

“Strategic Content”

**How L2 Specialists Can Bridge Pedagogical
and Political Spaces in Higher Education
Through Globally-Oriented Writing Courses**

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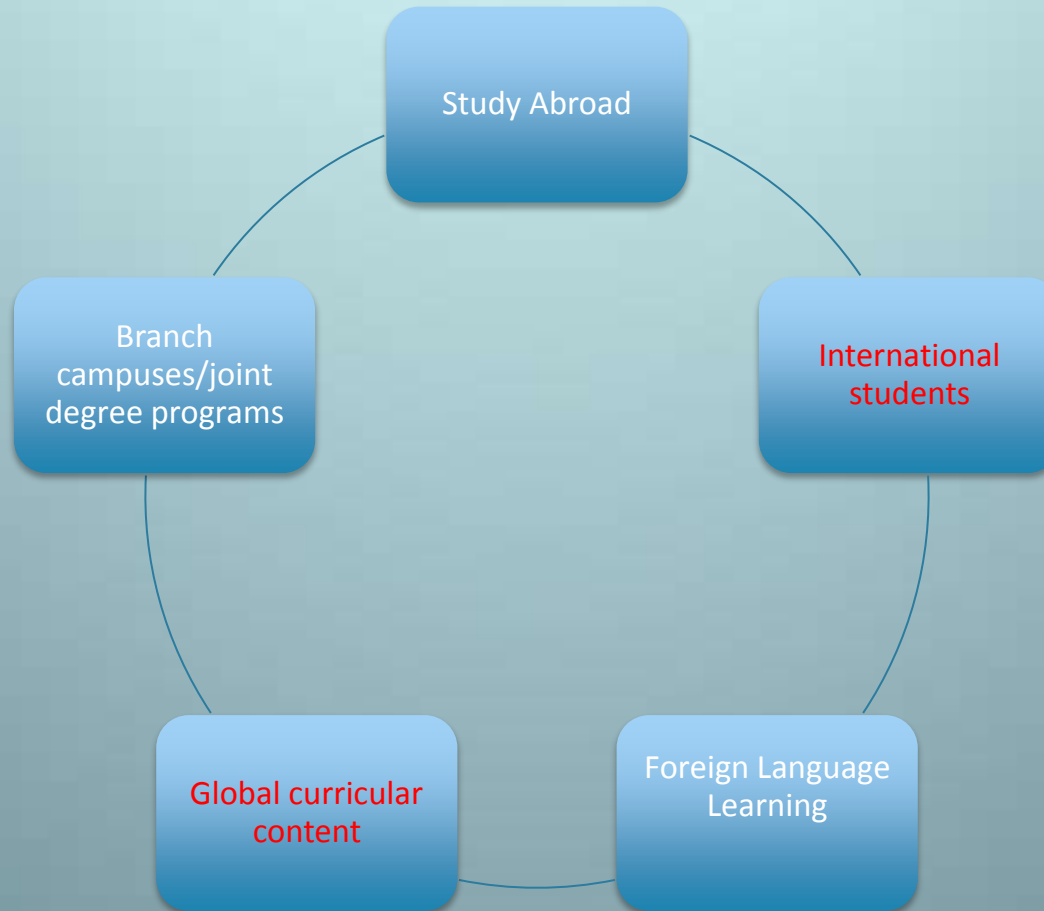
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A story of crossing boundaries...

- Two institutional contexts
- Two L2 faculty
- Three examples of globally oriented writing courses that
 1. Advance institutional goals of internationalization
 2. Appeal to student needs and interests
 3. Promote institutional integration

Internationalization

Half of all HE institutions articulate development of global perspectives as a goal; response to globally interconnected society (ACE, 2012)



Mission Statement Excerpts

- **Middlebury College:** “Through the pursuit of knowledge unconstrained by national or disciplinary boundaries, students who come to Middlebury learn to engage the world.”
- **George Washington University:** “To promote the process of lifelong learning from both global and integrative perspectives, the University provides a stimulating intellectual environment for its diverse students and faculty.”

