

SOAR Summer Project Faculty Proposal

Title of Project:

Laying the Groundwork for a Writing-Enriched Curriculum at Moravian College

Faculty Mentor:

Crystal N. Fodrey, Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing at Moravian

Student Researcher:

Christopher Hassay, English Major

Duration of Project:

Monday, May 16 to Friday, August 5 with Chris working approximately 33.3 hours per week.

Description of Project:

Over the next decade, the Writing at Moravian committee—including both Provost Kosso and Associate Provost Traupman-Carr—would like to see Moravian College embrace a robust writing program that emphasizes a Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) in the disciplines, roughly modeled after the very successful and influential program in place at the University of Minnesota and increasingly being modified and replicated at small liberal arts colleges across the country (Hobart and William Smith, Grinnell, Colby, Stetson, and the College of St. Scholastica all have WEC programs under development). As the University of Minnesota WEC Director Pamela Flash—who will be visiting Moravian to introduce the concept of WEC to the faculty during the Fall 2016 semester—explains, “WEC provides academic departments with a way to ensure that discipline-relevant writing and writing instruction are intentionally infused into their undergraduate curricula. The centerpiece of the WEC method is the Undergraduate Writing Plan, which is iteratively generated, implemented, and assessed by faculty within each department,” faculty who would work in collaboration with me in my capacity as the Director of Writing at Moravian (WAM) and the WAM Committee. Moravian College already has a strong tradition of valuing writing to learn and writing to convey disciplinary knowledge using the writing conventions of each discipline, especially in the designated writing-intensive (W-I) course(s) in each discipline; however, the explicit connection between the mastery of discipline-relevant writing outcomes and the mastery of discipline-specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) has not yet been fully realized or articulated at Moravian. Individual professors often voice the concern that students in their majors do not transfer writing skills from their W-I course to other upper division courses, and one goal of WEC is to put mechanisms in place to address transfer through more even distribution of writing instruction throughout a major’s curriculum. Additionally, the level to which discipline-relevant writing is used to assess SLOs in various departments is currently unclear.

The goal of this SOAR project is to work with Christopher Hassay over the summer to lay the groundwork for Moravian College to move from the current one-and-done W-I model for writing in the disciplines to a WEC model as described above. That

groundwork involves gaining as much understanding as possible about **1)** what aspects of and the extent to which student-writing is valued and taught in each discipline, **2)** the expectations for student-writers and characteristics of commonly assigned genres in each discipline, and **3)** how, if at all, the products of student-writers are currently used to assess SLOs in each discipline. This information will eventually be used to help departments produce Writing Plans for each discipline/major; Writing Plans define and characterize writing in a particular discipline, name the writing abilities with which department faculty would like students to become proficient in relation to the new graduation outcomes in writing for all Moravian College students, map those abilities to the SLOs for a major, map those writing-enriched student learning outcomes to individual courses in the major, and plan for relevant writing assessment and instructional support. With the assistance of the WAM Director and committee members, members of that department would then be responsible to implement and assess that program through the use of rubrics in Canvas, Moravian's new learning management system.

Over the last year, I have met with members of every department on campus to facilitate informal discussions regarding the sites of writing instruction within each major as well as what is valued in the writing asked of students in each major, which covers most of **point 1** above. The next step is to work toward **point 2** by collecting course syllabi, assignment sheets, grading rubrics, and sample student writing from faculty in as many disciplines as possible across both schools of the college so that, during the ten weeks of SOAR, Chris and I can analyze the expectations faculty articulate to their students through assignments, begin a writing instruction curriculum mapping process for each major, and determine the genre conventions of the writing students are most often asked to produce in each discipline in order to produce discipline-specific style guides for student writers, Writing Fellows, and Writing Center tutors. (Note: I am seeking IRB exemption for this aspect of the process since we will be studying existing documents representative of normal educational practices at Moravian College.) This will use a combination of existing documents (i.e. syllabi, assignment sheets, grading rubrics, and sample student writing from previous semesters) and documents that are in the process of being written during the spring 2016 semester. We will not request samples of student writing composed during the spring 2016 semester (with students' identifying information redacted) until after the end of the spring 2016 semester. Specifically, Chris will be directly involved in the collection of writing-related materials listed above as well as in the process of discipline-specific genre analysis so that he can articulate the rhetorical situations of as well as the characteristics and rhetorical moves made in the most common genres assigned in each discipline for the discipline-specific style guides. While much scholarship has been produced about these aspects of student writing in a national context, Chris and I find it of utmost importance to understand our local context in order to assist in the organic development of Writing Plans and discipline specific style guides that speak to Moravian's values and Strategic Plan, not simply impose national standards on departments.

