WHAT IS AN OSU WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE?

- An existing course in a student’s major field
- Writing content (instruction and assignments) added to teach students to write in their field
- Minimum of 5,000 written words of which 2,000 are in polished papers revised from feedback.

HOW DID WE BRING THE ENGINEERING BACK?

- Accepted as our goal simply meeting or slightly exceeding Writing Intensive Course requirements rather than greatly exceeding them.
- Modified course lectures, instructional staffing, and assignments to focus on engineering excellence as the primary purpose of the course.

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF CAPSTONE AS A WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE

Capstone students struggled to achieve technical excellence under the burden of content added to achieve writing excellence.

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THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The goal was to achieve excellence in all aspects of capstone. The pursuit of writing excellence was achieved with the OSU Baccalaureate Core Committee rating the writing content as exemplary stating “...we are deeply impressed with the effort you have expended designing and implementing this course; you are a model for the College of Engineering and OSU”.

However, the superbly thorough writing content led to three primary unintended consequences.

Skewed Resource Allocation

- The grading of writing was a major duty of two course instructors, two graduate teaching assistants, and the Communication Curriculum Director consuming the equivalent of approximately three fulltime people.
- Technical instruction was compromised

Excessive Report Length

- Writing excellence was translated to not simply meeting criteria but in significantly exceeding them.
- Reports required to be 2,000 words became 50,000.
- Time spent on technical content decreased.

Design Changes

- Most significant was the impact on design changes.
- Due to the required multiple revision cycles of the reports, design changes required editing papers.
- However, students would not pursue an obviously beneficial change to their selected design due to such a change necessitating modification to their written reports.
- Students would knowingly produce an inferior design solution rather than implement an improvement which necessitated updating the associated reports.