

2020 Regents' Teaching Excellence

Awards for Program

**Georgia Tech's Writing and
Communication Program**

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Table of Contents

Nomination Letter	iii
Program Narrative	1
Program Culture	
Program History	
Program Mission	
Program Goals	
Program Vision	
Program Data	4
Student Course Evaluations	
Student Completion	
Evidence of Program Effectiveness	6
Innovations in Teaching and Learning	
Innovation in Faculty	
Innovation in Pedagogy	
Innovation in Curriculum	
Innovation in Assessment	
Innovations in Supporting and Strengthening Teaching and Learning	
Innovation in Partnerships	
Innovation in Professional Development	
Innovation in Technology	
Innovation in SOTL Publications	
Acknowledgements and Awards of Teaching Excellence	
Student Well-Being	



October 30, 2020

Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Members of the Board of Regents' Awards Committee:

It is my pleasure to nominate Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program (WCP) for the 2021 Regents' Teaching Excellence Award for Programs. WCP truly promotes, supports, and recognizes both excellence in teaching and excellence in service to students.

There are several features of this program that make it unique:

1. Dual mission:

The Writing and Communication Program (WCP) fosters the interplay between professional development and teaching and learning for the benefit of Georgia Tech students, the state of Georgia, the United States, and the world as a whole.

• WCP's Faculty-centered Professional Development Goal:

Prepare postdoctoral fellows /lecturers for professional success, whether in higher education or the broader workplace, by refining professional competencies, extending interests, and developing new strengths.

• WCP's Student-centered Teaching and Learning Goal:

Provide opportunities for students in composition, research, technical communication, and learning support—grounded in rhetoric, process, multimodality, collaboration, and assessment.

2. Innovative curriculum:

All the courses in the Writing and Communication Program are built on a strong foundation of rhetoric, process, multimodality collaboration, and assessment.

• *Rhetoric* helps students assess and create powerful, evidence-based arguments.

• *Process* helps students develop professional confidence and the ability to transfer their knowledge to new situations.

• *Multimodality* emphasizes creating arguments in multiple modes: written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal.

• *Collaboration* helps students work productively with others in a global culture.

• *Assessment* enables students to develop expert-like behaviors for self-assessment and peer assessment.

3. Broad impact:

The Writing and Communication Program teaches first-year writing and technical communication to approximately 5,500 students each year, thus meaningfully contributing to the success of every Georgia Tech undergraduate. Students value learning how to share their thoughts effectively both in the classroom and beyond, increasing their ability to communicate in all the media that are used in today's workplace, and getting the hands-on experience that is associated with their civic projects.

The program's 40 faculty (largely Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows) are change agents for classroom practice and active contributors to disciplinary and pedagogical scholarship. These Postdoctoral Fellows challenge pedagogical norms by partnering with campus organizations, government offices, and non-profit agencies. They choose class settings that range from Georgia Tech's living-learning communities to state prisons. They engage students in assignments that enrich their understanding of communicating with varied audiences as they work to help community partners realize their goals.

4. Nationally recognized program:

Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program has been nationally recognized for innovation. When the program received the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Media Literacy Award, it was lauded for "persistent, innovative, and imaginative application of media analysis and media composition in English studies." NCTE is the largest professional organization for English/language arts in the US.

When Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Media, and Communication was evaluated in 2015, the External Review Committee praised the Writing and Communication Program by stating that "The WCP is at the cutting edge of its discipline" (APR 2015). This statement continues to ring true, as the evidence of program effectiveness presented in the following report demonstrates.

Please give Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program strong consideration for the 2020 Regents' Teaching Excellence Award for Programs.

Sincerely,



Steven W. McLaughlin
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Program Narrative

The Writing and Communication Program (WCP) at Georgia Institute of Technology teaches first-year writing and technical communication to approximately 5,500 students each year, meaningfully contributing to the education of every Georgia Tech student. Through teaching of life-long communication, the program's 40 faculty (largely Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows) are committed both to students' academic success and to whole-person education that fosters civic engagement and prepares students for the 21st century. In addition to encouraging academic rigor, the program creates a culture of innovation promoted by extraordinary support for teaching practices that are grounded in research-based pedagogy. The WCP's culture of innovation in course design, assignment design, and active learning is documented by consistently high student evaluations, student engagement, and award-winning work from our students.

We define excellent teaching as being grounded in disciplinary knowledge and framed by historical/cultural context; emphasizing active, experiential pedagogy; and attending to the environment of student learning. We promote this excellence by supporting a culture where faculty know they are each other's best resources and by encouraging pedagogical growth assessed through teaching observations, annual reviews, productivity reports, and annual reports.

Program Culture. The WCP's commitment to excellent and innovative teaching is substantive and long-standing. In 2015, the report from the External Review Committee evaluating Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Media, and Communication (March 31, 2015) offered praise for the Writing and Communication Program's culture: "The WCP is at the cutting edge of its discipline." Since then, WCP has continued to engage students in learning that is motivating and memorable and, in doing so, stands as a leader and serves as a model for innovative teaching, learning, and professional development. In 2020, the program remains at the cutting edge, with faculty who are change agents for classroom practice and active contributors to disciplinary and pedagogical scholarship. The narrative follows briefly discuss the ways the WCP's history, mission, goals, and vision create a strong and dynamic program dedicated to excellent teaching.

Program History. A distinctive component of the Writing and Communication Program is the Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship (named after a former Georgia Tech President), which funds the faculty who teach the WCP courses. The Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship had its beginnings more than 30 years ago, in 1987, when the chair of Georgia Tech's English Department, A.D. Van Nostrand envisioned a program that embedded writing into the intellectual identity of students for the rest of their lives. Having a better educated and stable faculty would help achieve this goal; thus, Georgia Tech stopped hiring graduate students and adjuncts to teach these very important courses and, instead, created a postdoctoral program. The Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship is now a nationally recognized and highly competitive program (accepting only 8-10% of applicants) with rigorous criteria for engaging students.

Program Mission. WCP's two-part mission creates a space for pedagogical innovation and student success, with one part of our mission focusing on our responsibility to students and the other part on our responsibility to faculty.

