

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: A “Layered Literacies” Approach to Program Change

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Abstract. This article showcases our professional writing program, which began in our university’s English department in the late 1980s, as we carry out the first major update since its inception. Until recently, the program has only been updated in small, incremental ways. We frame our recent, more extensive update in terms of Kelli Cargile Cook’s (2002) “layered literacies” scheme and Walton et al.’s (2016) guidance for integrating a social justice focus into professional writing programs. We describe our redesign of our major from a Professional and Technical Writing Program to a Public and Professional Writing Program, discussing how we addressed problems of enrollment decline, static classes, and outdated curriculum. We describe how we analyzed our student population and our program’s existing strengths and set clear, scholarship-based pedagogical goals before updating and modernizing our mission statement, learning outcomes, and curricular requirements. We conclude by sharing survey results that demonstrate campus stakeholders’ strong support of our programmatic changes. We reflect on expected benefits of our new program to our current and prospective students, our college and university, and our surrounding community. We offer key takeaways for professional writing program directors and faculty to consider as they evaluate and revise their own programs.

Keywords: Professional and Technical Writing, Writing Instruction, Curricular Change, Social Justice, Curriculum, Non-Profit Writing, Technical and Academic Writing

1. Introduction: The need for change

1.1. Overview

This article showcases our professional writing program, which began in our university's English department in the late 1980s, as we carry out the first major update since its inception. While we have made some cosmetic changes over the years, until very recently, the program has only been updated in small, incremental ways. We frame our recent, more extensive update in terms of Kelli Cargile Cook's (2002) "layered literacies" framework and Walton et al.'s (2016) guidance for "social justice initiatives" (p. 119) in professional writing programs. Because Cook's framework integrates theory and practice effectively, we have found the layered-literacies structure useful for course and assignment design as well as for coordinating learning outcomes across the program. Additionally, Walton et al.'s (2016) more-recent model for integrating social-justice oriented content and projects into professional writing courses adds productively to Cook's repertoire of literacies and helps us envision how our program can "reflect [the field's] turn from critical analysis to critical action" (p. 122). Below, we describe the nature and rationales for the changes we have made to our program's mission, learning outcomes, curricular requirements, and courses.

1.2. Three Problems: enrollment decline, static classes, outdated curriculum

1.2.1. Enrollment Decline. Enrollment concerns served as the original impetus to take a closer, more critical look at our program. In 2019, like Rebecca Walton, Jared Colton, Rikki Wheatley-Boxx, and Krista Gurko (2016), we found ourselves facing a "kairotic moment for change, [and] we considered several factors that would affect our program's direction" (p. 121). When we composed the first proposal for our program revision, our total number of majors had been declining for approximately five years. As Table 1 indicates, we experienced a gradual yearly drop from Fall 2014 to Fall 2016 followed by more significant drops in Fall 2017 and Fall 2018. Despite a modest increase in 2019, the overall trend had been downward. We hypothesized that our decline in majors stemmed from various factors: the overall university enrollment declines, departmental declines in majors, and the move of our university's journalism major to a different college, which made our major less visible to students interested in communication and writing.

Table 1: Number of Professional and Technical Writing Majors Over Six Years

Term	First Time Undergraduates	Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Total
F 14	3	6	10	8	12	36
F 15	2	5	3	10	13	31
F 16	3	5	6	7	9	27
F 17	0	1	4	6	7	18
F 18	0	1	2	3	4	10
F 19	2	3	8	2	5	17

To address enrollment decline, we envisioned a program that would make the undergraduate BA degree and our minor more attractive to a broader range of students. Recruitment and retention are perennial problems at our university. Moreover, because our program lacks the household-name status of more familiar majors such as psychology, engineering, and chemistry, we face an ongoing recruitment problem. Therefore, we sought to make changes that would increase our program's visibility among new students selecting a major or minor.

1.2.2. Static classes: decades on the books. Prior to our recent, more pedagogically reflective program revision, the most substantive change in our program occurred nine years ago during AY2013-2014. At that time, the program name changed from Professional Writing and Editing to Professional and Technical Writing, and the literature-course requirement was substantially reduced. Despite these changes, most of our courses had not been modified significantly for several years or even decades. For example, two core courses in our curriculum had not been seriously reviewed and updated in nearly thirty-five years. Side-by-side comparisons of these courses, (1) Proposal and Report Writing (Table 2) and (2) Professional and Technical Editing (Table 3), reveal minor changes made between 1985 and 2019:

Table 2: Proposal and Report Writing Course Description Comparison

1985	2019
Application of general rhetorical strategies to the preparation of texts in two specific professional communication genres: the policy/procedure report and the solicited/unsolicited proposal.	Application of rhetorical strategies and principles of design to the preparation of texts in two specific professional writing genres: the proposal (such as grant and research proposals) and the report (such as technical, feasibility, and other kinds of reports).

Table 3: Professional and Technical Editing Course Description Comparison

1985	2019
A study of the skills needed to make appropriate editorial changes in the grammar, mechanics, style, format, and organization of manuscripts for scholarly, trade, and professional publications. The course will introduce stages in the publishing process, technical and substantive editing, and the use of house or press style. Practice in copy editing, design, and proofreading will be provided.	Study of the skills needed to make appropriate decisions about the content, grammar, mechanics, style, organization, and format of scholarly, trade, journalistic, and other professional publications, including newsletters and electronic publications. Topics include stages in the publishing process, proofreading, hard-copy versus online editing, mechanical and substantive editing, and the use of house and press styles.

As the above comparisons demonstrate, updates to these two core course descriptions reflect relatively trivial revisions that left the scope, substance, and objectives of the courses largely unchanged. For Proposal and Report Writing, the more-recent description mentions design principles and a few specific examples of the genres covered in the course. Similarly, the more-recent Professional and Technical Editing description adds content-level editing as an area of focus, references some additional genres (e.g., journalistic texts, newsletters), and mentions electronic texts and online editing. While these revisions reveal minor updates to our courses, the scope and structure of these courses and our program has remained essentially the same.

1.2.3. Outdated curriculum design: catching up with the twenty-first century. In addition to sustaining static courses, for decades we had failed to engage in constructive reflection about our program's

overarching pedagogical goals and curricular coherence. If the program's courses had looked the same on paper but still functioned well programmatically and pedagogically, we may not have been motivated to institute a program-level overhaul. However, we tended to teach our program's courses without deliberating on course-description rationales or the extent to which the courses worked together to reinforce specific knowledge bases, competencies, and literacies. In other words, since the program's launch, we had not stepped back to take a broader view of our primary objectives and analyze how effectively our curriculum was addressing "multiple literacies of twenty-first century technical communicators" (Cook, 2002, p. 6).

Advocating for holistic layering of essential literacies across academic programs, Cook (2002) argues that professional and technical writers should develop proficiency in six literacies. These literacies include *basic* (reading and writing), *rhetorical* (understanding audience and choosing invention strategies), *social* (collaborating effectively with other writers and audiences), *technological* (navigating among and using emergent technologies), *ethical* (knowing ethical standards and considering all stakeholders), and *critical* (recognizing power structures and serving underserved audiences). In addition to Cook's well-known six key literacies, Walton et al. (2016) supplements Cook's framework with one that encompasses "social justice, diversity, and activist literacies," (p. 122). Social-justice literacy includes learning "how gender, race, culture, age, ideology, and socio-economic class influence the design, execution, and outcomes of projects" (p. 123).

