The Writer's Personal Profile: Student Self Assessment and Goal Setting at Start of Term

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Abstract: This article advocates an approach to WAC/WID assessment that prioritizes student learning and encourages students in upper-division writing intensive (WI) courses to take greater responsibility for their course writing experience. At start of term, students complete a self-assessment and goal-setting survey called the Writer's Personal Profile (WPP). This survey invites students to reflect on their college writing experiences, identify their strengths and weaknesses as writers, and set personal writing goals for the forthcoming course. The authors first describe the study through which the WPP was developed and validated and then summarize study results that showed benefits for students, instructors, and WAC program administrators. Completion of the WPP helps students focus on their individual writing issues and goals as the course starts; follow-up activities promote students' responsibility for their writing and learning. In sum, the study revealed that faculty can use WPP results to focus writing instruction on the needs of a given set of students, and WAC administrators can use these results to enhance faculty development and strengthen program support for identified writing issues.

Introduction

> Assessment…means gathering information in a way that shows genuine respect for individuals in the classroom. To respect people, we must listen to them—pay attention to what they have to say about their situation. (Beason & Darrow, 1997, p. 98)

One of the paradoxes of higher education's current practice of placing heavy emphasis on program and curriculum assessment is that while such assessment can certainly lead to system improvements, it can also compromise student learning by narrowing the instructional focus (as instructors work to prepare students for success in specified measurable learning outcomes) and by diverting valuable teaching time to required assessment. Another problem with assessments for continuous improvement is that they typically are conducted at the end of a given course, so the students completing the assessments don't themselves benefit from their feedback. And in undergraduate WAC/WID programs, which are targeted to faculty support and development, both the assessment activities and resulting improvements tend to be faculty-centered. Many WAC/WID program administrators rely on faculty to identify student writing issues and program weaknesses; direct feedback from students is less commonly solicited.

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In this article we address these paradoxes and problems as we argue for a different approach to WAC/WID program assessment, one that prioritizes student learning over data gathering and that gives WI (writing intensive) students greater control and responsibility for their own learning experience than is usually possible in a pre-set curriculum.

Central to our argument is a new research-based self-assessment tool, the Writer's Personal Profile (WPP), a start-of-term questionnaire to support writing and learning in upper-division writing intensive (WI) courses. Intended for use by students close to graduation, the WPP invites respondents to reflect on their college writing experiences, their strengths and weaknesses as writers, and the role of writing in their future careers. Then, based on these reflections, students set personal writing goals that will serve them in their post-graduation workplace and toward which they will work throughout the WI course. As well as laying the groundwork for their forthcoming course experience, the WPP also establishes a baseline reference for students' self-evaluation of their writing progress both during and at the end of the term.

In a research study conducted in 23 WI classes across seven colleges at Oregon State University, we found that at the same time students who complete this profile are learning through self-reflection and directing their own experience via personal goal setting, they are also generating a body of information that their instructor can use to target course content and assignments more specifically to the current cohort of students. Moreover, such "unfiltered" student input generates some surprising findings that constitute assessment data useful for WI program improvement.

In this article, then, we describe the institutional and scholarly contexts for our study, the study methodology, selected findings relevant to WI courses, programmatic applications of the study's findings, and best practices for using the Writer's Personal Profile to improve WI teaching and learning.

Institutional Context for the Study

Oregon State University is a mid-size (20,000 students) Research I Land-, Sea-, Space-, and Sun-Grant institution at which undergraduates must complete at least one upper-division writing intensive course in their major. This WI requirement, in place since 1989, is supported by the OSU Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC) Program through which a half-time director (a professor of English with specialization in rhetoric and composition studies) offers faculty consultations on course development, reviews proposed WI courses, and provides faculty development for WI course instructors and others who wish to use more writing in their courses. Faculty teaching WI courses are encouraged but not required to take the five-session introductory WIC seminar offered each fall. The WIC Program supports approximately 125 WI courses across the university. In addition to seminars, the program offers a rich website with resources for WI faculty and students (http://wic.oregonstate.edu); a quarterly newsletter on the teaching of writing; speakers and workshops on writing throughout the year; development grants for courses and departments; and a number of other activities. The WIC Program director works collaboratively with the university's writing center, library staff, and the first-year writing and other university programs.