All courses in the Writing and Communication Program are built on a strong curricular foundation of rhetoric, process, multimodality, collaboration, and assessment. *Rhetoric* helps students assess and create evidence-based arguments. *Process* guides students to develop

professional confidence and the ability to transfer their knowledge to new situations. *Multimodality* emphasizes creating arguments in multiple, WOVEN modes—that is, with written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal communication. *Collaboration* helps students work productively with others in a global culture. *Assessment* enables students to develop expert-like behaviors for self-assessment and peer assessment.

The WCP builds upon this strong curricular foundation through support of faculty teaching and an extensive program of professional development. We foster a spirit of creative collaboration in teaching, scholarship, service, and professional development through our postdoctoral seminars, mentoring, and opportunities such as team teaching and collaborating with living-learning communities. From the first day Brittain Fellows enter the program, they collaborate—both formally and informally—to create assignments, activities, assessment strategies to meet students’ interests and learning needs. The WCP also supports learning beyond the classroom, partnering with more than 20 organizations: for example, *on campus*—Georgia Tech’s Ivan Allen Archive, Office of the Arts, Office of Instructional Technology, and Capstone Design in Computer Science; and *off campus*—the Atlanta Beltline, Friends of Refugees, Grove Park Foundation, National Center for Civil and Human Rights, Transformation Alliance, and the West Atlanta Watershed. These partnerships enable faculty to create spaces for students to use problem-based learning to address community and workplace audiences with real problems in complex contexts.

Program Goals. The WCP is responsible for teaching critical courses—English 1101, English 1102, learning support, technical communication, and research writing. In teaching English 1101 and 1102, WCP fulfills a substantial portion of Georgia Tech’s General Education/Core Curriculum, which the Institute defines as “essential to the development of our extraordinary students beyond the deeply rigorous technical and applied education they receive.”

- The WCP ensures that Georgia Tech meets the Board of Regents’ Core Area A1: Communication Outcomes. Our students “demonstrate proficiency in the process of articulating and organizing rhetorical arguments in written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal modes, using concrete support and conventional language.”
- WCP faculty help students achieve two other General Education goals: (1) Learning Goal III: Critical Thinking—“Students will be able to judge factual claims and theories on the basis of evidence.” (2) Learning Goal C: Humanities, Fine Arts, and Ethics—“Students will be able to describe relationships among languages, philosophies, cultures, literature, ethics, or the arts.”

The WCP oversees additional courses that are important parts of specific degree programs and cross-curricular initiatives. For example, our technical communication courses are integral to students in the Scheller College of Business and the College of Computing; our academic writing and presentation courses help students in graduate programs in engineering; and our research proposal and thesis-writing courses are foundational to Georgia Tech’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program.

Program Vision. As part of the School of Literature, Media, and Communication, the Writing and Communication Program supports the School’s vision to “bring diverse humanistic perspectives to bear on technological invention and innovation.” Toward that effort, the WCP’s strategic plan reflects the vision of the Institute as well as the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts:

WCP Vision 1: *Create a culture of communication at Georgia Tech.* The WCP creates and maintains the conditions for students to become mature writers, presenters, and designers in their

academic, professional, and civic roles. To that end, faculty utilize digital pedagogies and leverage digital humanities methods to strengthen students' rhetorical competence, productive processes, collaboration, and multimodality—that is, WOVEN (written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal) communication—and self- and peer assessment.

WCP Vision 2: *Create a sustainable model for transformative teaching, research, and service related to writing and communication.* WCP provides a model for other programs in our attention to innovation in writing and communication teaching, scholarship, and service, especially service in relation to digital and multimodal pedagogy; to interdisciplinary and community partnerships; and to archival, client-based assignments.

WCP Vision 3: *Encourage excellence, creativity, innovation, and rigor in teaching, learning, and professional development.* WCP prioritizes the professional development of its faculty, supporting their expertise, creativity, and commitment to grow as teachers and professionals. WCP's leadership team encourages faculty to create and implement substantive, sustainable projects to improve teaching and further develop professional competencies. Faculty reap experience and rewards in a number of ways: institutional grants with pedagogical components teaching quality rewards, teaching excellence awards).

WCP Vision 4: *Embrace diversity in language and culture.* WCP recognizes the diversity of our students and the communities in which they will work and live, so we provide faculty with resources to respect linguistic and cultural differences, to improve multimodal competencies, and to help students from all backgrounds.

WCP Vision 5: *Demonstrate effective strategies for assessing and strengthening individual and programmatic practices.* WCP encourages self-assessment as well as formative and summative feedback, provides feedback for faculty about pedagogical practice and professional development, and acknowledges pedagogical and scholarly innovations and successes. Qualitative and quantitative data inform teaching practices for faculty, for curricular development, and for revision for the program.

Program Data

This data section presents student attitudes and successes, including student evaluation scores and representative comments, English 1101/ English 1102 completion rates in compliance with USG’s 30-credit rule, overall pass rates for English 1101/ English 1102 and technical communication courses, and the role of WCP in Georgia Tech’s Living Learning Communities.

Student Course Evaluations. Nineteen-thousand students took the Writing and Communication Program’s multi-section courses from 2014-2019; 53% of those chose to complete the Institute’s student evaluation form and indicated that the “overall instructor effectiveness” for these courses was high: 4.5/5.0 (see Table 1).

