A HYBRID MEGA-COURSE WITH OPTIONAL STUDIO: RESPONDING RESPONSIBLY TO AN ADMINISTRATIVE MANDATE

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What can ethically-minded writing instructors do when their administration mandates innovation at the level of delivery mode? This essay offers a responsible response to this question. It provides data and observations from the study of a two-semester, small-scale first-year composition (FYC) studio pilot program at the Tempe campus of Arizona State University (ASU). Studio courses for the pilot were populated by approximately 50 students per section. These mega-courses were both hybrid, requiring students to complete weekly asynchronous online assignments, and attached to optional Studios that students could choose to attend. This chapter details the design of this ASU program; investigates how problems with large composition class sizes can be mitigated by smaller, optional Studios taught by the same team of instructors who shared a curriculum; and explores the consequences of giving students the choice to attend Studios in the face of the truism that "academically optional" can mean "not important" in the minds of first-year students. Although our pilot program did not continue beyond two semesters, it did succeed in shedding light on the intersection of self-placement and required attendance in the context of studio courses and FYC.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

When institutional pressures compelled Arizona State University Writing Programs on the Tempe campus to explore innovative ways to make instruction in FYC more "efficient," several studio projects involving online instruction were initiated on multiple ASU campuses ("Downtown," "West," and "Tempe/Main") around the same time. Each studio program had a unique design

and program-specific goals, yet they shared student learning outcomes with FYC courses taught on all ASU campuses, which were aligned with the 2014 version of the Council of Writing Program Administrator's Outcomes Statement. Regardless of campus, most students enroll in a two-course required sequence—English 101 and English 102 with a writing-as-inquiry approach. The first course is "stretched" across two semesters for developmental writers; more advanced student writers take English 105, a one-semester "accelerated" version of FYC that combines the two courses into a single semester. Non-native speakers of English can enroll in dedicated FYC sections if they wish. Our provost asked the Tempe campus' Writing Programs Director, Professor Shirley Rose, and then Chair of the English Department, Professor Maureen Daly Goggin, to try out a studio design that asserted a new kind of efficiency within the composition classroom with the understanding that if successful, the design would be instituted program-wide, possibly affecting up to 13,000-15,000 students in FYC courses every year. Although "efficiency" in academic contexts is often a shorthand term for spending a smaller percentage of tuition dollars on instruction, in our case, "efficiency" efforts were directed at changing the way students experienced the FYC classroom (see the *Design Interpretations and Constraints* section).

In effect, and as Paul Butler explains, our studio pilot became a countermonument to our traditional writing program in that instead of "run[ning] the risk of becoming monolithic or static in [it]s evolution," we entered into a process of reinvention "as a kind of self-destruction" to revise and change our program structures (2006, p. 11). This revisioning meant that both students and instructors experienced composition instruction differently. Students who enrolled in our FYC studio pilot program were minimally required to 1) attend class once a week for 75 minutes with approximately 50 other students and 2) complete weekly asynchronous online course assignments. Readers may recognize the requirement to complete online assignments as typical of courses from a "hybrid" or "blended" model, which allows students to cut their in-class time in half. Unlike other hybrid models, including those already in place at ASU, our studio pilot program offered students the opportunity to attend *optional* 75 minute Studios on one or more days, up to five times a week with their own or another studio program instructor. Even though students' attendance at studio sessions was optional, attendance at the weekly whole-class meetings was not, as the Writing Program's policy of allowing no more absences than the equivalent of two weeks' worth of class meetings was in force for the pilot sections. As instructors, we individually led one weekly face-to-face class, supervised the concordant hybrid work, pair-taught two Studios per week, attended weekly or bi-weekly planning meetings, and shared a curricu-

lum—all the while doing our best to maintain a critical stance (Adler-Kassner) in the interest of helping students succeed within these novel constraints.

