

Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Cultures

WRAC 2024–2030

Strategic Plan



Summary

The Strategic Plan 2024–2030 for the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Cultures is values-enacted and values-anchored. We situate our work in collaboration; individual and community well-being and belonging; equity, inclusion, and intersectionality; inquiry, learning, and openness; and respect, trust, mutual support, and the assumption of good faith. Our plan leverages our strengths as a department anchored in the disciplinary work of rhetoric and writing studies and recognizes our diversity in scholarly and pedagogical foci. Our plan builds on these existing strengths and capacities while introducing and exploring new possibilities.

The plan echoes the values and strategic priorities of both the university and the College of Arts & Letters and articulates six key objectives:

<p>Objective 1 We will continue to foster a workplace culture and department community in which all members can thrive in their professional paths.</p>	<p>Objective 4 We will continue to realize First-Year Writing program values of equity, inclusion, and belonging in student experience and teacher development, and to shape multiple research projects around and in the First-Year Writing Program.</p>
<p>Objective 2 We will enhance our department faculty by recruiting and retaining diverse faculty across roles (teaching-focused faculty, academic specialists, and tenure-system faculty) through inclusive processes and practices.</p>	<p>Objective 5 We will invest in our BA in Professional and Public Writing, our Minor in Writing, and the BA in Experience Architecture to continue to attract a diverse body of students engaged through equity, inclusivity, well-being, and belonging.</p>
<p>Objective 3 We will increase the research productivity of the department by reengaging research clusters and groups.</p>	<p>Objective 6 We will refocus our PhD program so that it will be nationally recognized as a model of Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholarship, teaching, engagement, and professionalization offering support to students in their varied career paths after degree completion.</p>



Context and Framework

Our department strategic plan asserts who we are—as a team, as a community, as a place to learn, as a place to work, and as the individuals who create, shape, and sustain the department.

Our department strategic plan articulates what is of importance to us, to our students, our staff, and our faculty. It describes how we understand and evidence our successes. It documents our commitments—to our collective work, to each other, and to the students we teach. It identifies the challenges we face and the opportunities we are pursuing and plan to pursue.

Our strategic plan is:

- a method of bringing into focus and engaging our department mission and values
- a way to express the identity of our unit to outside audiences (including the college, the broader university, and beyond)
- a way to ensure stability when leadership or context around us changes
- a framework for understanding our needs and building toward making resource requests
- a blueprint for how we will engage and amplify resources within and around us
- a plan to address obstacles or challenges we are currently facing

Our strategic plan is about values, empathy, communication, and representation; it addresses and imagines how we can continue to make writing, in the context of humanistic inquiry and values, hold meaningful value for our students.

Our strategic plan resonates with our institutional context—imagining our future in line with the CAL Strategic Plan, the MSU 2030 Strategic Plan, and the DEI Strategic Plan. The plan also resonates with our disciplinary and national context—navigating the current context and imagining our future in consideration of the cultural, political, economic, and other forces at play in the world today.

Our strategic plan articulates how we:

- see challenges or successes in our work—we are disciplinary experts who understand the tableaux of our field (writing studies writ broadly) better than outsiders can/will
- align our department goals with college- and university-level goals to better prepare for stabilizing our work, pursuing innovations, and requesting resources
- articulate the identity of our unit—administrators change, faculty move on, students come and go; our strategic plan anchors the values, practices, and identity of our unit
- engage transparency around merit raises, promotions, resources, and leadership opportunities

Our Strategic Planning Values

In Fall 2023, members of the department—graduate students, staff, and faculty—worked to surface values to guide our strategic plan development and implementation:

Collaboration	Individual and community well-being and belonging	Equity, inclusion, and intersectionality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek consensus about what collaboration means and how we can implement it. ● Focus on idea-sharing and conversations across committees, roles, and ranks. ● Provide space for multiple modes of engagement and communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Value everyone’s work. ● Help each other so we can each do our best work, and the best work of the department. ● Assess labor practices with attention toward balance and health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exercise and uphold cultural humility. ● Find ways to distribute equity and justice engagement across the work of all departmental committees. ● Actively work to ensure that a diversity of perspectives are included in any project.