But even with this robust and active WIC program, some WI instructors remain uninformed about our program requirements and WI pedagogies, and they may not articulate writing outcomes for their courses. Academic advisors may also be uninformed about the WIC requirement. Hence, many students begin their WI course unsure of its purpose and what they can expect to gain from it.

While nothing short of committed and concerted university-wide attention can fully resolve this problematic situation, a more realistic approach is to address it through strategies applied within

individual WI classrooms. This, then, is the motivation for development and implementation of the Writer's Personal Profile, which constitutes a grassroots approach to pedagogical transformation by serving these four functions:

- Helping students gain a more complete understanding of what, exactly, a WI course is and what they can expect to give to and gain from the course; end-of-term WPP reviews also help outgoing students recognize the value of their course participation.
- Helping WI instructors get to know their incoming students as writers, facilitating their efforts to set reasonable and relevant course expectations and teach to their students' self-identified writing needs.
- Including students in the outcomes-setting process for their WI course and encouraging them to consider the elements of personal motivation, engagement, and personal responsibility for their learning experiences to enhance their gains as course participants.
- Enhancing the perceived value of these upper-division courses by increasing their visible contribution to college students' successful transition into the professional workplace.

Scholarly Context for the Study

In considering the future of self assessment, Boud (1995) argues:

> Self assessment can be viewed not as a distinct element of teaching and learning, but in relation to reflection, critical reflection and metacognitive practices. It is part of that set of activities which encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, monitor their learning plans and activities, process their studying and assess their effectiveness. Self assessment then would become something which is embedded in courses, designed from the very start to assist students with their learning. (p. 215)

The scholarly context for development of the WPP includes cross-disciplinary research on student self-evaluation and reflection, the relationship between goal setting and learning, and self-efficacy development related to writing instruction and learning in general. Important connections between student self-evaluation and enhanced learning at all stages of schooling are noted throughout the education literature (see for example Boud, 1995; Buehl, 1996; Hobson, 1996; and MacGregor's 1993 collection of essays on this topic). Likewise, composition research such as that reported in Smith & Yancey (2000), Young (2000), O'Neill (1998), and Silva, Cary, & Thaiss (1999) has demonstrated a positive association between reflective self assessment and writing skills development at all levels.

In addition, educators, psychologists, and academic success specialists have discovered that conscious goal setting enhances learning and task performance in academic, professional, and other arenas (see for example Eppler & Harju, 1997; Fenwick & Parsons, 2000; Kanar, 2004; Locke, 1996; Schunk, 2003; and Zimmerman, 1998). As a participatory, self-empowering learning strategy, goal setting tends to increase students' motivation, responsibility-taking, and engagement in a given learning experience (see observations of researchers such as Anderson, Billone, Stepien, & Yarbrough, 1996; Brophy, 1987; Chang and Lorenzi, 1983; and Locke, 1996). Moreover, successful completion of goals tends to heighten self-efficacy beliefs, which also influence the levels of motivation and engagement students bring to their learning experiences (Schunk, 1990, 2003; Zimmerman, 1998) . As defined by social cognitive theorist Albert Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs are "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 391). Frank Pajares (2002), who quotes

Bandura's definition, adds that "self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment. This is because unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties."

Recognizing and valuing the many benefits of reflective self-evaluation and conscious goal setting—and of the agency and instrumentality cultivated through these activities—the Writer's Personal Profile places these two activities front-and-center in the WI classroom. In doing so, the tool helps edge undergraduates away from "empty vessel" learning behavior and into a participatory, horizontal student-teacher relationship model more characteristic of adult learners and "educationally powerful learning environments" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Study Methodology

The primary objective of this study was to pilot the WPP in a variety of WI courses across the university to see how instructors and students used it and how it served these two clienteles. The intent was to draw from these observations to develop a set of best practices and recommendations that could guide future tool use. Study phases included developing and pre-testing the profile and obtaining IRB approval for its use as a research instrument; recruiting faculty participants; administering the profile and collecting and compiling the results; and completing the WPP assessment activities, including end-of-term follow-up with students and faculty debriefings.

The writing profile is constructed as a survey comprising both multiple-choice and short-answer questions related to the areas of emphasis in our WI curriculum. To close the exercise, students are invited to set two personal writing goals for their WI course. These goals—which should be specific, realistic, and achievable within the course timeframe—need not align with the specified course outcomes; more important, the goals should aim at bridging gaps between students' current writing competencies and those they anticipate needing as writers in their intended careers. The researchers consulted with the university's survey research center staff in formulating and presenting these questions (an extended discussion of which appears in Chapter 2 of Robinson's 2006 thesis). The tool was then pre-tested in five WI classes and with a group of writing center assistants prior to its design and contents being finalized for the formal study. As a formal research effort that involved human subjects, this study was awarded approval by the university's internal review board (IRB).