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

Studios and their practices change from setting to setting. Traditionally, Studio is "[a] small group . . . [which] provides a place where students, concurrently enrolled in different writing classes, meet once a week to discuss and question the demands of their various writing assignments" (Tassoni & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2005, p. 69). Studios typically require attendance (Grego & Thompson, 2008, p. 8), are taught by a separate instructor (p. 10), and are informed by "interactional inquiry" (p. 12-13), in which

> [s]tudents and instructor . . . examine individual, diverse writing curricula in order to uncover the rhetorical situation, including the contextual constraints and determinants, of particular writing assignments; teacher expectations; and social issues in students' lives at home, work, and in the university. (Tassoni & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2005, p. 70)

The use of interactional inquiry combined with a studio that is separate from students' "regular" writing classes is thought to create a thirdspace—a space/place outside of traditional writing classrooms and the institutions/disciplines that inform them.

The combination of interactional inquiry and thirdspace creation are hallmarks of Studios that reach well beyond the students and composition classrooms, meaning that studios can show up in institutional, economic, political, and faculty contexts. Studios can even spring up in digital spaces, as one does in Leach and Kuhne's work (this volume), where faculty sort out issues regarding shared students or curricula. Owing in part to their modularity, studios' contextual variances offer affordances and constraints that are not always, as Matzke and Garrett (this volume) point out, "easily aligned with studio best practices." This is true especially given the unique challenges studio practitioners face in borrowing from successful studios and/or their theoretical foundations to find space and enable interactional inquiry.

For us, our studio pilot program faced two clear challenges: large class size and optional attendance to Studio. These features of the program affected both instructors and students. Large writing classes can compromise both student-teacher and student-student interactions, and supplemental studio classes can be a long shot at mitigating negative effects. In addition, academically optional programs are a tough sell, especially at the freshmen level. Our students

were asked to attend Studios out of their own volition. Composition theorists' ongoing discussions about Writing Studios, class size, required attendance at writing centers, and the efficacy of directed self-placement provided a basis for inquiry into the design of our studio program.

CLASS SIZE AND STUDIO THEORY

We expected that valuable teacher-student interactions were unlikely to occur in our large, 50-person, face-to-face sessions. In her discussion of "why small writing classes are better," Alice Horning (2007), shows "smaller class size in writing courses improves student success" because small classes are more likely to require writing, which improves students' engagement and motivation, and because teachers are better able to assess and target students' varying learning styles (p. 11). The ideal writing class size, according to the CCCC's "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" is 15 with preferably no more than 20 students.

Being highly aware of issues pertaining to the negative effects of large class sizes, we recognized that the success of our pilot program relied on Writing Studios' potential to provide supplementary support to "at-risk students" who would benefit from a smaller class (Tassoni & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2005, p. 69). Unfortunately for us, the constraints of our program design did not allow us to require studio attendance, staff with separate studio instructors, or consistently perform the usual style of interactional inquiry in a thirdspace setting, points we return to throughout this chapter. For these reasons, our study is also informed by two other strands of scholarship that are not typically found in studio theory: research on required attendance and directed self-placement.

REQUIRED ATTENDANCE AND DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT

We expected that students might sometimes choose to attend Studios even though they were optional. As such, our studio design was informed by scholarship that explores students' abilities to make choices with regard to their writing instruction, in particular, research on the efficacy of required attendance at writing center tutorials and on directed self-placement.

While acknowledging that Studios and writing centers create different student experiences, we shared writing center researchers' questions about the effects of mandating student engagement with supplementary writing instruction. That is, writing centers sometimes discourage teachers from requiring attendance at writing center tutorials for two main reasons: 1) negative student attitudes

could influence the effectiveness of tutorial sessions, and 2) required tutorial conferences could create a demand for services that the writing center could not meet. Student attitudes mattered in our pilot program because the effectiveness of changed teacher-student roles presupposed positive student engagement and interaction. Students who chose to attend would encounter their teachers in a light that was much more casual, personal, and anecdotal; these differences might not have been valued or sustained without student buy-in.

