

Embedded Writing Fellows FYS “Pre”-Pilot

Purpose: Embedded Writing Fellows Programs offer students supplemental writing support. Such programs complement but not replace the teaching of writing in the curriculum. There’s research that suggests having an embedded Writing Fellow in your FYS [may improve the quality of writing you receive in your seminar](#). Writing Center Fellows work with faculty to ensure the goals of their assignments are clear to students. And they create regular opportunities for students to reflect on their writing and engage in the revision process.

Why now? During the past several years, faculty have approached the Writing Center requesting versions of an embedded Writing Fellows program. An embedded program is also the most popular request we receive from students each year when we collect feedback about how to better meet student needs. Student voices were particularly prominent last year because of the perceived potential of peer review to build in-class community and motivation around the writing process.

Last year, an FYS faculty member did a “light touch” version of an embedded Writing Fellows program. This May a handful of faculty members asked if the Writing Center had the capacity to do the same for their classes. This summer the Writing Center received a small stipend to launch a pilot.

History: Embedded Writing Fellows programs were founded at Brown University in 1982 and are now established at hundreds of colleges across the country, including Pomona. As Brown University puts it, “as peers, writing fellows collaborate with faculty in around a dozen courses each semester, serving writers in those courses as sympathetic readers who provide informed, constructive criticism in order to help students strengthen the argumentation, analysis, organization, clarity, and style of papers.” Part of my own research looks at the [adaptation of such programs at German universities](#), so I’ve had a chance to survey what makes an embedded peer fellow program successful. Clear roles, communication, and training are key.

Pre-Pilot Fall Semester: We’re calling this semester a “pre”-pilot year since program guidelines (and student worker budgets!) were drafted so late in the summer. We have funds to offer up to **6 embedded Writing Center Fellows** this year. Our “real” pilot will be in the Fall 2022 (for courses across the curriculum) so that interested faculty have time to reflect on the guidelines and integrate them into their course planning if they are interested in participating in the program.

How it Works: The embedded Writing Fellows program is flexible to meet your needs. However, there are some required components to ensure that the resource is valuable to you, the Fellow, and your students. We also want to be fair to your embedded Writing Center Fellow by clarifying the boundaries of their role in advance of the collaboration.

As you decide whether one of the models would work for you, please note that Fellows should not work more than 10-12 hours in any given week. For a “more robust” collaboration the Fellow time commitment often means 6-10 or 10-12 hours per week, depending on your needs and our budget capacity.

Light Touch Version. In the “light touch” version, a Writing Center Fellow comes to your class to facilitate or help facilitate peer review for one or more assignments. (You choose how many assignments.)

Faculty Expectations:

- By **mid-September** reach out to writing@pitzer.edu so we know the dates of your assignment(s) and when you need a Fellow to come to your class.
- Meet with the Writing Center Fellow **at least twice**— once to review your expectations for their role in class and your expectations for the assignment(s) and once to debrief about the peer review workshop. In advance of the debriefing session, we will send you the Writing Center Fellow’s feedback on the collaboration so that you both can talk about what you would continue and what you would change in the process/program for future semesters. (See sample guiding questions for these meetings on the reverse)

Fellow Expectations:

- Attend the meetings with you and collaborate on a plan with you for the in-class peer review workshop(s)
- Attend an extra 1-hour training session on the embedded Writing Fellows program facilitated by the Writing Center director (in addition to a full day of orientation training and the writing pedagogy course, WRIT100.)
- Facilitate the peer review workshops, as planned with the instructor.
- Complete a survey about their experiences in the program, including what went well and what might be improved.
- Attend an informal debriefing session with the Writing Center Director with all other embedded Writing Center Fellows.

More Robust Version. In the “more robust” version, a Writing Center Fellow attends each session of your class as a guest and meets with your students outside of class—individually or in groups of 3-4—to workshop their writing. The Writing Center Fellow may also help you facilitate writing-centered activities in your class with advanced notice.

Faculty Expectations:

- **By the semester’s start:** Reach out to writing@pitzer.edu so we know to pair a Fellow with your course for the “more robust” collaboration.
- Meet with the Writing Center Fellow **biweekly**, to review your expectations for their role in class and the dates and expectations for upcoming assignments. (See sample guiding questions on page 4.)
- For the last meeting, we ask you to debrief with the Fellow on the collaboration. In advance of the debriefing session, we will send you the Writing Center Fellow’s feedback so that you both can talk about what you

would continue and what you would change in the collaboration/program for future semesters. (See sample guiding questions on page 4)

Fellow Expectations:

- Attend each class session so that your embedded Fellow has context for your class, the students, and assignments. The Fellow isn't expected to do the readings.
- Attend an extra 1-hour training session on the embedded Writing Fellows program facilitated by the Writing Center director (in addition to a full day of orientation training and the writing pedagogy course, WRIT100.)
- Schedule and meet with students individually or small groups of 3-4 to workshop their assignment drafts outside of class.
- Complete a survey about their experiences in the program and how it can be improved.
- Attend an informal debriefing session with the Writing Center Director with all other embedded Writing Center Fellows.