Inquiry, learning, and openness	Respect, trust, mutual support, and the assumption of good faith
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen and hold space for conversations and understanding. ● Challenge ourselves to learn new things and be open to varied ways to approach a problem or project. ● Create spaces for different groups to contribute feedback. ● Listen across programs with an effort toward cohesive plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage empathetic listening. ● Respect differences of opinion. ● Work not necessarily toward the “final word,” but toward shared goals and outcomes. ● Hold each other collectively accountable for upholding community norms. ● Give each other grace and the benefit of the doubt. ● Believe in and assume good intentions and good will of others.

Goals of MSU’s 2030 Strategic Plan

<p>Student Success: Provide an exceptional educational experience for all students that prepares them for postgraduate success, achieving high graduation rates with no opportunity gaps.</p>	<p>Sustainable Health: Enhance quality of life for people everywhere by comprehensively leveraging expertise and research activity to improve health and the systems that affect health.</p>
<p>Staff and Faculty Success: Support career development and well-being of staff, faculty and postdoctoral research associates at MSU, focusing on creating a best-in-class workplace culture and environment in which excellence and opportunity thrive.</p>	<p>Stewardship and Sustainability: Provide exemplary stewardship of institutional resources to foster the long-term sustainability of MSU and its high-quality education, research and outreach and engagement programs.</p>
<p>Discovery, Creativity and Innovation for Excellence and Global Impact: Be a leader in developing transdisciplinary solutions to ecological and human problems affected by social, economic, political, climate and environmental changes.</p>	<p>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Become a national leader in increasing diversity, promoting inclusion, ensuring equity and eliminating disparities on our campus and beyond.</p>

CAL’s Values and Strategic Priorities

We engage our work as informed by and attentive to the 2030 MSU Strategic Plan pillars and the values and strategic priorities of the College of Arts & Letters.

CAL’s Values

- Equity: inclusivity, diversity, social justice, equitable access, accessibility
- Openness: transparency, open process, candor, accountability, open source
- Community: collaboration, collegiality, empathy, respect, connection

CAL’s Strategic Priorities

1. Enrich undergraduate and graduate education
2. Recruit and retain world-class faculty
3. Enhance research and creative activity



WRAC's Mission, Values, and Actions

Our Mission

The department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Cultures is the heart of and home for writing instruction and research at Michigan State University. Across our programs and initiatives, we emphasize curiosity and the robust exchange of ideas along with attention to the importance of writing—drawing across techniques and media, being attentive to audience and purpose, sharing one's ideas with the world, and working in coalition to collectively compose a better world. We engage writing as humanistic and ethically anchored work. We are committed to preparing excellent writers within the culturally, technologically, and economically dynamic environments of the 21st century and to shaping research and extending scholarly conversations in rhetoric and writing studies.

Our faculty and graduate students engage writing studies research in areas including but not limited to disability and access; social justice; multilingualism/translingualism; asset-based and culturally supportive pedagogies; transnationalism and globalization; feminist theory; digital, cultural, and decolonial rhetorics; multimodal composing; visual rhetorics; soundwriting; composition pedagogy; writing program administration; community literacies; writing center studies; experience architecture; and professional and technical communication.

We engage and sustain practices that acknowledge differences and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist action. We share the College of Arts & Letters commitment to equity, openness, and community as core values. We recognize and value diversity, which includes differences of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, ability, age, religion, politics, and socio-economic status. We extend this definition to include a diversity of cultural-rhetorical practices and approaches to writing.

Our Values and Actions

- We support students in transitioning to college and specifically to college-level writing and researching; our First-Year Writing classes are not a gate, but a welcome mat; not a “weeder” course, but a seed course. Our undergraduate programs engage students in writing within the dynamic cultural, digital, innovation-driven, theoretical, rhetorical, and flexible spaces, places, and tools of today's communication landscapes.
- Our graduate programs aim to prepare the next generation of leaders, thinkers, teachers, and innovators in the discipline of rhetoric and writing and in related fields both inside and outside of academia.
- We teach writing—framed by inquiry, discovery, and communication; engaged through reflective practices; focused on rhetorical and technological tools, means, and methods.
- Our research contributes to and extends scholarly conversations and seeks to (re)shape the discipline of rhetoric and writing studies.