Secondly, our studio design was informed, albeit indirectly, by discussions of directed self-placement. These discussions have mainly been limited to the level of course students may choose in a multi-level or sequenced FYC curriculum (Gere et al., 2010) or whether second language writers make informed choices about enrolling in special sections of FYC for multilingual writers or in "mainstream" sections (Costino & Hyon, 2007). Although the question of self-placement is of increasing interest, as more and more undergraduate writing programs experiment with other instructional formats, little formal study has been done about students' success in making good choices about the instructional format or delivery method of writing instruction. Dan Fraizer's article (this volume), is an exception, however, as his work argues that our systems of placement must be responsive to time and relational decision-making dynamics. For our study, questions about the effects of self-placement arose not only in students' initial choice of a hybrid class offering with elective face-to-face Studios, but also when students were asked to make a choice whether or not to self-place in studio sessions every week (or up to five times a week).

These research threads informed our inquiry as we sought to answer two key questions: 1) What was the nature of the support that instructors provided across the three pilot program modalities (lecture, hybrid, and Studio)? and 2) What was the nature of the choices that students made with respect to attending Studio? These questions lead us back into studio theory to consider the ways attending or not attending studios provided opportunities for students and instructors to rethink what it means to do school effectively.

DESIGN INTERPRETATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

As Ritola et al. and Matzke and Garrett demonstrate (this volume), getting a studio off the ground and functioning can be a tricky, uphill battle. As we developed and implemented our Tempe Studio pilot program, we worked to respond to key mandates outlined by our administration, which we interpreted and experienced as design constraints (detailed in Figure 6.1 and discussed following the figure).

Administrative Mandates	Design Interpretations and Constraints
Innovate curriculum to more efficiently use instructional time and classroom space	Offer instruction in several delivery formats: • in-person whole-class meetings ("lectures") • asynchronous online activities ("hybrid") • in-person, optional workshops ("Studios")
Develop flexible delivery options within current contractual definitions of instructional workloads	Respect/maintain current instructor workloads: • no heavier overall student load • no additional contact hours with students
Create and teach a standard curriculum without undermining individual teachers' agency	Teach a shared curriculum: • developed collaboratively (before and during semester) • managed in weekly/bi-weekly meetings
Offer alternative instructional delivery options without additional capital expenditures and without disruption to class scheduling practices	Maintain classroom configurations: • no extensive classroom architectural renovations or refurnishing • no new classroom scheduling configurations

Figure 6.1. Administrative mandates vs. design interpretations and constraints in our studio pilot.

OFFER INSTRUCTION IN SEVERAL DELIVERY FORMATS

The enrollment process for our studio pilot program was similar to signing up for a physical science course with a corresponding lab. For example, if a student registered for a "lecture" (whole-class meeting) that met on Wednesday, he or she would be prompted to register for a corresponding "lab" (Studio) session on either Friday or Monday. The teacher of Wednesday's class, likewise, would co-lead Studios on Friday and Monday. Figure 6.2 shows the weekly schedule of all the "lecture" classes and their corresponding Studios. However, even if a student from Wednesday's "lecture" class was officially registered for Friday's (or Monday's) Studio, she or he had the realistic option of attending *any* Studio during the week.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9-10:15	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Class E
10-11:45	Studio C, D	Studio D, E	Studio E, A	Studio A, B	Studio B, C

Figure 6.2. Schedule for Tempe studio pilot ENG 101 and 102.

As mentioned, forging new areas of innovation and efficiency were goals charged to our department by our provost. Earlier hybrid models had paved the way in this regard by giving students format options regarding how much time they spent in face-to-face portions of the class. Studios took this a step further by allowing students to make choices about how much and what kind of face-to-face supplementary instruction they felt they needed. We assumed that high-performing students would choose to go to Studio sparingly, while students who needed extra help could attend Studio as needed. Theoretically, a student could spend as little as 75 minutes per week in their FYC class (75 minutes of required whole-class, in person "lecture" time and zero minutes of optional studio time) or as much as 450 minutes in class if they chose to attend Studio every day! If students decided to attend studio sessions, they would have been very likely to encounter students from other classes, engage with students from their own class on a personal level, and see their own teacher interact with a co-teacher, or even avoid their own teacher entirely by choosing to attend completely different studio sessions. All of these options would be either impossible or simply not available to students in more traditional two- or three-day-a-week classes, or even in more contemporary hybrid or online formats. The optional studio classes therefore serve to allow greater scheduling flexibility for students and to demonstrate innovation and efficiency.