Large-Enrollment Writing and Communication Program Courses, 2014-19	Total students enrolled in these courses	% of students responding to evaluation form	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Clarity of instructor	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor communicates how to succeed	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor shows respect for students	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor shows enthusiasm for teaching	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor stimulates interest	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor is available to meet and correspond	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Instructor feedback is helpful	STUDENT EVALUATIONS: Overall instructor effectiveness
Core/GenEd Courses										
ENGL 1101	5,229	64.86%	4.64	4.64	4.86	4.84	4.38	4.76	4.7	4.76
ENGL 1102	11,224	64.16%	4.64	4.42	4.68	4.78	4.26	4.64	4.46	4.56
Upper-Level Courses										
LMC 3403	2,547	56.08%	4.16	4.08	4.36	4.46	3.92	4.5	4.3	4.14
LMC 3431	1,966	44.40%	4.35	4.425	4.5	4.375	3.775	4.25	4.2	4.25
LMC 3432	2,016	48.58%	4.35	4.375	3.475	4.4	4.1	4.125	4.35	4.375
LMC 4701	483	51.20%	4.76	4.84	4.92	4.82	4.54	4.66	4.66	4.7
LMC 4702	374	44.60%	4.8	4.78	4.94	4.76	4.6	4.86	4.72	4.76
2014-2019	19,000	53.41%	4.53	4.51	4.53	4.63	4.225	4.54	4.48	4.51

Table 1: Student evaluations of the Writing and Communication Program’s multi-section courses, 2014-2019. Source: Georgia Tech Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

Student Completion. The Writing and Communication Program encourages students to complete English 1101/English 1102 during their first year (usually within their first 30 credits). The Office of Institutional Research and Planning reports that 93% of students complete English 1101 and English 1102 by the end of the spring semester during their first year (see Table 2).

2018-19	Number of first-year students)	Students completing both ENGL 1101/ENGL 1102 by end of their spring semester)	% of students completing ENGL 1101/ ENGL 1102 by end of their spring semester
ENGL 1101/1102	3135	2904	93%

Table 2: Completion rates for students enrolled in ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102. Source: Georgia Tech Office of Institutional Research and Planning. [NB: For first-year students entering the USG system Fall 2012, students who have earned 30 hours but have not completed Area A1 (Communication Skills) must enroll in the next course necessary to make progress toward completing this Area in every semester in which they take classes. See USG Academic Affairs Handbook 2.4.4.]

Evidence of Program Effectiveness

The evidence for the success of the Writing and Communication Program is broad and deep, extending over many years. This section highlights 10 areas that deserve special attention, focusing first on areas related to *innovations in teaching and learning* and then on areas related to *innovations in supporting and strengthening teaching and learning*.

Innovations in Teaching and Learning. Four areas directly illustrate WCP's teaching and its role in student learning (detailed below with selected examples).

- **Faculty.** The Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows and lecturers who teach WCP courses provide disciplinary expertise, pedagogical experience, concern for student growth and development, engagement with technology, and scholarly commitment.
- **Pedagogy.** The faculty draw on long-tested pedagogical strategies (e.g., mini-lectures, small group activity, team projects, formative/summative assessment) as well as recent work in active learning, hybrid teaching, digital pedagogy, and digital humanities.
- **Curriculum.** WCP's nationally recognized WOVEN curriculum (multimodal—that is, written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal communication) reflects the challenges and critical importance of communicating in the 21st century.
- **Assessment.** WCP uses consistent criteria for both formative and summative assessment on five levels: self, peer, assignment/project, client, and program.

Innovations in Supporting and Strengthening Teaching and Learning. Six areas directly illustrate the WCP's support for teaching and learning (detailed below with selected examples).

- **Partnerships.** WCP works with more than 20 on-campus and off-campus partners in offering a range of assignments with real audiences, actual problems, and complex contexts.
- **Professional Development.** Faculty are professionally supported in expanding their pedagogical excellence.
- **Technology.** Faculty see technology both as a tool to aid teaching and learning and an object of study.
- **Publications.** Faculty share pedagogy through articles, book chapters, and books.
- **Awards.** The faculty's creativity and productivity have been acknowledged in local as well as national awards.
- **Attention to student well-being.** WCP faculty help students develop self-awareness of mental/emotional health, using time management, problem definition, and reflection.

WCP Innovations in Teaching and Learning

1. Innovation in Faculty

WCP's Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship stands as one of the largest and most innovative postdoctoral programs in the humanities. While the emphasis of the postdoctoral fellowship is on teaching, fellows are expected to engage with the full range of scholarship, service, assessment, and professional development. Our faculty are hired to be part of a program that values their intellectual enthusiasm and expects them to explore, experiment, and create in order to push the boundaries of what is possible in their own professional development.

Pedagogical Experimentation. While our WCP faculty arrive with strong disciplinary knowledge and teaching experience, they also come eager to expand their pedagogical repertoire. We encourage and support them to push their pedagogical experiences to include these possibilities:

- Develop hybrid and distance courses
- Incorporate digital pedagogies to increase learning
- Build courses around print and digital archives
- Engage in team teaching and linked courses
- Create client-based and service-learning courses
- Offer specialized sections for students in the first-year honors and learning communities

We want faculty to experiment with their teaching. They design courses that highlight their own disciplinary expertise. For example, in a multimodal composition course, an Early Modernist scholar may teach rhetoric and multimodality by assigning More's *Utopia*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Cavendish's *The Blazing World*. In a different class, a transmedia scholar may teach rhetoric and multimodality by assigning BTS (방탄소년단) videos, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, Marvel comics, and public-facing and essays and reviews. Those teaching technical communication address academic and anticipated workplace needs of students. Technical communication students might, for example, focus on simulated companies to take Broadway's *Wicked* on the road (e.g., PR, marketing, logistics, finance, advance teams, and cyber security) or projects providing ADA-compliant resources for local companies with clients who have physical limitations.

Hiring. Because the Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows have three-year terms, the program is always in hiring mode to replace the 15 or so faculty who move to new positions every year. Our Hiring Committee, chaired by WCP Associate Director Dr. Andy Frazee, uses a layered approach to reviewing the applications. All applications are reviewed by the screening subcommittee, looking for disciplinary expertise and teaching experience. We are especially interested in applicants who have experience and/or keen interest in our multimodal approach using digital pedagogy. The top applicants are then reviewed by the WCP leadership team, with 45-50 applicants then invited for interviews (via Skype). The pool is narrowed to successful applicants (typically 8-10% of those applying) who become members of a committed pedagogical community who create rigorous, engaging courses that help students become more capable writers and communicators.

