

Unacceptable introduction example:

Are general education requirements for writing-intensive courses good for students in the long-run? It is not clear that the extra writing assignments from these courses make a difference in a student's ability to write better. In this essay I will explore this question and also try to answer what can be done about the current requirements to make them better for students and discuss how this general education component is viewed by SUNY Cortland faculty.

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Hard introduction example:

This essay will explore the idea of whether writing-intensive courses in the major are beneficial to students' long-term development as authors and scholars. For many years there has been a discussion at SUNY Cortland concerning the nature of the writing-intensive requirements. The response among the faculty can be roughly separated into two groups: those who believe strongly that the writing-intensive courses are essential and want to see an increase in college-wide standards, and those that tend to view these requirements as a distraction from the primary objectives of their discipline-specific educational goals. Among those that argue in favor of an expansion of the requirements and standards, the specific issues under consideration are the optimal number of writing-intensive courses, a college-wide guideline for acceptable writing standards and styles, and methods for evaluating student learning outcomes. The discussion at SUNY Cortland regarding whether the scope of the writing-intensive requirements should be expanded or kept as they are will be framed in light of these three elements, with the arguments in favor and in opposition to supported by reference to specific examples from panel discussions and programmatic review reports.

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Soft introduction example:

Starting in 1999, the SUNY Cortland general education requirements were modified to include a requirement for completion of two writing-intensive courses. The core theme of the program, which specifies multiple and significant writing assignments with opportunities for iteration, has remained largely in its original form, except for a slight modification in 2004 which required that one writing-intensive course must be within a student's major.

Despite the continued success of this program, with broad support from faculty across all disciplines, there has been a resurgence of a discussion regarding the proper standard of work required. Interestingly, this discussion is being prompted by both strong proponents of the program and also the faculty minority that would like to reduce or eliminate the writing-intensive requirements. The proponents generally seek to expand the program in one of two ways: either through adding a third course requirement or by establishing a campus-wide policy for writing standards and style. The detractors argue that evidence in support of the effectiveness of these requirements toward improving the quality of student writing is lacking and that these requirements only serve to further limit the capacity to teach discipline-specific material.

The arguments for and against an expansion of the writing-intensive requirements will be presented with critical commentary. Data on faculty opinions on specific areas, taken from panel discussion and college internal reports, will be used as a primary source in defining proposals for specific modifications and also as a metric of the faculty division on these issues.