For Chris this is meant to increase his knowledge in the field of Writing and Rhetoric Studies to prepare him for possible future graduate study in this rapidly growing area while working one on one with a faculty-administrator to help build a new campus-wide program from the ground up. For Moravian College, this is meant to have a lasting positive impact on the teaching of Writing at Moravian as well as the training of Writing Center tutors and the Writing Fellows who will eventually serve in upper-division writing-enriched courses across the disciplines.

Roles and Responsibilities of SOAR Project Participants:

March 15 to May 15: Dr. Fodrey will complete IRB exemption paperwork and begin the process of collecting syllabi, assignment sheets, grading rubrics, and sample student writing from Moravian College faculty in departments that decide to opt in to the Writing-Enriched Curriculum program.

May 16 to June 10: Dr. Fodrey and Chris Hassay will meet twice weekly to discuss assigned readings in writing studies scholarship, including writing studies research methodology, writing across the curriculum scholarship, and key texts in writing transfer studies and rhetorical genre theory. During this time Chris will compose an annotated bibliography—primarily for a faculty audience—of these sources and draft a specific research plan for his analysis of assignment sheets and sample student writing from each represented discipline based on an agreed-upon methodology that emerges from our discussions of scholarly texts. During this time Chris will also follow up with faculty who might not have responded to Dr. Fodrey's initial request for documents.

June 11 to July 22: Chris will work independently with the documents to determine key discipline-specific trends in the writing students are asked to produce and likely compare that to scholarship on writing in the various disciplines using the earlier agreed-upon methodology. The end result of this work will be discipline-specific style guides written for a student audience.

July 23 to August 5: Dr. Fodrey and Chris will work together to draft statements to share with faculty in each discipline that has opted-in to WEC. These statements will define and characterize writing in a particular discipline in a way that works with the new graduation outcomes for writing at Moravian College. Chris and I will also plan next steps in terms of presenting and publishing about this collaboration on a national level.

How the student will be engaged in discipline-appropriate scholarly research:

Writing and Rhetoric Studies is a multi-disciplinary field, drawing from rhetorical arts; the study of context-based writing processes, genres, and instruction; and the study of the place of writing in institutions of higher education, as well as in areas such as knowledge/skills transfer, student success, and lifelong learning. This project asks the student-researcher to familiarize himself with current writing studies scholarship, especially as it relates to writing in the disciplines, rhetorical genre studies, and knowledge/skills transfer. Moravian College does not currently offer a course in writing studies (although I would like for there to be one), which is why some time will need to

be dedicated to developing Chris's knowledge base in this area. He has had previous coursework with me covering various genres of writing, and he has a strong understanding of theories of digital rhetoric and writing upon which he can build with this project.

How the work of the student will contribute to the discipline and opportunities the student will have to share his or her work with other students, faculty, and the community:

By working on this project, Chris will have the opportunity to help me contribute cutting-edge scholarship on SLAC-based development of a WEC program to the larger Writing Studies community. We may also have the opportunity to make connections between the traditional print scholarship students are asked to produce and the digital projects students are asked to produce across various disciplines, which is another major conversation in the field. However, more importantly, the analyses Chris will conduct of student writing in the disciplines will allow him to produce something tangible to assist students and faculty on this campus, which will hopefully have a lasting effect on all future Moravian College graduates' abilities to communicate in writing.

I will also encourage Chris to reflect on what he learns from this experience in his application materials for graduate school if he decides to apply.

SOAR Summer Project Student Statement of Purpose

Title of Project:

Laying the Groundwork for a Writing-Enriched Curriculum at Moravian College

Student Researcher:

Christopher Hassay, English Major, Expected Graduation Date: May 2017

Faculty Mentor:

Dr. Crystal N. Fodrey

On Campus Housing: Yes

Discussion of Rationale:

As a student studying English, I have been heavily involved with writing during my time at Moravian. Whether composing my own papers, editing the work of classmates, or working with first-year students as an FYS advisor, I have placed writing at a premium and focused on discovering the elements of composition that are most vital to students. When Dr. Fodrey approached me with the idea for a SOAR project that analyzed student-writing across campus I was immediately interested. Having taken classes with Dr. Fodrey in the past, I understand how she works as a professor, and can use this experience to collaborate effectively with her over the summer. Dr. Fodrey's course, Digital Rhetoric and Writing, emphasized the value of breaking down writing into identifiable chunks (in this case appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos) and using these chunks as guides to understand the method behind the work. After dissecting each work, I will employ qualitative research methodologies to accurately log information about the various works I am studying. Combining these two strategies, I will be able to better understand the writing of different disciplines, and contribute to Dr. Fodrey's goal of instituting a more integrated system of valuable writing across the curriculum. Furthermore, building upon my prior knowledge with new texts, scholarly work, and input from Dr. Fodrey will not only allow me a more solid base from which to work this summer, but also a more all encompassing understanding of the art of writing.