RESPECT/MAINTAIN CURRENT INSTRUCTOR WORKLOADS

Teaching in the Tempe studio pilot program did not mean that instructors worked harder for less pay. Instead, they actually spent less time in front of a class than teachers teaching traditional two- or three-day-a-week classes. Ordinarily, for example, a fall schedule would require a graduate teaching associate to teach two classes of approximately 25 students each.[1] A typical two- or three-day-a-week teaching schedule would then place teachers in front of students for 300 (150 x 2) minutes every week. Our studio model, on the other hand, allowed instructors to teach the same number of students in one "double"-sized section (50 = 25 x 2) while being in front of the classroom only 225 minutes per week (75 minutes of "lecture" and 150 minutes of Studio). This reduced not only teacher workload, but number of classrooms being filled per week.

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1   In fall 2012, the enrollment caps for first-year composition courses were maintained at 25 students per section, so the corresponding caps for these pilot sections were 50 students per section.

Teach a Shared Curriculum

Team-teaching the Studios motivated the five pilot teachers to develop a shared curriculum in which basic content and concepts were the same, and variability was limited to presentation styles and classroom activities. We spent time discussing the limits and possibilities of major writing assignments, and we mapped out daily plans the summer before the fall semester and during the winter break before the spring semester. To streamline the process, teacher pairs were formed in the spring and given the responsibility of providing the group with optional materials corresponding to their vision of one entire assignment sequence (approximately five weeks of plans). During the semesters, instructors met weekly or bi-weekly to negotiate their own and their students' interpretations of shared assignments and to develop shared grading rubrics.

Maintain Classroom Configurations

The "pilot" nature of our program required us to work with existing classroom space. So, much like Matzke and Garrett's (this volume) bricolage approach, which utilized "uptake" and "not talk" as tools for recognizing and assessing available resources for program design, we made use of existing computer-mediated, mid-sized classrooms. These rooms accommodate approximately 50 students at a time and are located in the Engineering Center Complex. Each student had access to a desktop computer but limited space for actual pen-and-paper writing. The presence of computer monitors made interaction among students, as well as between instructors and students, difficult. In fact, students were seated facing computer monitors and had to turn or move their chairs to follow lectures or to work with other students, which might have provided less incentive to engage or interact.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Instructors

Ten FYC sections—five English 101s in the fall of 2012 and five English 102s in the spring of 2013—were enrolled in this study. Eight different instructors (three of the original five stayed in the spring) taught 377 students (approximately 47 students per section in the fall and a range of nine to 44 students per section in the spring). Graduate Teaching Associates, full-time Lecturers and Instructors, and part-time Faculty Associates were recruited in the new TA train-

ing seminar or through direct invitation from ASU Writing Programs Director Shirley Rose. Instructors in the study had a range of FYC teaching experience (between 25 years and one year); the TAs were less experienced, though each had taught at least one section of English 101 and 102 prior to the start of the study.

Data Sets

In all, five separate data sets are included in this study. The first and second sets include optional student surveys collected at the midterm of the fall 2012 semester and at the end of the spring 2013 semester. These Likert-style surveys focused on self-reports of attendance patterns, attitudes toward discrete components (in-person whole-class meetings, asynchronous online hybrid activities, and in-person studios), perceived value of discrete components in achieving course objectives, and students' self-anticipated final grade. Participation in the optional student surveys across semesters resulted in a 21% and 63% sample of students, respectively, in the fall 2012 and spring 2013 semesters. The third data set comprised instructors' reflections on student attendance at studio sessions. Since program policy did not require students to sign-in and restricted teachers from counting studio attendance toward students' overall grades or participation, we depended upon instructors' recollections of individual student attendance in the optional Studios, which they recorded in three categories: "never attended," "occasionally attended," and "often attended." The fourth data set is made up of students' final grades, which, along with the survey data (Sets 1 and 2) and teachers' reports of students' studio attendance (Set 3), were subject to statistical analysis in consultation with the Arizona State University Statistical Consulting Center in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The fifth data set is comprised of transcribed recordings of five focus groups conducted with approximately 50 students (five groups of ten) during a week of studios around the midterm of the fall semester. Students responded to a series of questions regarding the value of studios and their own attendance patterns. These live group interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Grounded theory was used to code, discover patterns and analyze these qualitative data.