A Strong Community of Teacher-Scholars. Where do our WCP faculty come from? They come from diverse international and U.S. institutions, representing Research 1 (R1) and Research 2 (R2) universities recognized as disciplinary leaders. This purposeful diversity results in a strong teaching faculty. The faculty since 2014 have earned their PhDs from these institutions: Arizona State University, Auburn University, Carnegie Mellon University, East Carolina State University, Emory University, Florida State University, Georgia State University, Idaho State University, Illinois Institute of Technology, Indiana University, Louisiana State University, Michigan Technological University, North Carolina State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, SUNY-Albany, SUNY-Buffalo, SUNY-Stony Brook, Texas Tech University, University of California–Berkeley, University of California–Davis, University of California–Riverside, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Illinois, University of Kansas, University of Miami (FL), University of Minnesota, University of Mississippi, University of New Hampshire, University of Notre Dame, University of Oregon, University of Pittsburgh,

University of Rhode Island, University of Tennessee, University of Toronto, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin, Yale University.

2. Innovation in Pedagogy

WCP faculty are expected to innovate—drawing on their own disciplinary expertise to instantiate WCP’s outcomes for students. WCP faculty were spotlighted in the report from the External Review Committee reviewing the School of Literature, Media, and Communication (March 31, 2015): The Writing and Communication faculty are “one of the most highly trained and talented cadres of instructors in the country, thanks to the extraordinary Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows Program” (APR Report 2015).

WCP offers a variety of resources for faculty to strengthen and refine their teaching. Two required orientation sessions are scheduled every summer, one in July to help faculty develop their syllabi and the other week-long teaching orientation in August for all new WCP faculty. The following additional resources are available through the entire academic year:

- Weekly teaching seminars (1) focusing on multimodality and pedagogy, required for all new WCP faculty during their first semester; (2) focusing on technical communication and required for all new WCP faculty teaching technical communication
- Classroom observations and followup meetings
- Professional development meetings
- Technology boot camps and seminars
- Experts available for classroom support and presentations (e.g., educational technology, library resources, archival use, podcast design and development, data visualization, web development, information design)
- Periodic panels and workshops focused on teaching-related topics (through WCP committees and through the Center for Teaching and Learning)
- WCP’s digital journal, *TECHStyle*, which especially encourages SOTL publications
- Faculty involvement contributing to and organizing the ENGL 1101/1102 textbook, *WOVENText* (publisher: Macmillan Higher Education)

Below are selected examples to showcase the kinds of classes, deliverables, and projects our faculty develop: active learning, summer teaching, and communicating with varied audiences.

Active Learning. On one day in fall 2019 when students came to Dr. McKenna Rose’s ENGL 1102 class having read Book II of More’s *Utopia* (1516), she put them into groups and assigned each group a category (e.g., geography, city planning, interpersonal relationships). Each group wrote 2-3 lines from *Utopia* on the white board to exemplify their category and then illustrated those lines on the board. When the whole book was illustrated around the room (Figure 2), students asked and answered questions about interrelationships between parts of More’s system.



Figure 2. Student teams in Dr. McKenna Rose’s ENGL 1102 class drawing elements of Thomas More’s *Utopia*

Summer teaching. In summer 2019, the compressed six-week course schedule and opportunities to collaborate with the [iGniTe Summer Launch Program](#) (an early admission initiative) and [Serve-Learn-Sustain](#) offered WCP faculty a range of ways to extend their multimodal pedagogy. Consider: *Frankenstein* in alternative genres. Redesigned periodic tables. Poetry and digital archives. Feminist editorial interventions in Wikipedia. Sustainable futures, pop culture, and crisis. These were the WCP course topics that Brittain Fellows offered in the 2019 summer semester. Seven reflections about our recent summer teaching serve as examples of the Brittain Fellowship’s use of tools and assignments that innovate on humanities-based pedagogies in a range of transdisciplinary contexts. (See Nick Sturm, “7 Brittain Fellows Reflect on Summer Pedagogical Experiments in First-Year Writing.” *TECHStyle*, 3 September 2019.) Figure 3 shows students in Dr. Sturm’s class working on the Atlanta BeltLine’s Westside Trail as part of their preparation for writing about historical issues of the city’s racial and environmental inequity.



Figure 3: Dr. Nick Sturm’s English 1102 students weed strawberry patches at Aluma Farm on the BeltLine’s Westside Trail, June 2019

Communication with Varied Audiences. Students are involved in a number of activities and learning outcomes related to addressing public audiences beyond the boundaries of their classrooms. We’ve listed here three representative examples of faculty providing opportunities for students communicating with a variety of audiences.

- Dr. Bethany Jacobs’ students in English 1102, while focusing on issues of social justice, read the graphic novel *March*. They were well-prepared for their fall 2017 conversation with the author, Rep. John Lewis, a meeting arranged by Georgia Tech’s Office of Government Relations. In Figure 4, they’re shown in a post-session photo op.



Figure 4. Dr. Bethany Jacobs’ English 1102 students with Rep. John Lewis, November 2017

- To teach rhetoric in “live” environments, Dr. Kent Linthicum uses the [Reacting to the Past](#) pedagogy developed by Barnard College. His students have debated whether New York should join the Revolutionary War, the nature of the French government during the French

Revolution, the 2009 Copenhagen climate change accord, and the nature of abolition before the Civil War. His students always respond positively to these simulations, one stating: “The *Reacting to the Past* projects were amazing... I think it is a great way to learn.”

- Three students have published on their work stemming from projects in Dr. Sarah Higinbotham’s English 1102: Shakespeare and Law course: Murray Smith in the University of Pittsburgh’s *Forbes and Fifth* (peer-reviewed, 2015), Darby Foster in the Mellon-funded *Visualizing English Print* (2017), and Preston Smith in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (2018).