In addition to my interest in the topic, the SOAR program represents an excellent opportunity to better gauge my own future plans in academia. SOAR's combination of extended study within a particular topic, high collaboration with a faculty member on a single project, and publication possibilities derived from project findings serves as a preview to graduate studies. Having the opportunity to work in this fashion will help me better understand what will be expected if I continue my education, and also better acclimate me to the expectations of a graduate school program. Having this added perspective will help me make more informed decisions about my future as a student. In addition, this work is great preparation for a graduate program as I will already have worked under conditions that are similar in nature. Overall, having a SOAR experience will be vital in understanding how I would like my future to unfold after Moravian, and equip me with the necessary experiences to be successful in continuing my education.

The SOAR program is designed to place students into positions of study that will challenge them, and allow them to apply their learned skills towards a topic. What makes the program so valuable is collaboration with a faculty mentor towards a new discovery or an improvement of a pre-existing one. This project represents the ideal synthesis of such goals. By analyzing works from various disciplines I will gain a broader understanding of academic writing. By working alongside Dr. Fodrey I will be able to get an invaluable experience and insight that will stretch beyond the classroom, and our findings will help push Moravian towards a writing-enriched future curriculum.

Expected Outcomes

This project will contribute towards the goal of shifting Moravian away from a writing-intensive system. Through the analysis of works from various disciplines, Dr. Fodrey and I will be able to create instructional tools for each discipline to ease this transition. Also, the information we gather and develop over the summer can be used to identify what students need to do to be successful writers in their specific disciplines. This information can be transferred to both students and tutors. Both can use this information to better understand the elements of a paper faculty members in different disciplines value most highly. This information can help improve how writing is taught across Moravian's campus, and help give students a more accurate understanding of what is vital to their discipline-specific writings.

On a personal level, I will be able to research in a specific area for longer, and in more depth, than ever before. As stated above, this extended focus will help me prepare for graduate school, as well as introduce me to the study of writing beyond literature and English-related courses. The scholarship Dr. Fodrey and I will read to begin our SOAR on studies in the field of writing represents a new avenue of academic focus, and will give me context into a developing area of humanities scholarship that I can use to continue my education. Also, learning to use qualitative research methods, which are not a focus of most English courses, represents an invaluable skill I can use in the future. In conclusion, SOAR will give me valuable experience, help me improve as a Moravian student, and present me with opportunities for publication all while working on something that I find both highly valuable and extremely interesting.

SOAR Summer Project Expense Proposal

Project Title

Laying the Groundwork for a Writing-Enriched Curriculum at Moravian College

Faculty Mentor

Dr. Crystal N. Fodrey

Student

Christopher Hassay

Itemized List of Expenses

copying and printing fees	~1000 @ \$.10 per page	\$100.00
bound discipline-specific style guides	~20 @ ~\$15.00 per booklet	<u>\$300.00</u>
		\$400.00

Justification of Expenses

This is a maximum estimate of the expenses for this summer's project. First, Chris will be printing and reading writing studies scholarship. Then, he will be printing and reading student writing from various disciplines that opt-in to the Writing-Enriched Curriculum project. 1000 pages seems adequate to cover this aspect of the research. The big expense that we would like covered is for the binding of the discipline-specific style guides that Chris produces. Based on an estimate from Staples, these will cost approximately \$15.00 apiece to produce if each is about 30 pages long and includes tabs to separate sections. We would like to have enough to give two for each discipline to the Writing Center to use for trainings and tutoring sessions, one for the Director of Writing at Moravian (Crystal), and one for each department to have on hand to share with students as needed (with the assumption that departments would incur the cost to produce more of these for students in the future). Assuming that Chris creates five separate discipline-specific style guides over the summer, this would call for the creation of 20 bound booklets. If we find that we need to print more, we will find ways to save money on the binding.