Twenty-two of the 50 Oregon State faculty slated to teach WI courses during the study term (winter 2004) accepted our invitation for study participation; among them, 23 WI sections, with enrollments ranging from 6 to 61 students, were represented. Participating faculty ranged from full professors to adjunct instructors and included a two-person teaching team. About two-thirds of the faculty participants had previously completed the WIC introductory seminar and/or other faculty training; several were teaching a WI course for the first time; and two were teaching multiple sections of the same WI course.

Paper copies of the WPP were distributed to participating faculty on the first day of the study term, and they were asked to administer the WPP during the first week of the term. We also provided them with a script that covered the necessary points regarding informed consent and guarantee of respondent anonymity, but beyond that they were free to administer the WPP as they saw fit, e.g. as an in-class or take-home assignment, with a request for alternative ID to allow student–survey matching by the instructor (but not by us), and so forth.

A total of 256 undergraduates, or about half of the available subjects in the participating WI sections, completed the WPP at start of term. Per human subject research requirements, student participation

was always voluntary, but some participating faculty sought their students' involvement more actively than others. After collecting their students' WPPs, the instructors forwarded the profiles to us. Participants' responses were collated in an Excel data table; collective class results were sent to the respective instructors both for their own review and, if desired, for distribution of class results to their students. The completed hard copies of the profile were also returned to the instructors for possible subsequent use during the course and for end-of-term student review.

Assessment of the questionnaire's effect on student participation and learning and on faculty's teaching experience included an end-of-term writing self evaluation for use by all students enrolled in the participating courses (not just those who had completed the profile). Faculty were also asked to complete a debriefing questionnaire and to participate in a face-to-face debriefing interview after the study term ended. Based on student and instructor feedback, the tool was refined, and recommendations for best practices in using the tool were developed.

Results

The full study results (available in Robinson, 2006) are copious and varied and can be interpreted from a number of perspectives. Here, however, we limit our discussion to results that revealed the tool's usefulness for students and teachers, those that pointed the way to best practices, and those that just simply surprised us.

Results: Student Self-reflection and Goal Setting

One purpose of the study was to learn more about students' self-reflection and G as they begin a challenging upper-division Writing Intensive course in their major. Some salient findings about student self-reflection and goal setting included the following:

- All students could opt out of participating in the study, but some teachers requested or required that students complete the WPP as a classroom activity. Not surprisingly, students were more likely to complete the survey if it was presented as an in-class exercise rather than as an optional, take-home assignment. In other words, despite what we know (and communicate to students) about the benefits of self-reflection and goal setting, that argument in itself may not be sufficiently persuasive to motivate students to use the WPP entirely of their own volition.
- Most students who did complete the WPP took it seriously and made a good-faith effort to answer all questions, including the open-ended ones asking about their writing strengths and weaknesses. This seemed to be true whether or not they were being given credit for WPP completion.
- Virtually all WPP respondents set personal writing goals, most of which met the criteria of being specific, realistic, and achievable within the course time frame. But this is where the commonalities ended. The goals set by study participants covered the entire range of writing categories used to characterize the open-ended responses.[1] While the majority of goals were related to writing skills typically targeted in WI courses in the disciplines (e.g., ideas and content, organization, clarity and conciseness, and genre knowledge), a surprisingly large percentage focused on skills that many WI instructors believe upper-division students should be carrying with them into the course. For example, 16% of the goals were writing-process related (i.e., dealt with issues of time management, proofreading/revising, collaborative work, peer review, or getting started), 9% addressed conventions such as punctuation, spelling, and grammar, and 6% targeted sentence fluency and word choice skills.

- To get feedback on student experience with the WPP, another self assessment was administered at the end of the study term to students in participating WI sections. This self assessment could be taken by all students (not just those who had completed the WPP), but it did include questions targeted to WPP-takers. Some instructors gave their students an opportunity to review their WPPs before completing the end-of-term assessment. Students who did so collectively reported more growth as writers and saw more usefulness for the start-of-term tool than students who did not review their WPP responses before completing the end-of-term assessment. Perhaps the most striking difference in responses from these two groups pertained to personal writing goal achievement. Of those who did review their original WPPs, 42% reported having made significant progress toward their writing goals, while only 14% of non-reviewers reported significant progress. These results suggests that at the end of their WI experience, the students' completed WPPs may function as a benchmarking tool that reminds them where they started from and hence enables them to more precisely gauge their progress during the term.

