To: Karin Ruhlandt, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
From: Lois Agnew, Chair and Director, The Writing Program
Re: Writing Program Proposal for Department Name Change

We, the faculty of the Writing Program, request a name change from the Writing Program to the Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition to bring our unit into alignment with other departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and the university. We feel that the name “Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition” more accurately reflects our standing as a unit in the College of Arts and Sciences with our own operating budget, ten tenure-track and tenured faculty lines, nine full-time non-tenure-track faculty, part-time faculty lines, an undergraduate program that offers lower-division writing to all students across the university, a major, a minor, and a doctoral program. Thus we meet all the criteria for department status and are an anomaly in the College in retaining the title of Program when we function as a Department.

The major benefit to this name change is **accuracy**. Over the years, we have encountered a great deal of confusion on the part of people who find it difficult to understand the structure of the Writing Program or to understand that our “program” comprises various other programs (lower division, major, minor, doctoral program). The name change from the Writing Program to the Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition will allow us to represent the status of our unit more accurately to various constituents, including our colleagues across the university, graduate students, undergraduate students, and parents. This name will also better reflect the university’s national reputation as a leader in its strong commitment to student writing at all levels.

Our faculty has carefully chosen our proposed department name. This title connects with each of the major components of our department’s work: the graduate program (Composition and Cultural Rhetoric), major in writing and rhetoric, minor in writing, and lower-division instruction in composition.

**History**

The Writing Program became an independent academic unit with its own operating budget, a Chair/Director, tenure-track and tenured faculty lines, part-time faculty lines, and a course prefix of “WRT” in 1987. Faculty lines were initially jointly hosted in the Writing Program and the Department of English with faculty being appointed 60% in the Writing Program and 40% in the Department of English and undergoing the tenure and promotion process in both units. In 1997, we became a degree-granting unit when we officially established the Ph.D. program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric. At that time, faculty lines were moved solely (100%) into the Writing Program to reflect the reality of our full-time commitment to research and teaching in this unit. All tenure-track
faculty members in our unit are tenured and promoted solely in Writing unless they are jointly appointed elsewhere.

Components of the Program

There are three elements to the Writing Program:

- The lower-division curriculum, which provides undergraduate writing instruction to SU undergraduates across the university.
- The upper-division curriculum, which is focused on 300 and 400-level writing courses, most of which feed into our Writing and Rhetoric minor and major. We also teach WRT 307, Professional Writing, an upper-division course that is required or recommended by Whitman School of Management, several engineering departments, and the I-school, among others.
- A highly selective doctoral program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric (CCR) that draws doctoral students nationally and internationally. Our recent external review ranked this program among the top five nationally in our field.

The Lower-Division Curriculum

The Writing Program has a core commitment to lower-division writing instruction—the required WRT 105 and WRT 205 courses, which satisfy the liberal arts core writing requirement. Teaching the required lower-division writing courses is central to who we are and what we do, and a number of faculty research and write about literacy acquisition at the college level. The tenured and tenure-track faculty, including the Chair, Lower Division Director, Director of TA Education, and other staff members, devote a great deal of time and energy to designing the lower-division writing courses, teaching those courses, and mentoring and evaluating TAs and part-time faculty who also teach these courses. This work will continue and will not be interrupted or altered by this name change. See Appendix A.

The Upper-Division Curriculum: The Major and Minor

In 2004 we started a Writing and Rhetoric minor. In Fall 2008, we officially began offering a Writing and Rhetoric major, and we are now granting undergraduate degrees in Writing and Rhetoric. We currently have 66 active majors and 34 minors. The projected size of our major from year-to-year is from 60-100 students, and our writing minor has ranged from 15-40 students per year since its inception. See Appendix A.

The CCR Doctoral Program

In 1997, the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric Doctoral Program began (http://ccr.syr.edu/prospective/overview.html). We admit a small group of 4-5 doctoral students per year. We have granted over fifty doctoral degrees; our graduates have gone on to accept faculty and post-doc positions at a variety of institutions: http://ccr.syr.edu/people/alumni.html. See Appendix A.
**Consultation**

We have consulted with the Dean and Senior Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences about this change.

