Journal of Basic Writing

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VOLUME 35 NUMBER 1

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 15-25 pages, double spaced, on topics related to basic and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and e-mail addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page *only*. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of 4-5 key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission for including excerpts from student writing, especially as it entails IRB review.

Contributions should be submitted as Word document attachments via e-mail to: hopekcc@aol.com as well as hope.parisi@kbcc.cuny.edu, and Cheryl.Smith@baruch.cuny.edu. You will receive a confirmation of receipt; a report on the status of your submission will follow in about sixteen weeks.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic-writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening. The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, and critiques the institutions and contexts that place students in basic writing and standardize academic language, as much as it may illumine the subtexts of individuals' writing processes. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in non-technical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy.

EDITORS' COLUMN

Since the 2016 presidential election, many Americans have become more immersed in politics, news, and activism. As a result, many of us also have become more distracted and unable to focus on work and other responsibilities. Although this issue of JBW began to take shape well before the election, it offers insight into the value of meaningful connections at work that can sustain us in difficult times. Collectively, the authors chart a course into ways of knowing and cultivating relationships, programs, and pedagogies. They model how to advocate for what matters in our classrooms and institutions, reminding us to maintain some focus on the challenges and pleasures of this work despite the worldly woes that may dog us.

Edward M. White and William DeGenaro start us off by thinking big about the discipline as a whole. In "Basic Writing and Disciplinary Maturation: How Chance Conversations Continue to Shape the Field," they return to a question they explored in the pages of this journal over fifteen years ago: what dynamics shape the development of Basic Writing? Previously, they argued that the field had failed to reach "professional consensus" and disciplinary maturity because scholars weren't engaging in conversation with one another's research. Times have changed. Enriched by developments including the WPA Outcomes Statement (OS), the field no longer lacks a sense of professional consensus. "Optimistically," White and DeGenaro assert, "we have become more inclined to listen to one another in productive ways—perhaps freed from the constraints of searching for mythic consensus, perhaps empowered by the OS, perhaps compelled by the body of scholarship." In light of this optimistic framing of Basic Writing, they celebrate "small moments" of connection, collaboration, and mentorship as foundational to the field. Right now seems like a particularly fine time for both optimism and the celebration of what White and DeGenaro call our "smallness," that local, grassroots quality deep in the soil of Basic Writing that continues to feed it.

In "From Falling Through the Cracks to Pulling Through: Moving from a Traditional Remediation Model toward a Multi-Layered Support Model for Basic Writing," Lori Ostergaard and Elizabeth G. Allan take us from a broad consideration of the discipline to look at the evolution of one basic writing curriculum. The curricular redesign they describe, while local to Oakland University, is familiar to many of us; it reflects our programs and courses, our students and teachers laboring under similar institutional and political constraints. Ostergaard and Allan argue that meaningful curricular revision

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is possible, as long as it is both "grounded in current best practices in the field" and informed by local reality, broadly conceived. They demonstrate the value of not only confronting Oakland's "troubling history" and prevailing attitudes toward basic writers, but also tapping the pedagogical expertise of program teachers. The course revisions that Ostergaard and Allan describe attest to the community and history that power change locally and connect us globally. As the authors note, "our worries [about the future of basic writing on our campus] are doubtlessly shared by many readers of this journal," underscoring the common experiences that draw us into those small moments of cooperative spirit that shape and define our field.

Jon Balzotti continues to sharpen the focus and pull us further into the classroom with his study of multimodal composing and the resilient question of transfer. In "Storyboarding for Invention: Layering Modes for More Effective Transfer in a Multimodal Composition Classroom," he pursues an increasingly urgent question: How do we help students see connections between their writing in new media modes and their writing in more traditional modes? To explore this question, Balzotti targets the stage of invention and its role in the transfer of experiential knowledge. While his findings are immediately relevant to teachers and programs developing curricula around multimodal composition, the implications have greater potential to touch our identity as scholars and teachers. Balzotti notes, "Perhaps the most valuable lesson drawn from our observation of students using storyboarding in the basic writing class is the emphasis placed on sequencing and play, a discursive practice that stresses change and creativity." Not surprisingly, play and creativity yield positive results: "Collectively," Balzotti argues, "the students' work in [the study] builds an optimistic perspective on both invention and transfer." There is something serendipitous and unplanned about play and its relationship to change and creativity. Like the small moments of professional connection highlighted by White and DeGenaro, the generative potential of play constructs an optimistic portal into our work and its meaning.

This portal must orient us in the direction of students and their experiences: in the classroom our work has its most immediate impact. But how much do we really know about students' perspectives on their own experiences? In "Self/Portrait of a Basic Writer: Broadening the Scope of Research on College Remediation," Emily Schnee and Jamil Shakoor "expand the borders of authority and authorship in scholarship on basic writing to include students." Professor Schnee teams up with her student, Shakoor, to narrate and reflect on one basic writer's journey "as he moves from the

lowest level of developmental English at a community college to graduate with a Bachelor's degree." This powerful portrait of student experience, mentorship, and collaboration forces us to confront not only what matters in our practice, but also what often eludes our scholarship: the diversity of voices that testify to multiple lived realities, voices that extend knowledge by challenging or reframing it. Together, Schnee and Shakoor demonstrate "a commitment to the nuance of individual lives, the power of stories to create meaning, and the urgency of engaging research participants in constructing knowledge for social change." What emerges from this collaboration is a sobering reminder that all our small interactions, including and perhaps especially those we share with students, seed our intellectual work. And in the seeding of this ground we find the deep satisfaction of connection that sustains our field.

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We may be in unusual times, but navigating the work-life balance is always a challenge. This period of political struggle will evolve into the next, hopefully less troubling, time. Along the way, our work is nourished by the relationships we cultivate with one another, in our classrooms and conferences, over coffee or across the pages of our professional journals. As we write this column in preparation for that most gratifying moment in journal editorship—the publication of a long-awaited issue—we reflect on the history and relationships that have brought us to this moment. We believe JBW's history, emerging out of open admissions and Mina Shaughnessy's creative, intellectual advocacy, is special; we also suspect, however, that many editorial teams share similar beliefs that motivate their work, and further, this intersection between belief and work offers a microcosm of how action and change-making happen across the field. We, Hope and Cheryl, may be colleagues at CUNY, but we work at distant ends of a system so sprawling that we struggle to see one another more than annually at CCCC. Although we mostly communicate virtually and asynchronously, we touch base regularly—in stolen moments before sleep or just after waking, or over holiday weekends once our grading is done. In this way, our work enters our most personal space. And, in the same continually intimate way, we communicate with prospective authors, valued reviewers, and the scholars whose work we help cultivate toward publication. Finally, we bring all their insights into our own classrooms and programs, into our scholarship and assignments and conferences with students.

We are grateful for our authors' insight and perseverance and for you, our readers. In taking up this issue, perhaps as a last act before sleep, you
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enact your own commitment to finding stolen moments for the conversations of our field.

—**Cheryl C. Smith** and **Hope Parisi**

Basic Writing and Disciplinary Maturation: How Chance Conversations Continue to Shape the Field

Edward M. White and William DeGenaro

ABSTRACT: Thirty years ago, Maxine Hairston observed that disciplinary shifts in writing studies occur not gradually but rather due to revolutionary "paradigm shifts." Perhaps. But even as the discipline has grown, chance encounters, collaborations rooted in friendship, conversations and coffees, and the discovery of mutual acquaintances have continued to play roles. The subfield we call basic writing *has maintained an ethos informed by these "small moments," and even as the subfield has matured in the last fifteen years, we have collectively stayed small and ought to continue fostering an atmosphere that is paradoxically mature but also serendipitous, friendly, and even informal. This article is about BW's burgeoning (sub-) disciplinary maturity. In equal part, though, we tell our own stories, and reflect on how serendipitous that engagement has been, ultimately arguing that the BW community continue to foster and expand serendipitous engagement.*

KEYWORDS: abolition; basic writing; discipline; mainstreaming; mentoring; outcomes statement; research methodologies

What does it mean to say that *basic writing* has matured as a subfield?[1] The subfield of *basic writing studies* as a distinct enterprise within the larger discipline of composition and rhetoric has matured, which is to say BW scholars can (and do) collectively point to agreed-upon, discipline-sanctioned touchstones. Moreso than fifteen years ago, we comprise a community that uses these touchstones productively to create both new knowledge and new programs. A little more than fifteen years ago, the two of us wrote

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in this journal that BW had failed to locate "professional consensus" due to researchers' tendency not "to listen much to each other or to build on each others' findings" (DeGenaro and White 23). We pointed to cross-talk between theorist-critics who critiqued BW as a "sorting and placing" apparatus and empirical researchers who had amassed evidence of the material value of BW and suggested this cross-talk was evidence of immaturity. We stand by that analysis, which was of a time, reflective of and informed by trends large and small. Since then, this same note has certainly echoed (though differently) in productive debates regarding emerging models of entrance assessment and the role of the WPA Outcomes Statement. Indeed we want to suggest that in the intervening years, maturation in basic writing studies has occurred in ways that suggest perhaps "consensus" was not the primary element the subfield was lacking.

The maturation in BW has not always brought with it *consensus* per se, though the WPA Outcomes Statement (OS), for instance, has been both a productive and *stabilizing force* that has institutionalized, though not standardized, the pedagogies of first-year composition courses, including BW courses (see Behm, Glau, Holdstein, Roen, and White, especially Olson; Sternglass). Wendy Olson sorts out the symbiotic relationship between the OS and basic writing courses, arguing although it is not desirable that, nor is it the objective of, the OS to provide a model for a standard BW curriculum, the OS has in its decade of existence given writing programs an "opportunity to make the case for a necessarily complex pedagogy within basic writing classrooms." Likewise, Olson writes, the OS itself has been informed by "basic writing pedagogy" (21). So in the years since our argument that basic writing suffered from a lack of disciplinary maturity, the pervasive and influential WPA Outcomes Statement has both made use of diverse BW pedagogies and practices and in turn guided writing programs seeking to make their BW programs more "complex," to use Olson's helpful term. The OS is an example of disciplinary maturity in composition and rhetoric writ large, to be sure, but the institutional-cum-disciplinary stability the statement fosters has created an environment wherein BW practitioners can argue with greater credibility and force for sound—and increasingly creative, out-of-the-box—programming for the sometimes vulnerable students which BW programs and courses support. It's no coincidence that BW innovation has thrived in the post-OS era.

