instruction in any way strikes fear for the character of the College into some hearts. Indeed, the prospect of instituting a writing requirement or establishing clearly designated writing courses across the curriculum appears, at least to some, as equivalent not only to paving Middle Path but also to putting up a parking lot.

Proponents of change also argue with a strong sense of history and a great reverence for tradition, albeit very differently expressed. With regard to both Middle Path and writing, arguments in favor of new ways of doing things tend to be people-centered and explicitly responsive to the challenges involved in keeping the best elements of the past alive. How can the College keep Middle Path at its center, a 2009 faculty resolution asked, and also respond to the needs of current community members, especially students, faculty, and staff with disabilities or temporary injuries that limit their mobility? Too many of the most historic locations on campus are inaccessible, lacking elevators and other accommodations. Isn't resisting modifications that will make it more possible for everyone to participate in the life of the College

reenacting only the most exclusionary chapters of Kenyon's past? And how should resistance to changing writing education be understood, especially given perceptions and evidence of current instructional deficits? In the past, the College has accommodated rising needs with different combinations of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular resources. In the last fifteen years alone, Kenyon has made any number of concrete commitments—to the sciences, to studio art and art history, to Islamic civilizations and cultures, to Latino/a studies, to environmental studies, and more. Of course, committing or recommitting to writing education demands a distinctive initiative. Unlike most other focal points of instruction, writing is pan-disciplinary, and everyone who assigns it can—and should—be involved.

However, **liberal education has always struggled to place writing within its curricula**. Rooted in the ancient study of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (the Trivium) along with arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (the Quadrivium), liberal education began as a literate project in resoundingly oral ancient and early modern cultures. Neither eighteenth-century European reinventions nor later American incarnations gave writing an explicit intellectual or instructional home, even while the ability to write well remained a hallmark of the liberally educated individual. In practical terms, learning to read and write were, until recently, imagined as mainly a matter of mechanics. Both were skill sets that students acquired in grammar school and refined prior to their arrival at college. Throughout the formation of what is currently known as English and associated most strongly with literary studies, the development of writing instruction has followed different trajectories, which vary according to institution type (e.g., research university, community college), mission (e.g., land grant, faith-based), and demographics as well as external influences such as state and federal education policies and funding.

With few exceptions, small liberal arts colleges dedicated to liberal education have only lately begun to acknowledge writing studies as a field as well as a source of relevant information. As Jill Gladstein and Dara Regaignon summarize in *Writing Program Administration at Small Liberal Arts Colleges*, from campus to campus approaches to writing instruction remain highly varied (97). Among the 109 SLACs they surveyed, only one college had no writing requirement of any kind. By contrast, 95 schools required students to complete some kind of capstone project, senior comprehensive exam, or other similar exercise, all of which involve a substantial amount of writing and may or may not also involve an equally substantial amount of writing instruction. More than half of participating colleges also had explicit requirements on their books (e.g., first-year writing seminar, writing-intensive courses), and some but not as many either embedded writing in designated courses (e.g., writing intentional) or articulated standards or goals for writing education elsewhere (e.g., in core curricula, in individual departments). Gladstein and Regaignon also noted two significant trends: the first a shift away from general,

composition-based requirements toward requirements in writing across the curriculum; the second a movement toward greater scaffolding for writing instruction. They explain: "[N]early all of the schools in the sample are currently interested in ways to build vertically into their cultures of writing, identifying ways and places between first-year requirements and senior capstones to delivery writing instruction" (97).

It may be most accurate to describe Kenyon's current approach to writing education as utopian. On one hand, writing appears to be everywhere on campus, and faculty and students express a high degree of dedication to it. On the other hand, writing education is formally nowhere to be found. There are no writing requirements, no designated writing courses apart from creative writing, and no shared learning goals for student writers. In this context, students receive an enviable education, which includes a great deal of writing. Certainly the twelve students in the Kenyon Writes interview subgroup were among the most thoughtful student writers with whom Principal Investigator Jenn Fishman has spoken over the course of her career, which includes five years' of interviewing students in the Stanford Study of Writing. Nonetheless, Kenyon students' writing knowledge appears to be largely tacit—versions of "I never thought about that before" were a steady refrain throughout interviews—or students explain what they know in relation to specific courses and faculty rather than general theories and principles. A continuing paradox, Kenyon remains an exemplar of liberal education, and as such the College provides one of the best environments in which students might actively learn about writing in conjunction with not only thinking but also engaging others over issues of shared importance. At the same time, the Kenyon community continues to entrust writing education to the twinned poles of general culture and the highly individuated, even isolated work of those faculty who give student writers their time and attention.

