October 2, 2007

To: Department Chairs and Advisors
From: Jan Ellen Lewis
Associate Dean

Subject: Designation of Writing Intensive Courses

I write at the behest of the Courses of Study Committee and Office of the Dean of Student Affairs to clarify the policy on sections that are designated as fulfilling the Writing Across the Curriculum requirement. Undergraduates at NCAS and UC are required to take two writing-intensive courses, of which at least one must be in the major. These sections are designated by a Q-prefix in each semester's schedule of classes, and they are supposed to be so designated only after departmental review to insure that both the formal criteria for the WAC requirement (http://wac.newark.rutgers.edu/Faculty/criteria%20with%20commentary3.htm and http://wac.newark.rutgers.edu/Administration/considerations.htm) and departmental objectives for disciplinary student writing are met. Only those sections that are listed by departments in the schedule with a Q-prefix are to be accepted as fulfilling this requirement.

From time-to-time, however, individual instructors have petitioned to have a particular course not so designated considered as a writing-intensive course after the semester has begun. Such requests have most often been made on behalf of particular students who have approached graduation lacking a sufficient number of writing-intensive courses.

Please consider this memo as notice that henceforth, all such requests from individual instructors will be denied. The designation of a section with the Q-prefix is determination made by the department offering the course, not the individual faculty member teaching it, and it is incumbent upon departments to vet courses properly and to apply the Q-designation to writing-intensive sections at the time when the schedule of classes is submitted. And it is incumbent upon all advisors to explain the WAC requirement clearly to their students. Please make certain that everyone in your department who advises students is familiar with this policy.

Any requests for retroactive WAC designation of a section that has already been or is currently being taught should come from departments only. They will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, and only to remedy administrative oversights or errors on the part of the departments themselves. It is not fair to other students who have done the same work in the course and who may also have unfulfilled WAC requirements to grant writing-intensive credit on a case-by-case basis for particular students, and it is complicated to designate an entire section retroactively, as it is impossible to apply automatically the Q-designation for courses taught in completed semesters.