Faculty "Common Understandings" for First-Year Writing Courses (W1s)

An important aspect of an expanded, writing-rich curriculum at Colby is the focus it brings to shared principles of excellent writing, no matter the discipline. Whatever the subject, W1 courses should include curricular content that incorporates the following common understandings for introductory writing-intensive courses at Colby:

1. Students must write on a weekly basis, either formally for a grade or in an ungraded fashion across a variety of modes.

2. During the course, students will normally be expected to write three to four essays, with revision, for a total of approximately 20 pages (~6,000 words) of polished, graded writing.

3. Course work may include peer editing, in-class writing, and other writing opportunities such as journals, blogs, speeches, editorials, summaries, response papers, and position papers.

4. W1 professors will use rubrics or explicit guidelines in the assessment of their students' writing. These guidelines will be communicated to the students in advance of the assigned writing exercise.

5. For each major writing assignment, students will receive feedback on their writing in an individual conference with the W1 professor or the writing fellow assigned to the course.

6. W1 professors must assign a grammar and usage handbook, or its equivalent, as a reference.

7. Students will learn how to use a documentation and citation style appropriately.

8. Students will learn the meaning and consequences of plagiarism.

9. All W1 professors will be asked to submit student papers for the purpose of evaluating the program and designing the best possible assistance for W1 faculty, including workshops and Writers' Center supports. All submissions will be kept confidential, anonymized, and assessed in the aggregate.