With maturity, BW has maintained a particular ethos, though suggestive of a paradox. As the subfield has changed, it has stayed the same. At the same time the subfield has matured, it has remained small and held tight to

the importance of coffee breaks, small moments, and collaboration across rank and institution type. Optimistically, we have become more inclined to listen to one another in productive ways—perhaps freed from the constraints of searching for mythic *consensus*, perhaps empowered by the OS, perhaps compelled by the body of scholarship (less polarizing but equally strident, equally tied to context and the potential to affect positive change).

This essay celebrates those small moments, celebrates collaboration, and celebrates mentoring by looking at the maturation across twenty years of the subfield of BW. We don't offer a thorough state of the subfield (see Otte and Mlynarczyk), nor an exhaustive literature review (though we recommend the newest edition of the *Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*, which annotates much of this important work), nor a detailed taxonomy of methodologies (a possibly interesting project, though it seems obvious that we have long been methodologically diverse—doing work that *cuts across* theory, classroom and teacher-research inquiry, history, and much more) before and during the maturation we posit. Instead, we are most interested in exploring the significance of a subfield that we argue has become more productive in its disciplinary maturity while at the same time continuing to maintain its "smallness." We offer this exploration via our own story of small moments, collaboration, and mentoring—and then offer our own analysis of what the subfield might continue to do to live this productive paradox.

As our parent discipline, rhetoric and composition, was coming into its maturity, Maxine Hairston observed that disciplinary shifts in writing studies occur not gradually but rather due to revolutionary "paradigm shifts" in our collective thinking. Perhaps. But even as writing studies writ large has grown, chance encounters, collaborations rooted in friendship, conversations and coffees at 4Cs, and the discovery of mutual acquaintances have continued to play roles too. As the field of rhetoric and composition grew it remained small, characterized by personal moments and close encounters. New ideas in subfields like basic writing studies, likewise, emerge thanks to many different factors, not the least of which is serendipity.[2] What important book or article has emerged without one or two or more coincidences or intimate moments shaping its core ideas? Our field is not wholly unique in this regard. A recent *New Yorker* piece told the story of two geneticists and the role a traffic jam played in shaping their scholarly agenda, which in turn led to important disciplinary findings (Mukherjee). A field no less empirical, no less serious, no less "mature" than genetic biology! The chain of accidental encounters that has led to this essay extends for fully twenty years, from a chance meeting at a WPA conference in Ohio in 1994 to a chance visit from

a mid-career academic to his retired graduate school mentor in Arizona in 2014. This is a story about disciplinary maturation in BW and an essay about chance encounters.

Snapshot 1: Oxford, Ohio, 1994
By Ed

A sunny noon break in the Writing Program Administrators conference at Miami University in Ohio. I take a noonday stroll and spot Sharon Crowley sitting by herself at a cafe and join her for lunch. Friendly small talk leads me to ask Sharon how she can reconcile her passionate concern for the less privileged students with her equally passionate advocacy that "the universal course" in first-year writing be made an elective. I echo her passion when I say, "The weakest writers will avoid the course if they can for fear of failure and that course helps many of them stay in college." Sharon smiles. "There's no evidence for that," she says. I reply that I have such evidence, from my work in the central office of the California State University system. "OK," Sharon says pleasantly as we return to the conference. "Then you should publish it."

As a result of that chance meeting and conversation, my article "The Importance of Placement and Basic Studies: Helping Students Succeed under the New Elitism" appears in the Journal of Basic Writing *the following year, with this abstract:*

> A new elitism and its (however unintended) theorists, the new abolitionists, seek to abandon the required freshman composition course and the placement tests that help students succeed in it and in college. This paper argues for placement into the course and is based on two sets of studies: a series of follow-up studies of Fall 1978 First-Time California State University Freshmen and a series of reports analyzing a four-semester overview conducted by the New Jersey Basic Skills Council, Fall 1984 to Spring 1989. As the data show, the effect of a placement program, followed by a careful instructional program, is to allow many students who would otherwise leave school to continue successfully in the university. (75)

Sharon Crowley replies to my article in this journal in 1996, arguing that the history of first-year composition is exclusionary, that it is a "repressive institution" (89) for many students, "using mass examinations to segregate them into classrooms that can be readily identified as remedial or special" (90). She rejects my identification of her position with elitism, saying that she is just rejecting "our institutional obligation, imposed on us from elsewhere, to coerce everyone in the

university into studying composition" (91). Sharon offers a compelling version of her call to grant greater agency to first-year students and thereby curb problematic institutional practices such as overinvesting in placement (what she argued were sorting and segregating) mechanisms. She engages a good deal with both the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of such mechanisms though less, in my view, with the empirical data I presented: data that show students entering the CSU and New Jersey campuses with failing scores on a careful placement test who receive institutional help with writing are present at a 56% rate two years later, while those who do not receive such help are still enrolled at a 16% rate.

Snapshot 2: Tucson, Arizona, 1998
By Bill

Early in my career as a doctoral student at the University of Arizona, I still felt far from home—home was a small, blue-collar place: Youngstown, Ohio—in the midst of Tucson's looming saguaro cacti and the English Department's looming faculty of national renown. I had taught basic writing for a few semesters back at Youngstown State University (security guards, auto workers, football players under Coach Jim Tressel before Ohio State lured him away from YSU) and knew I wanted to study working-class students and the Basic Writing enterprise. But Arizona was an intimidating place and maybe, I thought, I shouldn't have packed up and left behind all things familiar.

Two things I recall about the August when I arrived in Tucson: 1) Bill Clinton on the small television in my small apartment finally admitting he had an affair with Monica Lewinsky, as I sat at the kitchen table working on my syllabus for my first term as a TA; 2) Being assigned Ed White as my mentor. Since we had never met, Ed volunteered to pick me up and drive me to the fall kick-off party at the home of Roxanne Mountford, suggesting that the drive to Roxanne's house would be a chance to chat. I credit that drive and that chat for helping me lessen the symptoms of imposter syndrome. Especially the chance exchange wherein Ed asked me about hobbies and I told him I had a passion for cooking. Ed's response, and I'm paraphrasing, was something like, "How about I come over next Tuesday?" He did, and brought a few other graduate students he mentored. Also, a bottle of wine. But I didn't have a corkscrew, I suppose because I was 23-years-old and had just hauled myself and my worldly possessions 2,000 miles in a pick-up truck. Ed ran up to Fry's grocery store, bought me one, and in an early, important bit of mentoring, advised, "You should have a corkscrew."

So began an unlikely supper club at my modest apartment wherein food and drink and conversation were all robust. We met irregularly, often at my place, some-

times elsewhere, and always there were calories. I imagine this kind of interaction happens in any good graduate program where mentors take their work seriously and do their work well, but I'm struck not only by how the interactions and debates were sometimes as important as what went on in our seminars but also by how a transformative experience began by chance: a carpool, Ed's outgoing nature, my own affinity for feeding friends. Ed extended several offers to collaborate during my grad school years—an article, an online module for a textbook publisher, several community-based assessment projects—opportunities, all, for discovering, honing, and clarifying what I thought about the matters that led me to the field of writing studies: basic writers and basic writing programs.

Snapshot 3: Tucson, Arizona, 1999
By Bill and Ed

By the late 1990s, scholars invested in the basic writing subfield of composition and rhetoric had not reached clear consensus about two of the most fundamental matters connected to what we do as teachers of first-year writing: how to identify and whether to mainstream basic writers and whether to advocate for composition as a universal, i.e. campus-wide, requirement. Now, to be sure, part of the lack of disciplinary consensus was due to the fact that local, institutional factors played—and of course continue to play—significant roles in determining needs of first-year writers. Still, at a moment when at least two generations of scholars in contemporary writing studies had generated both empirical studies and theoretical and critical scholarship about the foundational enterprise of first-year and basic writing, the lack of consensus was noteworthy.

During this disciplinary moment, Crowley expanded the line of reasoning from her JBW response essay and other arguments she had been making throughout much of her career and published Composition in the University, *a provocative and ambitious text that historicized and critiqued "freshman English" and concluded that courses like BW were possibly doing more harm than good: proliferating bad labor practices, preventing the field's advancement, and impeding the development of more meaningful and transformative writing instruction. The "abolition" movement—the movement to abolish not first-year writing courses but rather first-year writing course requirements—had its most compelling, fully realized, and widely discussed document.*

Critics of sorting and segregating "basic writers" were using arguments informed by a similar ethos and orientation. Like Crowley, those critical of the basic writing enterprise were engaging in a kind of ideological critique—focusing on the broader institutional and cultural values and assumptions being prolifer-

ated by programs that assessed students (often by invalid multiple-choice tests) and subsequently imposed placements perceived to be draconian impediments to progress-toward-degree. For instance, Ira Shor published in the Journal of Basic Writing *"Our Apartheid: Writing Instruction and Inequality" about the same time. Like Crowley's book, "Our Apartheid" also focused on both historical development of curriculum and current labor problematics; also like Crowley, Shor's text was unapologetically provocative. His metaphor for most placement testing, "a gate below the gate" (94), was memorable.*

Scholars like Crowley and Shor informed (at least) two prominent scholarly conversations happening in the field at the time. In Tucson, meanwhile, Ed was teaching research methods and having graduate students including Bill read Stephen North's The Making of Knowledge in Composition, *essentially a taxonomy of research communities working in the discipline (the ethnographers, the clinicians, etc.). He asked each student that semester to identify an interesting issue, question, or debate in the field; find examples of scholarship that engaged that issue from as many different methodological communities (a la North) as they could find; and then compose a kind of literature review cum methodological analysis of those artifacts. Bill chose the mainstreaming debate.*

That term paper began as a document that stuck pretty close to North's categories. Bill found scholarship that was empirical in its orientation, theoretical in its orientation, and still other instances of published work on the topic of mainstreaming basic writers that could probably fit in what North called the "house of lore." But something else began to emerge: a lack of cooperation among the methodological communities, a disconnect between different types of scholarship, a lack of cross-talk between, say, the "critics" and the "empiricists." While we were discussing this matter—a simple discussion of a draft of a paper for a graduate class—Ed showed Bill a letter from JBW *he had just received, an invitation to contribute to the journal's 20th anniversary issue and said, "We ought to write about this." It was a chance conversation, a teacher and student who happened to be meeting about a seminar paper-in-progress. There was serendipity in the assignment that was part of our class, the letter from the* Journal of Basic Writing, *and in the curiosities and interests we have about the field.*