The remaining pages of this report recast findings from Kenyon Writes as strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and obstacles or threats to the future of campus writing education. These details serve as a prologue to related recommendations, which outline a short series of concrete strategies for moving forward and answering the question, "What lies ahead for writing at Kenyon?"

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

It has become commonplace in higher education for departments and programs as well as whole colleges and universities to fold an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) into strategic planning. Although to date Kenyon Writes has not been incorporated into formal planning efforts, it was included in Kenyon's application for a Mellon Presidential Discretionary Grant in order "to re-examine the question of writing instruction across the college" and "to assist [Kenyon] in assessing [...] current writing programs and designing programs for the future." Elaborating on her rationale for supporting the study, President S. Georgia Nugent explained:

I have some concerns about how effectively we are teaching writing—across the curriculum and across the college career. The provost's more substantial proposal to the Foundation will focus quite specifically on this question—with an effort to develop a more robust writing center and to ensure that we infuse instruction in effective writing into our curriculum in all departments and from the freshman through the senior year. (3)

The analysis below systematically addresses these concerns with reference to data presented in previous sections of this report.

STRENGTHS

Culture. Kenyon Writes data attests to the culture of writing as one of the College's greatest strengths with regard to writing education. Notably, faculty and students were nearly unanimous in their agreement that Kenyon values writing (21).^{*} Data also indicate the College is a place where most faculty and students regard writing as important (20), and many also see themselves as writers both in general and in particular academic, personal, and social contexts (18-19).

Faculty. Although current faculty may not have had specific training in writing instruction before they arrived at Kenyon, they nonetheless teach writing with confidence (2-3). Faculty also appear to share a number of teaching priorities and pedagogical practices (32-39). This kind of common ground should stand faculty in good stead not only as a starting place for future conversations about writing but also as place to return should differences in opinion about writing priorities and instructional practices become divisive or come to represent obstacles to future planning and action.

Students. For the most part, Kenyon students see themselves as writers (18), and they believe they are prepared for college-level writing (41-45). Regardless of whether faculty agree with this self-assessment or not, students' enthusiasm for writing and for writing at Kenyon are enormously valuable assets (22-23). Indeed, evidence of students' high degree of engagement with writing indicates they are poised to do more than serve as beneficiaries of future changes to writing education. They are ready to participate in shaping conversations, just as many appear to be eager for additional opportunities both to write and to learn about writing.

* From this point forward all parenthetical references are to pages in this report unless otherwise noted.

WEAKNESSES

Inconsistencies between priorities and practices. The Kenyon Writes data indicate several standout inconsistencies between overall faculty goals for student writers and the writing instruction faculty deliver. Notably, faculty strongly agree on the importance of giving students experience in writing with different technologies and tools, and they also agree it is important to teach students that writing is a means of building individual and community relationships (30-31). However, faculty do not appear to be teaching types of writing related to these goals, especially the former (8, 10-11); nor do their reasons for assigning writing in lower- and upper-division courses square with their overarching goals for writing instruction (34, 38). Kenyon Writes findings also indicate that faculty assign a variety of genres associated with scholarship (i.e., research proposals, research paper), particularly in upper-division courses (38), yet they do not widely support overall goals typically related to scholarly writing (e.g., teaching students more than one academic discourse, using writing to produce new knowledge).

Discrepancies in faculty-student communication about writing. There is evidence faculty and students do not communicate effectively about writing. All survey respondents were asked thirteen parallel questions about "writing encouragement" or the pedagogical messages faculty send students about writing. In eight out of thirteen instances, there were statistically significant differences between faculty and student perceptions, with faculty consistently estimating they offer greater encouragement than students perceive (47). Discrepancies include encouragement related to general writing improvement as well as specific strategies for improving (i.e., examining one's own writing process, examining writing by experts and peers), transferring knowledge about writing from one context to another (i.e., applying prior knowledge to coursework, applying course knowledge to nonacademic writing), and talking about writing with both professors and peers.

The diffuse nature of writing instruction. In spite of Kenyon's strong writing culture, findings related to both lower- and upper-division writing instruction indicate a lack of clear curricular focus on writing, and they also suggest instruction may be difficult for students to identify. In general, the data do not give any indication of existing (if unofficial) courses that might qualify as writing intensive (32-33, 36-37). Instead, data show an overall lack of instruction involving many of the genres associated with best teaching practices, namely genres that help students concentrate on specific aspects of writing processes. For example, barely half of faculty report assigning rough drafts in either lower- or upper-division courses, and there is even more limited use of peer review. Since the data also show faculty who deviate from the norm, it appears likely that students' opportunities for writing-centered instruction are hyper-individualized, dependent on the particular courses and initiative they take to seek out explicit writing instruction.