- We build community; we work in and with community. We work hard to nurture an intellectual community that seeks out and welcomes all individuals and that openly makes space for the broadest possible spectrum of diversity across categories of age, home language, life experience, gender, abilities, race, ethnicity, class, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, and geographic identification.
- We are committed to creating, supporting, and sustaining a culture of care across our programs and among all of our faculty, students, and staff.
- We support all staff, students, and faculty—research-focused faculty, teaching-focused faculty, and academic specialists—in pursuing and creating meaningful pathways to intellectual and professional leadership.
- We engage MSU’s strategic attention to values and practices of collaboration, equity, equality, inclusion, integrity, and respect.

Strategic Plan Components

Objective 1

We will continue to foster a workplace culture and department community in which all members can thrive in their professional paths. We will:

- develop a method of informing fellow faculty of current projects (research, teaching innovations, community engagement, invitations to collaborate)
- open up more pathways and opportunities for collaboration across the department and the university
- ensure that we recognize and draw on each others’ knowledge and experience as assets in the work we do together
- participate in robust mentoring opportunities within and toward a variety of professional goals and milestones

Leaders: WRAC Chair; WRAC leadership; all faculty elected to or appointed to a department committee; all faculty

Assessment activities: Develop and run a department climate survey, with follow-up surveys and opportunities to share feedback annually.



Objective 2

We will enhance our **department faculty** by recruiting and retaining diverse faculty across roles (teaching-focused faculty, academic specialists, and tenure-system faculty) through inclusive processes and practices. We will:

- assess the current department climate in part by surveying faculty across roles and ranks regarding their experiences to inform actions the Department can take to ensure better equity, diversity and inclusion, with intersectionality as an undergirding principle
- support and foster the creation of spaces where diverse faculty, especially faculty of color, can speak to their particular experiences and find community
- ensure that hiring committees for faculty of any rank take into account the importance of representation and positionality in attracting, recruiting, and supporting diverse faculty to support students of diverse backgrounds
- be attentive to the overburdening of faculty of color, especially in the context of diversity, equity, inclusion, well-being, and belongingness initiatives; ensure that a diverse range of individuals are participating in such work

Leaders: WRAC Chair; WRAC leadership; WRAC Advisory Council

Assessment activities: Develop and run a department climate survey, with follow-up surveys and opportunities to share feedback annually.

Objective 3

We will increase the **research productivity** of the department by reengaging research clusters and groups and leveraging the project support of WIDE: Writing, Information, and Digital Experience. We will:



- develop research clusters and support to identify and apply for interdisciplinary funding sources, including external grants
- value research as engagement and public scholarship to raise the public profile of the department and our work
- continue to recognize a broad range of faculty research and creative work
- create and run a survey to help identify faculty perceptions of obstacles and missing opportunities and barriers to research productivity
- engage a department-level evaluation of faculty research productivity, considering what is being produced (qualitative) and what is the rate of production and reception (quantitative)

- practice intentional stewardship of faculty time to enable new and support ongoing research projects

Leaders: WRAC Chair; WRAC leadership; tenure-system/research faculty.

Assessment activities: Produce an annual evaluation of faculty research productivity to celebrate areas of expansion and to rally resources toward work that requires more support. Increase our publication output in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Increase our grant-seeking activities.

Objective 4

We will continue to realize **First-Year Writing (FYW) program** values of equity, inclusion, and belonging in student experience and teacher development. We will support the success of diverse students via an “excellence through equity” approach to learners and learning (Boyer 2030). We will:

- make data-driven decisions about how to design and support effective learning experiences, curriculum, and learning environments for culturally, socially, linguistically, and economically diverse students
- support, foster, and implement culturally responsive and anti-racist pedagogical practices through professional development and collaboration.
- increase the visibility of the FYW program—its mission, goals, and curriculum—across the university community
- strengthen and nurture collaborations with other partners central to student success (e.g., the Registrar's Office, the Neighborhood Student Success Initiative, the Office of Undergraduate Education)
- seed and support research projects in and around the First-Year Writing Program in service of student and teacher learning and success, including and related to Academic Program Review and assessment initiatives, and including a longitudinal project to study how student learning in FYW transfers into and across undergraduate degree programs
- discover and create best practices for being responsive to the needs of students, faculty, and staff in the context of our post-pandemic world of wellness concerns and mental health challenges
- create a collaborative professional community by continuing to develop and implement best practices in collaborative mentoring and teacher support anchored faculty pedagogical knowledge and experience as assets