That assignment in the methods class was especially generative for Bill, and also of a time. North published his book during a decade (the 1980s) when composition and rhetoric was coming into maturity and the assignment was perhaps most operative during a decade (the 1990s) when North's categories had not yet been expanded and challenged by technological and institutional changes as they have been in the new millennium, and when BW as a subfield in particular was in the midst of robust, though not always productive, debates about funda-

mental—indeed existential—issues over whether courses in BW ought to be. But regardless, the assignment and the close reading of both North's text and the basic writing scholarship helped clarify for Bill the importance of critical interrogation of questions regarding placement, pedagogy, mainstreaming, and overall how to contend with less prepared college writers. The cross-talk (and at times the lack thereof) among critics, empirical researchers, and practitioners showed how little agreement there was about how to seek answers to those questions. We continued exploring the scholarship, the debate, and the moments when the disagreement seemed productive and the moments when it did not, during the next months and the term paper eventually became a collaborative article in JBW*, "Going Around in Circles: Methodological Issues in Basic Writing Research," indeed published in the journal's 20th anniversary issue.*

Snapshot 4: Tempe, Arizona, 1999
By Ed

Whenever the Western States Composition Conference was held at nearby Arizona State University, I made sure that our research methods class was on the program. As it happened, the year Bill was in my class we gave a well-received presentation, with him as one of the presenters. Afterwards, we went for a celebratory drink and there, in an echo from the past, was Sharon at the center of a group of students. We joined the group and I introduced Bill to her. When she asked what he was working on, he briefly summarized our analysis of the cross-talk in basic writing research and most politely asked her for her thoughts on the place of data in the mainstreaming debate. Her reply was that she was most interested in the concepts and assumptions in composition scholarship. I noticed Bill smiling later as he took notes about that brief conversation, since it provided additional opportunity to consider how knowledge is created and circulated and the extent to which "consensus" (or possibly productive cross-talk) is an objective for which we should aim. She had not paid much attention, for instance, to the charts in my article.

Snapshot 5: Flagstaff, Arizona, 2014
By Bill and Ed

Time together in Tucson meant collaboration and mentoring but in the years after Bill graduated and Ed retired (sort of), time together meant brief conversations at 4Cs and emails. We hadn't spent much face time together between 2002 and 2014 but in the summer of 2014, we made plans to get together for the afternoon in Flagstaff. Coincidentally, the call-for-papers for an edited volume on serendipity in writing research had just landed on Ed's desk.[3] *As conversation made its way*

from politics to families to writing programs, Ed remarked, as he had some fifteen years prior, "We ought to write something." About chance encounters and friendship. So what has changed in the last fifteen years? One of us is partially retired but continues to write from home base in Flagstaff, Arizona. The other graduated and finds himself, more or less, at mid-career, with tenure and a position directing a mid-sized writing program in Michigan. In different places but still two individuals who enjoy one another's company. And basic writing studies? We could say the same thing. In a different place but still an enterprise that has held true to a core ethos.

Basic Writing and Maturation

Whereas existential debates about mainstreaming were a large part of the disciplinary discourse circa 1998-1999, particularly in periodicals like *Journal of Basic Writing* and at conferences like the 4Cs, these matters aren't as hotly contested today. In the subfield of basic writing studies, fewer books and articles are being published on the matter of mainstreaming basic writers into standard first-year composition courses. Soon after our initial collaboration, the important collection *Mainstreaming Basic Writers* assembled diverse perspectives that sorted through the complex issues that warrant consideration. Editors Gerri McNenny and Sallyanne Fitzgerald did not seek consensus nor engage in reductive debates about whether or not to mainstream but rather acknowledged that local and material conditions inevitably intersect with institutional constraints as well as sometimes rapidly shifting student needs like increased numbers of L2 writers, for instance. The discussion was complex and markedly mature and though some fifteen years old, the collection continues to be a text often utilized by WPAs and BW professionals of various stripes.

Fewer programs are experimenting with mainstreaming, if we may continue pointing to mainstreaming as an example of a disciplinary conversation and institutional/programmatic practice. To be sure, some institutions and even systems have eliminated basic writing courses and mainstreamed their basic writers (by choice or, lest our analysis seem Pollyanna-ish, by legislative fiat), thereby rendering the question of mainstreaming moot. However, more campuses have traveled what are perhaps even more creative curricular and institutional avenues, instituting Stretch and Studio programs, for example, as ways to serve their basic writers. Fifteen years ago, in our *JBW* piece, we suggested the field needed to continue evolving into a "mature field of study" (22), one in which productive conversations between methodologically diverse scholars lead to consensus or at least more fruitful cross-talk. That

seems to have occurred, especially insomuch as creative pedagogical and institutional arrangements have taken hold in many diverse sites.[4]

Fifteen years on, the innovative practices in basic writing programs and the sophisticated conversations in the pages of this journal (which inform those programs) strike us not only as shifting conversations but as signs of disciplinary maturity. The subjects of coffee-break conference conversations have shifted, and so have institutional practices, as well as the subjects garnering attention in journals like *JBW*. One of the reasons we find this evolution to be a mark of maturity is that the specific innovations are marked by even greater nuance. Mainstreaming is no longer a black/white proposition: Should we do it or not? A program like the Stretch model shifts the experience of less-prepared college writers in qualitative and quantitative ways by creating a yearlong Comp I experience (see Glau; Rankins-Robertson, Cahill, Roen, and Glau). The Studio model, likewise, creates a wholly different, co-curricular environment for basic writers to increase metacognitive awareness of the writing process (see Grego and Thompson; Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson).

It's worth noting that the Studio model, for instance, attends to the matter of student agency that Crowley foregrounds in so much of her most useful scholarship (the Studio program at Miami of Ohio that Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson describe is an elective) while also supporting less-prepared college writers by providing additional attention to the conventions and norms of academic culture. Likewise, these creative approaches both answer important ethical critiques about the punitive nature of traditional, stand-alone basic writing classes while also being mindful of the value of empirical data to assess the teaching and learning in ways that are meaningful to internal and external audiences. The Stretch program at Arizona State University, for instance, has touted its own ethical and empirical soundness by framing the program's connection to retention, including retention of students of color ("Stretch Award"). Likewise, the work that Grego and Thompson have done on the Studio model at the University of South Carolina underscores the paradigm's emphasis at once on generating usable data *and* attending to the agency and material conditions of students, teachers, and other potentially vulnerable stakeholders.

That is not to say that Studio or Stretch are panaceas. The economic and cultural forces in our society that diminish or deter student preparation for college cannot be ignored. Nor is this meant to be dismissive of the very real, very problematic pressures on basic writing programs imposed by regressive state legislatures and/or regressive central administrations.

However, we present these examples of disciplinary progress informed by nuance, collaboration, and attention to both empirical data *and* theory. Any list of innovative, "mature" programs serving "basic writers" would have to include the Accelerated Learning Program (or ALP) that Peter Adams and his colleagues at the Community College of Baltimore County. ALP allows BW students to elect to mainstream into a section of first-year composition while also matriculating in a co-curricular workshop led by the same FYC instructor who provides additional support in areas including invention and brainstorming for FYC assignments as well as attention to sentence-level errors on works-in-progress (Adams; *ALP* website). Like Arizona State's Stretch program, ALP has received national attention for curricular innovation. Like Studio, ALP has been a paradigm and movement mindful of the value of generating data that can be used to make arguments in front of a wide variety of stakeholders. ALP has distinguished itself by *also* working to remain affordable, demonstrating how the program can be replicated without breaking the bank.

This is not to cheerlead for the subfield—though a little bit of optimism can be a good thing. Rather, this is to point out that in just fifteen years, the contentious, closely connected debates over abolition and mainstreaming have largely disappeared from professional journals, listservs, conference talks, and ad hoc discussions. This is especially noteworthy, given how hot-button was the issue, especially following the release of Crowley's book around the time Ed was offering his research methods class back in Tucson. Again, we refer to one of the central premises of our *JBW* article from 2000, which asked why, aside from the limits of studying formal grammar in foundational writing classes, "it is hard to come up with other examples of professional consensus" in writing studies. We suggested that the lack of consensus was hindering progress. We wrote, "We are defining progress in our field as the development of professional consensus about key issues: findings or premises are published, debated and tested over time, and certain matters are, as a result of the professional dialectic, considered settled" (23). We were thinking of the face-to-face conversations between Ed and Sharon—friendly and collegial albeit without a shared set of assumptions—as well as the provocative though not always productive polemical scholarship in circulation: the in-print conversations between the critics and the empiricists. So what changed since we were graduate student and mentor, circa the turn of the millennium?

To renew our earlier point, one of the factors that perhaps cooled these debates was the release, wide circulation, and ever-growing usage of the WPA

Outcomes Statement (see Behm, Glau, Holdstein, Roen, and White for a variety of treatments of the statement's history and trajectory). The OS has in many ways provided, if not consensus, then professional ethos for the entire enterprise of basic writing and first-year writing programs. The OS has a kind-of built in flexibility, an acknowledgment that local needs and dynamics must always be considered and assessed, while also asserting the values and the possibilities of University-level rhetoric and writing instruction, at the first-year level, and—as Crowley herself advocated—integrated vertically throughout the curriculum as well. If anything, the field has an even greater ethic of respecting local situations and needs, but the OS has served, in the best possible ways, a unifying function, assisting the discipline's move toward an even greater maturity compared to, say, 1999.

We are also in a place where a useful and usable text like *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, can be published. The book purports to articulate some of the core principles and notions of the field—many with significant implications for the BW subfield. Less concerned with labels and taxonomies, *Naming What We Know* assembles agreed-upon, established concepts that the field can put into action in various pedagogical, scholarly, and community-based sites. This is not to say the text is a sign that debate and dissent are dead. However, the release of the text marks a recognition of the usefulness of disciplinary maturation. And yet chance encounters and small moments are still part of our work; coffee, conversation, and intimacy still matter too.

