What do we know so far about writing at HMC?
A timeline

- Nov 2008- SVCIC establishes the Writing Course Subcommittee (later the Ad Hoc Writing Course Committee)
  - Imagines a half-semester fall writing course for first-years

- Fall 2009– Pilot (3 sections; 40 students)
  - Assessment
    - Outside evaluators reviewed final papers; all learning objectives assessed were met (5 of 8)
    - Student papers comparable in quality to Hum 1 papers

- Fall 2010– 14 sections of Writ 1 taught by 13 faculty members plus Director of Learning Programs
  - Assessment of thesis statements
    - Students demonstrated moderate competencies (aggregate mean scores 2.5 on 4-pt scale on four dimensions of thesis strength.
    - Stability from one half-semester to the next
2011 Summary Recommendations from Ad Hoc Writing Course Committee

• Maintain 8:1 student to faculty ratio
• Course staffed by full-time, permanent members of HMC faculty
• Instructors free to develop course topics, BUT the content of the course is writing; common due dates and assignments
• Adoption of Joseph Williams’ *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 9th edition
• Revised, trimmed learning objectives (from 8 to 5)
• Weekly instructor meetings (pods)
“Faculty should continue to consider how writing experiences throughout the curriculum can extend the training and practice students will receive in the first-year writing course”

2011 Summary Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Writing Course Committee
Sustainability

• From the January 2010 committee report:

“[T]he writing course will become sustainable only when […] the instructor ‘pool’ contain[s] 30 faculty members, or about 40% of the full-time, tenure-track HMC faculty […] who would rotate through the course at roughly 50% duty cycle when not on sabbatical leave.”
Sustainability

- As of today:
  - 39 faculty members have participated in the week long faculty development seminar
  - 33 are still members of the HMC faculty
  - Of these 33, 28 have taught or are teaching the course
Writ 1E

• Fall 2011:
  • Faculty approve a spring continuation course for students who complete Writ 1 but fail to demonstrate the academic writing competencies necessary for further work
  • A grade of C- or better in Writ 1E results in a retroactive Pass in Writ 1, and 3 credits for a “floating” elective.
Spring 2014 Writ 1E Assessment

- 45 of the 46 students enrolled in Writ 1E since 2011 have passed and received retroactive Writ 1 passing grades.
- Writ 1E students persist at rates comparable to their non-Writ 1E classmates.
- 2013 NSSE Writing Module Data show no significant differences between Writ 1E students and their non-Writ 1E classmates on any dimension measured.
Writ 1E Alum Focus Groups

• All respondents found Writ 1E a useful class.

• Confidence was a recurring theme, both in their continued disappointment at initially failing Writ 1, but also in their developing confidence in their new skills as writers.
Focus Group Voices

How were Writ 1 and Writ 1E different for you?

• “In Writ 1E you really brainstorm with your peers.”

• “Time scale of Writ 1E really helped– we had a week to write, then a week of feedback, then a week of peer review.”

• “In Writ 1E we edited our paper as a class. Really helpful. Learned how to give feedback.”

• “Writ 1E is humbling.”
What are the most important take-aways from Writ 1E?

• “Writing is about logic. Making an argument, conveying valid ideas, how to present an idea [and use] evidence.”

• “What academic writing is. I did not understand what I was supposed to do in Writ 1.”

• “I got more experience writing; I gained confidence.”
Advice to future Writ 1E students.

• “Take it. It will boost your confidence.”

• “It helps with HSA.”

• “Have multiple drafts. Learn from feedback”

• “I’m glad I took it. I’m glad they made me. It turns out to be good. It helped.”
Zoom Out
Peer Review of Writing Assignments

First Years

- Talked with a classmate to develop your ideas before starting: 3.2 (HMC) 3 (PeerGrp)
- Received feedback from a classmate about a draft before turning it in: 4 (HMC) 3.2 (PeerGrp)
- Gave feedback to a classmate: 3.7 (HMC) 3 (PeerGrp)

Seniors

- Talked with a classmate to develop your ideas before starting: 2.9 (HMC) 2.8 (PeerGrp)
- Received feedback from a classmate about a draft before turning it in: 2.8 (HMC) 2.8 (PeerGrp)
- Gave feedback to a classmate: 2.5 (HMC) 2.6 (PeerGrp)

1 = no writing assignments; 2 = few writing assignments; 3 = some writing assignments; 4 = most writing assignments; 5 = all writing assignments
Drafting and Feedback

First Years

- Prepared two or more drafts before turning it in: 2.8 (HMC), 2.6 (PeerGrp)
- Ins. provided feedback on a draft: 3.2 (HMC), 3.0 (PeerGrp)

Seniors

- Prepared two or more drafts before turning it in: 2.1 (HMC), 2.5 (PeerGrp)
- Ins. provided feedback on a draft: 2.8 (HMC), 2.9 (PeerGrp)

1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = very often
Conventions of Academic Writing

First Years

Summarized material you read: 3.5 HMC, 3.3 PeerGrp
Analyzed or evaluated something: 4.2 HMC, 3.6 PeerGrp
Described your methods or findings: 3.4 HMC, 2.8 PeerGrp

Seniors

Summarized material you read: 3 HMC, 3.3 PeerGrp
Analyzed or evaluated something: 3.8 HMC, 3.7 PeerGrp
Described your methods or findings: 3.1 HMC, 3 PeerGrp

1 = no writing assignments; 2 = few writing assignments; 3 = some writing assignments; 4 = most writing assignments; 5 = all writing assignments
Conventions of Academic Writing, Continued

First Years

- Argued a position using evidence and reasoning: 4.3
- Explained the meaning of numerical or statistical data: 3.4
- Wrote in the style and format of a specific field: 3.6
- Addressed a real or imagined audience: 3.9

Seniors

- Argued a position using evidence and reasoning: 3.8
- Explained the meaning of numerical or statistical data: 3.3
- Wrote in the style and format of a specific field: 3.1
- Addressed a real or imagined audience: 3.5

1 = no writing assignments; 2 = few writing assignments; 3 = some writing assignments; 4 = most writing assignments; 5 = all writing assignments
Faculty Instructions for Writing Assignments

**First Years**
- Provided clear instructions: 4 HMC, 4.1 Peer
- Explained in advance what s/he wanted you to learn: 3.5 HMC, 3.8 Peer
- Explained in advance the criteria s/he would use to grade: 3.5 HMC, 4 Peer

**Seniors**
- Provided clear instructions: 4.1 HMC, 4 Peer
- Explained in advance what s/he wanted you to learn: 3 HMC, 3.7 Peer
- Explained in advance the criteria s/he would use to grade: 3.3 HMC, 3.9 Peer

1 = no writing assignments; 2 = few writing assignments; 3 = some writing assignments; 4 = most writing assignments; 5 = all writing assignments