Earlier this fall, we consulted with the other SU academic department that uses the term “Rhetoric” in its title: Communication and Rhetorical Studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Charles E. Morris III, CRS department chair, sent a message that expressed his department’s support for our proposed name change. Our undergraduate majors and our doctoral program and the CRS master’s program are complementary, but clearly distinguishable from each other. We also have a long history of collegial relations with CRS and supported that department’s name change a number of years ago from the Department of Speech Communication to the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies.

**National Trends**

Writing and Rhetoric Departments are a growing national trend in the United States and are beginning to appear in Canadian universities as well. Below we provide a list of U.S. Departments focused on Writing or related areas. This is not an exhaustive list, but one based on information provided through professional listings on websites and listervs. In addition to this, other independent Writing Programs are considering the change to departmental status or are in the process of doing so.

- Michigan State University, Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures, [http://wrac.msu.edu/](http://wrac.msu.edu/)
- University of Minnesota, Department of Writing Studies, [http://writingstudies.umn.edu/](http://writingstudies.umn.edu/)
- University of Texas, Department of Rhetoric and Writing, [http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/)
- University of Rhode Island, Department of Writing and Rhetoric, [http://harrington.uri.edu/undergraduate-program/writing-rhetoric/](http://harrington.uri.edu/undergraduate-program/writing-rhetoric/)
- Oberlin College, Rhetoric and Composition Department, http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/
- Colgate University, Department of Writing and Rhetoric, [http://www.colgate.edu/academics/departments-and-programs/writing-and-rhetoric](http://www.colgate.edu/academics/departments-and-programs/writing-and-rhetoric)
• DePaul University Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse, http://las.depaul.edu/wrd/

• Hofstra University, Department of Writing Studies and Composition, http://www.hofstra.edu/academics/colleges/hclas/Writing/index.html

• Ithaca College, Department of Writing, http://www.ithaca.edu/hs/depts/writing/

• Georgia Southern University Department of Writing and Linguistics, http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/writing/

• Grand Valley State University, Department of Writing, http://www.gvsu.edu/writing/

• Loyola University, Maryland, Writing Department, http://www.loyola.edu/academic/writing

• Oakland University: Department of Writing and Rhetoric, http://www2.oakland.edu/wrt/

• University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Department of Rhetoric and Writing, http://ualr.edu/rhetoric/

• University of Hartford, Department of Rhetoric, Language, and Culture, http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/rlc/

• Rowan University, Department of Writing Arts, http://www.rowan.edu/colleges/communication/departments/writingArts/

• San Diego State University, Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, http://rhetoric.sdsu.edu/

• University of Central Arkansas, Department of Writing http://www.uca.edu/writing/

• Roger Williams University, Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition. http://accepted.rwu.edu/category/departments/department-writing-studies-rhetoric-and-composition?page=2

• University of Central Florida, Department of Writing and Rhetoric, http://writingandrhetoric.cah.ucf.edu/

• University of Minnesota-Duluth, Department of Writing Studies, http://www.d.umn.edu/writ/index.html
Appendix A

The Lower-Division writing curriculum is supported by the following people, positions, and structures:

Lois P. Agnew, Chair and Director, Associate Professor
Tony Scott, Lower Division Director, Associate Professor
Patrick Berry, Director of TA Education, Assistant Professor
Faith Plvan, Assistant Director, Staff member
Ben Erwin, Writing Center Administrator, Staff member
The Lower-Division Committee is composed of faculty, staff, and representatives from the TAs, senior lecturers, and part-time faculty.
Full-time tenure-track faculty, TAs (both from the CCR program and from the English department’s MA and MFA programs), senior lecturers, lecturers, and part-time faculty teach regularly in the lower division.

The Writing and Rhetoric Major and Minor are supported by the following people, positions, and structures:

Lois P. Agnew, Chair and Director, Associate Professor
Rebecca Moore Howard, Major/Minor Director, Professor
Faith Plvan, Assistant Director, staff member (works specifically with our writing internship program)
The Major/Minor Committee is made up of faculty staff, and representatives from the TAs, senior lecturers, and part-time faculty.
Faculty members advise all majors and minors and teach the majority of the upper-division offerings.
Experienced part-time faculty, senior lecturers and lecturers, and advanced TAs teach some of the upper-division offerings.

The CCR Doctoral Program is supported by the following people, positions and structures:

Eileen E. Schell, Director of Graduate Studies, Associate Professor
The Graduate Studies Committee is composed of faculty members and a TA representative
Faculty advise graduate students and teach the doctoral seminars.