What Fellows Cannot Do: Since it's crucial to uphold clear boundaries between the roles of faculty and peer Fellows, we want to clarify what Fellows will not be able to do. This will be communicated to Fellows as they are recruited and during training.

- Teach classes (e.g., when you are not there), though faculty are welcome to use their planning meetings with Fellows to develop collaborative workshops or other in-class activities.
- Grade papers or read final (as opposed to rough) drafts. Fellows will never assign grades or recommend or speculate about grades with students or faculty. They are also trained not to triangulate in the faculty-student relationship in order to keep their consultations focused on the student's goals for an assignment within the parameters of the prompt and class.
- Design assignments – though faculty are welcome to ask Fellows for feedback on their assignments during their meetings with them.
- Conduct other activities that are the responsibility of the instructor (e.g., emailing class about class logistics, designing the syllabus or lesson plans, selecting or retrieving readings).
- Do the readings for your class. Fellows can serve as readers who give writers an “outside perspective” on their work, but with the added context of having a relationship with you and the class. We don't want the workload of the position to be so cumbersome as to impede a Fellow from completing their own coursework.
- Last minute requests. Being an embedded Writing Center Fellow is a significant time commitment. We ask that faculty use the early planning meetings to communicate expectations, including assignment prompts and deadlines, so that Fellows can plan their schedules as the semester starts.
- Unpaid work. Fellows are always paid for the work they do in the Writing Center, including training, preparation, class attendance/participation, and consultations.

Sample Questions for Faculty & Embedded Fellows to Discuss During Planning Meetings

First Meeting (“light touch” and “robust version”; Goals & Expectations for Collaboration)

- When will the two of you meet during the semester?
- How would you like to collaborate? What will the time commitment be?
- What are your assignments? When are they due? And what are your goals for the same?
- When will your prompts be available and when will you share them with the Fellow?
- If you plan only to have a Fellow do peer review (“light touch” version), what date would you like the Fellow to come? We recommend that you meet with the Fellow again in advance of that session, if possible.
 - How would you like to organize the peer review session? Would you like to lead it? Would you like a Fellow to lead/co-lead it? What are your goals for the peer review session? (scoring with a rubric? feedback on particular strengths and weaknesses like question, thesis, structure, evidence? review of prompt prior to peer review? etc.)
- When would you like to meet with your Fellow to debrief about the collaboration?
- Do you want to add the Fellow to your Sakai site?

Ongoing Meetings (for “more robust” version; all questions are optional of course!):

- Do you want the Fellow to play any role in your class for small group work? (e.g., circulating during group discussions)
- Do you want Fellows to give feedback on pre-writing (e.g., scaffolded assignments) or just rough drafts? When are these due?
- Do you want to solicit feedback on your assignments from the Fellow?
- Do you want to check with the Fellow after an assignment to compare notes on where students improved and where students are still struggling to learn concepts and writing strategies?
- Do you want any other feedback on the class from a confidential student perspective?
- Do you plan to change the dates of any of your assignments?
- Do you want to know which students have attended required individual or small group meetings outside of class with the peer Writing Center Fellow?
- How will the Fellow manage appointments with peers? (e.g., a Google Doc? A calendly sign-up?)

Debriefing Conversation with Fellow (“light touch” and “more robust” versions)

*Fellows will receive a short feedback form on the collaboration (not your class!) that they submit to the Writing Center that covers strengths and potential weaknesses of the collaboration so that the program can be fine-tuned. It is *not* an evaluation of your class and it will be shared only with you and the Fellow. You will be sent the evaluation in advance of your debriefing session at the semester's end. In other programs, these forms have been helpful reflective instruments for both the Fellow and the faculty member.*

- What did the Fellow see as the strengths of the collaboration in terms of meetings its goal of offering students meaningful writing support?
- How could the collaboration be improved for future students?
- Is there anything that came up in the Fellow's assessment that you'd like to learn more about?

Questions? Feedback? Feel free to email writing@pitzer.edu or stop by Andrea's office.