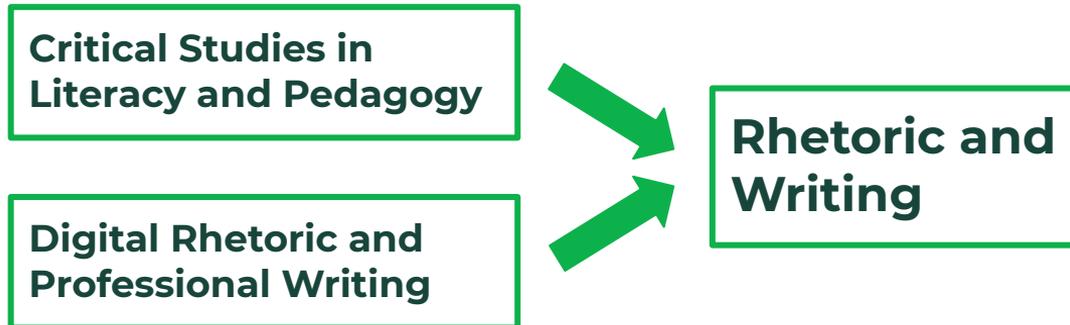# Rhetoric and Writing MA Awareness Campaign

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April 2021

Introduction / Overview

The Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures (WRAC) houses the First-Year Writing Program, two undergraduate majors, and both Master's and PhD graduate programs.

In 2021, WRAC is merging its two MA programs into a single Rhetoric and Writing MA similar to the current PhD program.

Critical Studies in Literacy and Pedagogy → **Rhetoric and Writing**

Digital Rhetoric and Professional Writing → **Rhetoric and Writing**

Strategy Statement

In the 2021–2022 academic year, the WRAC department will be merging their two Master of Arts (MA) programs, Critical Studies in Literacy and Pedagogy and Digital Rhetoric and Professional Writing, to produce one MA program in Rhetoric and Writing.

To make this transition go smoothly, it is critical that we approach the release of this information strategically.

An effective transition will reduce ambiguity, attract new audiences, and emphasize increased relevance of the program.

Campaign Goals

1. Attract new master's students
   a. Those uninterested in previous offerings
   b. Those interested in pursuing the new program as an extension of the old
2. Demonstrate the benefits of the new program
3. Show continuity of previous programs into new model (continued relevance)
4. Explain why the change was necessary
5. Transition past program information into department archives

Research

Typical MA Cohort: 5–12

With Current Students from... Michigan, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin, Puerto Rico, and more!

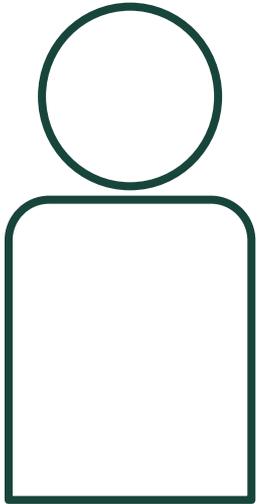**According to LinkedIn, out of 189 WRAC Master's Students...**

Stayed in the US: ~163 Alums

Stayed in the Midwest: ~72 Alums

Industry Trajectory: ~70 Alums

Academia Trajectory: ~54–60 Alums

Audience Demographics

Age: 21–30

Location: Mostly continental USA / Majority domestic students

Focus of undergraduate degree: Common backgrounds in rhetoric and writing, technical communication, business

Type of Undergrad University: Regional, Public, Private, Liberal Arts

Needs: Preparation for career in industry/non-profit or for doctoral program

Pain Points: Financial constraints, difficulty balancing ethics and work

Goals: Get an MA degree, avoid severe educational debt, work with good people, find fulfilling career

Platform

The website is one of the first resources people will consult for information about the program.

Prospective students access the website for detailed information about graduate studies in the WRAC department

Faculty are conditioned to visit program websites for the most up-to-date and accurate information about graduate programs
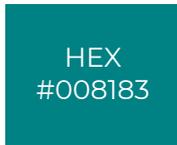
Campaign Style Guide

The campaign will retain the existing style of the WRAC website

Visual

Font for Web
- Montserrat

Color Palette

HEX #18453B	HEX #ffffff	HEX #0DB14B
HEX #CB5A28	HEX #008183	HEX #535054

Voice

Personality
- Professional
- Active
- Positive
- Helpful

Rhythm
- Descriptions are written in full sentences and short paragraphs
- Examples are presented in short bullet points

Vocabulary
- Word choice assumes the reader has prior knowledge of commonly utilized terms in higher education

Timeline Overview

Week 1: Announce merger publicly (press release) — on News and Spotlights page. Discuss changes to current programs.

Week 2: Announce details, provide overview/courses/expectations for new MA program — new subpage of Graduate "degree requirements".

Week 3: Update about page "how to apply" with implications for prospective students (applications, recruitment).

Week 4: Discuss impacts for current students and alums on a Chat With WRAC episode featuring grad directors/chair answering questions about the new program.

Week 5: Archive current MA programs, overhaul navigation, publish blog post about the archival.