While our original program certainly addressed several of these literacies, an archival search of our program's course descriptions offered no evidence that the curriculum had ever been developed or revised using a central, multilayered rationale that intentionally integrates core literacies. Instead, our program's courses were built on the faculty's experiential awareness of needed skillsets, such as competence with communicative technologies (e.g., Videotex in the 1980s) and knowledge of genres and practices in the field. This approach to program design reflected a "lack of understanding about how these multiple literacies can be integrated, situated, or [...] layered into programs, courses, and specific course activities" (Cook, 2002, p. 6).

Consequently, while we may have engaged in some pedagogical analysis over the years and made small revisions from course to course, we had not been conducting the overall pedagogical business of the program reflectively. We had failed to reflect on, evaluate, and revise our program on a broad scale to produce a modern, dynamic educational experience for our students. Our recent curricular redesign re-

flects an attempt to make deliberate efforts to layer Cook's six literacies and social-justice literacy more coherently into our mission, learning outcomes, curricular requirements, and individual courses.

1.3. Conditions on the ground: our student population, our program's strengths

To address the aforementioned three problems—static courses, enrollment decline, and outdated and piecemeal program design—we formed a comprehensive plan to revise our Professional and Technical Writing undergraduate major to a Public and Professional Writing (PPW) major. In crafting this proposal, we considered two important conditions: which students were selecting our major and the strengths of our current program.

1.3.1. Our student population. During our curricular redesign process, we gathered information about our recent graduates and current students. To understand our student population better, we collected transcript data from students who registered for our senior capstone course from Spring 2014 to Spring 2022 and from current students who have declared our major. Among a total of 67 students in these two groups, we were able to access 65 students' transcripts and record the following:

- current enrollment status or graduation year
- semester in which they entered the university
- whether they declared our major in their first semester at our university
- previously declared majors (if applicable)
- academic standing at the time they declared our major (good, warning, probation, or suspension)

Among the 65 transcripts we examined, 18 students were listed as currently enrolled, 45 students had graduated with their degrees, and 2 had never graduated (but were not currently enrolled). As for whether students declared our major during their first semester at our university, 51 students did not declare our major in their first semester, and 14 students did declare our major in their first semester. Among those students who did not declare our major in their semester, the most common statuses were the following: undetermined/exploratory (15), STEM (12), English literature (8), education (8), journalism (6), and business (5). All students who declared our major after being undetermined/exploratory or declaring a different major were in good standing with the university when they declared our major. These data show that most students in our program over the last decade have not declared our major in their first semester at our university, and many come to us after trying one or more other majors first.

These findings indicate the need for a more appealing, visible professional writing program. Courses with more explanatory names and descriptions might increase the chances that students take our classes. For examples, students from STEM might see our program as a good supplement to their major (as a minor or second major) or an even better fit for their long-term professional goals than their declared major. They might see our revised course, “Writing with Data,” as an opportunity to learn to write about scientific findings in clear, concise ways for lay audiences. As another example, business students or students in arts programs might see our new course, “Grant Writing,” as a chance to better understand the grant-proposal genre to acquire funding for nonprofit organizations. While our courses have provided instruction in these areas for years, one important goal of our new program is to make our program’s offerings clearer to a broader audience.

1.3.2. Our program’s strengths. Our program revision intends to build upon the strengths of a university degree program that has existed since 1989. While we argue that these substantive changes to the major should be made, we have not changed the fundamental identity of the program—one in which writing, nonfictional and pragmatic, is the central practice we study and teach. When the Professional Writing and Editing major first appeared in our university’s course catalog in AY1989-1990, the faculty teaching in the program held PhDs in English literature. Some had worked as practitioners in technical writing, publishing, and editing, and they relied on those experiences to develop the program.

Beginning in the 2000s, faculty with PhDs in rhetoric and composition joined the department and initiated a scholarly and pedagogical shift in the program. We began moving our program from one tied closely to literature studies to one firmly situated in the field of rhetoric and writing. For instance, while the original major required more literature courses than professional writing courses and presented professional-writing competencies from a workplace-writing stance, our faculty now approach assignments and courses based in rhetoric- and writing-specific theory and scholarship. We believe this strength of our current program should remain central to our new program.

1.4. Our new goals

We have envisioned a major in Public and Professional Writing as one that stems from the ancient rhetorical tradition and prepares students to succeed in today’s writing marketplace—from corporations to nonprofit firms and academic institutions. Specifically, we have sought to create a program that employs a layered-literacies approach to prepare students to understand and respond to audience needs—whether the

audience is an individual client, various stakeholders in an organization, or the public. We hope that the revised major appeals to a broader base of students and prepares students for a wider range of careers. To accomplish this goal, we work to establish with students a strong foundation in basic, rhetorical, and technological literacies as well as attention to ethical, social, and critical literacies and social justice.

1.4.1. Grounding in rhetorical literacy. Rhetorical literacy remains at the forefront of our program. We consider all forms of nonfiction composition to be rhetorical, and our curricular revisions reflect that view. We want to cultivate an understanding among our majors that all public, professional, and technical writing uses basic and rhetorical literacies to accomplish certain goals:

- Identifying and analyzing significant problems to organizations and communities
- Constructing authority and credibility within documents
- Capturing and sustaining audience attention
- Engaging effectively with multiple and diverse stakeholders
- Grounding discourse in sound reasoning and competent research
- Devising appropriate and effective linguistic strategies

1.4.2. Developing technological and ethical literacies. We also aspire to incorporate technological and ethical literacies into our program. We aim to teach students how to use available software and hardware packages to create clear and effective designs, adhere to formatting styles, and convey honest, ethical visual arguments. By assigning projects that require designing documents for actual readers, we help students comprehend “the ethics of writing for a real audience and the social embeddedness that can influence the writing process” (Bouelle, 2012, p. 184). We work to teach our students that public, professional, and technical writing involves the following:

- Understanding core principles of visual design (i.e., as derived from Gestalt theory)
- Knowing how to use available software to produce effective designs for specific audiences (e.g., Adobe InDesign)
- Using data-visualization tools to generate graphs, charts, and tables that convey truthful data-driven arguments
- Developing credibility and trustworthiness through clear, accurate visuals

1.4.3. Meeting student needs through social and critical literacies. Pedagogically, our revised program strives to meet student needs—including securing rewarding jobs and learning the ideals of a liberal arts education. These principles include engaging in critical

thinking, learning about the role of community and social context in writing situations, and selecting audience-appropriate research, language, and tools. To reinforce these ideals, the new program has aimed to place social and critical literacies in more prominent roles. For instance, as our program turns more intentionally to public-facing genres and audiences in the nonprofit sector, we hope to focus more attention on helping students “recognize and consider ideological stances and power structures” and the role of writing in “[taking] action to assist those in need” (Cook, 2002, p. 16).