3. Innovation in Curriculum

The Writing and Communication Program is built on a foundation of five critical topics: rhetoric, process, multimodality, collaboration, and assessment. The report from the External Review Committee reviewing the School of Literature, Media, and Communication (March 31, 2015) reinforced the importance of WCP's emphasis on multimodality for students: "Even students who are accomplished writers need to be able to communicate effectively on digital and social media platforms." The external reviewers found that WCP excels in preparing students for these challenges, writing that they "strongly endorse the WCP's commitment to train students to communicate in all the media that are used in today's workplace." In elaborating on this commitment to rhetoric, process, multimodality, collaboration, and assessment, this section briefly outlines some of our curricular innovations: *WOVENText*, critical concepts and practices, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), hybrid courses, and our linked computer science and technical communication curriculum.

WOVENText. Multimodality (written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal communication) became central in the Writing and Communication Program's curriculum in 2007; soon thereafter Georgia Tech became the national leader in multimodal composition. At the time, no textbook existed for this approach, so WCP worked with the leading national textbook publisher for creating innovative textbooks— Bedford/St. Martin's (now an imprint of Macmillan)—to help us design and write a custom textbook specifically for Georgia Tech. *WOVENText* addresses all aspects of our multimodal curriculum. In the current edition, nearly half of *WOVENText* has been written by Writing and Communication Program faculty; the rest is carefully selected from Bedford/St. Martin's materials. Over the years, more than 30 Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows have written materials for inclusion in *WOVENText*. Nationally, the publisher uses our Writing and Communication textbook as a model for creative excellence.

Critical Concepts and Practices. Students in WCP classes learn to navigate contexts and practices within and beyond the classroom via our exploration of key concepts in writing and communication that are important in the academy, community, and workplace, including these, all discussed in *WOVENText*.

Affordances—Different media (e.g., film, blog posts, essays, podcasts) allow messages to be communicated in different ways. Discerning the *affordances of the medium* empowers students to pick the most effective one for their purposes.

Audience—Students never communicate solely to the instructor. They learn to navigate diverse audiences through client-based learning and other public-facing projects.

Context—Students learn to observe and reflect upon the situations/occasions (political, historical, social, etc.) in which they communicate.

Ethics—WCP fosters the development of students as practitioners who consider *why* they communicate, make, or design as well as *how* to do it via the WOVEN curriculum, which encourages a principles- and values-based approach.

Ethos—Rigorous documentation and citation of sources help students to build the credibility needed for a persuasive argument.

Logos—Studying the form and internal logic of written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal arguments empowers students to craft persuasive, well-organized communication.

Pathos—As students learn to communicate persuasively with audiences who have different viewpoints and different emotional reactions, they develop empathy and learn to express it.

Transformation—Students learn to reshape ideas or information—that is, changing *genre* (print to web), *scale* (thumbnail to poster), *medium* (live demo to video), *mode* (from written to oral), *scope* (manual to tip sheet), color palette (4-color to B&W), or *pace* (self-paced to auto-paced PPT).

Transference—Students apply communication strategies from one context to another (e.g., transferring appropriate use of metaphors from academic to workplace situations).

Translation—Students learn to adapt information for new audiences (e.g., translating information in a medical journal to a mass-market newspaper; translating an aerospace engineering drawing for nonexperts watching CNN).

Universal Design—WCP is committed to promoting an inclusive world. Students learn how to make their communication available and usable to a wide range of users.

How do students demonstrate their knowledge of these concepts? They work individually or collaboratively to create a range of projects, ranging from traditional documents such as essays, reports, articles, and research posters to multimodal projects such as podcasts, graphic novels, videos, and websites. Our rhetorical approach provides strategies for analyzing and resolving academic, community, and workplace issues thereby motivating students to think about their role and potential contributions to the world.

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). WCP became involved with communicating on a grand scale when we received a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grant (supplemented with support from Georgia Tech’s Office of the Provost) to design, develop, and teach one of the first composition MOOCs. The MOOC project put WCP on the leading edge of communication education. We focused on improving learners’ awareness of and ability to use *composing processes* and, as a result, to increase their *confidence* as communicators. We also focused on the habits of mind learners can develop that lead to more expert-like behaviors in their writing and communication. Our 19-person team included 11 WCP faculty who managed the day-to-day interactions of the 21,934 registered participants in our MOOC. Of the participants, 14,772 were “active”—defined as completing at least one module, a high rate of participation in comparison to the 5-10 percent average participation for MOOCs. Our team worked on three core aspects of our MOOC: curriculum, technology, and assessment. In addition, our team members were part of a teaching consortium with The Ohio State University, Duke University, and Mt. San Jacinto College, each of whom designed, developed, and taught a differently focused writing and communication MOOC.

Hybrid Courses. A number of our WCP courses every semester use hybrid strategies (part in-person and part online). In hybrid courses, students benefit from the affordances of different types of learning environments. For example, in Dr. Darcy Mullen’s hybrid courses, students have a blend of in-person and online classroom times and spaces. The work done by her students outside of the classroom ranges from group work assignments and campus lab visits to individual communication activities and independent research time (visiting farms, interviewing community partners, engaging with local politicians). Students communicate in diverse community settings and, thus, learn new strategies (asset based thinking, rhetoric of mutual identification) and modes (phone, email, face to face) for different rhetorical situations. One example of the exemplary work students have done in this hybrid class are podcast projects that focus on food issues in Atlanta—intended for residents of Atlanta and hosted by an SLS community partner. Dr. Mullen has observed that her hybrid classroom reduces student absences, increases student engagement, and improves learning. Other WCP faculty members who demonstrate excellence in the study

and practice of online hybrid pedagogy include Dr. Alok Amatya, Dr. Courtney Hoffman, and Dr. McKenna Rose.

Computer Science & Technical Communication.

Two of WCP's technical communication courses are co-taught by faculty in tech comm and computer science. The courses were co-developed in a yearlong project by the Writing and Communication Program and College of Computing. In this two-semester sequence, computer science students plan, design, and build an original computer science project (e.g., mobile application, website, software) for a real-world client. Seven years ago, we started with two faculty members (one CS and one WCP) and 100 students; now we have 10 faculty (five CS and five WCP) and nearly 600 students who have produced, high-quality professional projects including phone apps and software programs.