Leaders: Director of First-Year Writing; Department Chair; First-Year Writing Administration Team; First-Year Writing Advisory Committee

Assessment activities: Analyze student success institutional research data including drop-fail-withdraw rates across student demographics; collect and analyze qualitative data related to student success and faculty learning and experiences (conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with students and faculty); collect and analyze data related to faculty learning and faculty experiences; use data and analysis to inform course and curriculum planning

Objective 5

Across Our Undergraduate Programs

We will continue to engage practices to attract a diverse body of students engaged through equity, inclusivity, well-being, and belonging. We will strive to welcome students to our programs, support them across their degree paths, nurture them toward the varied career paths they pursue, and engage them as alums in post-graduation activities, events, and connections. We will:

- advance student engagement through pedagogical innovation and inclusive classroom spaces; build on our community's attention to accessibility and inclusivity
- build structures of programmatic support for students to initiate, pursue, and share their research
- develop opportunities for conducting and sharing research within and about our programs across the college, university, and discipline



Professional and Public Writing

We will invest in our BA in Professional and Public Writing and our Minor in Writing; we will:

- create and implement a promotional and recruitment strategy that highlights our program values, student experiences, course content, and career outcomes for a range of audiences, including high school students, students enrolled in FYW classes, advisers across campus, and newly admitted MSU students
- develop co-curricular experiences (e.g., Care Day, Writing Opportunities Fair, Portfolio Showcase) for students to connect with each other and with community stakeholders, alumni, and faculty
- reinstate an alumni board to inform the program and connect students with alums and alums with each other; the board will serve as a springboard for research, teaching, and entrepreneurial partnerships within and beyond MSU and as career support for alumni and current students

Experience Architecture

We will invest in the BA in Experience Architecture; we will:

- create and implement a recruitment and promotional strategy that highlights our program values, student experiences, course content, and career outcomes for a range of audiences include including high school students, students enrolled in FYW classes, advisers across campus (especially in CSE, EGR, and BUS), and newly admitted MSU students
- develop the World Usability Day conference and attract an audience of high school seniors, students across campus, faculty and admin, alumni, and professionals so that students and faculty can share their research and work and so that the conference can serve as a connection point between industry partners and students for networking opportunities
- develop and support co-curricular experiences (e.g., Care Day, Day of Professionalization, Portfolio Showcase) for students to connect with each other, community stakeholders, alumni, and faculty
- create an alumni board to inform the program and connect students with alums and alums with each other; the board will serve as a springboard for research, teaching, and entrepreneurial partnerships within and beyond MSU and as career support for alumni and current students

Leaders: Associate Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies; Director of XA; Undergraduate Studies Advisory Committee

Assessment activities: Conduct user testing to analyze the purpose and message of promotional content; establish and assess benchmarks for promotional reach; survey students regarding classroom experiences; conduct focus groups of students and faculty; track engagement with co-curricular opportunities to assess community- and opportunity-building; survey alums to assess their current and future levels of engagement to support network building.

Objective 6

We will refocus our **PhD program** and it will be nationally recognized as a model of Rhetoric and Writing Studies scholarship, teaching, engagement, and professionalization offering support to students in their varied career paths after degree completion. We will:

- revise the PhD curriculum, including core and concentration courses; rethink the structure(s) of the concentration areas and options and review exam processes
- collaborate as a faculty and as a community; continue to share information about the revised program with the field of rhetoric and writing studies, including potential students and alumni
- develop and engage an assessment approach for the program changes

- nurture various pathways and support for students to pursue varied career paths
- invite alumni to join us in cultivating community, sharing their understandings of our field in contemporary terms, and helping us shape the new program

Leaders: Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Studies; Rhetoric and Writing Graduate Advisory Committee (RWGAC)

Assessment activities: Survey alums and current students on their program experiences; study the success of students in and beyond our program (e.g., job placement, professional organization leadership).