Lack of support for curricular and extracurricular writing resources. The data regarding faculty opinions about the best resources for writing at Kenyon shows the weakest agreement. In fact, none of the options for writing instruction provided by the CPC Subcommittee on Writing received support from even half of respondents (50) and data regarding extracurricular writing resources (i.e., Disability Services coordinator, student-led workshops) are similar (51). Faculty members' strong preference for faculty-centered extracurricular writing resources (i.e., faculty development workshops, pre-orientation programs) constitutes an additional point of concern. Considered alongside students' limited use of facilities such as the Writing Center, these data indicate not only a lack of consensus about which resources should receive priority but also a lack of confidence in current options both in and outside the classroom.

OPPORTUNITIES

Good energy from new administrators. As Kenyon's newly inaugurated President and newly (officially) appointed Provost look ahead not only to 2020 but also to 2024 and the bicentennial anniversary of the College, there is no better time to renew Kenyon's commitment to writing and to address from the infrastructure out the weaknesses listed above. If, for example, the College had a formal articulation of learning outcomes and mechanisms for encouraging and supporting faculty to calibrate their own teaching to general goals, there would likely be fewer discrepancies between priorities and practices. If there were explicit designations for writing curricula (e.g., writing-intensive and -intentional course labels, writing requirements), college-wide opportunities would be easier to identify and assess. Establishing and overseeing these and other improvements requires a clear mandate as well as support from campus administrators, including firm stewardship, recognition of individual and collaborative effort, and dedicated resources from funds for faculty development to funds for current or new faculty to take on substantial roles and responsibilities related to writing.

Good alumni. Kenyon is fortunate to have good alumni who are good writers, and that includes not only the well-known authors whose names appear in lists of famous or notable graduates, but also the scores of former Kenyon students who are quick with pen and paper, keyboard, and any number of other writing technologies. Collectively, alumni constitute a powerful resource for writing education, and the College misses out on myriad opportunities for enrichment by not tapping alumni writers and inviting more of them regularly to share their experiences and expertise.

Good neighbors. Kenyon is located in an ideal neighborhood for writing education. Not only are peer institutions in the GLCA such as Denison and Oberlin nearby; several schools with nationally recognized writing faculty and award-winning writing centers are also within an easy drive. In Ohio alone the list includes Bowling Green State, the University of Cincinnati, Dayton University, Kent State, Miami of Ohio, and the Ohio State University. The possibilities for forming reciprocal relationships with colleagues at these institutions are numerous, and Kenyon has as much to offer as to gain. By establishing forums for information exchange, Kenyon could benefit from writing scholars' knowledge and in turn both faculty and students could contribute their own valuable insights into teaching and learning about writing in a small liberal arts college setting.

Good timing. Rhetoric scholars since the Sophists have talked about *kairos*, which can be understood as an opportune moment. Good rhetors take advantage of such moments, and the present is an excellent time for Kenyon to join scholarly and public conversations about writing education. Even more ambitiously, Kenyon has the capacity to become a leading interlocutor in such discussions. While rhetoric and composition is a growing field with robust graduate programs and high academic placement records, it is not a field with a great history of small liberal arts college education. As a result there is a great need for the kinds of models Kenyon has the capacity to provide. The college that seeded the School of Criticism and Theory, developed the AP test, and continues to sponsor *The Kenyon Review* can—and should—have a shaping influence on twenty-first-century writing education.

THREATS

The foil of tradition. An over-dedication to tradition poses a threat to the future of writing education at Kenyon. In order to assess emerging instructional needs fairly and the meet them effectively, the campus community must be willing to consider and even undertake change. This does not mean flying in the face of College customs or individual faculty members' time-tested pedagogical practices. Instead, Kenyon students, faculty, and administrators need to accept emerging needs as an invitation to discover new ways of enacting and honoring the past by engaging the present, while always keeping the future and desired outcomes in mind. Writing scholars rely on examples from the ever-changing rhetorical tradition for inspiration, and the best academic writing programs model a high degree of responsiveness, regularly revising and changing instruction in relation to students, faculty, available means, and perceived needs. For Kenyon, an institution teeming with opportunities for writing education, one of the greatest challenges may be marshalling tradition effectively.