In these linked, client-based courses, students learn how to prepare technical documents, including proposals, video demos, detailed design reports, and presentations for various audiences, purposes, and contexts. Course assignments—often using industry-based concepts as well as creative activities—integrate written, oral, visual, electronic and nonverbal modes to help students thrive in the contemporary workplace. Recent clients have included a number of private, public, non-profit, and educational organizations: Atlanta Community Food Bank, Emory University Hospital, Centers for Disease Control, My Hero Card, Kennesaw State University, Upper Oconee Watershed Network, Growing Leaders, and the Integrated Media Technology Center. A relationship between WCP and Georgia Tech's Serve-Learn-Sustain has produced 10 community-focused projects with SLS community partners: a paired course program with College of Engineering and a community health linked program that connects WCP with the Schools of Industrial Design, History and Sociology, and City and Regional Planning.

EXAMPLE: Dr. Jonathan Shelley's Agile approach to project management helps students plan their final group projects (see [TECHStyle article](#) about this work). Agile methodologies incorporated include *sprints* (project phases), *scrums* (brief regular meetings), and *retrospectives*. Dr. Shelley also uses rhetorical lessons from the European Renaissance to help tech comm students develop clear and concise language for contemporary digital interfaces. For example, students performed Erasmus's exercise from *De Copia* (1512)—composing as many variations of the line "thank you for your letter" as possible—in order to examine how word choice, syntax, length, and even vocal delivery can alter an expression's meaning and effect. Students then consider these rhetorical elements when creating the digital apps' informational components such as message boxes, notifications, and buttons.

4. Innovation in Assessment

Assessment in a rhetorical, multimodal curriculum depends on rhetorical criteria, not on simply correct/incorrect information or compliance with rules of grammar and mechanics. Students need to consider the affordances of modes and media as they respond to audience needs in ever-changing rhetorical situations. Our innovative approach towards assessment not only enables us to determine how well we have achieved programmatic outcomes for external accreditation, but it also supports our faculty in their teaching. While student assignments range from essays to podcasts, from posters to documentary videos, each assignment measures how well students meet goals to identify writing and communication as rhetorical, engage in writing as a process adaptable to specific contexts, collaborate in communities of practice, and create across modes. Faculty assess how well students meet these goals according to WCP's common feedback chart. WCP has an Assistant Director of Assessment (a Britain Fellow with expertise in assessment) who (1) advises the Director about assessment policies and practices, (2) chairs the program's Assessment Committee responsible for regularly reviewing assessment policies and practices and recommending changes regarding assessment, (3) coordinates the three-person faculty assessment teams who review students' reflective portfolios for our programmatic assessment. The Assistant Director of Assessment ensures a culture of continuous improvement by interpreting annual assessment data and providing feedback about curricular revisions and adjustments.

Levels of and Criteria for Assessment. WCP emphasizes five levels of assessment for students.

- **Self-assessment**—to give students the opportunity to develop self-assessment, which is a key characteristic of experts.
- **Peer Assessment**—to give students feedback from their peers (and to give peers the opportunity to develop skill in giving feedback).
- **Assignment/Project Assessment**—to give students (both individuals and teams) feedback from their instructor(s). The WCP feedback chart is a critical component in our emphasis on assessment.
- **Client-based Assessment**—to provide an opportunity for recipients of students' client-based projects to offer input regarding their interaction with students and the resulting artifact(s).
- **Programmatic Assessment**—to meet the Board of Regents' Core Area A1: Communication Outcomes (to “demonstrate [their] proficiency in the process of articulating and organizing rhetorical arguments in written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal modes, using concrete support and conventional language”) by assessing our students' reflective portfolios.

WCP actively promotes these five levels of assessment across all modes and media. Using consistent criteria (*rhetorical awareness, stance, development of ideas, organization, conventions, and design for medium*) for all levels and kinds of assessment is theoretically and methodologically important—and rarely done. Our programmatic policy enables students to understand that such assessment will be useful in their written, oral, and visual communication in their academic projects, their personal interactions, their community activities, and their professional work. WCP encourages regular and frequent formative assessment: low-stakes feedback *during* instruction to help faculty improve instruction and students improve learning. WCP faculty regularly embed creative formative assessment strategies throughout their courses.

WCP Innovations in Supporting and Strengthening Teaching and Learning

5. Innovation in Partnerships

The Writing and Communication Program was praised for community partnerships in the report from the External Review Committee reviewing the School of Literature, Media, and Communication (March 31, 2015): “The School deserves praise for its many classes in the Writing and Communication Program that incorporate civic projects” (APR 2015). WCP currently has more than 20 campus partners, all of whom promote campus or community projects. Below we highlight our work with three of these partners—Georgia Tech’s Serve-Learn-Sustain, living learning communities, and the nonprofit Common Good Atlanta. To prepare students to enter the global marketplace as leaders and innovators, our partnerships foster students’ resilience, ability to take risks, and creative thinking while encouraging them to recover robustly from failure and persist.

Serve-Learn-Sustain. Since its implementation (2016), Serve-Learn-Sustain has sought partnerships with WCP’s dynamic faculty and courses. Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS) is a campus-wide initiative produced of the Institute’s Quality Enhancement Plan. SLS’s mission—to equip students to create sustainable communities at Georgia Tech and in their lives after graduation—is realized in great part through WCP’s creative, high-impact pedagogy.

EXAMPLE: Dr. Kent Linthicum’s Fall 2019 English 1101 course is one of the SLS linked courses under the “green infrastructure.” The class partners with the Grove Park Foundation. While investigating the rhetoric of decarbonization, students create visual arguments to be used by the Grove Park Foundation to increase the neighborhood’s walkability and sustainability. For this partnership, students attended a series of workshops with the other classes and with Grove Park representatives. The class visited Grove Park early in the semester and helped prepare its community garden while also listening to community members talk about its needs. The students then translated that visit into ideas for their visuals, which will be reviewed by the community members.