Internationalization: Rhetoric vs. Reality

- Internationalization activities (and discourse) accelerating
- More schools requiring courses that feature global content (ACE, 2012)
- **YET, efforts to internationalize the curriculum at home are falling short on our campuses**
 - Limited to particular domains
 - Marginal rather than central to curriculum
 - Graduates not gaining intercultural competency and global awareness

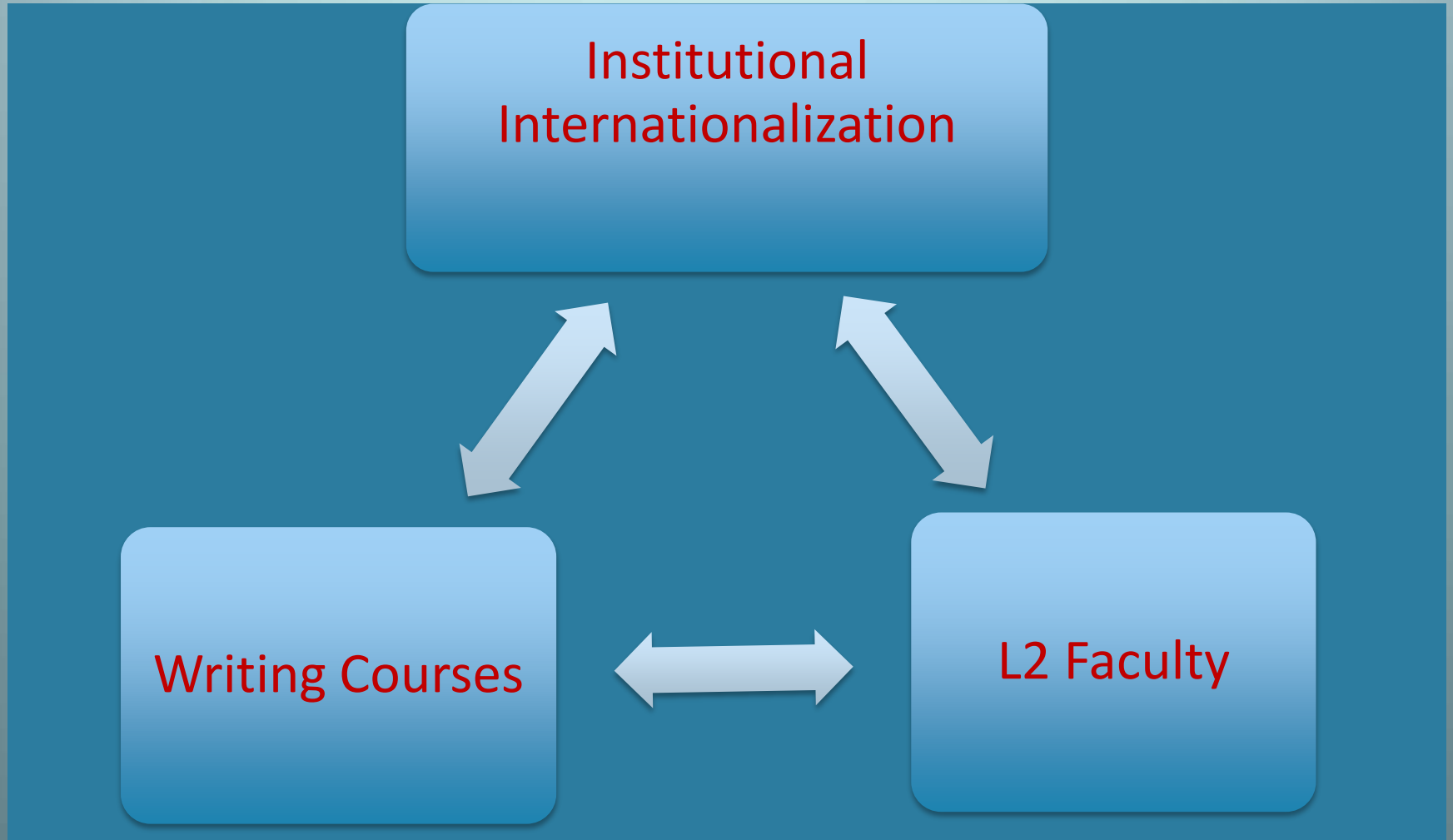
Embedding Global Learning Opportunities in the Curriculum

- Is undoubtedly a goal, viewed favorably by administrators, faculty, students
- But it is rarely strategically and thoughtfully embedded in students' classroom learning experiences, and the potential contributions of L2 faculty and students are often overlooked
- Why?