The lack of clear infrastructure for writing. Kenyon's utopian approach to writing instruction has evolved in relation to individual departments as well as a number of nonacademic and administrative units, including the CPC Subcommittee on Writing, the Writing Essentials Workshop, the Writing Center, and the Center for Innovative Pedagogy. This network may boast high participation, but it does not offer obvious structures of leadership or pathways to action. As a result, it is not evident how new facets of writing education might be mandated, developed, and implemented, nor is it clear how Kenyon will support the ongoing work that concerted efforts at writing education require, particularly regular evaluation conducted to identify exemplars as well as areas for improvement.

The current Writing Center The lack of use and regard for the current Writing Center, Kenyon's only dedicated space for writing-focused activities, is a threat to the future of writing education, as is the perennially problematic nature of the Center and its leadership. In 2011 external reviewers called attention to "the Writing Center's low profile in the eyes of both faculty and students," noting "writing centers at similar schools have become busy, productive places where students of all writing abilities engage intellectually with the writing problems and opportunities posed by their academic work" (Assessment 1). By contrast, they described Kenyon's Center as operating on a "deficit model," understood by students and faculty alike as mainly a resource for struggling writers, and that model seems to persist. Both then and now tutors are not regular tutees, a classic litmus test for evaluating the overall health of a vibrant writing center, and the Center remains more strongly associated with "the editing and correcting of surface errors in papers instead of [. . .] real discussions of ideas, writings strategies, organization, evidence, etc." That the same issues persist, even after the current director was afforded new resources (i.e., a more central location, increased budget) suggests another component of the threat. As the external reviewers stated explicitly:

Common practice at other schools like Kenyon positions the writing center as a central component of a consciously constructed writing program, whether or not there are required writing courses and even at schools where the general level of student writing is considered to be good. The director of such centers is a member of the faculty—usually and ideally on a tenure track with full-time responsibilities split between teaching and administration—and therefore has the ability to work with faculty, lead faculty development, and be regarded as a full colleague. Generally, writing center directors have academic training and experience in implementing current composition theory. They teach courses in varieties of academic writing,

composition theory, rhetoric, and sometimes creative writing. Writing center directors are usually fully engaged in faculty development and have active research programs. (Assessment 2)

The need for change that led to the Writing Center's external review was clearly evident the previous year, when President Nugent and Provost Samhat made their separate applications to the Mellon Foundation. As President Nugent explained in her 2010 letter of application for the Presidential Discretionary Grant: "The provost's more substantial proposal to the Foundation will focus quite specifically on this question [of how effectively Kenyon is teaching writing]—with an effort to develop a more robust writing center and to ensure that we infuse instruction in effective writing into our curriculum in all departments and from the freshman through the senior year."

Now, four years later, if the College does not take a different tack in addressing ongoing problems with the writing center, making use of external reviewers' assessment and this report, this would-be resource will continue to be a detriment to the community rather than an effective center for writing education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report concludes with three recommendations. Individually and together, they offer concrete suggestions for focused, high impact actions that build on College strengths and take advantage of current opportunities while systematically and structurally addressing weaknesses and threats.

Recommendation #1: Establish college-wide learning outcomes for graduating students.

Learning outcomes will help the community define as well as more clearly and coherently carry out writing instruction. They will also provide the College with a mechanism for meaningful assessments of both teaching and learning. Moreover, learning outcomes offer a means of addressing current instructional deficits without recourse to curricular solutions that faculty have already indicated they do not endorse (i.e., writing requirements of any kind). Since learning outcomes stand to improve communication by providing a shared vocabulary for talking about writing, they can also help staff improve the extracurricular services they offer to both faculty and students.

To develop and implement learning outcomes, faculty involved in the CPC Subcommittee on Writing, the Writing Essentials Workshop, and CIP-sponsored writing pedagogy activities are natural leaders. The WPA Outcomes Statement offers a national, time-tested model, and Kenyon Writes data along with the perspectives faculty and administrators have gained through the last several years' of Mellon-sponsored activities can provide useful supporting information. In addition, *The Outcomes Book* and *The WPA Outcomes Statement—A Decade Later* are resources worth consulting.

Recommendation #2: Establish clear demarcations for writing instruction within the curriculum. Clear demarcations or labels for writing instruction, made available in the *Course Catalog* or equivalent resource, will do more than make instructional opportunities transparent to students. Clearly labeled instructional opportunities will also clarify what constitutes "writing instruction" with regard to curricula and related pedagogical practices.