In this way, layering social and critical literacies more deliberately into our new program facilitates the professionalization of our majors and moves our students beyond “simulated” workplace projects into authentic writing tasks (Bouelle, 2012, p. 184). We foreground social and critical literacies in our new program by expanding research-based curricular elements we have had in place for several years:

- internships on and off campus that empower students to become true “experts” in the field (Bouelle, 2012, p. 187)
- a requirement that capstone students work with a real client (e.g., writing grants for local nonprofit organizations, a feasibility report for a local literary organization, handbooks for campus departments)
- client-based/service-learning projects at all levels of courses (as described in Melançon, 2018)—from campus clients in our gateway course to off-campus organizations in upper-level courses like our new health sciences writing course

1.4.4. Explicitly integrating social-justice oriented literacies.

Along with Cook’s (2002) six core literacies, our programmatic revision considers the field’s recent turn to social-justice literacies, which engage students in social action through professional writing (Walton et al., 2016). According to Walton et al. (2016), including social-justice literacies in professional writing curricula requires teaching students “social justice at two levels of abstraction—1) broad critical concepts (e.g., social justice, privilege) and 2) specific social issues relevant to the partner mission (such as homelessness, wrongful incarceration)” (p. 126). To implement teaching on these levels, we plan to integrate more course readings on social-justice concepts. We also intend to seek out community partners, internship employers, and service-learning projects with missions and values that explicitly support social-justice causes. In this way, we follow Walton et al.’s (2016) guidance to build courses centered on social justice, provide students with authentic social-justice projects, and encourage both students and community partners to reflect on these experiences.

2. Updating the program's mission and goals

With these goals in mind, we have modified our programmatic mission statement to prioritize and layer the aforementioned literacies into core courses, projects, and out-of-classroom experiences. Our original mission statement placed emphasis on basic and rhetorical literacies with some attention to technological literacy; however, social, ethical, critical, and social-justice literacies remained largely implicit. Our original mission statement foregrounded basic and rhetorical literacies by stating an overarching goal of teaching students “to write, edit, and design electronic and paper documents for businesses, organizations, and institutions.” Reinforcing the centrality of rhetorical literacy, we stated our goal of enabling students to “analyze existing works—from web sites and manuals to policies and proposals—as well as produce [their] own original materials for [their] professional portfolio[s].” Our original mission statement also alluded to the interdependence of rhetorical and technological literacies. We stated our aim to teach students “to produce clear, effective, well-edited writing that serves the needs and interests of various audiences; learn to adapt to working environments that are changing rapidly—especially in terms of information technology; [and] develop a specialty in a specific field or type of working environment in which [they’d] like to put [their] PTW knowledge and skills to use.”

In our revised mission statement, we mention the new ways we layer technological, social, ethical, and social-justice focused literacies into our program. One new area includes preparing our students with a more robust understanding of argumentation and rhetoric, including visual rhetoric and document design. While these competencies have been addressed in our program for many years, the new program positions them in more central roles. For instance, technological literacy emerges in our new visual rhetoric course, which aims to equip students with a fuller understanding of document-design theories and user-centered design. Students will not simply strive to make their documents aesthetically appealing using Adobe InDesign, for instance; they will learn visual principles that shape decisions about how to create rhetorically effective designs that, in some cases, aim to effect social change among public audiences.

We also highlight ethical and social-justice oriented literacies more intentionally in our revised mission statement. In a new course, *Writing with Data*, we engage students in activities like seeking IRB approval for systematic primary research, collecting data, and writing up results truthfully. This amplified focus on collecting, analyzing, and writing about primary data works to empower our students to accurately

represent data-based findings through visuals and text. We intend to help students see connections between data and argument (another approach to teaching rhetorical literacy) and understand how to report data honestly (ethical literacy) to influence social or public issues that affect audiences in concrete ways (social-justice literacy). These curricular revisions prepare our students to communicate competently in a world where clear, honest presentation and analysis of data matter more than ever—particularly in nonprofit and other public contexts.

Finally, our new mission reflects more purposeful emphasis on social literacy through more emphasis on creative nonfiction, storytelling, and writing in the public sphere. While our program has always empowered students to write documents intended to be consumed by the public, we now overtly mention public writing in our mission statement, directly addressing social literacy. In addition to naming “public writing” as a focus in our new and revised classes, we have also made a conscious decision to require more client-based projects and internships—engaging students with “the *involved* audience. . . [which assists] in the decision-marking, problem-solving, strategy-building act of invention” (Cook, 2002, p. 11). This change mirrors the move toward more social, public-facing professional writing programs across the country and aligns more closely with the types of professional writing positions our students seek.

Our new mission statement now reads:

The mission of the PPW program is to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully plan, develop, and revise documents for businesses, organizations, and institutions. Specifically, successful PPW majors will:

- *produce clear, effective, well-edited writing that serves the needs and interests of various audiences and publics;*
- *develop a robust understanding of visual rhetoric and the ability to use visual techniques to enhance the effectiveness of their documents;*
- *analyze and write meaningfully about data drawn from various fields and sources;*
- *explore writing in both traditional and emergent genres.*

3. Before and after: Learning outcomes and curriculum redesign

Modernizing our program to layer Cook’s (2002) six essential and social-justice focused literacies into our curriculum more substantively also required evaluating and revising our original student learning

outcomes (LOs). The original Professional Writing and Editing program highlighted the two product-focused competencies of writing and editing and, in so doing, placed most of the focus on basic and rhetorical literacies. The third original LO focused on design, addressing technological literacy somewhat; however, most design instruction in our original program centered on teaching software (i.e., Adobe Page-Maker in the 1990s and InDesign in the 2000s) rather than design principles. Even after our program name changed in 2013 to Professional and Technical Writing, our LOs remained centered on basic, rhetorical, and technological literacies. Historically, we assessed students' mastery over these LOs by examining final written products: the content of written documents (writing), the degree to which surface-level errors remained in the prose (editing), and the inclusion of basic visual-design principles in documents (design). The additional three literacies described by Cook (2002)—social, ethical, and critical—received inconsistent or scant attention in our original curriculum.

During our curricular redesign, we have attempted to refocus our learning outcomes to account for the full range of literacies professional writers need. While we have preserved our original focus on the quality of the final product (basic, rhetorical, and technological literacies), we have also implemented changes that attempt to capture a sense of the writing process. This new process-focused stance allows more attentiveness to social, ethical, and critical literacies. Below, we show side-by-side views of our old and new LOs, followed by a mapping of which of our courses cover which LOs and the extent to which these courses layer all six literacies.

3.1. Learning outcome 1

We kept this LO the same but incorporated more emphasis on the rhetorical dimensions of texts by elaborating how students demonstrate effective writing. This revised LO addresses rhetorical literacy with more depth and breadth than the original LO.

Table 4. Learning Outcome 1

Old	New
LO 1. WRITE documents to meet the demands, purpose, and interests of a specific client and audience.	LO 1. WRITE documents to meet the demands, purpose, and interests of a specific client and audience.
Demonstrated through the production of clear, professional prose appropriate to specific genres and contexts.	Demonstrated through the production of clear, professional prose appropriate to specific rhetorical strategies (e.g., consideration of audience, purpose, context, genre).