And while we see other factors as perhaps more important signifiers of disciplinary maturity, a much greater consensus has emerged on the issue of placement. The role of multiple-choice testing has been diminished, though not yet entirely removed, for those campuses using placement as a means to offer extra help to those needing it. In addition to the curricular innovations we have mentioned, the emergence of Directed Self-Placement, in various iterations, has put placement responsibility in the hands of the students themselves, with the institution responsible for providing them with enough and good enough information to make effective decisions. And where testing is still used, the method of choice has become portfolio assessment, either as a supplement to other tests or standing alone. That is to say, within the basic writing subfield, we have crossed the titular threshold from Adler-Kassner's and Wardle's book. By and large, we agree that looking at real pieces of writing in context has virtue and utility. We agree that granting agency and choice to students not only provides a more ethical foot forward but also a more productive one as well. We aren't "going around

in circles." Or perhaps we've moved on to different circles. Being able to point to threshold concepts and a unifying document like the OS have not removed productive debate but rather created an environment for better debates—debates built upon something firm.

Snapshot #6: Oxford, Ohio, 2003
By Bill

After graduate school, I taught at Miami University in Ohio from 2002 to 2005. As chance would have it, the English Department called on me to teach the graduate research methods class in Fall, 2003, four years after I took Ed's methods class. I seized the opportunity to teach a class that had been so transformative for me and we even spent the first month of the course studying Stephen North's text while the students in the class wrote papers similar to the one Ed had assigned (I stole the idea but gave Ed credit) but with a twist: I asked students to write in equal part about the limits of North's categories as they assembled their methodological analysis papers—about universal design as a model for disability access in writing classrooms, online communities for adolescent girls, and civil rights discourse in first-year comp readers, among others. Four years later, those categories seemed even more limited; indeed, North's book was over fifteen years old at that point.

Students' reflections on the methods and methodologies in circulation—and the limitations of any taxonomy we might apply to those camps—led into our study of other, more current (at the time) texts about research in the field: Cindy Johanek's Composing Research: A Contextualist Research Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition, *and Jim Porter et al.'s influential CCC essay "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change." Both of these foreground the institutional and contextual milieus in which research happens and argue that calling oneself a clinician or an ethnographer is less important than listening to the rhetorical situation and considering how scholarship (its subject as well as its design) can enter into dialectic with the material world. Method and methodology are a means to something much greater. Circa 1998-1999, Ed and I had noted that "camps" inquiring into key issues in BW weren't necessarily listening to each other. But there's an equally important consideration: are scholars listening to context? As the literature on research methods and methodologies shifted toward kairotic moments for inquiry, it seemed like another sign the field was maturing.*

There are good reasons to be suspicious of narratives that assume progress (basic writing studies has gone through growth and maturation and now we are great!). It's never that simple, of course. However, perhaps as a discipline we have learned to listen—listen better to one another, listen better to our worlds, listen better

to the teachers and friends and colleagues and moments both large and small that can spur positive and productive change.

Here is how I will complicate the narrative of growth and maturation: by saying that even as the discipline evolves and fortifies itself, maybe one of the best things we can all do is be more attuned to the little, idiosyncratic moments, the serendipities that can prove productive. I learned something about the field teaching that class but I also made close friends: Jay Dolmage showed up to class wearing a Belle and Sebastian t-shirt and I commented that the band is one of my favorites too; we ended up writing a short essay together for Disability Studies Quarterly *a few months later and he has taught me (and the field) a great deal about access and higher education and much more. Better yet, we got to know each other. Serendipity. It expands as surely as the Ed White Supper Club did back in Tucson.*

Snapshot #7: Flagstaff, Arizona, 2014
By Ed

In my early years as a literature professor, I used to teach a Dickens novel or two. My students often grew annoyed at the coincidences that occurred in the story lines, arguing that they made the plots seem contrived. One day in class, I interrupted their complaints by asking, "Tell me, how did you meet the person you are now dating or married to?" After a moment of surprised silence, a student said something like "we bumped into each other on a crowded street corner." After a chuckle, similar serendipitous moments poured out. After a few moments, a student sitting quietly in the back of the room, muttered, "Dickens is the ultimate realist."

What really matters is not the serendipitous moment, but the ability to seize that moment and recognize its implications and possibilities. As Bill and I wrote this article, exchanging drafts over some months, we both came to see connections and threads barely noticeable at the time. Have we imposed a narrative and theoretical frame on disconnected incidents, or, as we are convinced, was that frame already inherent in the serendipities—and our professional lives—waiting to be discovered?

Conclusion

George Otte and Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk argued in their state of the subfield article a few years ago that "providing access to higher education along with appropriate forms of academic support such as basic writing pays off for individuals and for society" (5). Reviewing changes facing BW scholars and practitioners in the 21st Century, Otte and Mlynarczyk conclude optimistically that although political and legislative forces sometimes impose constraints on BW programming, there is power in knowing that our

academic enterprise supports access. Building on their work, we contend that BW is in a position to continue leveraging threshold concepts around sound pedagogy and firm disciplinary apparatuses like the OS to act locally and nationally to build an even more robust BW enterprise. Evidence like the creative and nuanced alternatives to traditional models of "remediation" and "mainstreaming" suggest that the subfield has matured. Our argument, further, is that we all do our best work when we—paradoxically perhaps—remain small, close-knit, and open to serendipity. We have shared our own anecdotes of chance encounters with BW conversations as illustrative of the role that a meal with a mentor, or a chat in an office, can have.

As the BW subfield continues to mature, we offer some modest considerations about chance encounters and maintaining a collaborative and social ethos:

- The basic writing community might continue to encourage scholarly participation and collaboration across institution type via avenues like the Basic Writing SIG at CCCC as well as TYCA (the two-year college association), a group that has itself fostered this ethos with breakfasts and socials at national conferences. In particular, we as a scholarly and pedagogical community concerned with educating BW students might think about ways to encourage even greater integration and productive scholarly exchange *between* four-year and two-year BW professionals.
- We might also consider ways to build more critical, sustained, and sustainable awareness of race and other forms of difference into basic writing gatherings, so as to maintain as hospitable an environment for as many BW professionals as possible. What opportunities do we have to assure that workshops, professional meetings, seminars, and other opportunities can lead to chance encounters for all members of that community?
- One of the key institutional issues that BW scholarship will need to engage in the coming years is dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment programs (wherein high school students take college courses while still in secondary school). In her role as TYCA chair, Eva Payne brought the scope and impact of dual-enrollment to the field's attention. For BW professionals, implications of dual enrollment are varied depending on state and institutional policies; dual enrollment entails BW being offloaded to secondary school teachers in some contexts while in other contexts successful

completion of a dual enrollment writing course could have impact on a student's placement independent of whether that course had an impact on a student's proficiency. Given the complex nature of this issue, and the added groups of stakeholders that dual-enrollment programs add to the mix, perhaps the BW community can seek ways to foster chance encounters with secondary teachers and other players in the popular dual-enrollment game.

- These are just a few modest ideas that all entail continuing to foster collaboration—though perhaps with an ever-widening cohort. We are thankful for the small moments and chance encounters that have marked us and maintain that moments that are idiosyncratic can and should continue to mark the field as well.

Notes

1. Thank you, *JBW* editors Hope Parisi and Cheryl Smith, as well as two anonymous reviewers for extremely helpful feedback on this article.
2. We thank Maureen Daly Goggin and Peter Goggin for articulating the notion that "serendipitous moments. . . can occur anytime during a scholarly project" in the call for contributors to their collection on the subject, which is currently in process. Their CFP created a serendipitous, as well as generative, moment for us.
3. Ultimately, the narrative-based essay we wrote did not prove a good fit for that collection. We anticipate its arrival, though, and suspect the book will be a useful contribution to another ongoing, always shifting conversation in the field: the role of the personal and its relationship to the research process.
4. Readers of *JBW* are likely aware of many of these arrangements. Glau offers a helpful overview of the Stretch program at Arizona State University, for example. And Grego and Thompson detail a theoretically sophisticated rationale for the Studio model. More recently, still, Peter Adams and his colleagues at the Community College of Baltimore County have amassed empirical data, institutionally compelling and actionable budgets, and theoretically critical discussions of the Accelerated Learning Program.

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From Falling Through the Cracks to Pulling Through: Moving from a Traditional Remediation Model Toward a Multi-Layered Support Model for Basic Writing

Lori Ostergaard and Elizabeth G. Allan

ABSTRACT: This article examines two course redesigns undertaken to improve student support, learning, and retention in the basic writing program at Oakland University, a doctoral research university in southeast Michigan, where support for developmental writers has fluctuated dramatically between nurture and neglect over the past fifty years. However, current conditions—including the creation of a new department of writing and rhetoric and a university-wide commitment to student support and retention—have set the stage for dramatic revisions to the way our basic writing and supervised study courses are administered. Over the last five years, the writing and rhetoric department at Oakland has revised both of these courses to better align them with our first-year writing program's focus on rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection. These changes have formed the groundwork for a new curricular model that we believe will provide multiple layers of faculty and peer support for our most vulnerable students.

KEYWORDS: curriculum reform; writing instruction; basic writing; retention

In 2013, Michigan adopted a new transfer agreement that effectively eliminated the requirement for a research-focused composition course by allowing students to fulfill their writing requirements through a combination of *any* composition course and a communication course. This agreement was designed by a committee of university registrars, community

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college administrators, and directors of marketing who were appointed by the state legislature, and it was done without the input of writing program administrators (WPAs) or composition specialists. Paralleling Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson's 1996 account of how the expertise of composition faculty was ignored when for-credit basic writing classes were eliminated in South Carolina ("Repositioning" 63), compositionists and WPAs in Michigan have found ourselves confronted with just how "invisible" our discipline is to educational bureaucrats. As we wondered what this agreement would mean for our transfer students' college readiness, we also contemplated why no one on the committee had deemed a single composition professor or WPA to be a legitimate stakeholder in their deliberations. This decision led the writing and rhetoric faculty at our university to reevaluate how our program was perceived by the state legislature, to consider what they imagined our work to be, and to contend with how those perceptions might shape future legislative actions. We worried, not without cause, about the future of basic writing on our campus.