DATA

Much like Grego and Thompson's Studio model, instructors used the studio space, in both the fall and the spring, as a way to engage in interactional inquiry with students. However, one difference between their model and ours loomed large: while Grego and Thompson used Studio to give students a break from their teachers (in order to draw students from different writing courses into discussions about the

demands of their assignments and the expectations of their teachers), we provided supplemental instruction for our own students in our program when they chose to attend Studios co-led by their instructor. In this section, we draw from survey and focus group data to evaluate what happened in our Studios.

During both semesters, the shared curricula informed the kinds of supplemental instruction teachers provided to mitigate the effects of the large lectures. In the fall, for example, the multi-modal curriculum carried over to Studios to help students develop the digital literacies required to do well in the course and adjust to the technological aspects of the projects, which for this particular class included using Google Maps, Blogger, and Audacity. Similarly, in the spring, major curricular projects required more advanced traditional rhetorical critiques and arguments, which used citation formats (MLA, APA) and outside research. Unfortunately, content covered in the spring semester Studios lent itself to a different, somewhat stilted style. Students and teachers seemed to struggle to find ways to match the stride of their fall Studios. As Fred, a student who enrolled in both semesters of the pilot program, describes:

> In the fall [in Studio we would] work together, collaborate on projects, ask questions, and watch brief presentations to clarify information about the project. In spring, it was structured like a full on lecture. I much preferred the laid back environment that allowed me to freely work on my assignments and ask questions or work as a group.

Even though spring Studios did seem to put some students off in terms of pre-determining the paths of inquiry and somewhat scripting responses, interactional inquiry remained. Students who chose to attend Studios continued to interact with teachers in ways that the larger lecture classes did not allow. Students were able to observe co-teachers navigating the same content, getting in each other's way, and reconciling their different perspectives through intelligently productive conversations, as the following instructor says:

> [While in Studio] we share different answers to the same question, and discuss how our assignments differ . . . [or we] disagree. These are moments where [students] see that education is not simply about memorizing concrete facts but rather being able to justify your interpretations and observations— developing tools for knowing. (Instructor Donald)

In fact, the highly interpretable and often contentious nature of the content of English 102 combined with the varying disciplines of each instructor (three in literature, one in rhet/comp, and one in linguistics) often made for much

more productive and institutionally-revealing co-teacher conversations than the fall Studios' focus on using new technology.

Gerald Graff's (1992) arguments for "teaching the conflicts" in *Beyond the Culture Wars* came to mind when we heard teachers discuss the benefits they saw in students being able to observe two teachers working together—disagreeing productively and respectfully as well as bringing complementary skills and expertise to the studio meetings. Such conflict further helped students "build experiences with and validate knowledges about writing, experiences and knowledges that . . . struggle with the institution's desire to turn [students and teachers] into its objects and instruments of power" (Grego and Thompson, 2008, p. 175). In many cases, these exchanges between studio teachers modeled the tone and rhetorical strategies of civil debate that teachers wanted their students to learn and adopt for their writing in the course and beyond. Moreover, whether instructors are modeling or students are engaging, these moments—or sites of interactional inquiry, as Leach and Kuhne's (this volume) explain—can create safe spaces where individual realities are affirmed and situated knowledge can be brought to bear to the service of creating community and better futures for all involved.

Ultimately, however, only 77 percent of students enrolled in the studio version of English 101 in fall 2012 completed the course with a passing grade of a "C" or better; 22 percent either dropped, failed or withdrew, a full 11 percent lower than the completion rate for non-studio English 101 hybrid courses. The spring 2013 numbers were no better: 78 percent of English 102 students passed with a "C" or better compared to the 91 percent pass rate for non-studio 102 hybrids (see Figure 6.3). These results led our provost to decide to cease the studio pilot program.