This recommendation can be implemented in a variety of ways. The College could choose, for example, to establish specific kinds of writing courses across the curriculum. For example, departments and programs might offer "writing intensive" and/or "writing intentional" courses at any level, with courses in each category clearly labeled in the *Course Catalog*. Alternatively, the College could compile a list of pedagogical strategies associated with writing instruction (i.e., pre-writing, reading as academic writers, planning, revising, reviewing, publishing) and ask faculty to indicate which activities they incorporate into their courses, making that information publicly available to students prior to enrollment.

Recommendation #3: Make the Writing Center a true center for writing education on campus. As external reviewers made clear, Kenyon's Writing Center should be central to the culture of writing on campus. As such, it should be regarded by faculty and students alike as a site for everyone to engage with writing and to deepen their knowledge as well as their enthusiasm for it.

Kenyon's Writing Center cannot be improved by repeating previous efforts, and this recommendation cannot be implemented without making significant changes, starting with Writing Center leadership.

As the only campus resource dedicated solely to writing education, the Center must be led by a teacher-scholar with a career engagement in writing center work. The Director must have not only specialized education in writing studies or related areas of scholarship; he or she must also have expertise and an established professional record of accomplishment in relevant subfields, such as tutor training and undergraduate research, L2 writing education, and writing across the curriculum. It is also paramount for the individual who fulfills this role to command respect for both him or her or himself and for writing from multiple audiences, including not only faculty and students but also College writing stakeholders, writing experts, and members of the public eager to learn more about writing at Kenyon.

Given the culture of writing at Kenyon and, in particular, faculty dedication to writing, it should be feasible to act on these recommendations within the next three to five years. In doing so, learning outcomes stand not only to provide a practical, meaningful way of honing the focus of writing instruction at Kenyon. They can also act as a domino that, once in place, connects related discussions and activities. In turn, clear demarcations for writing instruction will enable faculty to build on learning outcomes, making transparent the scaffolding they create for newly concerted efforts at writing instruction. Last, by radically reinventing the Writing Center, the College will do more than curtail a weakness that has over time become a known threat. Reinventing the Writing Center will also put in place the kind of lynchpin essential to coordinating as well as sustaining other new efforts.

As suggestions for next steps, these recommendations represent meaningful ways of improving writing education at Kenyon. These recommendations are also necessarily directive, insistent on the kind of definitive and timely action warranted not only by Kenyon Writes data but also by the past three years' of on-campus community inquiry conducted by faculty under the auspices of other Mellon funding. Notably, they do not put forward strict curricular requirements. Instead, they encourage the Kenyon community to choose other, potentially more innovative and organic ways of meeting instructional needs.

Of course, there are pros and cons as well as risks and benefits to any way of proceeding. Since writing instruction is not one-size-fits-all, the only requirement implicit in these recommendations is the necessity of choosing a course of action and pursuing it.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jenn Fishman, a Kenyon alumna, is Associate Professor of English at Marquette University, where she offers undergraduate and graduate courses in rhetoric and composition. Her writing research includes Kenyon Writes (Principal Investigator), the Embodied Literacies Project (Principle Investigator), and the Stanford Study of Writing (Co-Researcher). Her related publications appear in *Composition Studies*, *Composition Forum* and *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) as well as several edited collections. Her 2005 article, "Performing Writing, Performing Literacy," received the Richard C. Braddock Award for Outstanding Article on Writing or the Teaching of Writing. Since 2010 she has co-chaired the Conference on College Composition and Communication's inaugural Committee on Undergraduate Research, and she is currently President of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition.

Brian D. Jones is an Associate Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at Kenyon College, where he has taught since 1995. His research interests are applied probability, the properties of random mathematical structures, mathematical modeling, combinatorics, and generating functions. In addition, he has a passion for mathematical writing. Complementing his academic career, Professor Jones has also worked in industry as a process development engineer and as a designer and analyst of mathematical and statistical models.

Sarah Kahwash is a member of the Kenyon Class of 2014. A double-major in Economics and Modern Languages and Literatures, her college activities ranged from grading and tutoring regularly in math to writing for *The Collegian*, *The Kenyon Observer*, and *The Huffington Post*'s online site *Her Campus*. As a senior, she also served as editor-in-chief of *The Observer*, and she was due to begin work this fall as a project manager within the wealth management analyst program at J.P. Morgan in New York City. Instead, she will spend the year in Malaysia teaching English under the auspices of the J. William Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