Results: Instructor Use of the WPP and of Student Data

Most faculty reviewed the WPP responses, both on the individual forms and in the compiled data set, and this effort prompted several of them to modify teaching approaches, assignment design, and/or responding practices. What they found most helpful and/or surprising about their students' responses varied by instructor, but a majority valued the insights gained on their students': (1) perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses as writers and of their research paper writing skills and deficits; (2) expectations of whether/how this course would help their writing; and (3) their personal writing goals.

Most faculty appear to have initially overlooked the goal-setting aspect of the WPP and opportunities for integrating that important aspect into their WI course. However, in the debriefing phase of the study, many instructors engaged with the idea of goal setting and with following up on writing goals students set during the term, as well as with identifying external resources that would support students' goal achievement. At the end of the study, most instructors also expressed interest in using the WPP in future WI classes, planning to make it a required assignment and to take fuller advantage of the tool by using it as a basis for discussion and follow-up throughout the term. They also planned to place more focus on the goal-setting aspect of the WPP.

Results: Support Needed for Instructors Using the WPP

Feedback from faculty participants suggested a number of ways that the OSU WIC Program could support WI instructors using the WPP. Such support includes faculty orientation and training on best practices for using the WPP, making the WPP available on Blackboard so that results can be aggregated easily by teachers, providing a "toolbox" of writing and learning resources that teachers can offer in support of students' personal writing goals, and offering faculty development opportunities focused on genre and characteristics of "good writing" in various fields and disciplines.

Results: Understanding Advanced Writers

In addition to its benefits for students and faculty, the WPP also has secondary use as a vehicle for information gathering and program assessment for WI program directors, college deans and department heads, curriculum developers, and others who seek to more accurately characterize advanced college writers. While we would not suggest that data from our pilot study of 23 WI courses

can be generalized to represent all Oregon State students (much less those at other universities), our data does have a number of uses at the program level. We see potential contributions in three main areas.

The first area is verifying (or complicating) assumptions about incoming WI students' prior college-level writing experience. For example, a surprising study finding for us was that only about 40% of the upper-division WIC students who completed the WPP had taken first-year writing at Oregon State University. As is undoubtedly true at many universities, OSU faculty tend to imagine their students' experience here as starting in the freshman year and continuing on through to graduation. Consequently, many base their expectations of upper-division students' writing skill sets on an assumption of a common first-year writing experience. Our data contradicts that assumption and has been a good reminder to faculty of the wide variety of first-year writing experiences (or lack thereof) their majors may actually have had.

A second area in which the WPP provides programmatic data is in confirming or complicating guiding WAC principles that inform WI program policies and practices. One such principle is the privileging of writing-to-learn (WTL) as a learning approach—a practice that has already been questioned by some members of the composition and education communities (see for example Ackerman, 1993; Ochsner & Fowler, 2004; and Smagorinsky, 1995). One WPP question lists a number of WTL strategies and asks students to indicate which of these they have tried previously and which have been helpful to their learning. Most of our study respondents acknowledged experience with some WTL strategies (most frequently note-taking, outlining or idea grouping, brainstorming, freewriting, and summarizing). Asked about the helpfulness of these activities in learning course material, however, respondents' opinions varied widely, with typical WAC WTL strategies such as response journals and impromptu in-class writing receiving the lowest ratings. For example, 98% of the respondents who had tried note-taking considered this practice useful to their learning, but only about half of those who reported prior experience with in-class WTL activities also reported finding them helpful.

While this difference may simply reflect students' perceptions that they are tested on material in class notes and that therefore notes are more useful, it may also indicate that different WTL approaches are more useful in some disciplines than in others. While, as Bazerman et al. (2005) point out, the efficacy of specific WTL strategies has been investigated in certain disciplines (biology, physics, mathematics, and nursing, for example), further cross-disciplinary research could yield evidence of which WTL strategies are effective in which disciplines—and perhaps also which do not work in any discipline.