Our worries are doubtlessly shared by many readers of this journal and with university and community college faculty around the country. Indeed, in 2015, the Two-Year College English Association published a "White Paper on Developmental Education Reforms," which outlined their concerns over movements "from Florida to Washington, from Connecticut to Colorado" intent on legislating the administration of developmental college courses ("TYCA" 227). Almost invariably, such legislative mandates have been pursued without the advice or consent of two-year college faculty (227). With legislation poised to move developmental courses such as basic writing out of four-year institutions and into community colleges, the TYCA white paper acknowledges that two-year college faculty may be caught flat-footed, finding that they need make dramatic programmatic changes "on short notice and with few or no additional resources" (235). Other factors, such as dwindling enrollments, low retention and completion rates, and high DFWI rates in gateway and required courses also contribute to a troubling environment for all institutions and impact the support we can provide to our at-risk students.

As disciplinary experts, we might wish to pretend that political and bureaucratic concerns should have no bearing on our pedagogical decisions. But in this contentious regulatory context, we would do well to consider Sugie Goen-Salter's warning that—while considerations of "curriculum, pedagogy, and basic writing theory are left out of administrative policy discussions about remediation"—writing faculty may also be guilty of "ignoring basic writing's complex history and the ways it interacts with vested

institutional, economic, and political interests" (83). Throughout Oakland's history, writing instruction has "shifted among curricular and institutional locations that were at first invisible, then remedial, and then independent" (Chong and Nugent 176). The university's earliest records show an institution at first in denial about the need for writing instruction, then one swept by urgent calls for writing support and, eventually, an institution in possession of a substantial developmental writing curriculum. The Basic Writing (WRT 102) and Supervised Study (WRT 104) courses that we discuss in this article were revised in response to two pressures: the threat of additional curricular mandates enacted by the Michigan state legislature and, more generally, "the increasing influence of neoliberal impulses" driving university administrators to eliminate curricular and extra-curricular support for at-risk students (Lamos, "Minority-Serving" 5). Our revisions were inspired by departmental concerns about the future of basic writing support on our own campus, grounded in current best practices in the field, and informed by an understanding of the troubling history of developmental education and first-year writing instruction at Oakland University.

THE HISTORY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Oakland University (OU) was endowed in 1957 as a liberal arts college, drawing faculty from Ivy League universities in the northeast who began their work here with unrealistic expectations and "relentlessly rigorous" academic standards for their first few classes of students (Riesman, Gusfield, and Gamson 33). As noted in OU's first course catalogs, the university was committed to offering no "courses of a sub-collegiate character" (*Michigan State University-Oakland*, 1959), defined as any courses in reading, math at a level below calculus, or composition. In their history of the university, David Riesman, Joseph Gusfield, and Zelda Gamson note that the university's "original plan to have no 'remedial' or 'bonehead' English composition in the freshman year but to begin with the study of literature was in keeping with the post-Sputnik insistence that the colleges force better preparation upon the high schools" (31). Thus, while Mike Rose notes a tendency for institutions to treat basic writing "in isolation from the core mission" of the university and to place the course in a kind of "institutional quarantine" ("The Positive" 4), at Oakland such courses were initially prohibited because they were viewed as both unnecessary and antithetical to the mission and higher ideals of the institution. Instead of traditional composition classes,

the university claimed that faculty in every department were expected to "place a strong emphasis on writing in all courses" (*Michigan State University-Oakland*, 1959).

All composition courses were considered "sub-collegiate" during the university's early years, but a number of other academic initiatives attempted to make up for the lack of direct writing instruction and support during this time. The first of these initiatives was a literature course that emphasized writing about literature, "Composition and Analysis of English Prose." However, a number of other approaches to improving student writing were proposed between 1963 and 1972. In 1963, for example, university faculty and administrators serving on the University Senate questioned the assumption that students were learning "writing in all courses," and charged the Academic Affairs Committee to investigate "the University wide problem of literacy" (*Minutes*, April 8, 1963). Within two years, the University Senate approved the committee's proposal that all first-year students be required to complete "two semesters of UC 01 Freshman Explorations" (*Minutes*, April 14, 1965). The proposal made exceptions for transfer students who had "successfully completed a full transferable year of English Writing work elsewhere" (*Minutes*, April 14, 1965). These new courses were called Freshman Explorations, or Exploratories for short, and were first offered in Fall 1966. They emphasized writing within specific subject areas, including western civilization, non-western civilization, literature, fine arts, "Man and Contemporary Society," and science ("UC Courses" 1).

There may have been some limited success to this approach; however, incremental changes to the wording of this requirement suggest that faculty continued to be dissatisfied with student writing. In 1968, for example, the University Senate approved language indicating that "any student who has not satisfactorily completed two Exploratories in his first three semesters may be declared ineligible to continue as an enrolled student" (*Minutes*, March 26, 1968). In 1970, the Academic Policy Committee proposed using reading and writing exams to place students into one of three new levels of Exploratories. Those three levels will likely look familiar to readers of this journal: UC 01, a 4-credit course capped at 18 students that involved "frequent short writing assignments" and that could be waived if the student earned an excellent score on the placement exams; UC 02, a 4-credit course, which was capped at 25 and engaged students in "longer, less frequent assignments"; and an 8-credit course, UC 03 for students who had earned a score below satisfactory on their placement exams (*Minutes*, April 2, 1970). This course, offered an "intensive concentration in writing," was capped at 20 students, and was

staffed by an instructor and a student assistant (*Minutes*, April 2, 1970). Instructors and assistants teaching UC 03 were charged with forming "a group to exchange information about problems and specific teaching techniques" (*Minutes*, April 20, 1970). As further evidence of the university's struggles to address developmental writing students, only one year later, the University Senate approved a motion to abolish UC 03, the course designed specifically to address the needs of those students.

In 1971, the Academic Policy Committee proposed yet another measure to improve student writing by eliminating the remaining Exploratories and creating a free-standing Department of Composition charged with teaching reading and writing courses, developing placement exams, and collaborating with the new Department of Speech Communication (*Minutes*, March 28, 1972). The proposal to abolish the Exploratories was approved without discussion, but the proposal for a Department of Composition was amended to rename it the Department of Learning Skills Development (*Minutes*, April 5, 1972). A discussion over the name of the department and its institutional home continued over several meetings before the member advocating "Department of Composition" agreed to withdraw that name if the member advocating "Department of Learning Skills Development" agreed to withdraw the word "development" (*Minutes*, April 26, 1972). A compromise having been reached, the Learning Skills Department was approved on April 26, 1972 and began offering its first developmental writing courses that fall. Unlike other academic departments, this department was entirely under the auspices of the Provost's Office.

The institutional history of writing instruction that we recount above demonstrates the extremes to which the pedagogical pendulum has swung at Oakland—oscillating between the institution's inattention to direct writing instruction and the needs of at-risk students in the 1950s and early 1960s, to uncertainty over how best to address student literacy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and finally, as we discuss below, to hyper-attention for these students and the creation of an extensive developmental reading and writing curriculum in the 1970s and 1980s. Like other universities around the country, writing instruction at Oakland has also moved away from the current-traditional instruction of the university's early decades to the more contemporary curriculum rooted in rhetoric and process.

Developmental Instruction and an Emerging Discipline

By conceding in 1972 that developmental writing courses were at least a pedagogical necessity—if not entirely consistent with what many faculty believed to be the highest ideals of their institution—Oakland joined countless other institutions around the country who were newly committed to attending to their at-risk student population by providing supplemental instruction, peer tutoring, and basic writing classes. Indeed, only three years after Oakland offered its first developmental writing classes in 1972, Mina Shaughnessy invited readers of this journal's inaugural issue "to take a closer look at the job of teaching writing" ("Introduction" 3). While Shaughnessy's work emerged from the challenges facing universities around the country as a result of new open admissions policies, Felicia Chong and Jim Nugent suggest that Oakland faculty were always deeply troubled by the academic preparation of their students. They note that, beginning with its first class of students, "a conflicting dynamic surfaced almost immediately between the aspirations of OU's esteemed faculty and the academic abilities of its students," suggesting that "the early history of the institution is defined by a gradual reconciliation among the expectations of faculty, the abilities of students, and the imperatives of institutional administration" (173).

In the early 1970s, faculty at Oakland worked first to develop and then to expand a collection of skills-based, developmental reading and writing courses. The new department began to address the needs of more advanced students by offering a Basic Writing III course that emphasized "the development of extended rhetorical structures" and that focused on organization, logic, coherence, and unity alongside an introduction "to techniques of persuasive argument and to fundamental methods of research and annotation" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog,* 1972–1973, 366). The department also offered students up to 8 credits of a 200-level "Writing in Special Fields" course (*OU Undergraduate Catalog,* 1972–1973, 366). These course offerings suggest that learning skills faculty recognized the importance of rhetoric and research practices in preparing students for work at all levels in the university. Unfortunately, this interest in advanced writing classes was short-lived. In 1974, LS 200-210, Writing in Special Fields, was removed from the catalog; LS 101, Basic Writing III, was removed in 1978; and by 1979, the department of learning skills comprised a dozen writing, reading, and study skills classes, seven of which were below the 100-level.

As Oakland embraced developmental education in the 1970s, contributors to this journal were laying the foundation for research and best

practices in the field. Some of the most innovative and powerful voices published works on grammar instruction (D'Eloia; Halsted; Kunz), vocabulary (Eisenberg; Gallagher), and rhetoric (Lunsford; Taylor). During its first six years, *JBW* authors proposed pedagogies for ESL students (Bruder and Furey; Davidson) and writing across the curriculum programs (Maimon; Reiff); presented research on revision (Harris; Sommers) and evaluation (White; Williams); and turned their attention to how graduate programs might best prepare teachers of basic writing (Gebhardt). Unfortunately, as this intellectual tradition in basic writing developed on the national level, the curriculum at Oakland and at universities around the country continued to exhibit a remedial approach consistent with what William B. Lalicker terms the "prerequisite model" and what Shawna Shapiro identifies as a "traditional remedial model" (42).