Institutional Structures and Ideologies

- “Division of labor” (Matsuda, 1999; 2006)
 - L1 vs. L2
 - Content vs. Language/skills
- Ideologies about language; language difference as “problem” (e.g., Hall, 2009)
- L2 programs situated outside of mainstream programs; institutional policies that segregate
- L2 programs seen as “less rigorous, less prestigious, less ‘real’” (Vandrick, 2006, p. 289); seen as remediation

Leveraging Resources to Overcome Division of Labor



Institutional Contexts

- **Middlebury College:** small residential private liberal arts college
- **GWU:** mid-sized private research university
- Both have demonstrated a commitment to internationalization; actively recruit international students
- Both lack an IEP; have writing programs outside of English departments using a WAC/WID model; have established links between L2 specialists and writing programs

“Strategic Content”

1. Contributes to the goals of internationalization
2. Appeals to student interests and needs
3. Promotes institutional integration of L2 writers and L2 writing instructors

Goals of Internationalization

- Commitment to transformative learning and deep engagement with the world
- Topics of both personal and global significance
- Critical understanding of self and others to advance the development of cultural/global competency

Appeal to Students

- Inclusive engagement with peers from diverse backgrounds and exploration of issues from multiple disciplinary and cultural perspectives
- Cultivation of transferable skills, including reading, writing, intercultural communication, and knowledge of global content
- Courses “count” for requirements and are not viewed as remediation

Institutional Integration

- Coherent, interdisciplinary approach to global engagement; contribution to cross-faculty dialogue
- Leveraging of L2 faculty's disciplinary and cultural expertise and L2 students' global experience and perspectives
- Breaking down barrier between skills/content

Key Features of Strategic Content Approach

- Careful attention to content
 - Global focus
 - Disciplinary (meta-disciplinary) context
 - Authentic materials
- Transferable academic literacy skills
- Emphasis on reading, writing, and research for various rhetorical situations
- Inclusive of diverse perspectives

Model “Strategic Content” Courses

Course	Location	Population	Curricular requirement
Language and Power/Soc Justice	Writing Program/ First-year Seminar Program	Mixed L1/L2	Fulfills “social analysis” distribution
Geography of Thought	First-year Writing Program	Mostly L1	Fulfills First-year Writing requirement that all matriculated students need in order to graduate
English in a Global Context	EAP Program	L2-only	Fulfills one of two WID requirements
The English Language in a Global Context	Writing Program (cross-linked with Linguistics)	Mixed L1/L2	Fulfills “cross-cultural” distribution. Also counts towards Linguistics and Education minors

Student Responses

- Critical perspectives/engagement with content
 - “This course taught me to question my own culture because I never thought that any English beside my own was correct”
 - “I learned to look at systems of power more critically”
 - “It allowed me to tap into my heritage and identity.”

Student Responses

- Class atmosphere
 - “Discussions were great [...] great to hear others’ experiences/opinions.”
 - “We can bring in our own learning experience [...] to make the class more diverse.”
 - “international students have more chances to express their opinions and participate in class more vigorously.”

Student Responses

- Writing/literacy development
 - “I learned social science way of analyzing information”
 - “I learned the fields that social science study, how to read the articles and analyze, how to interact with scholars’ ideas.”
 - “Now I can write different types of papers, academic, research, and directed to public audience ones.”

Institutional Opportunities

- Positive feedback
- Avenues to develop new courses
- Highlighting our expertise beyond “skills” of writing or language acquisition
- Broadening of institutional identities
- Joining more institutional conversations
- Increased platform for advocacy: L2 student inclusion and globally-infused course content

Challenges and Caveats

- Fitting into the structure; institutional structures may impede opportunities
- Cultivating disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise
- Taking initiative
- Finding time to develop new courses
- Balancing content and writing instruction
- Balancing wide ranges of proficiency

Questions

- To what extent is your institution focused on internationalization?
- How do L2 faculty and students fit into these efforts?
- Would a “strategic content” approach work for you in your institutional setting?
- How can we better research and document the benefits of this approach?

References

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These slides and more info about the courses described will be posted on

<http://shawnashapiro.com/>