	Fall 2012: English 101	Spring 2013: English 102
In-person courses	89%	90%
Hybrid courses	88%	91%
Studio course	77%	78%

Figure 6.3. Delivery models and passing students (students who passed with a "C" or better).

COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIPS: INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND STUDIO ATTENDANCE

In line with our expectations but contrary to our hopes, students were to a great extent opting out of Studio. In both the spring and fall semesters, studio attendance was highest at the beginning of the semester, lowest toward the end, and

peaked at 12 and sunk to zero; attendance averages were different depending on teacher pairings or particular days, but it was unusual to see more than three students at a time. And some students never attended. These "wild" fluctuations were both a blessing and a curse in the eyes of instructors who on particular days or weeks collectively celebrated opportunities to co-lead effective Studios only to experience empty classrooms the next time around.

These outcomes compelled us to consider ways that we as instructors might challenge the dominant script in the classroom, tap into student underlife, their counterscript, to merge our world views in moments of "unscripted improvisation" (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). We hoped to manage the tensions we felt as a result of maintaining dual commitments: 1) to the integrity of the program design (which we felt left students out to dry), and 2) to our responsibilities as writing teachers to closely structure and scaffold student success. We responded by working to help students think more—not just once or twice, but again and again—about the potential drawbacks of the openness of the program. Because students' success was in part riding on their willingness to make choices about attending studios, we wanted to cultivate a critical consciousness to encourage student discernment and ownership of their writing education again and again over the semester (See Dan Fraizer's article, this volume). More specifically, we went to work developing formative self-assessments to demonstrate what Studios were good for, and we reviewed the assessment questions with students in class and emailed them as reminders. See Figure 6.4 for an example self-assessment. On paper, the self-assessments identified essential components, concepts, and milestones of projects we developed by circulating questions among ourselves. We asked questions such as: "Is it critical for the assignment?" or "Do you think that *most* students know how to do that?" or "What should students have done by this point?"

Week 8 (10/15-19) Draft Workshop: Developing Blog Entries and Evaluative Criteria

Do You Need to Attend this Workshop?

Are your annotations focused by evaluative criteria?

Have you had someone navigate your links successfully?

Does your introduction prepare a reader for the project?

Do you have at least 500 words drafted?

Figure 6.4. Example self-assessment for students.

Furthermore, we made sure we framed the questions in ways that clearly signaled what were desirable outcomes and features of the project. Specifically, we focused on developing self-assessments in keeping with what Frank Pajares' (2003) research on self-efficacy of student writers has shown to be critical for the development of good judgments about one's own writing abilities. In retrospect, we noted that our self-assessment exercises were sometimes directed toward what students were interested in or felt they needed help on. This got them in the door with practical promises, and we could then work in interactional inquiry as integral to the larger process.

Another way the self-assessments affected Studios was that they helped us to plan what content would be covered or which questions would be attended to (at least), an effect which challenged the philosophy we had established at the start of the studio pilot. Within this initial orientation, instructors were encouraged to respond to issues students brought to Studio, rather than coming to the studio class with a set agenda. However, as we began to recognize the highly significant dependent relationships between grades and studio attendance, especially between semesters,[2] we were inclined to hybridize Grego and Thompson's (2008) guideline that Studios should be "orient[ed] toward responding to what students say, do and need" with our formative self-assessments in hopes that students might think again and again about attending Studios (p. 10).

While studio attendance did not markedly improve after the introduction of the self-assessments, neither did it slide, and some pilot instructors held steadfast by promoting the Studios anew, posting assessments to course online Blackboard shells, and asking the questions out loud in class. As Grant put it, "like in class, he'll put stuff on the board and say, 'these are things that we will be covering in the Studio, so if you need help with this stuff go ahead and come along'." Despite the drifting of our Studios away from some of Grego and Thompson's (2008) general guidelines, the weekly student self-assessments gave instructors the chance to bring interactional inquiry into the lecture class itself because the assessments guided students through a process that allowed them to make their own informed choices.

COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIPS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND STUDIO ATTENDANCE

We looked to the surveys and focus groups to take a pulse on students' perceptions of the relative importance of the Studios and see what more we could do to get

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2   Students who were reported to have "occasionally" attended the workshops passed the course with higher grades than those who never attended workshops. The correlation between grades and attendance in the spring semester has a P-value of <0.001.

students to attend them. But questions concerning how conveniently scheduled the Studios were, the usefulness of studio topics, opportunities to improve their writing, or their confidence in making good choices about whether or not to attend a Studio yielded no significant data. Furthermore, their self-reported studio attendance and their assessments of how well they were learning to meet any of the course outcomes also failed to illuminate much. These results suggested that these factors were not the bases students used to make decisions. However, one key finding that surfaced from our data was students' use of a general rubric of feeling "completely confused" to determine whether they would attend a particular week's Studio. That is, when students were "sure of what [was] expected and clear about what [would] be covered" in Studio, they seemed to be less likely to attend (James). As Sam explains: "Studios are designed to aid you if you are not understanding, comprehending, or you just don't know what to do at all. . . . If I understand what is going on in class, or we were just going over something we've been over already, then I don't need to attend Studio." Since Sam does not mention the self-assessments as contributing to his decision-making process, his example stands in contrast to David's, which relies on the self-assessments, but is still based on degrees of feeling informed: "Every week [Professor Hardy] posts when Studios are and what's going to happen, so I feel very well informed on whether or not to go." Because studio attendance seemed to hinge on the information we provided, we may have encouraged students' to skip Studio by circulating self-assessments, which actually made them feel informed. In fact, no students reported that they attended Studio for personal or goal-oriented reasons.

Additionally, in understanding how and why students made their individual choices about studio attendance, we anticipated that even if students recognized they could benefit, they might not actually choose to attend or follow through due to unpredictable events and circumstances (as we all have no doubt experienced). Sonia's regret sheds light on our point: "I honestly wish I would have gone to more Studios." The importance of her reflection is intensified when coupled with another student's sense that his decision to attend Studio should not have been his decision at all: "Studios should be mandatory, but since they weren't, I busied myself with mandatory things out of priority" (Earl). Students like Earl often have more demands than they have time for, which realistically means that anything not required (like Studio) is low priority. These answers demonstrate that students' theoretical valuing of the Studios was not what drove decision-making. Instead, more pressing everyday events were larger factors, a consequence of a more pragmatic approach to education's role in their lives, as Elly explains: "What determines it for me is that I have a really early work schedule, and so I try to come because I know that it is beneficial, and it has helped me when I do come. . . . but it is a matter of if I need more sleep."

DETERMINING THE ACCURACY OF ASSESSMENT WITH PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

Despite students' perceptions of the significance of studio attendance to achieving several of the outcomes, from the analysis we did *not* find a statistically significant association between optional studio attendance and high student grades. Frequent studio attendance did not cause students to receive higher class scores, and infrequent studio attendance did not cause lower class scores. To investigate the relationship more deeply, we asked instructors to classify each student's studio attendance into one of three categories: "never attended," "occasionally attended," and "often attended." According to their reports using these criteria, everyone (with the exception of one student) who attended elective Studios *often* received a course grade of "A" or "B+." We also saw that some who received high grades had *never* attended Studio; yet no one who attended Studio *often* ended up failing the course. Simply stated, while studio attendance was not essential to receiving a high grade, frequent attendance appeared to assure a high grade.