Basic Writing's New Status at the University

While a skills-based curriculum for reading and writing persisted at OU throughout the 1980s and 1990s, changes to the departmental home for these courses made possible some eventual adjustments to how writing was taught and perceived at the university. In 1982, a dozen learning skills courses were transferred to a new Department of Rhetoric, Communication, and Journalism (RCJ), marking the first time composition was housed in a non-administrative, fully academic department. At the same time, courses in the advanced learning skills curriculum, which introduced students to both process and rhetoric, were renamed from Basic Writing Skills I and Basic Writing Skills II to Composition I and Composition II. With this change, OU came to recognize composition as a necessary course for all students and not just developmental students. Subtle changes were also made to the course descriptions, demonstrating a clear shift in approach for these two classes. For example, in 1980, LS 101 Basic Writing Skills I was described as "a course emphasizing the formal and functional elements in expository writing. Students are introduced to syntactic and rhetorical patterns of the English sentence and related patterns of paragraph development" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1979-1980, 128). In 1982, this course was renamed RHT 100 Composition I and described as a course that "explores the formal and functional elements of expository prose, with emphasis on the process of writing. Students investigate effective syntactic and rhetorical patterns, incorporating these patterns into the composition of several short essays" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1982–1983, 126). In its original form, LS 101

focused on sentence-level and paragraph-level considerations. With this new iteration of the course, Composition I came to emphasize the writing process and the development of short essays.

In place of these basic writing skills classes, two "developmental" classes—RHT 075 Developmental Writing I and RHT 080 Developmental Writing II—were created. Both were described as small group classes in "basic composition skills" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1982–1983, 126). Gradually, the number of skills-based courses offered in RCJ decreased, and an advanced writing curriculum, one that incorporated the rhetorical and process-based pedagogies of Composition I and Composition II, emerged. In 1999–2000, half of the rhetoric courses offered by RCJ (7 of 14) were identified as reading, writing, and study skills courses, although only one of those courses, a 6-credit Communication Skills class, was listed as below the 100-level.[1] While most of these skills-based courses were offered only rarely after the turn of the century, six remained on the books until Fall 2010, two years after the new department and new writing and rhetoric major were formed. That year, writing and rhetoric faculty voted to reduce the number of developmental courses to three: WRT 102: Basic Writing (required for any student earning a 15 or below on the ACT), an elective 1-credit WRT 104: Supervised Study course, and an elective WRT 140: College Reading class.

The number of developmental offerings in our department has remained unchanged since 2010; however, the attention that we pay to the curriculum, staffing, and assessment of these courses has improved greatly in recent years. This renewed attention was made possible, in part, as a result of financial support from both our senior associate provost, who chairs our university's retention and completion committees, and from the College of Arts and Sciences. With both financial resources and the efforts of new faculty, our department has significantly revised both the basic writing and supervised study curriculum. The basic writing course was redesigned to focus on instruction in rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection and is intended to support students' development of the habits of mind of effective college writers outlined in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* and to encourage help-seeking behaviors among at-risk students. These changes to basic writing have been strengthened by an improved referral process and new course objectives for supervised study.

A TROUBLED HISTORY OF WRITING SUPPORT AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Writing Centers as the "New Frontier"

Like developmental courses, writing centers have a checkered history at Oakland. Our first writing center was established in 1965 by English department faculty. Students were referred to the center by their instructors or advisors, although some students chose to enroll in the writing center's course of study of their own accord. In its first semester, Oakland's writing center served seventy students (out of some 1,800 undergraduates), offering each student three mandatory one-on-one conferences and two optional open lectures every week ("Student Help" 1). Faculty and student tutors in the writing center focused their efforts on helping students "learn to limit a subject adequately, organize it methodically, and develop it thoroughly" (1). According to the center's founders Joan Rosen and Rosale Murphy, tutorials and lectures emphasized "clearly constructed sentences and paragraphs with specific attention to unity, coherence, emphasis, and variety," along with attention to the use of standardized English so that students might gain the confidence that "their ideas will be understood and respected" (1).

While this first center may fall short by a number of contemporary measures, faculty and students who staffed it aimed to instruct students in higher-order concerns like organization and development alongside lower-order concerns like grammar and mechanics. By the 1980s, however, the English department's writing center was moved into a unit known as the Academic Skills Center, a transition that shifted the center's focus more exclusively to lower-order concerns and compelled faculty in Oakland's rhetoric program to develop their own writing center that, according to one of our senior colleagues, was funded by "passing the hat" at department meetings. Known as the Writing and Reading Center, the department's center was staffed by three advanced writing students and provided at least some measure of support for first-year writing students in researching and writing.

So while tutorials offered in the department's Writing and Reading Center provided assistance with research and writing, the university's Academic Development Center largely conformed to the "fix-it-shop" model that Lil Brannon and Stephen North identified in the first issue of *The Writing Center Journal* in which writing centers are held to be "correction places, fix-it shops for the chronic who/whom confusers" (1). For more than two decades, this fix-it shop doctrine informed the kind of writing support that

the majority of Oakland students received in the Academic Development Center and, later, the Academic Skills Center. In fact, one rhetoric professor described that support as clinical: "Even before we became much more rhetoric[ally] and theoretically grounded [in the rhetoric program], we had issues with how the Academic Skills Center was [tutoring writing. . . .] It was a little bit like, 'Here's your paper [hospital] gown'. . . Like there had to be something pretty wrong with you."

In 1984, OU's Commission on University Excellence authored a report suggesting that institutional support systems for developmental students such as the Academic Development Center lacked both "sufficient resources...[and] widespread support to achieve their limited goals" ("Preliminary Report" 72). The report not only suggested that the university might consider relying on community colleges to support students with "minimal skills levels," but it also reflected our faculty's commitment to underprepared students by noting that, "for political and social justice reasons, the University may wish to retain and significantly improve and strengthen its academic support program" (73). Despite the recommendations for increased student support for writing, there appears to have been limited support and vision for a fully funded university writing center during this time. Thus, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the rhetoric program's basic writing and supervised study courses were often the only institutionally sponsored writing support for our underprepared students.

It took years of discussion, several proposals, and financial support from two generous donors, but in 2006, the university finally established a writing center as a permanent administrative unit. Where the Academic Skills Center operated on the model of "remediation labs, schoolhouse grammar clinics, [and] drill centers" (Brannon and North 1), Oakland's new writing center remains informed by current theories, research, and best practices in the field. The new center is also staffed by undergraduate and graduate student consultants who are required to complete our department's peer tutoring course (WRT 320 Writing Center Studies and Peer Tutoring Practice), and the work of tutors drawn from writing and rhetoric is overseen by a writing instructor whose academic background and research are in the field of composition-rhetoric.

The Writing Tutorial Course

OU's history is marked by a number of literacy crises, the earliest of which was described in school newspaper accounts of the first writing cen-

ter in 1964. The creation of the university's first writing tutorial course that same year suggests that Oakland faculty felt more could be done to improve student writing. The non-credit-bearing tutorial course that emerged from this perceived crisis in student writing, ENG 009: Aids in Expository Writing, was a precursor to our department's supervised study course. ENG 009 provided students with access to a faculty tutor and offered struggling students much-needed support beyond what the university's first writing center could provide. This tutorial course persisted for more than a decade at Oakland, disappearing from the English Department's curriculum in 1972 when the university's new Learning Skills Department began offering their own series of for-credit writing tutorials. When the new RCJ inherited the learning skills curriculum in 1982, rhetoric faculty reduced the number of tutorial courses from five to two, offering both a 1-credit tutorial for ESL students and the 1-credit supervised study course that promised to aid students in "any variety of subjects including mathematics, the sciences, the social sciences, theatre, art history, and composition" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1982–1983, 126). By 1988, supervised study was described as providing students with "tutorial instruction focusing on academic skills" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1988–1989, 165), and in 1993 the tutorial sessions were redesigned to focus more specifically on composition practices and were described as "tutorial instruction in areas mutually agreed upon by student and instructor such as independent or academic writing projects" (*OU Undergraduate Catalog*, 1993–1994, 170).

With the creation of a new writing center in 2006, both the center's free peer tutoring and the department's for-credit supervised study course co-existed without any formal delineation of their respective roles in supporting student writing. In practice, however, referrals to supervised study by first-year writing instructors, academic advisors, administrators, and writing center staff tacitly implied that a student had "more severe" problems with standardized edited English than peer tutors could cope with or classroom instructors had time to address. While tutors in the new writing center employed current best practices in the field, by 2008 our supervised study course again began to resemble Brannon and North's "fix-it shop" (1): instructors addressed grammar and mechanics with their tutees, while largely ignoring the kinds of process and rhetorical instruction that informed our other first-year and advanced writing courses.

HOW SUPPORT FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS FELL THROUGH THE CRACKS

During OU's first five decades, writing instruction and support shifted and expanded as writing courses were first offered by the English department in the 1960s (ENG 009: Aids to Expository Writing; ENG 101: Composition and Analysis of English Prose; and ENG 210: Fundamentals of Exposition); then through a separate department of learning skills in the 1970s; then by a rhetoric program housed in an academic department of rhetoric, communication, and journalism in the 1980s; and finally by an independent academic department of writing and rhetoric in 2008. As tempting as it would be to make this history into a teleological narrative of developmental writing's arrival at its ideal institutional home, we admit that even within our department, basic writing has at times fallen through the cracks as our faculty's energy was consumed by the urgent and unceasing tasks involved with the establishment of a new department and major. Curriculum design for the new undergraduate writing major and baseline assessment of the required general education/first-year writing course depleted our resources as a department in the first few years, especially in terms of faculty time. Out of necessity, issues with the basic writing and supervised study courses were put on the back burner, even as we recognized serious pedagogical issues with the current-traditional content and teacher-centered approaches of both courses. When the university's Retention Committee began exploring ways to support at-risk students and improve first-to-second semester and first-to-second year retention, though, we knew a kairotic moment was at hand for us to dramatically revise these classes.

In the sections that follow, we briefly discuss how we revised the basic writing and supervised study courses to better prepare our students for the rhetoric- and process-based curriculum of our other first-year classes. The revision of each course began with an assessment of its "ground game" pedagogy that revealed the extent to which they had come to diverge from the research, theories, and best practices embodied in the rest of our curriculum. For example, while other first-year writing courses at OU adhered to best practices in the field, such as those outlined in the *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition*, Lori's research suggested that our sole basic writing course was built around retrograde assumptions about students' struggles with writing and overwhelmingly informed by skills-based, current-traditional instructional practices. This course has since been revised to

focus on the "four Rs" of our first-year writing curriculum: rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection.