Old	New
Demonstrated through the consistent use of an appropriate style guide or in-house style.	Demonstrated through the consistent use of an appropriate style guide or in-house style.
	Demonstrated as the presence of a minimum of inappropriate sentence-level language choices (e.g., style, usage, syntax, grammar, mechanics).

3.2. Learning outcome 2

We maintained this outcome but absorbed the “hardware and software” element into the first statement about how the LO is demonstrated. In the past, we relied upon Adobe InDesign almost exclusively for our design-tool requirement, but the new curriculum is devised to require design across multiple courses using multiple tools (e.g., Microsoft Word for typography and Excel for graph and chart creation). This more robust coverage of visual rhetoric attempts to enrich students’ technological literacy by equipping them with theories of design that can be applied across genres and platforms to meet their audience’s unique needs.

Table 5. Learning Outcome 2

Old	New
LO 2. DESIGN documents to meet the demands, purpose and interests of a specific client and audience.	LO 2. DESIGN documents to meet the demands, purpose, and interests of a specific client and audience.
Demonstrated through effective use of basic document design principles as well as design conventions of specific genres.	Demonstrated through effective use of basic document design principles and design conventions of specific genres, using available hardware and software packages.
Demonstrated through effective use of available hardware and software packages.	

3.3. Learning outcome 3

We added two important elements to this revised LO: a statement about setting and meeting criteria established by real audience(s) and the point that revising involves multiple stakeholders and potential authorities. This LO prioritizes social, ethical, and social-justice oriented literacies and aims to encourage more client-based and service-learn-

ing projects—particularly ones that explicitly support social-justice causes. This LO also manifests in our new curriculum as deeper audience-analysis activities (e.g., writing audience personas as described in Dayton, 2003), implementing document user-testing to center revision around readers’ real needs, and composing reflective revision memos.

Table 6. Learning Outcome 3

Old	New
LO 3. EDIT documents to meet the demands, purpose, and interests of a specific client and audience.	LO 3. REFLECT and REVISE their documents’ writing and design using concrete criteria set by a specific client and audience.
Demonstrated through substantive, positive changes in response to comments, criticisms, and questions, including improvements in both writing and design for the sake of coherence, clarity, consistency, and readability.	Demonstrated through meaningful reflection on one’s own writing and design choices with a focus on revision plans that prioritize higher-level concerns over surface-level issues.
Demonstrated through prose that is free of mechanical, grammatical, or diction errors.	Demonstrated through substantive, positive changes to document(s) made in response to reader comments, criticisms, and questions, including improvements in both writing and design for the sake of coherence, clarity, consistency, and readability.

3.4. Learning outcome 4

This new LO explicitly acknowledges oral presentations—another effort to integrate social literacy into our revised program. While our program has always required oral presentations in courses, emphasizing oral communication with a distinct LO strives to communicate the significance of knowing how to present one’s writing projects visually and orally to an audience of stakeholders. Our students practice this important literacy in capstone presentations given to our entire faculty, fellow students, and members of our local chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

Table 7. Learning Outcome 4

LO 4. DELIVER ORAL PRESENTATIONS of their documents' writing and design using professionally designed visual aids.
Demonstrated through focused, well-organized presentation that attends to audience needs (e.g., detail, lexicon, structure).
Demonstrated through prose that is free of mechanical, grammatical, or diction errors.
Demonstrated through effective engagement with the audience, including ability to respond to questions and comments.
Demonstrated through effective use of presentation software and visual aids.

3.5. Layering our new learning outcomes in our core courses

These revised and new learning outcomes do not simply sit alongside our new curriculum as goals to keep in mind. They function as the criteria by which our courses are designed and by which our program is assessed. To demonstrate how we intend to use them for those purposes, we have mapped them to each of our program's nine core courses, identifying relevant LOs as "high," "medium," or "low" priority:

Table 8. Learning Outcome Priorities in Nine Core Courses in the New Curriculum

Course	LO 1: Write	LO 2: Design	LO 3: Reflect/ Revise	LO 4: Present
Intro to Public, Prof., and Tech. Writing	High	Medium	High	Medium
Writing with Data	High	High	Medium	High
Writing for Online Media	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Rhetoric and Argument	High	Low	High	Low
Ethnographic Writing	High	High	High	Low
Grant Writing	High	Low	High	Low
Visual Rhetoric	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Copyediting	High	Low	High	Low
PPW Senior Project	High	High	High	High

As Table 8 shows, we have attempted to layer and balance the aforementioned literacies into our new core courses through our LOs. While all four learning outcomes matter across our program, the highest-priority outcomes remain writing and reflecting/revising

because of our program's central focus on rhetorical and basic literacies. Reinforcing our program's emphasis on technological, ethical, and social literacies, design and presentation emerge as critical outcomes represented in at least half of our core courses. Finally, while educators may not want to label any LO as "low" priority, some classes emphasize one LO less than others. Indeed, the only course where all LOs receive "high" priority is the capstone course, in which students are expected to demonstrate competence in all essential outcomes and literacies. As Lisa Melançon and Joanna Schreiber (2018) argue, our capstone course represents the site where students "[bring] together theories and practices of the academic field and the workplace" (p. 322).

4. Refining core courses in the major

Once our vision for our revised program had been documented in our new mission statement and learning outcomes, we updated core course names, descriptions, and syllabuses to reflect our program's new focus on a fuller breadth of literacies. To that end, we revised our core curriculum (27 semester hours) by revising some existing core courses, creating new courses, and moving one course from our core requirements to our elective options.

We first revised the names and descriptions of several existing core courses to create more coherence across the program. Two goals motivated our course revisions: 1) making the courses more appealing to students and 2) reflecting more accurately how courses had been taught in recent years. While courses are more than names and descriptions, as "highly visible, public facing, and readily available" (Melançon & Schreiber, 2018, p. 329) texts, they can determine whether students register for classes. For instance, a vaguely named course, "Advanced Writing," had been taught for decades in our department as an upper-division nonfiction narrative writing course. However, because the course description presented an imprecise focus, one professional writing faculty member has taught the course in recent years as an ethnographic writing class. Others have taught it as the study of nonfiction, often personal essays. We responded to this long-standing curricular ambiguity by replacing the old, unclear "Advanced Writing" class with two new classes: "Nonfiction Narrative Writing" and "Ethnographic Writing:"

Table 9: Evolution of Advanced Writing Course

Old Advanced Writing Description	New Ethnographic Writing Description	New Nonfiction Narrative Writing Description
Designed to strengthen proficiency in essay writing, with emphasis on the development of ideas, analysis of style, clarity of thought and expression, editing, and proofreading.	Students learn to analyze and produce ethnographic nonfiction texts by learning 1) the rhetorical strategies ethnographic writers use to advance claims (e.g., purpose, audience, stance, voice, and genre); 2) how to collect and analyze primary and secondary sources of information; and 3) how to communicate in written, audio, visual, and multimodal formats, using various technologies.	Using a range of prose styles (e.g., personal essays, memoirs, travel writing, political commentary), students learn to 1) identify and use rhetorical elements informing narrative nonfiction writing situations (purpose and audience, characters and dialogue, the narrative arc, narrative themes, imagery, and symbolism, and metaphor); 2) read, analyze, and write narrative nonfiction essays, using various sources of information; 3) communicate in multimodal formats.