EXAMPLES: Examples of SLS courses include Dr. Darcy Mullen’s partnership with the Atlanta mayor’s Office of Resilience and Dr. Krystin Gollihue’s partnership with The Ray sustainable highway project. Dr. Mullen’s English 1102 course developed a social media campaign and podcast series for Aglanta, an online portal for information and commentary on urban agriculture in Atlanta. Students’ podcasts serve as a repository for information about food literacy, food access, and food systems in metro-Atlanta. Dr. Gollihue’s tech comm students in LMC 3403 work with The Ray C. Anderson Foundation to develop communication strategies to engage visitors to the Ray—innovative maps and an archive of digital stories that help communicate the role that sustainability plays in Georgia communities.

Each semester, five Brittain Fellows are selected by application as SLS Affiliated Brittain Fellows, receiving course development grants to incorporate community partnerships and community-based projects into their courses. This SLS-WCP collaboration engages 250-350 students each semester and approximately 25-30 students in the summer. The faculty and students work with SLS partners—community organizations, government offices, and nonprofits, including Grove Park Foundation, The Ray Foundation, Mad Housers, Groundwork Atlanta, Aglanta (City of Atlanta’s Urban Agriculture office), and the Conservation Fund. With these partners, WCP faculty create course assignments such as podcasts, multimodal signage and branding, and software development that enrich students’ understanding of collaboration and community engagement in STEM careers and strengthen the capacity of community partners to realize their goals.

Living Learning Communities. For many years, the Writing and Communication Program has been a partner for students in Georgia Tech's living learning communities (LLCs). Here are three examples:

- For many years, the advanced undergraduate and graduate women in Georgia Tech's oldest learning community (*Women, Science, and Technology (WST) Learning Community*) have benefited from professional development workshops run by the WCP Director.
- Every year, WCP faculty teach 10 sections of ENGL 1101/1102 for students in the Honors Program LLC, providing Honors students with courses that engage them actively and help develop their community.
- In 2017, WCP leadership began to work closely with faculty, staff, and administrators in Institute Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to develop Georgia Tech's newest learning co-ed community, *Impact through Science, Technology, and Social Good*. IMPACT attracts first-year students interested in taking courses and collaborating on projects related to social justice, environmental justice, and sustainability. A number of Brittain Fellows in fall 2019 taught English 1101 and English 1102 courses focusing on these topics and particularly aimed at IMPACT students; spring 2020 courses will offer similar courses directed at social good and sustainability.

Common Good Atlanta. Seven current and former Brittain Fellows are partnering with a statewide nonprofit, Common Good Atlanta, to teach and direct college programs inside four state prisons, equipping incarcerated men and women to reflect, think deeply, and imagine alternatives to existing problems. Since 2014, more than 20 Brittain Fellows have taught in the program and taken GT undergraduates to the prisons for combined classes. Current and former partners include Dr. Owen Cantrell, Dr. Sarah Higinbotham, Dr. Joshua King, Dr. Lauren Neeffe, Dr. Jonathan Shelley, Dr. Caroline Young, and Dr. Ruthie Yow.

6. Innovation in Professional Development

The goal of WCP's professional development mission is to support faculty in their development as teachers and as professionals in higher education. The program supports a synergistic model connecting pedagogy and praxis, encouraging a deep integration between classroom experience and professional development. Three of the many WCP approaches to professional development include mentoring, postdoctoral seminars, and committee service and leadership.

Mentoring. Every incoming faculty member is assigned three mentors—two senior WCP faculty member and a faculty member in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication—to help with adjustment to our program, to the Institute as a whole, and to the broader Atlanta community as well as their familiarization with disciplinary and professional conventions. These relationships blossom into career-long connections that both the mentor and mentee find valuable.

Postdoctoral Seminars. One of the essential elements of Brittain Fellows' professional development is their training. In the Digital Pedagogy Seminar (D-Ped) and Technical Communication Seminar, WCP faculty evaluate current scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) and explore innovative uses of technology in the classroom. Additionally, D-Ped provides our faculty with the opportunity to work with Georgia Tech's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and to present posters at CTL's annual, Institute-wide Celebrating Teaching Day.



Figure 6. WCP faculty in the Digital Pedagogy Postdoctoral Seminar

Committee Service and Leadership. The Writing and Communication Program furthers faculty development through providing a number of leadership positions. Fellows can become a member of the Executive Committee of the School of Literature, Media, and Communication; a representative for each cohort, a lecturer representative, an at-large representative, and the chair of each of the 16 committees, which address opportunities for curriculum, for digital work, and for professional development. Some of the committees have been discussed elsewhere in this packet: Assessment Committee (page 14), Hiring Committee (page 8), *WOVENText* Committee (page 11), and *TECHStyle* Committee (page 18).

7. Innovation in Technology

Georgia Tech provides a fully wired campus and requires students to come with their own laptops, which become critical educational tools. The Writing and Communication Program uses technology both as a tool for learning and as an object of study, as these two examples illustrate.

- To dramatize the importance of newspapers to shaping opinion in Revolutionary France during a *Reacting to the Past* project, Dr. Kent Linthicum had his students create websites to publish their own papers supporting the royalists, moderates, liberals, and radicals. This way students used a media platform to try to influence the opinions of their peers. As the class sessions unfolded, students wrote critiques of their peers claims and then posted them to their faction's website. These posts then became fodder for debates in class.

- Alison Valk, the Multimedia Librarian at Georgia Tech, conducted workshops on Adobe InDesign and Adobe Illustrator in Dr. Jeff Howard’s English 1101: Introduction to Food and Communication. The workshops contributed to students’ knowledge about design and design tools as they designed professional menus for restaurants of their own creation. These workshops also prepared them to move into other design tools they will use in upper-division courses and careers.

8. Innovation in SOTL Publications

One of the important ways to encourage excellent teaching is to share successful practices. This section highlights three ways the Writing and Communication Program promotes successful pedagogy: in our own publication, *TECHStyle*, and in peer-reviewed journals as well as books and chapters in books published by presses including MIT Press and University of Michigan Press, and in Georgia Tech’s annual Celebrating Teaching Day. Below we describe some of these SOTL publications.

WCP faculty have an active scholarly agenda that includes the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). Below are selected publications that reflect our pedagogical successes. Program Director Rebecca Burnett and Associate Director Andy Frazee make a special effort to encourage and model SOTL publications such as the following.