As with the basic writing course redesign, the revision of our supervised study course began with an assessment that demonstrated that some of our first-year instructors referred students to the supervised study course because of grammatical errors, proofreading problems, or perceived ESL issues. The course also lacked consistent pedagogical practices or learning objectives, leaving the decision of how best to use the weekly half-hour tutorial meetings to the student. Our revised supervised study course now emphasizes guided practice in interpreting writing assignment directions and instructor feedback, developing strategies for invention and revision, and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of work-in-progress (Appendix A). Ultimately, we believe these course revisions may serve as a catalyst for more substantial curricular changes to take place at OU in the next few years.

THE BASIC WRITING REDESIGN

Basic writing students at Oakland fit the pattern that Mark McBeth identified at John Jay College: students are frequently "enrolled in their freshman composition courses still underprepared to complete the types of college-level critical thinking and writing expected" in the Composition I and Composition II courses (82). With its skills-based, current-traditional approach, our original basic writing course did little to prepare students for this type of critical work. This course also provided basic writing students with little or no rhetorical instruction, and it did not introduce students to primary or secondary research practices.

Reforming a Skills-Based, Current-Traditional Curriculum

While the other first-year writing courses at Oakland embrace rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection, prior to our redesign, the department's only basic writing course was informed by more current-traditional assumptions about student writers and about the types of support our at-risk student population required. We bragged on our new department home page that our first-year writing program helped our students "develop the rhetorical skills, processes, and information literacies necessary for writing and composing in the 21st century," and we also touted the program's "focus on community and civic engagement, new media composition, collaborative writing, and revision" ("First-Year Writing and Rhetoric"). However, with its emphasis on grammar, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph construction, our

basic writing course was not "theoretically or epistemologically compatible with outcomes being assessed" (Lalicker), valued, and boasted about in the other courses in our first-year program. Looking back now, we realize that we may have assumed that the theories and best practices that shaped our innovative Composition I and Composition II courses would naturally and inevitably trickle down into the basic writing curriculum.

As we undertook our course revision, first-year attrition rates and course-specific data provided by our Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) indicated that our basic writing course was, indeed, failing to provide our students with the academic preparation they needed to succeed at the university. In the past, only 30–40% of Oakland's basic writing students returned for their sophomore year, compared with 70–80% of students who initially enroll in Composition I. First-year student attrition rates are a university-wide concern, and national research studies suggest that "most of the gap in graduation rates has little to do with taking remedial classes in college" (Attewell and Lavin qtd. in Otte and Mlynarczyk 184). However, our university's data suggested that the basic writing course might have contributed to retention problems at Oakland. In their 2010 assessment of our first-year writing program, OU's OIRA suggested that even "after accounting for differences in academic preparedness, results suggest that there is some aspect of Basic Writing that reduced six-year graduation rates for Basic Writing students" (*Student Performance* 13). Despite this observation, OIRA's published report did not support mainstreaming this population of students; instead, it proposed there was only "weak support for the argument that [our basic writing] students would have had higher six-year graduation rates if they had instead been enrolled in [composition I]" (19). We took OIRA's mixed review of the data to suggest that low graduation rates among basic writing students were not the result of our students being assigned to the developmental class; rather, these rates may have been, in part, the result of that course's failure to prepare these students for more advanced work at the university.

Assessing the Curriculum

Administrative oversight of basic writing at Oakland has generally been minimal, and as a result, instruction in the course was informed primarily by individual instructor preferences and lore rather than by disciplinary research and best practices. In addition, no assessment of Oakland's basic writing course had ever been undertaken prior to the 2012 revision of the

course. Before we could revise our approach to the course, then, we needed to get a clearer understanding of how writing was actually being taught in the class.

In 2011, Lori was appointed to serve as the department's director of first-year writing, and her first undertaking in that role was to conduct an informal assessment of our basic writing course by surveying course syllabi. Faculty teaching these classes had received scant oversight of their teaching, and course syllabi were poised to provide insights into the objectives these instructors had identified for their courses and the assignments they designed to meet those objectives. In the process of this research, Lori was pleased to discover two recent developments, initiatives spearheaded by our writing center director who regularly taught basic writing and first-year writing in the department. These included an embedded writing specialist program that put writing center tutors into every basic writing class and an *ad hoc* committee charged by the department chair, Marshall Kitchens, with developing a common syllabus to bring consistency to course instruction in the dozen or more basic writing classes we offer every year.

While the embedded writing specialist program was a step in the right direction, providing our students with additional in-class writing support, the common syllabus displayed many of the characteristics of a "traditional remediation model" (Shapiro 42), suggesting that the committee's efforts had only re-entrenched and institutionalized an approach that privileged instruction in grammar, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph development. The eleven distinct course goals that shaped this revised curriculum revealed that the process of developing a common syllabus may not have been an easy one. In fact, these eleven goals reflected the compromises that had to be reached to address the "paradigm clashes [and] significant differences in belief" about basic writing students' abilities (Del Principe 65) that were embraced by our diversely trained faculty on the committee.

The course objectives revealed the compromises the committee had forged to construct a common curriculum, although theirs was a curriculum marked by contradictory pedagogical and theoretical approaches. For example, the new course goals ranged from "feel-good" learning outcomes such as "develop confidence in ability to accomplish a writing task" to more current-traditional concerns such as "write complete sentences in the four basic patterns (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex)." These goals reflected the full range of our instructors' familiarity with movements in the field, from new—"add visual literacy to your definition

of composition"—to not so new—learn to "appreciate the complex and personal effort involved in the craft (art and science) of writing."

Because a course syllabus may not accurately reflect what happens from one day to the next or during an entire semester, Lori supplemented her syllabus review with classroom observations and a review of Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs). Both revealed that, despite the eclectic assortment of course goals outlined on the common syllabus, our basic writing faculty focused almost exclusively on sentence construction, editing, and appreciation of good writing (i.e., reading published writers) in their courses. Indeed, instruction in these areas frequently overlapped, with grammar being taught in the context of what students were reading (including "at least one book"). During a classroom observation in 2011, for example, one senior faculty member observed a basic writing instructor lead her class in a lengthy discussion of the previous night's reading of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. This was followed by a grammar lecture and fill-in-the-blanks activity examining comma usage in paragraphs taken from *Walden*. Students in these classes completed "scaffolding assignments" that included some writing in response to issues and readings, but the majority of the scaffolding assignments focused on online workbook lessons in "punctuation, usage, and syntax work"; vocabulary exercises; and quizzes to test "readings, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, and usage."

To Lori's eyes, primary course assignments reflected the instructors' insecurities about assigning more complex writing tasks and their belief in what Annie Del Principe describes as "the linear narrative" (65), which presumes that "a particular sequence of genres or rhetorical modes represents an ascending sequence of complexity and skill" (66). Thus, major projects did not challenge students to compose in unfamiliar genres but merely required that they practice genres with which they already had some familiarity: our basic writing students were assigned a reading summary, a reading synthesis, two personal narratives, and two letters. In both its faculty-centered focus on analyzing (or appreciating) literary non-fiction and its emphasis on vocabulary building and on grammar and punctuation drill and testing, our basic writing course shared little resemblance with the rest of our program's courses, student-centered practices, or learning outcomes. Lori determined that the course's emphasis on grammar needed to be replaced with an emphasis on rhetoric, providing basic writing students with the same kind of introduction to rhetorical appeals and audience awareness that students in our Composition I course receive. Rather than requiring that students read one or more books chosen by the course instructor, Lori believed our basic

writing students needed an introduction to secondary and primary research methods, to information literacy practices such as source evaluation, and to incorporating and synthesizing source information into their own texts. And rather than requiring grammar and vocabulary drills and quizzes, Lori wished for our basic writing instructors to make more time for peer review, conferencing, revision, and reflective practices.

A Redesign that Emphasizes Rhetoric, Research, Revision, and Reflection

In 2012, Lori and Kitchens wrote a proposal for a $10,000 "High-Impact Practices" grant offered by the university's Office of Undergraduate Education (see Kitchens and Ostergaard). This grant paid for stipends for members of a small committee of full- and part-time faculty to research basic writing curricula during the summer of 2012, pilot a new curriculum in the fall of 2012, and assess and adjust that curriculum in Winter 2013. Together, this committee developed new outcomes and assignments for the class that brought basic writing in line with the outcomes valued in our Composition I and Composition II courses.

The redesign of the basic writing course that Lori's new committee facilitated incorporates a number of programmatic and pedagogical features that are accepted as best practices in both writing studies and basic writing:

- a Basic Writing Committee that is responsible for maintaining, assessing, and, as necessary, updating the new curriculum;
- an embedded writing specialist program that appoints a writing center tutor to work with each section of basic writing;
- assignments that develop students' help-seeking behaviors by asking them to conduct primary research into student support services on campus; and
- reflective writing assignments that encourage the transfer of learning from basic writing to other classes.

The 2012 redesign project refocused the course goals and aligned them more with our first-year writing program's learning outcomes and with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* by emphasizing rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection.[2] Changes to the course goals include subtle changes in wording that emphasize practice over comprehension and appreciation, such as revising an original course goal asserting that students would "understand writing as a process (not a product)" to a goal that asks

students to "approach writing as a multi-step, recursive process that requires feedback" (Appendix B). The new goals also demonstrate significant changes in emphasis within the course: the original goals asserted the importance of students making "a connection between reading and writing," but the new goals prioritize "synthesiz[ing] information/ideas in and between various texts—written, spoken, and visual." Where the original goals emphasized sentence structures and copyediting, the new goals privilege reflection to improve learning transfer and to help students develop the habits of mind of successful college writers.

The four major projects in the class challenge students to

- analyze their own learning strategies (Project 1: Learning Narrative)
- conduct primary research and analyze data—observations, interviews, and surveys—about support services on campus (Project 2: Guide to Student Support Services)
- employ and synthesize secondary research to develop an argument (Project 3: Critical Response to Selected Readings), and
- compile and reflect on their revised work in the class (Project 4: Final Portfolio)

An unexpected benefit of this standardized curriculum is that our basic writing instructors have developed an online resource where they share assignment descriptions, classroom activities, model student papers, and resources. When an instructor is assigned to teach the basic writing course for the first time, they have both a wealth of resources and a cohesive group of other instructors to provide support.