4.1. Revised and new core courses

In addition to revising existing courses, we also added several new courses and removed one course from our core curriculum:

Table 10: Original Core Courses and Revised Core Courses

Original Core Course	Revised Core Course
Professional and Technical Writing	Intro to Public, Prof., and Tech Writing
Proposal and Report Writing	Writing with Data
Writing for Online Environments	Writing for Online Media
Readings in Prof. and Tech. Writing	Rhetoric and Argument
Advanced Writing	Ethnographic Writing
Advanced Prof. and Tech. Writing	Grant Writing
Professional and Technical Editing	Copyediting
PTW Senior Project	PPW Senior Project
	Visual Rhetoric
Principles of Linguistics	<i>Removed</i>

Introduction to Public, Professional, and Technical Writing: Replacing our original gateway course, this new introductory course maintains the original focus on rhetorical concepts like audience, purpose, and context, and adds a new public-writing component. Intended to be the first core course taken by majors, this course provides a survey of key genres in professional writing. Because the course has historically served programs in our university's STEM college, we retained "technical" in the title to signal that we include instruction in technical writing.

Writing with Data: We created this revised course to replace the original course, Proposal and Report Writing, which problematically "[settled] into teaching generic forms" (Melançon, 2018, p. 206) without providing appropriate context for those genres. This revised course emphasizes collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data in various professional genres for diverse audiences. Students learn about seeking IRB approval and using primary research methods (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups, online community analysis, and quasi and true experiments). Students also become familiarized with designing and writing about visual representations of data. The course aims to help students use data to investigate, analyze, and write about real-world problems and serves as one site where social-justice content may be addressed. Students may select a local social-justice focused issue for their course projects and collect data that aims to effect change in our community.

Writing for Online Media: This course originally focused on writing copy for the Videotex system of the 1970s. Later, the course taught students HTML and CSS and how to use online WYSIWIG editors to create web projects. As online work became more commonplace, the course became "Writing for Online Environments," with added attention to developing online forms, interactive PDFs, and electronic portfolios. Recently, the course has moved to a more streamlined structure, focusing on rhetorical matters of writing online articles in different forms (informative, instructional, persuasive, analytical) and capitalizing on the functionality of online media (e.g., interactivity and juxtaposing text, images, audio, and video).

Rhetoric and Argument: This new course explicitly addresses rhetorical concepts and themes that have always been implicitly covered in our courses. Providing students with more in-depth exposure to classical and modern rhetoric, the course explores how current forms of written communication can be examined using rhetorical theory. The course also builds upon the research-based argumentation that students typically learn in first-year writing. Expanding this framework, the course examines additional rhetorical dimensions of public,

professional, and technical writing. Because the course focuses on argumentation and advocacy, this course serves as a natural site for a social-justice perspective.

Ethnographic Writing: Unlike the vaguely framed Advanced Writing course, this new course more accurately reflects one way the course has been taught recently. Through ethnographic research and writing assignments, students analyze and produce ethnographic nonfiction texts by focusing on the rhetorical strategies ethnographic writers use to advance claims (e.g., purpose, audience, stance, voice, and genre). Students write ethnographic nonfiction essays using primary and secondary sources of information (e.g., field observations, ethnographic interviews, archival research). Students also learn to use various technologies to communicate in written, audio, visual, and multimodal formats.

Grant Writing: Replacing the ambiguously named “Advanced Professional and Technical Writing” course, this new course in grant writing is modeled after our graduate-level grant-writing course. We designed this undergraduate course for students across campus and within our program who would like to pursue grant writing. In this course, students learn about writing grant proposals, beginning with “an emphasis on rhetorical exigencies” (Melançon, 2018, p. 207) motivating grant proposals. They learn how grant proposals enable research in natural, behavioral, and social sciences; facilitate civic and educational projects and social change; and advance community development and artistic initiatives.

Copyediting: As “Professional and Technical Editing,” the original course did not require a complete overhaul; however, the way it was taught over the years often departed from the core editing practices covered in the course description. The revised course focuses more closely and specifically on professional copyediting. In part, this change stems from a desire to narrow the scope of the course’s coverage, and in part it is motivated by the most recent edition of Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz’s (2019) *The Copyeditor’s Handbook* and *The Copyeditor’s Workbook*; this textbook provides a focused foundation in the work of professional copyediting. The topics covered in the textbook represent the art of copyediting in the breadth and depth appropriate to our vision for the course.

PPW Senior Project: Revisions to the capstone course represent minor changes to the name and description; primarily, we have added the public-writing component. In the course, we connect students to real clients—as most capstone courses in our field do (see Melançon & Schreiber, 2018, p. 326)—to address problems and opportunities

that can be solved with professional documents. Combining “knowledge and skills gained from across the other courses in the degree program to serve as a ‘cumulative experience’ for students” (Melançon & Schreiber, 2018, p. 324), the capstone course involves individualized research, analysis, development, and oral presentation of a project that responds to clients’ needs. Students learn to incorporate audience-appropriate writing, design, and editing in a usable high-quality product. They also reflect on their final project in writing and in a presentation to the faculty (Melançon & Schreiber, 2018).

Visual Rhetoric: This new core course targets a competency we tangentially covered in various courses in the original program, providing a stronger, more coherent basis in visual literacy. This course considers student feedback from several years, our own sense of the value of understanding foundational design principles, and the general importance of visual rhetoric in modern society. Students analyze documents in terms of the rhetorical and functional roles their visual elements play, and they produce their own documents using software packages like Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint and Adobe InDesign.

4.2. Layering literacies in revised and new core courses.

These revisions to our core curriculum clarify the genres and competencies covered in our classes and modernize and streamline the topics covered. Additionally, these changes align our program’s aims and requirements with similar programs across the country—a goal others in the field contend academic program administrators should work toward (Schreiber & Melançon, 2019). These revisions also reflect a more deliberate layering of Cook’s six literacies and social-justice literacy (see Table 11).

Table 11 demonstrates that not all literacies receive close attention in every course. Indeed, only “basic” and “rhetorical” literacies receive high priority in all core courses. We assign the remaining literacies different degrees of focus depending on each course’s goals, objectives, and genres. For instance, social literacy receives more attention in Ethnographic Writing, Grant Writing, and the Senior Project class. In these classes, students practice social literacy by partnering with outside clients and engaging with involved audiences directly, meeting with readers who “ask clarifying questions, express concerns, and make suggestions” (Walton et al., 2016, p. 132). As another example, we focus on technological literacy more closely in Writing with Data, Writing for Online Media, Ethnographic Writing, and Visual Rhetoric as students learn to use different software to produce multimodal texts for diverse audiences. Notably, while we do not label critical or social-justice literacies as high priority in any of our classes, we expect our program to

Table 11: Priority of Literacies in New Public and Professional Writing Core Courses

Course	Basic	Rhetorical	Social	Technological	Ethical	Critical	Social Justice
Intro to Public, Prof., and Tech. Writing	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Writing with Data	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium
Writing for Online Media	High	High	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium
Rhetoric and Argument	High	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Ethnographic Writing	High	High	Medium	High	High	Low	Low
Grant Writing	High	High	High	Low	High	High	Medium
Visual Rhetoric	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low
Copyediting	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low
PPW Senior Project	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium

integrate more service-learning and social-justice focused projects into courses. For instance, we expect both literacies to assume more central roles in classes like Ethnographic Writing, Writing for Online Media, Rhetoric and Argument, and Grant Writing; in these classes, issues of equity and inclusion could be emphasized by encouraging students to engage in more intentional audience outreach and by partnering with local nonprofit organizations on social-justice oriented projects.