- Burnett, Rebecca E., Olga Menagarishvili, & Andy Frazee. (2019). “Student attitudes about teamwork in face-to-face and blended technical communication classes.” In *Blended Learning in Practice: A Guide for Practitioners and Researchers*. Eds. Ashok K. Goel, Rob Kadel, Amanda Madden, and Lauren Margulieux. MIT Press.
- Colton, Aaron. (2019) “Strategies for Teaching Blocked Writers.” *Pedagogy and American Literary Studies*. <https://teachingpals.wordpress.com/2019/05/13/strategies-for-teaching-blocked-writers/>
- Fitzsimmons, Rebekah. (2019). “Possibly Impossible; Or, Teaching Undergraduates to Confront Digital and Archival Research Methodologies, Social Media Networking, and Potential Failure.” *The Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy*.
- Kruschek, Gina. (2019). “Stigma in the Comments Section: Feminist and Anti-Feminist Discussions Online.” *Computers and Composition* 54.
- Madden, A. G., Margulieux, L., Kadel, R. S., & Goel, A. K. (2019). *Blended Learning in Practice—a Guide for Practitioners and Researchers*. MIT Press.
- Robinson, Joy, Lisa Dusenberry, Liz Hutter, Halcyon Lawrence, Andy Frazee, & Rebecca E. Burnett. (2019). “State of the Field: Teaching with Digital Tools in the Writing and Communication Classroom.” *Computers and Composition* 54. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755461517300312?dgcid=coauthor>

Celebrating Teaching Day. Every year, the Writing and Communication Program is well-represented at Georgia Tech’s Celebrating Teaching Day, a program hosted by the Institute’s Center for Teaching and Learning. Between 2015-2019, WCP faculty have created and presented 90 posters at Celebrating Teaching Day. Each WCP poster highlights one especially successful class project (see Figure 7) for this campus-wide celebration.



Figure 7: Brittain Fellow Andrew Marzoni at CTL’s Celebrating Teaching Day, Spring 2016

9. Acknowledgements and Awards of Teaching Excellence

The teaching excellence of WCP faculty is recognized locally and nationally.

Programmatic Acknowledgement. The Writing and Communication Program presents two teaching awards each spring (see Figure 8). The *Award for Multimodal Innovation* emphasizes innovative use of multimodality to aid student learning, creative multimodal activities and assignments, approaches that inspire students to take intellectual risks, and exploration in multimodal communication leading to scholarly presentation and/or publication. The *Award for Excellence in Pedagogy* emphasizes excellent classroom performance, creative curriculum development, high levels of student engagement, productive use of Georgia Tech and metro-Atlanta resources, excellence in formative assessment and summative evaluation, scholarly and/or research projects related to pedagogy, and pedagogical presentations and/or publications.



Figure 8: Writing and Communication Program faculty who received 2018 WCP teaching awards (Dr. Patrick Ellis, Dr. Rebekah Fitzsimmons, and Dr. Leah Misemer) and who received the Communication Center Tutor of the Year Award (Dr. Chelsea Murdock) (Source: WCP)

Serve Learn Sustain (SLS) Awards: SLS-affiliated Brittain Fellows have received awards for their innovative, partner-engaged pedagogy. For example, in 2018, Brittain Fellows Dr. McKenna Rose and Dr. Bethany Jacobs were recipients of the SLS Student Choice Award for Excellence in Teaching. Dr. Rose’s students wrote, “Dr. Rose’s passion in this topic has made me want to truly implement the solutions in our video to create sustainable communities.” Dr. Jacobs, wrote her nominators, “has inspired us all to explore the ideals of science fiction for visions of how we can create a more equitable and sustainable community for all.”

Institutional Acknowledgement. WCP faculty have received teaching awards from Georgia Tech, coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning. Between 2015-2019, four Brittain Fellows have received Class of 1940 Course Survey Teaching Effectiveness Awards and 69 Brittain Fellows have received Thank-a-Teacher certificates. In 2020, the WCP was awarded Georgia Tech’s Diversity Champion Award, which recognizes units of inclusive excellence.

External Review Committee. An earlier External Review Report noted that it was “particularly impressed by [Georgia Tech’s] Writing Program which, serving both the School and the Institute at large, has achieved remarkable results with minimum resources....We were impressed by the remarkable programmatic changes in the Writing Program since the previous BOR assessment. The School has appointed an excellent and resourceful Director of Writing who has professionally designed a writing/communication program appropriate to both the School and GIT in general. We are particularly impressed by the ways that the School has organized a writing/communication program that is already becoming a model for such programs in the U.S....We are also impressed by the ways that the Director has organized and re-structured the curriculum for the Brittain Fellowship program” (APR 2009).

National Acknowledgment. WCP was nationally recognized for innovation when the program received the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Media Literacy Award, which recognizes the program for "persistent, innovative, and imaginative application of media analysis and media composition in English studies." NCTE is the largest professional organization for English/language arts in the US and has an international membership. The NCTE honor reinforces Georgia Tech’s national presence as a model of excellence in digital pedagogy and multimodal communication (encompassing written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal modes). It reflects the Institute and the College’s investment in a leading-edge program that offers students, faculty, researchers, staff, and alumni opportunities to develop first-rate communication strategies that serve them in the classroom, community, and workplace.

10. Student Well-Being

Students can best take advantage of the excellent teaching in the Writing and Communication Program if they can connect what they are learning in their classes to their own lives. Students often comment that their relationships with the WCP faculty are the most meaningful and lasting of their academic career at Georgia Tech. In our classes, faculty often emphasize strategies—such as time management, project management, problem definition, and reflection—that help students manage feelings of stress and anxiety. In further efforts to support student well-being, WCP provides support to faculty through collaborations with the Georgia Tech Dean of Students, Counseling Center, Office of Disability Services, LGBTQIA Resource Center, and Women’s Resource Center; we also sponsor discussion and workshops about issues in student well-being, including suicide prevention and responding to campus tragedies.