



BIGGER THAN ENGLISH?

"We're not going to be as big as English."

The publicity of PW is nearly nonexistent. The program's popularity is achieved by student interaction. With more funding, the program has the potential to be huge. "I could walk over to English and walk back with 250 new majors," admits DeVoss.

THE FUTURE OF PW

"I want us to stay a small, powerful, growing community."

The program's current goal is to increase the attendance of freshmen and sophomores at workshops held throughout the year. Since seniors make up the majority of attendees, it is important to help students new to the program get involved. Taking advantage of workshops, such as "Writing Resumes and Cover Letters" and "Preparing a Professional Portfolio," is a great way to gain PW skills outside of the classroom.

PW is an evolving program, but its focus on helping students will remain constant. Curriculum will change, and professors will come and go, but the program will always

be "growing and developing at a sustainable, reasonable pace."

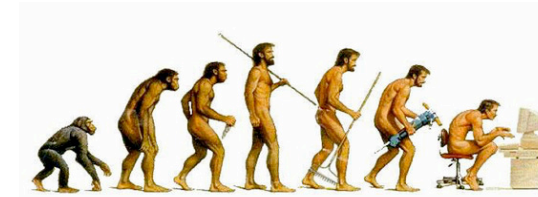
BIOS

Jeff Grabill is currently a Professor of Rhetoric and Professional Writing at MSU and serves as the co-director of the Writing in Digital Environment Research Center.

Danielle DeVoss currently serves as the only student advisor and the Director of the Professional Writing Program. She has authored and edited several pieces, one of which won the 2007 Computers and Composition Distinguished Book Award.

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THE EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL WRITING AT MSU



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November 2008

WHAT PROMPTED THE CREATION OF THE PW PROGRAM?

"We were one of nearly ten Professional Writing programs in the United States in 2001."

According to Danielle DeVoss, the current Director of PW, the local legend states that the MSU Administration tried to force the English Department to create a separate writing program, and the English Department politely refused. The Administration then brought in two individuals, Danielle DeVoss and the lead developer Jeff Grabill, to create and implement such a program.

The first unique writing classes emerged in Fall 2002, and the program was fully

developed by 2004. However, the faculty views the program as organic; DeVoss states that "the curriculum is a living thing." It has evolved and will continue evolving. Courses, requirements and electives are ever changing to fit the needs of the program's most valuable asset: the students.

Using a Writing Advisory Committee, PW faculty came together in 2001 to discuss industry trends, the strengths of Professional Writing, and means of improving upon the new program at MSU. This information was used to develop course requirements, the three separate tracts and the creation of opportunities for students.


DeVoss says that students came to PW from "all over the place, the students who stick out are those in web design; refugees from those places and journalism and English." With little publicity and even less fanfare, the PW quietly graduated its first class in Spring 2005. These original "refugees" came to the program as juniors and seniors and provided valuable insight. This past year PW graduated its largest class: 22 students.

Since its inception, PW at MSU has engaged students in various activities. In 2005, "Writer's Bloc," an organization dedicated to the sharing of ideas through workshops, was established. With the creation of diverse student organizations, students have the opportunity to create their own niche within the PW program.

professional writing @msu

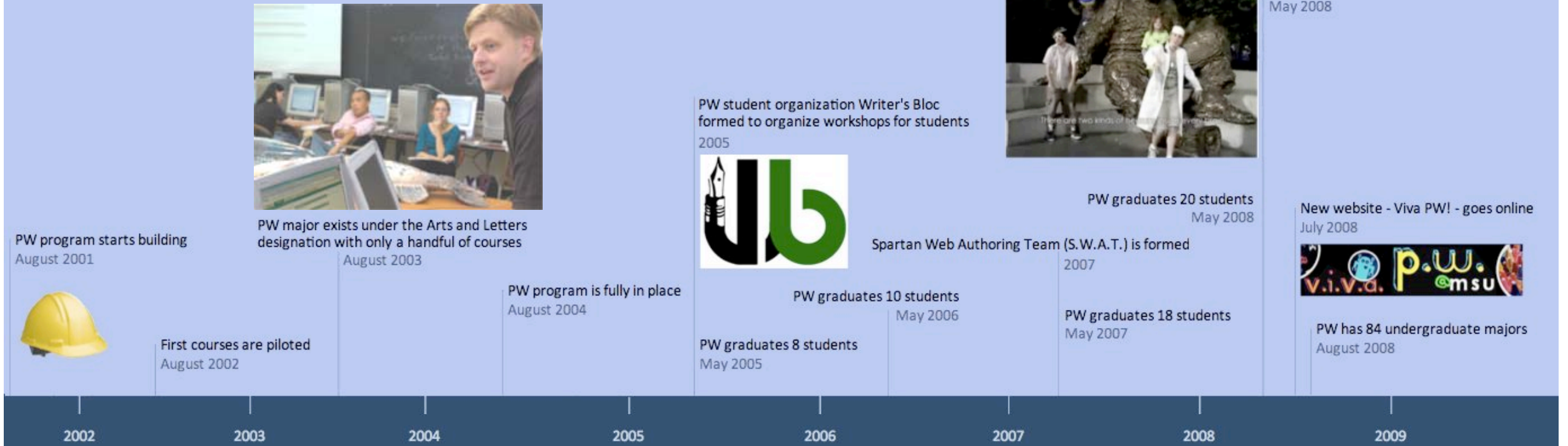
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11/11/2008

The History of Professional Writing (2001-2008)



STRUGGLES FACING THE PROGRAM TODAY

"Finding [instructors] with these skill sets is tricky, and we're still struggling to staff the courses."

One of PW's ongoing struggles is the ability to find and adequately support the faculty it needs. There is no shortage of ideas for new innovative classes, but there is a shortage of people who are qualified to teach them. Most institutions across the country are still giving degrees for basic

technical writing and computer usage skills. Professors in the PW program are expected to teach their students more than just how to write a good report and how to use Microsoft Word; professors have to know more than just basic writing skills themselves. It is extremely difficult to find people with the required skill sets and a passion and talent for teaching.

Another ongoing struggle facing the program is funding. The program currently does not have its own budget; instead, PW draws money from the broader budget of WRAC (Writing, Rhetoric and American

Cultures). "All of our money is tied up in people and 317 [the classroom where all PW classes are taught]," says DeVoss. In order for the program to acquire more faculty and more students, more funding is needed.

WHAT IS MAXIMUM CAPACITY?

"On one hand, I want us to get bigger and more visible; we have so much to offer."

The PW program is currently at its limit. The number of students is restricted both by the

program's budget and the amount of qualified faculty available. The program cannot afford to grow with only one academic adviser and a yearly budget of \$7,500. "I don't want to grow in ways that would make us treat you guys badly," states DeVoss. Growth would disrupt the current student-to-faculty ratio and would lead to less personal interaction between professors and students.