4.3. Expanding elective options and areas: “Writing and Language Study”

Supplementing our core courses in both the original and revised programs are supporting elective courses in related fields. In this portion of our curriculum, called “Writing and Language Study,” students choose electives that customize their degree to align with their long-term goals and interests. In the original program, students selected four courses (12 semester hours) from four categories—Professional and Technical Writing, Journalism, Creative Writing, and Linguistics—and could not take more than nine hours from a single area. In the new curriculum, students may select electives from Public and Professional Writing, Journalism, Creative Writing, Linguistics, and Communication.

Under the new “Writing and Language Study” area, students must take one additional PPW class beyond the core curriculum, and they cannot take more than six semester hours in any single area. Our rationale for these parameters stems from our university’s recent policy that allows students to count the same course(s) in their major and minor. By limiting the number of courses taken in one area, we hope to prevent students from counting all or most of their minor’s courses as major electives (e.g., a creative writing minor is six courses, and three are listed as electives under “Writing and Language Study”). More broadly, we hope that requiring students to distribute their elective courses across multiple academic areas expands their understanding of written, visual, and oral communication.

Additional PPW classes under this elective portion of the curriculum represent more specialized PPW courses that may not be offered regularly. These courses equip our students with knowledge in other subject areas: Nonfiction Narrative Writing, Writing and the Public Sphere, Writing in the Health Science Professions, and the PPW Internship class. Nonfiction Narrative Writing examines a range of prose styles, including personal essays and memoirs, travel writing, political commentary, and forms of science writing. Writing in the Public Sphere covers writing that serves the public interest (i.e., writing primarily for the nonprofit sector). Writing in the Health Science Professions introduces students to writing practices and genres produced in the health

professions with a focus on writing about health and medicine for lay audiences. Finally, the PPW Internship includes supervised work-and-learning experiences in public and professional writing under the direction of a faculty member and a supervisor at a participating business, organization, or institution; one goal of encouraging more students to complete internships derives from both anecdotal and research-based evidence of improved job outcomes for student interns (Bourelle, 2012).

Notably, as we revised the elective options, we removed a vestigial literature requirement from the program's curriculum. As mentioned, the original major developed from a traditional English literature degree program. While the bulk of the literature requirement was removed by 2013, a new course was created, "Readings in Professional Writing and Editing" (later, "Readings in Professional and Technical Writing"), and a "critical reading" requirement of two literature courses was established. These related moves served to reassure some literature colleagues that students in our program completed enough reading throughout our major. By the time we proposed our Public and Professional Writing curriculum to the department, concerns about our students' reading had largely dissipated, and no one objected to removing the remaining literature requirement.

4.4. Replacing the "Professional Area" with a traditional minor

In addition to making substantive changes to our program's mission, learning outcomes, core courses, and electives, we also revised our original curriculum's requirement for a "professional area," and instead, we added a requirement for a minor. The original BA in professional and technical writing was distinctive among majors at our institution in that it required a "professional area" instead of a minor. This "professional area" served as an 18-credit block that students could assemble with an advisor. A "professional area" could consist of a minor or it could be customized to suit students' individual interests.

The original rationale for the "professional area" held that students could pursue subject matter expertise to combine with the transferable rhetorical skills taught in our writing courses. Despite this thoughtful reasoning, the "professional area" brought practical problems and failed to function as intended. Some students selected six courses that logically fit together as a coherent area of study, but other students selected courses that only loosely related to each other. For many students, the objective became maximizing the number of courses that counted for completion of the program instead of assembling a pedagogically sound collection of courses. After noting this problem for several years, we replaced the "professional area" with a traditional

minor.

In the new program, we recommend that students meet with advisors to select a minor that supports their long-term professional goals. For instance, students with an interest in technical writing careers might select a STEM minor that provides needed subject-area expertise. Students who would like to become grant writers might choose our university’s minor in nonprofit leadership. Students who plan to work for businesses or other for-profit organizations might select a minor in business or graphic design for non-art majors. One advantage of our new requirement of a minor is that established minors present a coherent, logical set of courses that students can take to supplement the rhetorical competencies they acquire in our major.

5. Survey results on revised curriculum

To systematically assess the perceptions and interest in our revised Public and Professional Writing Program, we conducted a brief IRB-approved survey (IRB #: 2023-25, Youngstown State University) of stakeholders on our campus (see Appendix A for survey questions). We circulated our survey across our campus to all students, faculty, administrators, staff, and others. We received feedback from 144 respondents, affiliated as follows:

Table 12: Affiliation of Survey Respondents.

Respondent affiliation		
Student affiliated with the Public and Professional Writing (PPW)/Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) Program	9.03%	13
Student not affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program	40.28%	58
Faculty affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program	2.78%	4
Faculty not affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program	26.39%	38
Administration	2.78%	4
Staff	13.19%	19
Other	5.56%	8
TOTAL		144

Table 12 shows that most respondents to the survey were not affiliated with the PPW/PTW program. This distribution of respondents provides a clear idea of what the broader campus community thinks of our proposed curriculum in the new Public and Professional Writing Program.

Among the 144 respondents, 62 (43%) had heard of our professional writing program, and 83 (57%) had not heard of our program. When asked about their degree of interest in classes that teach students about writing, editing, and designing documents for businesses and organizations, 93% of respondents expressed at least some interest; 35% showed strong interest in our program.

We asked respondents to rate their perceptions of our program revisions and views of our new and revised courses. In response to a question highlighting our revised program's new emphasis on teaching students to write public-facing genres and address audiences in the nonprofit sector, nearly 90% of respondents said the changes were either somewhat or highly desirable.

We also asked respondents to rate their interest in all revised and new core course offerings and found wide support across our campus for our new and revised courses. See Table 13 for a detailed breakdown of respondent interest in our courses. Approximately 90% of respondents expressed moderate to strong interest in the following courses: Introduction to Public, Professional, and Technical Writing (90%), Writing with Data (89%), Writing for Online Media (87%), Grant Writing (91%), and Copyediting (90%). Between 75-85% of respondents expressed moderate to strong interest in the following courses: Rhetoric and Argument (85%), Ethnographic Writing (78%), Visual Rhetoric (83%), and Public and Professional Writing Senior Project (74%). The two most highly rated among these new and revised courses are Grant Writing (68 respondents expressed strong interest and 39 expressed moderate interest) and Writing with Data (65 respondents expressed strong interest and 37 expressed moderate interest).