Week 1: Press Release

Actions

- Announce merger publicly via press release
  - Hosted on News and Spotlights page of website

Goals

- Let folks in and beyond the department know about the change
  - Why the change is being made
  - Who is impacted
  - Next steps for current and future scholars in the program

Week 1 Content Examples

We will distribute a press release to wracdept@list.msu.edu

Dear WRAC Community,

We are pleased to announce the rollout of our new combined MA in Rhetoric and Writing! This program replaces the former MAs in Critical Studies in Literacy and Pedagogy and Digital Rhetoric and Professional Writing. This change reflects larger trends in the field and allows our students to focus their program on scholarship that meets their individual needs and priorities. MAs enrolled beginning Fall 2021 will enroll in the new program; MAs who previously enrolled as CSLP or DRPW will finish their degrees under their original catalogue.

Week 2

Actions

- Announce details of new MA program
  - Hosted on website > Graduate > Rhetoric and Writing (MA) > Degree Requirements

Goals

- Create a place on the website for the prospective students and others to access detailed information about the program
- Outline the expectations for the program for current students

Week 2 Content Examples

Develop a new subpage under "degree requirements"

- Title of Program
- General overview of the program
- Course Requirements for program
- Degree Completion requirements

RW Degree Requirements

———

General Overview of the new program (paragraph)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
- WRA XXX Course title
- WRA XXX Course title
- WRA XXX Course title

DEGREE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

- Additional Requirements for Plan A
- Additional Requirements for Plan B

Week 3

Actions

- Update application and recruitment information on the About page
  - Application deadlines and recruitment information
  - Implications for prospective students

Goals
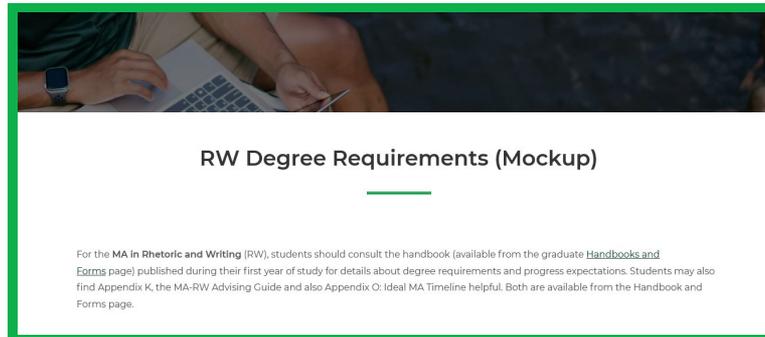
- Make the application and recruitment information available
  - Current application cycle already complete
  - Information will remain for future years

Week 3 Content Examples

Alterations to **How to Apply**, **Application Instructions**, and **Handbooks and Forms**.

Most of the changes will replace references to former degree programs with references to the new one.

The only *new* content which will need to be created is a new MA-RW Advising Guide.

RW Degree Requirements (Mockup)

For the **MA in Rhetoric and Writing** (RW), students should consult the handbook (available from the graduate Handbooks and Forms page) published during their first year of study for details about degree requirements and progress expectations. Students may also find Appendix K, the MA-RW Advising Guide and also Appendix O: Ideal MA Timeline helpful. Both are available from the Handbook and Forms page.

Week 4: Chat With WRAC

Actions

- Produce an episode of Chat with WRAC that includes a friendly dialogue that addresses questions from our community.

Goals

- Address and answer our WRAC communities' questions and concerns.
- Discuss the impact of the merger on current and prospective students.

Chat with WRAC

- Podcast episode hosted by Justice Curry
  - Special Guests—Dr. Ben Lauren, Dr. Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, and Dr. Jackie Rhodes
- Podcast episode description, excerpt quote, and transcript housed on WRAC website
- Features answers to FAQs, and other questions and concerns from our students, staff, faculty, and community

Week 5

Actions

- Publish blog post coupled with a front page module
- Navigation overhaul
  - The old programs will be no longer be reachable via the navigation bar

Goals

- Center new program information
- Make clear that the old program information is no longer up-to-date
  - Archive previous program information
  - Point to where the archived info can be found

Week 5 Content Examples

Week 5 and Beyond will start the archiving process for the previous MA programs pre-merger.