There are a few caveats to mention. First, course grades are a crude indication of whether students could have benefitted from attending Studio because most students were earning "A's" and "Bs" anyway. Secondly, our analysis showed that student grades were statistically different from instructor to instructor, and patterns of student attendance at the optional studios varied with the instructor. Final grades and teacher's reports of students' studio attendance indicated highly significant dependent relationships between grades and studio attendance, and teachers and studio attendance. Individual instructor attributes and teaching styles that inspired high studio attendance, may have also tended to belong to instructors who awarded higher grades.[3]

CONCLUSION

Given the need for more research on understanding students' abilities to make efficacious and strategic choices regarding their supplemental writing instruction, this study described the results of a studio pilot that investigated the possibility that large composition class sizes could be mitigated by smaller, optional studios taught by the same team of instructors who shared a curriculum. We found that students had highly variable studio attendance patterns (which we count as evidence that choices were being made), and those who attended Studios at least *occasionally*—in the recollections of their instructors—had a higher

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3   The correlation between teacher and grade for spring 2013 had a P-value of <0.001, and the correlation between teachers and student attendance patterns in spring 2013 had a P-value of 0.011.

success rate than those who did not, validating to an extent the usefulness of the Studio program. Our findings are in line with Writing Studio theory and recent class size research (Horning, 2007) that recognizes small class sizes as a vital part of student success. Additionally, our study draws an important distinction between self-placement (which allows students to determine the level of difficulty of the material they are required to master) and required attendance (which structures student choice regarding elements within a course) to show that though students may seek out extra attention when they need it, they may only do what is required for a number of pragmatic and very rational reasons.

Two key limitations of our study are important to note. First, the attendance requirements attached to the lectures and hybrid components may have implied a higher value compared to the optional Studios, a point that students who expected higher grades may have picked up on. They considered the hybrid component more important to their success than the Studios, but less important than the lectures. Second, while we felt that the self-assessments did much to characterize Studios as of substantive value, our studio design may have implied that Studios were only for writers who needed help. Although we believe that all writers have something more to learn about writing, we are not convinced that our model communicated that belief.

We have since pondered a number of possibilities to account for why students failed our hybrid mega-course with optional Studio at a higher rate than the traditional or hybrid FYC courses offered at ASU, possibilities that this study was not designed to answer. First, once students discovered the attendance policy, the offer to "cut in-class time in half" may have proved too tempting an offer for "weaker" (or simply busier and thus—in some ways—more at-risk) students, who may have recognized an opportunity to spend the least amount of time possible in class. And, as Dan Fraizer (this volume) points out, "without a clear referral process, the novelty of Studio could have led to confusion about who should take it and why." Second, additional research could shed light on ways that failing grades earned in the Studio might be seen *positively*, as representing important learning. After all, by allowing students to choose their own course of study, we were asking them to take responsibility, which entailed making mistakes as well as doing things correctly. However, it may very well be the case that more students felt like Sonia, who "wished she had attended more sessions," suggesting that our studio course may have prompted students to think more about the importance of going to class. Perhaps students who failed the FYC studio course might (in the long term) have a higher rate of finishing college because they were given a chance to make a relatively low-stakes mistake. It may also be that students felt empowered by the choices the course offered and were able to identify their own goals outside of those outlined by the course. In

any case, we as instructors, had we had the goal of programmatic sustainability, might have borrowed more from Dan Fraizer's work (this volume) to further enable decision-making (in terms of exploring options for pre-enrollment and sending initial and follow up letters home that marketed the benefits of choosing the Studio). As Fraizer showed, these efforts may have benefited our students greatly, especially in terms of supporting decision-making strategies as transferable (Wardle).

Unfortunately, our studio design created significant barriers to achieving one or more implicit or explicit goals for our FYC curriculum. And even though improvements in student persistence in the second semester of the pilot suggest that perhaps those barriers can be overcome as teachers develop strategies for addressing them, our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Deans' office reviewed our disappointing "DEW" (Drop, "E," and Withdraw) rates for our fall 2012 studio sections and petitioned the Provost for permission to discontinue the Studio. We did not object. There have been no subsequent plans to revisit this particular studio model.

Instead, for us, the experience of participating in the studio pilot has meant that we see the potential in countermonuments (Butler) and counterscripts (Gutierrez et al.) at the level of program or instructor as allowing for a reinvigorated commitment to ethical teaching practices, particularly those that invite, support, and encourage interactional inquiry regardless of context.

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