We hypothesize that the transferability of the concepts and the versatility of the genres covered in these two courses appeal to respondents from a range of disciplines. The next two most highly rated among our new program's courses are Introduction to Public, Professional, and Technical Writing (61 respondents expressed strong interest and 45 expressed moderate interest) and Writing for Online Media (61 respondents expressed strong interest and 44 expressed moderate interest). We theorize that our introductory course appeals to respondents because the class offers a survey of the field and includes rhetorical concepts and strategies that can be applied to a range of field-specific writing. Finally, Writing for Online Media likely interests respondents because of the ubiquity of online writing and communication in our culture and the increasing demand on professionals from all fields to understand the best practices of online writing.

Table 13: Interest in our proposed courses

Course name	Strong interest	Moderate interest	Some interest	No interest	Total respondents
Introduction to Public, Professional and Technical Writing	42.36% 61	31.25% 45	17.36% 25	9.72% 14	144
Writing with Data	46.10% 65	26.24% 37	17.02% 24	10.64% 15	141
Writing for Online Media	42.96% 61	30.99% 44	13.38% 19	13.38% 19	142
Rhetoric and Argument	35.42% 51	31.25% 45	18.75% 27	15.28% 22	144
Ethnographic Writing	22.92% 33	34.72% 50	21.53% 31	21.53% 31	144
Grant Writing	47.22% 68	27.08% 39	16.67% 24	9.72% 14	144
Copypediting	42.36% 61	28.47% 41	18.75% 27	10.42% 15	144
Visual Rhetoric	29.37% 42	32.17% 46	22.38% 32	16.78% 24	143
Public and Professional Writing Senior Project	36.62% 52	23.94% 34	14.08% 20	26.06% 37	142

In response to an open-ended request for additional feedback on our new Public and Professional Writing Program, several respondents commented on the value and applicability of our new program to students across campus. One respondent commented that the program revision “makes the curriculum more relevant and applicable to a wider range of students.” Another mentioned the applicability of our new and revised courses to STEM students and to students “who may not have been interested in writing.” One individual noted that the program revision’s orientation toward “nonprofit, public-facing writing... [is a] unique program offered at YSU for students looking to further their education in that direction.” Another stated, “As a first year [*sic*] student, I’ve been debating on a minor to choose, and the revised courses have definitely made me interested in looking into choosing

PPW as my minor." Comments like these suggest that our curricular revisions may be more attractive to students outside our department.

Although most open-ended responses reflect a positive view of our new program, some survey respondents offered recommendations for our program or expressed concerns. One respondent advised us to integrate "interdepartmental collaboration to give the students a broader experience," and another suggested that the introductory course should be mandatory for some majors on campus. Notably, we do involve other departments' courses in our curriculum (see "Writing and Language Study" requirements above), and some programs do require their students to take our introductory course (e.g., some engineering and computer science students). Another survey respondent encouraged more visible marketing of the new program across campus. In terms of concerns about our new program, one respondent noted the limitation of our new program's broad-facing stance and the lack of writing instruction within specific disciplines. While we acknowledge that our program cannot offer discipline-specific writing instruction, this concern goes beyond the scope of our programmatic goals. One strategy for addressing this issue would be to guide our students to select minors in specific subject areas or fields that interest them. A few other respondents commented on potential overlap between our writing courses and courses in business and journalism; while we take these concerns seriously, our new and revised courses do not emphasize business or journalism in their content.

Overall, we conclude that our survey of campus stakeholders reflects strong support for our new Public and Professional Writing Program. We cannot draw definitive conclusions about the generalizability of these survey results to those who did not take our survey. Nonetheless, we are encouraged that most students, faculty, administrators, and staff who took our survey believe that our revised program teaches valuable competencies and benefits our students, our university, and our community.

6. Concluding comments

6.1. Benefits for students

Primarily, we hope the new program expands our graduates' professional and academic possibilities. Like graduates from our original program, graduates from the revised program will be qualified to begin careers "as writers, editors, and document developers, professional and technical writers, grant writers at regional nonprofits, marketing and public relations specialists, [and] teachers, trainers and consultants in the field" (quoted from our curricular materials circulated to students).

With a broader range of competencies and literacies acquired in the revised program, we expect our graduates to be more prepared for careers writing in public advocacy and engagement, public agencies, government, the non-profit sector, and advertising and public relations. We also hope graduates from our new program will be more fully equipped to enter graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, which remains one of the strongest growth areas within English studies.

Along with modernizing and expanding our program, we also hope the program's new name and focus align with more students' overall interests. For years, we had anecdotally noted that most of our students did not pursue technical writing careers. We had hypothesized that the word "technical" in our program title deterred some students. While technical-writing careers remain possible for students in our revised program, we expect the new curriculum to appeal to the larger group of students who seek to write in public domains and for advocacy and social-justice purposes.

Our changes to our program also support fundamental philosophies of our academic department, college, and university. Our revised curriculum prepares our students to engage in effective communication in a wider range of contexts and critical thinking for a broader set of writing purposes. We have better aligned our program with our institution's mission "to provide innovative lifelong learning opportunities that will inspire individuals, enhance futures and enrich lives" through an increased push for service-learning projects and off-campus internships. As we continue to develop new real-world projects and positions for our students, we establish "reciprocity between the campus and the community," (Bingle & Hatcher, 1999, p. 180), an objective that improves our students, local businesses and nonprofits, and our university. Our Public and Professional Writing major strives to empower students to identify, research, and solve writing problems by understanding more genres, appealing to more audiences, and "[moving] outside of academic frameworks and into disciplinary and workplace practices" (Melançon, 2018, p. 208).

6.2. Limitations and future directions

1. *Although we did not formally consult students or other stakeholders prior to making our programmatic changes, we conducted a survey during the first semester of the revised program, and we plan to track perceptions of our revised curriculum over time.* We based several of our programmatic changes on anecdotal evidence from our capstone students' final reflections about the program as well as feedback from internship employers and service-learning cli-

ents. During the first semester of those changes taking effect, we conducted a campus-wide survey of our programmatic changes to gather input on our curricular revisions and suggestions for additional changes. To build on our recent campus survey about our programmatic changes, we plan to continue tracking perceptions of our revised program from various stakeholders within and outside of the university. In this way, as Joanna Schreiber and Lisa Melançon (2019) contend, we intend to bring together “current programmatic practices (e.g., assessment, course objectives, program outcomes, curriculum mapping, stakeholder identification) by enabling the alignment of programmatic and course outcomes with field-wide curricular practices, while also making these practices and reflections visible in documentation” (p. 262).