Our study also raised questions about another WAC staple, peer review. MacAllister (1982) cites research showing that "peer responses to writing can be just as effective as responses made by instructors," and other researchers, including Sims (1989), have cited benefits associated with peer review. However, WPP respondents expressed an ambivalence toward peer review similar to that documented in studies by Artemeva & Logie (2002), Chuck & Young (2004), Helfers, Duerden, Garland, & Evans (1999), and Saito & Fujita (2004). WPP respondents indicated a general distrust of peer review, especially as compared to feedback on a draft from the instructor. We remain committed to the use of peer review in WI courses, but our results suggest that students may carry baggage of past negative peer review experiences into their advanced writing courses. WI teachers may therefore need to debrief students on the best and worst of peer review, model strong reviewing for the class, and offer assignment-specific guidelines for peer review. We would like to encourage more research on student attitudes toward the effectiveness of peer review when all of these efforts have been accomplished. Will students continue to view their peers' feedback with the same degree of ambivalence and distrust?

Results on revision were surprising in a different way. Citing Sommers (1980) and Crowhurst (1986), Beeson & Darrow (1997) report a prevailing belief among scholars that "students … generally see revision as merely 'cleaning up' a text" (p. 105). But our study results suggest that many incoming upper-division WI students have a more comprehensive notion of revision than Beeson & Darrow's observation suggests. Fifty-seven percent of our respondents showed an understanding that substantive editing and reworking of content and organization is part of revising rather than limiting their definition to sentence-level copyediting, style issues, and cleaning up of grammatical errors. It is also interesting that in their definitions, students applied the idea of "correcting" not only to language issues but also to ideas, content, and organization. These results suggest that student views of revision at the upper division may differ from those of first-year writers, a possibility that merits further investigation.

The third major area in which WPP data can contribute to WI program assessment is in helping to identify areas for innovation and improvement in faculty training and program direction. For example, in examining questions that shed light on program goals and purposes, we found that most incoming WI students who anticipate improving as writers expect their improvement to occur in "high-level" areas such as ideas and content, organization, and knowledge of workplace writing genres, expectations consistent with WI program goals. On the other hand, what respondents identified as their principal writing weakness (and frequently also cited as a goal for improvement) seems somewhat at odds with standard WI agendas. Twenty-six percent of these responses focused on standard writing conventions (e.g. faulty punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage), almost twice as many as the two next-most-frequently cited areas of concern, content and organization.[2]

As is typical of undergraduate WAC and WID programs nationwide, Oregon State's WIC Program does not emphasize conventions-related instruction in WI courses and encourages faculty not to think of themselves as the "grammar police." This stance aligns with the vision and espoused purposes of the broader WAC movement and is also consistent with the current nationwide de-emphasis of grammar in writing instruction at all levels of schooling, a trend whose roots are documented and critiqued by Kolln & Hancock (2005) but supported by many others. Given that grammatical correctness is one of the most important ingredients of effective workplace writing (see for example Anderson, 1985; Gray, Emerson, & MacKay, 2005; Jones, 1994; and National Commission on Writing, 2005), upper-division college undergraduates' lack of confidence in their grammar skills, as expressed in their WPP responses, raises significant questions about how well our students have been served by the "anti-grammar" trend in American education. Students' concerns about conventions also suggest that our WIC Program might look for ways to help them shore up these skills prior to graduation.

Best Practices for Using the Writer's Personal Profile

Once the study was completed and we saw that results indicated the positive impact of the instrument for teaching and learning, we were eager to expand the tool's use to other WI courses at the university. One early change involved renaming the instrument. Although it had been called the Start-of-Term Writing Questionnaire (STQ) during the study, we wanted a name that would be more student-centered and settled on the Writer's Personal Profile (WPP). We also worked with the university's Technology Across the Curriculum program to design a version of the WPP that could be administered electronically through Blackboard. The research study showed the importance of requiring WPP completion by all students rather than making it an optional exercise. For teachers who prefer the electronic version, the questionnaire is uploaded into Blackboard as a test, and students complete it there. Students can save their answers for future review and print out copies for themselves and their instructor.

The teacher can also download the aggregate Blackboard data into an Excel spreadsheet and analyze it to obtain an overview of the class as writers—information that can then be shared with the course participants. Students may also be asked to consolidate their data onto a one-page summary sheet, which is available on the WPP website.