A front-page module will point to a blog post about the new program. This blog post will note that the previous programs were archived and provide a link to the previous program material.
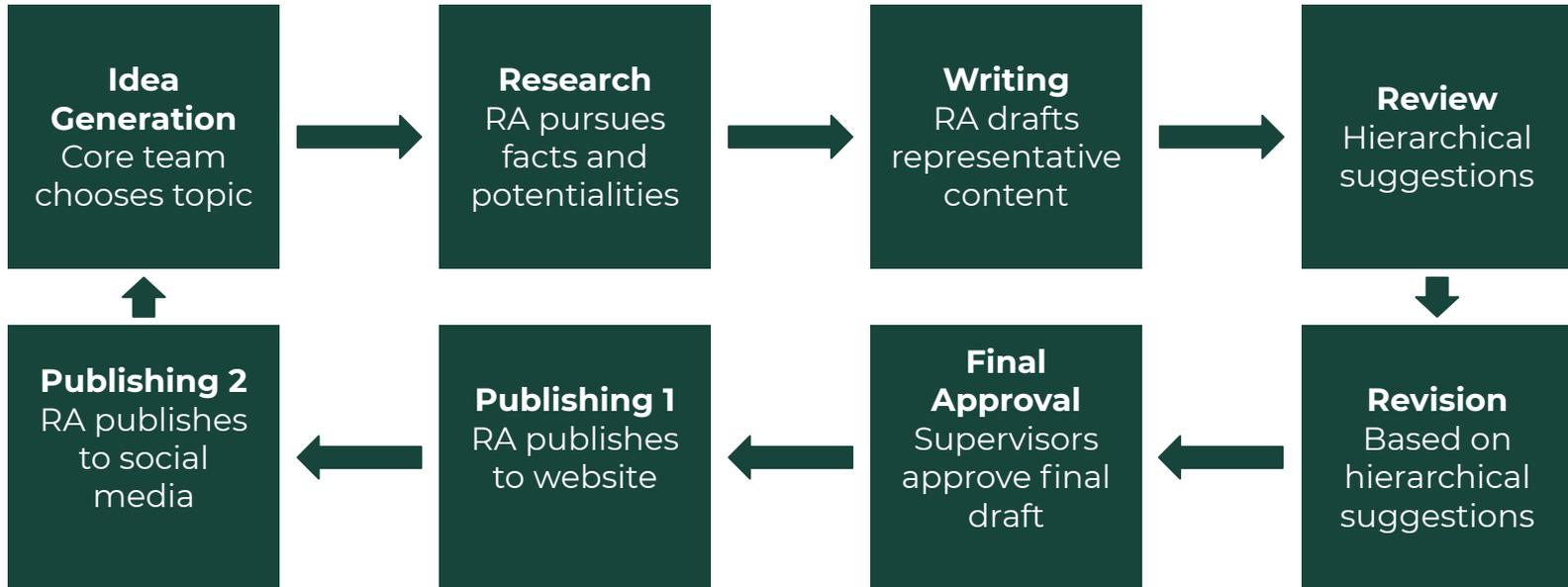
Workflow and Approval System

Idea Generation
Core team chooses topic

→

Research
RA pursues facts and potentialities

→

Writing
RA drafts representative content

→

Review
Hierarchical suggestions

↓

Publishing 2
RA publishes to social media

↑

←

Publishing 1
RA publishes to website

←

Final Approval
Supervisors approve final draft

←

Revision
Based on hierarchical suggestions

Crisis Communication

The WRAC communications team will be monitoring platforms for negative comments or feedback.

Possible situations include:

- Alumni of either discontinued program becoming upset about the loss of their old program
- The audience misunderstanding the goals and purpose of the change

Crisis Communication Guidelines

The WRAC communication team will be responsible for addressing any crisis that may surface during this campaign.

Crisis Communication Guidelines:

- Respond respectfully and in a professional manner
- Refer the commenter to the facts and reasoning for the program change located on the website
- If commenter continues to engage, ask the commenter for their email in order to move the conversation "offline"
- Once drafted, responses to negative comments should be reviewed and approved by the Technical Research Assistant (TRA) or Faculty Supervisor if TRA deems it necessary

Crisis Communication Sample Responses

Upset Alumni

Thank you for sharing your feedback on our new RW program. Our WRAC community is proud to have alumni who continue to engage with the college. The decision to combine our two previous masters-level programs into the RW program was not taken lightly and was a combined effort of faculty from both previous programs. Please visit our website for further information and details: [link website]. Thank you for being part of this process!

Misunderstanding

Thank you for your engagement as the WRAC department transitions to the new RW program. We understand change can be difficult and at times, locating accurate and clear information can be challenging. Please visit our website [link page] for the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding the new RW program. Thank you for working with us to share the news about our program!

Metrics

- **Site analytics**
  - Visits to pages, time spent on each page - bounce rate

- **Number of applications received**
  - Major metric of success, compare to sum of previous programs

- **Survey of current students**
  - Gather impressions of the new program compared to the old programs, satisfaction with the transition

- **Requests for information/clarification**
  - May indicate lack of clarity, should be monitored for patterns and volume

Summary

The campaign rollout for the new RW MA program (and replacement of the two existing MA programs) is intentionally designed to provide clarity and build excitement for the change. The WRAC department and RW program are set to increase applications by targeting prospective masters students who were not previously interested in WRAC's offerings in addition to those who were considering either of the retired programs.

Communication about the change will be published on the WRAC website over the five-week campaign. Beginning with the public announcement of the program merger, the campaign will then provide details about the program requirements and how to apply in weeks two and three. Week four will discuss the impacts for the current students and alumni via a podcast episode. Finally, in week five, the current MA programs will be moved to archive status on the website and the public will be notified of the change.

Following the conclusion of the campaign, the campaign managers will review metrics and discuss plans for continued monitoring.

Contact Info

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