2. *While we have no guarantee that our programmatic changes will attract more students, we intend to follow enrollment trends and student feedback to assess the effect of the new curriculum. We expect our revised major and minor to appeal to more students for the reasons we have described in this article, but we must follow our enrollment numbers each semester for several years to make any determinations. Because various factors influence program enrollment, we will not be able to make causal assumptions. However, increasing enrollment in the program may indicate positive perceptions of our changes. In addition to following enrollment numbers, we plan to conduct more robust exit surveys for our graduating senior students and collect reflective memos at the end of our senior-level courses to develop a fuller picture of students’ experiences with the new curriculum.*
3. *Because Cook’s (2002) six literacies and social-justice focused literacies may exclude other essential literacies, we plan to integrate other frameworks into ongoing curricular improvements. While we do not limit our programmatic and course goals to these literacies, this framework has informed our approach to our recent curricular redesign. Moving forward, we plan to keep working to apply these literacies (e.g., by layering critical and social-justice oriented literacies into more courses), and we intend to incorporate other professional-writing frameworks that align with our overarching aims.*

6.3. Key takeaways

1. *Enrollment declines in academic programs may result from issues like outdated curricula and static classes; solving these curricular problems requires regular and thorough reviews at global and local levels. While programmatic consistency maintains stability for both stu-*

dents and administration observers, consistency for its own sake can leave a program stale and out of step with the field's current pedagogical best practices. Annual program assessment can be useful, but this institutional practice does not guarantee genuine program change. Assessment instruments can be designed and applied, and results can be produced to satisfy institutional goals, without a program necessarily becoming more engaging or useful to students. As this program showcase describes, updating static, outdated professional writing courses and curricula involves aligning the program with similar, reputable academic programs.

2. *Academic programs should be theoretically informed.* While a program of study should not be a mechanical application of any theory, program changes can and should be grounded in concepts that hold currency in the field and that can be applied fruitfully. Instead of approaching program maintenance in a piecemeal fashion without broader theoretical concepts driving curricular revisions, Cook's (2002) layered-literacies approach represents one solid framework for informing curriculum structures, learning outcomes, and individual courses. We also view Walton et al. (2016) as a timely guide for incorporating a social justice focus in key courses in our program. Moving forward, another framework we expect to consider as we evaluate our new program comes from Schreiber and Melançon (2019): the GRAM model of continuous improvement encourages gathering data about an academic program, "reading landscapes" (p. 262) in the field, analyzing local and global information, and making modifications to improve curricula.
3. *Program faculty should not hesitate to make major changes to academic curricula.* For many years, our program remained in a rut, in part because of the inherent conservatism of academia. When our program began, our major looked like a traditional English literature degree with some professional writing course requirements. This model remained in place for decades, as literature faculty worried that students in our program would graduate without the appropriate background in "English." When we undertook this program change, we decided to engage in a serious overhaul of our curriculum. That perspective facilitated our development of a new program that we hope will truly engage more students and serve our pedagogical and professional goals for them.

7. Appendix A

Full Survey:

1) What is your status at the university?

- Student affiliated with the Public and Professional Writing (PPW)/Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) Program
- Student not affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program
- Faculty affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program
- Faculty not affiliated with the PPW/PTW Program
- Administration
- Staff
- Other, please specify:

2) Have you heard of YSU's Public and Professional Writing (PPW)/Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) Program in the Department of English and World Languages (EWL)?

- Yes
- No

3) How much interest do you have in classes that teach students about writing, editing, and designing documents for businesses and organizations?

1. Strong interest
2. Moderate interest
3. Some interest
4. No interest

4) The Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) Program has recently been revised into a Public and Professional Writing (PPW) Program with more emphasis on teaching students to write public-facing genres and address audiences in the nonprofit sector. Rate your perception of this program change.

1. Highly desirable
2. Somewhat desirable
3. Somewhat undesirable
4. Highly undesirable

5) Several courses in the new Public and Professional Writing (PPW) Program have been revised to update older courses. Please rate your interest in the new Public and Professional Writing (PPW) core courses.

1. Strong interest
2. Moderate interest

3. Some interest
4. No interest

Introduction to Public, Professional, and Technical Writing

Course Description: Exploration of writing for public and professional/technical audiences. Students examine the use of writing in public organizations, government, the nonprofit sector, the safety and health professions, and political and social campaigns. With an emphasis on audience and purpose, students consider the rhetorical and ethical demands of writing in public, professional and technical contexts. Assignments may include analysis and research, proposals, media kits, editorials, instructions, position papers, and web content.

Writing with Data

Course Description: Introduction to writing effectively with data. Students examine various forms of qualitative and quantitative data, focusing on how to use data rhetorically to advance research-based arguments for lay and specialized audiences. Students collect, write about, and cite qualitative and quantitative data, including methods such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, online community analysis, and quasi and true experiments. Students also learn how writers incorporate data-driven arguments into different written genres and represent those arguments using data-visualization tools. No knowledge of statistics is required.

Writing for Online Media

Course Description: Analysis of the rhetoric of online verbal and visual discourse and exploration of techniques for examining and producing documents meant to be accessed online. Students consider common audiences, purposes, and genre expectations for various genres of online writing. Students use web design applications to produce online writing that serves a range of rhetorical purposes.

Rhetoric and Argument

Course Description: Examination of historical and contemporary rhetorical concepts that inform written arguments. Students analyze present-day issues, evaluate other writers' arguments, and construct a range of arguments that incorporate written, visual, oral, and digital modes of representation. Students design and participate in written and oral debates on current topics and compose their own forms of public persuasive communication.

Ethnographic Writing

Course Description: Analysis and production of ethnographic nonfiction texts with a focus on the rhetorical strategies ethnographic writers use to advance claims. Students learn to recognize the rhetorical elements that inform ethnographic writing situations, including purpose, audience, stance, voice, and genre. Students write ethnographic nonfiction essays using primary and secondary sources of information and learn to communicate in written, audio, visual, and multimodal formats, using various technologies.

Grant Writing

Course Description: Study of various issues and strategies involved in writing grant proposals to help solve a range of problems and support various causes that improve people's lives and communities. Students learn how grant proposals enable significant research in natural, behavioral, and social sciences; facilitate civic and educational projects; and advance community development and artistic initiatives. Students learn the functions and conventions of grant proposals, the range of research required to write grant proposals, and the rhetorical and practical processes that produce them and lead to approval. The course emphasizes two key stages of writing grant proposals: developing the proposal (including defining needs, reviewing existing projects and literature, and researching sources of funds), and writing the proposal with a particular audience in mind.

Copyediting

Course Description: Study of the skills needed to make appropriate decisions about the content, grammar, mechanics, style, organization, and format of scholarly, trade, journalistic, and other professional publications, including newsletters and electronic publications. Topics include stages in the publishing process, proofreading, hard-copy versus online editing, mechanical and substantive editing, and the use of house and press styles.

Visual Rhetoric

Course Description: Study of visual elements across a range of historical and contemporary rhetorical practices and genres. Students explore the rhetorical implications of design and analyze how design and writing work together as an integrated process. Students work with specific technological tools to analyze existing texts and to create single- and multi-paged texts for particular rhetorical purposes, audiences, and contexts.

Public and Professional Writing Senior Project

Course Description: Capstone experience for the Public and Professional Writing major. Individualized research, analysis, development, and oral presentation of a project that responds to a client's needs by incorporating audience-appropriate writing, design, and/or editing in a usable high-quality product. Taken during the student's final undergraduate year.

6) Please share any feedback or comments you have about the Public and Professional Writing (PPW) Program or its revised and new courses.

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