With new awareness of class needs and experiences, the teacher can integrate the results into the course, for example by referring to students' responses in lectures or discussions of writing, in writing conferences, or as part of writing assignment feedback. We see the completion of the assessment feedback loop as a rich opportunity to use reflective self-evaluation and goal setting to shape students' experience in their WI course. And not surprisingly, various faculty use the results in differing ways.

A faculty member in mechanical engineering, for example, shares the aggregated strengths, weaknesses, and goals with the class and then asks students, in pairs, to design strategies by which each writer can achieve her or his individual writing goals. A business professor categorizes the students' personal writing goals and discusses these categories with the class. Then, during in-class peer review sessions, he displays the categories on the overhead projector to remind students of issues they may want to address. An English teacher uses the WPP as a conversation starter in writing conferences with students, inviting them, for example, to talk more about preparing to write in their chosen career field. She finds that discussing self-identified writing strengths and weaknesses enables students to share particular concerns they may have about writing and identify strategies for dealing with those concerns. And teachers who use a process memo with the submission of each assignment have asked students to restate their two writing goals on the process memo and indicate how they addressed the two goals in writing the current assignment.

Other best practices based on faculty feedback include asking students to self-assess their writing goals and strategies at mid-term and then again at the end of the course. The end-of-term assessment can ask students not only to look back at their growth as writers in the course but also to look ahead and set writing goals for their future academic work and their careers. Another practice is to allow time in the course for discussion/follow-up of the students' responses. Especially recommended are "goals check-in" activities that students do either on their own, in conference with the instructor, or as a group activity. Checking in with students not only makes it clear that their instructor really is holding them accountable for accomplishing their goals, but also gives students an opportunity to bring up any difficulties they are encountering as they work toward those goals. Instructors may be able to suggest strategies and point to resources for resolving difficulties.

We encourage faculty to build time into the course syllabus for an in-class, end-of-term review by each student of his/her WPP, preferably in conjunction with some kind of end-of-term writing evaluation activity.

Implications for Program Building

Our research indicates that the Writer's Personal Profile is used most effectively when faculty have some training and orientation to the instrument before they use it. Our current training model is one two-hour session that introduces the WPP, suggests best practices for its use, and explains the technical aspects of administering it on Blackboard. In our faculty training, the first thing faculty do is complete the WPP themselves, perhaps imagining themselves as a student in the class, or taking the opportunity to reflect on their own writing goals and struggles. This personal experience invariably increases their engagement with the tool and triggers ideas on how to use it in their classes. As we introduce the tool's potential for students and its possible impact on teaching, we especially emphasize the goal-setting opportunities and encourage faculty to return to the goals

throughout the term, as described above. We are also developing online training modules on best practices for using the WPP, and we are integrating WPP training into our introductory seminar for WI faculty.

The data we gathered have given us a rich collection of new, specific knowledge of what WI writers at our institution need and want, and we have tailored faculty development experiences to support those needs. Here are a few examples of programmatic activities that have already been initiated in response to WPP results:

Faculty seminars on frequent errors, proofreading, and editing. As mentioned previously, problems with standard writing conventions was the most frequently mentioned writing weakness among 256 student respondents. To support WI teachers in responding to these problems, we are offering faculty seminars on Lunsford and Connors' (and now Lunsford and Lunsford's) studies of most frequent errors in student writing, as well as workshops on proofreading and editing. In addition, the OSU WIC Program website (http://wic.oregonstate.edu) contains student grammar guides using examples from various disciplines. And to broaden the base of support for student writers in this area, we have discussed their concerns with our first-year and professional writing program and writing center staff.

- **Department presentations on time management of writing.** Students' self-assessment of their problems with research writing highlighted numerous areas in which students (and therefore their teachers) need support. Across the board, time management of writing was the top student-identified problem. Although process writing, itself a staple of the OSU WIC Program, implies forced time management, we are investigating other strategies that can be used by WI teachers and students, and we are offering presentations that focus on time management of department-specific writing projects.
- **Support for development of visual communication pedagogies.** Another highly ranked problem for writers of research papers was "incorporating and citing tables and figures." To address this issue we have awarded a WIC development grant to a faculty member studying effective use of visuals, and we offer seminars in which instructors with expertise in this area share their approaches.

"Surviving your WIC Course" website for students. In part in response to study findings, we have developed a website (http://wic.oregonstate.edu/survivalguide/) for students that addresses the challenges of completing a major writing project.

Future Directions, Including the IRB Conundrum

Some readers may recall that in 2004, the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program and Center for Writing and Learning collaborated to produce the film *Writing Across Borders*, in which international students discuss how they were taught to write in their home cultures and how they have had to adjust to write in an American university. With funding from internal grants, we were able to give away the first 1000 copies of the film at various writing conferences. In a similar spirit, we have decided to set the Writer's Personal Profile free—to make it available not only to Oregon State faculty but also to colleagues at other institutions. The Writer's Personal Profile website (http://wic.oregonstate.edu/OSU/WPP.htm) contains a print version of the WPP and instructions for creating a Blackboard version, a link to the original thesis study, a handout on best practices for WPP use, and a sample end-of-term assessment. The survey and related WPP

documents are copyrighted, so they cannot be reproduced for profit, but users are invited to adapt the questions to local needs. We hope that colleagues who gather data using the WPP will let us know what they learn—and how use of the tool impacts teaching and learning at their institutions.

As we have shared our data at conferences, many people have suggested that it would be useful for us to collect data on all the future Writer's Personal Profiles completed for OSU WIC courses. We agree that this would be a worthy task, but it would also be a labor-intensive one for which our university's program does not have personnel or funding. Further, in any ongoing research study using "human subjects," students completing the WPP must agree to be part of the study, and completion of the survey must be optional, which contradicts what we found to be a best practice for use of the instrument. Making the WPP part of an ongoing formal research study also adds responsibilities for WI instructors. And frankly, it is hard enough already to persuade faculty to take on use of the WPP, which many overworked colleagues see as "one more thing." To ask them to administer human subjects protection might close the show. So, at least for now, we continue to work for program improvement by using the results of the research study and by responding to expressed needs of faculty, but we are not collecting the WPP data from current classes. Individual WI faculty may be collecting WPP data for their own use.

We conclude by offering our thoughts on future research issues inspired by—or contested by—the Writer's Personal Profile. We are encouraged by student responses to goal setting for writing improvement, and we would like to see more research done on the impact of self assessment, goal setting, and metacognition on college writers' development, especially as they approach graduation. Along with the findings of Hilgers et al. (1999) that 68% of students interviewed had established personal goals for their focal WI assignment (p. 330), and Thaiss and Zawacki's findings that some students in their study shaped disciplinary writing assignments to meet personal goals (p. 118-119), our findings suggest the use of goal setting by student writers as a promising line for future research.

Another promising research area might involve examining canonical strategies of WAC teaching, for example various types of writing-to-learn assignments and the use of peer review, which have undergone little scrutiny as they are used across the disciplines. We would particularly like to see more studies of the effectiveness of specific WTL strategies in a variety of disciplines, especially in light of the question Klein (1999) raises in his review of the research on cognitive processes in writing to learn: "*When* writing contributes to learning, *how* does it do so?" (p. 206). And we would like to know more about how teachers assess the effectiveness of a given WAC strategy in their own classes and how they tend to view and act on student self-reported information (as used in our study). Is student self-report always the best measure of how well these strategies are working?

Even more than prompting additional WAC and WID research, we hope to prompt teachers of WI courses from across the disciplines to consider the powerful potential of self assessment at the start of WI courses for advanced student writers—both as that self assessment attunes students to the writing tasks ahead (not only within their course but also onward into their careers) and as students' feedback and goal setting help teachers attune their course to specific students in a specific class. self assessment not only helps students grow but also helps them realize they are growing. And their input helps teachers reflect on current teaching practices and make changes with intention. Such habits of organic assessment and improvement are at the heart of excellence in teaching and learning.

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Notes

[1] These categories include "citing sources," "clarity and conciseness," "conventions," "genre," "ideas and content," "organization," "personal traits," "sentence fluency," "voice," "word choice," "writing process," "writing-to-learn," and "general." For a detailed description and examples of responses for each of these categories, see "Classification of Open-ended Student Responses" in Chapter 3 of Robinson (2006).

[2] It is important to note that we (and the students) are using the term "conventions" the way it is used in Oregon public education, which is as one of the seven categories on which K-12 student writing is assessed (see Oregon Department of Education, 2005). This category refers to "standard writing conventions (e.g. punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage)" and the degree to which errors in those areas impede readability. This use of the term diverges significantly from its meaning in much WID scholarship, where it typically signifies the discursive approaches specific to in a given discipline (for example, "the conventions of writing in engineering").

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