Assessing the New Curriculum

Data from OU's OIRA suggest our revised curriculum, which has been in place for four years, may better prepare our basic writing students for the Composition I course than in years past. In the three years prior to our redesign, of the basic writing students who went on to pass Composition I, about 70% earned final grades of 3.0 or above (on a 4-point grading scale). After the new curriculum was implemented and assessed, however, this portion went up to 90% (*Enrollment*).

We also developed a means for basic writing students to bypass the Composition I course and enroll directly into Composition II. As students work on Project 3: Critical Response to Selected Readings, basic writing

faculty encourage their students to compose a second, optional critical response paper using a selection of readings and a prompt designed by the Basic Writing Committee. Members of our Basic Writing Committee (who are required to also teach Composition I and Composition II), receive small stipends to evaluate these papers every semester to determine which students may enroll directly into the Composition II course the following semester. During our pilot of this program, thirteen out of 120 students (11%) opted to complete a placement essay, and eleven of those students were placed directly into Composition II the following semester. Of those eleven, one student left the university, one earned a 2.0 in Composition II (sufficient to meet the prerequisite for upper-level, writing-intensive courses), and the remaining nine earned grades of 3.0 or above. An additional program-wide benefit we've experienced since instituting the optional placement essays is that this new placement process provides our basic writing faculty with an opportunity to read and evaluate essays written by their colleagues' students. Thus, these evaluations serve a norming function for the course: at the end of every summer, fall, and winter semester, our basic writing faculty assess and discuss the work that students complete in their classes.

The gains we've witnessed in student performance following their enrollment in our basic writing class may be attributed to the new curriculum, especially to its focus on rhetoric, revision, research, and reflection. Following our redesign of the course, the new Basic Writing Committee spent a day assessing a random sampling of three of the assignments students completed in every section of basic writing: portfolio reflections, first-week essays, and critical response papers. We began the assessment process by norming a set of high, medium, and low essays using the department's Composition II rubric. During the assessment, each paper received two ratings to ensure consistency among raters. If the raters were off by more than one point on our five-point rubric, the papers were discussed until consensus was reached or a third reader was consulted. Otherwise, the two scores were averaged. Our assessment of our basic writing students' portfolio reflections revealed that these students critically analyzed the choices they made as writers, scoring a 3 (on a 5-point scale[3]) for their "critical analysis of writing process choices ('what I did')" and 3.36 for their "critical analysis of success of writing process ('did this work?')." Our analysis of students' Critical Response to Selected Readings papers compared students' first-week essays with their work at the end of the semester. In this assessment, students demonstrated improvements in their organizational strategies when writing to an academic audience, from an average of 2.32 to 3.23 on a 5-point scale; in their adoption

of an appropriate ethos (tone and register), from an average of 3.25 to 3.57; and in their ability to write to topics that were appropriate for college-level inquiry, from an average of 3.14 to 3.47.

THE SUPERVISED STUDY REDESIGN

At the time that Elizabeth took on the project of redesigning supervised study, many of our instructors assumed this 1-credit tutorial course was a kind of makeshift developmental writing course: a tutorial designed to aid students who had qualified for Composition I or Composition II "on paper," but whose struggles in these courses suggested they would have been better off in basic writing. Additionally, there was widespread confusion about whether our basic writing students should ever be advised to enroll in supervised study, since it was assumed that they were already receiving grammar instruction in their basic writing classes. And many of our students were, quite understandably, resistant to paying for an additional elective credit.

Responding to a Crisis: An Athlete Falls Through the Cracks

As is often the case, the redesign of supervised study began as a response to a "crisis" that attracted the attention of a college administrator: an athlete had been (mistakenly) told that supervised study was mandatory, and the additional tuition charge had affected the athlete's financial aid status. As department chair, Kitchens was called to a meeting with the associate dean to explain the situation. Kitchens asked Elizabeth, who was then in her second year as an assistant professor in the department, to accompany him to the meeting. Once the associate dean understood both the potential for a credit-bearing professional tutorial course to support student writing and the problems we faced regulating the *ad hoc* and unruly system for referring students for supervised study, we were able to secure the resources needed to evaluate whether the course was (or could be) effective in meeting the needs of our underprepared students.

In 2011, the Dean's Office provided a course release and a departmental summer research grant for Elizabeth to conduct a research-based assessment of existing practices and to develop and pilot a redesigned version of the course. She and her student research assistant Jason Carabelli designed an IRB-approved, qualitative study to document the history of the supervised study course and to solicit feedback about its perceived strengths and weaknesses. An online survey was distributed to all fifty-five full- and part-time writing and rhetoric faculty, twenty-eight of whom responded (51% response

rate). The survey consisted of fourteen questions, covering how faculty administered and evaluated the first week essay assignment and what factors influenced their decisions about referring students to the supervised study course. Faculty were also asked for suggestions to improve the referral process and the tutorial course. In addition to these surveys, eight faculty who had taught the course or who had administered the writing program were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Seven of these faculty members were interviewed about their experiences teaching or overseeing the course, the history of the course and its relationship to writing centers at OU, writing placement and referral procedures, and the characteristics of students who typically took the course. Based on this research, Elizabeth revised the first-week essay assignment used to identify FYW students who need additional support, developed clear criteria for supervised study referrals, and created a common syllabus required for use in every section of the class.

Results of the Supervised Study Research Project

Writing and rhetoric department faculty and administrators who participated in Elizabeth's study described the supervised study course using the theoretical framework of Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*. As they found, students' patterns of error could be explored more effectively through sustained individualized instruction. Participants compared the supervised study course to the "Oxford model" of tutorial instruction, also called supervisories in the British educational system, which "allows the tutor to adapt the [instructional] process to the student's learning needs and to give students immediate feedback on their performance" (Ashwin 633). Interview participants emphasized that, as experienced writing teachers, supervised study instructors had both the expertise and the opportunity to "unpack" students' difficulties with writing. At its best, supervised study had been a catalyst for changing many students' attitudes about writing and college. Left to its own devices, however, there were indications that our supervised study course had not lived up to its potential. Many participants expressed deep concern that supervised study should not be, as one faculty member feared, a "dumping ground" and that referrals should not be based on individual instructors' "pet peeves."

Unfortunately, Elizabeth's research findings suggested that some of our first-year instructors were "hyper-focused on grammar and development" and "looked for markers of otherness" when referring students to the supervised study course. Of the twenty instructors whose survey responses

described the writing issues that typically influenced their referral decisions, eighteen included surface-level errors or linguistic patterns. For example, those survey responses documented the following reasons for referrals:

- "poor grammar and syntax"
- "sentence issues (fragments, comma splices), Ebonics and ESL issues"
- "serious grammar problems, i.e. fragments, run-ons and comma splices, verb tense switches, agreement problems"

Rarely were these issues clearly defined in terms of specific patterns of error. Nor did they appear to be so egregious as to render the student's ideas unintelligible. Many of our colleagues' survey responses mirrored those of the basic writing instructors who Del Principe suggests do not work from a model of current research and best practices, but who, instead, base "their decisions on their sense of what basic writers need"(77), believing that students' struggles with grammar indicate that they are not prepared for "a more complex level of writing" (69). For example, while half of the instructors considered content to some extent, using vague terms to describe students' lack of "focus" or "development," only one instructor cited "failure to provide examples and evidence to support ideas" as a reason for referral.

Although they believed they could recognize red-flag issues with students' writing, the instructors were not always able to articulate or agree on what those issues actually were. One faculty member asserted that Composition I or II students who were referred to supervised study just needed "some particular kind of help" with writing, whereas our basic writing students "did not have enough writing experience—*period*" and "really need a *course*. . . on *just* the basics." Another faculty member stated that a student's "inability to generate any specific ideas" during a 45-minute, timed diagnostic essay was sufficient grounds for a referral. This instructor's comment points to another problem with our referral system prior to the redesign: the first-week essay assignment was a decontextualized, in-class, timed, handwritten essay and was not aligned with our writing program's emphasis on a rhetorical, process-centered writing pedagogy.

Changes to the Supervised Study Referral Procedures

In light of these findings, Elizabeth approached the supervised study redesign with the belief that a faculty-led tutorial course should provide a different kind of learning experience for students than either traditional

classroom instruction or peer tutoring. The first phase of the redesign effort clarified how and why a student should be referred to supervised study. To counter our instructors' tendency to privilege "accuracy over fluency, and decontextualized 'skills' over discipline specific conventions" (Shapiro 27), Elizabeth developed a referral rubric that focused instructors' attention on higher order concerns, such as a student's ability to identify and respond appropriately to the rhetorical situation of the assignment (Appendix C). The redesigned supervised study referral system is one way that our program has been able to reinforce our pedagogical principles. Instructors were also strongly encouraged to treat the first-week essay as they would any other writing assignment—allowing students time to draft and revise outside of class and to use word processing tools.

Changes to Supervised Study Pedagogy

The second phase of the supervised study redesign involved establishing consistent pedagogical practices for sustained, individualized writing instruction that set the course apart from writing center peer consultations. For example, the new common syllabus includes course goals and specific learning objectives for supervised study that emphasize interpreting and responding to the rhetorical situation (Appendix A).

In addition to framing these instructional goals, Elizabeth established regular checkpoints where the supervised study instructor and the referring writing class instructor could share information about a student's progress. Because our writing center's consultations are confidential, both peer tutors and classroom instructors rely on the student's understanding of what was said in class or during a peer tutoring session, and students sometimes report feeling confused by what they perceive as contradictory instruction. By opening a channel of communication between the supervised study instructor and the referring writing instructor, both were better able to understand the student's struggles with writing.

Pulling Through: Initial Assessment Results for the Redesigned Supervised Study Course

Elizabeth's research prior to the supervised study course redesign included an online survey distributed to the sixteen students who had enrolled in supervised study the previous semester; however, only one student responded. Consequently, her study was extended to include an analysis of the anonymous end-of-semester course and instructor evaluations for

the first two semesters after the curriculum redesign. A total of thirty-four students were enrolled in supervised study during the 2011–2012 academic year, and twenty-three of them completed the evaluations. Analysis of these course evaluations for the revised supervised study course suggests that the redesign has been successful.[4] Students' comments emphasized how helpful it was to have an instructor who took the time to "guide [them] through" the writing process, "talking through" and "work[ing] through every detail." Supervised study instructors were characterized as teachers who "didn't give up" and were "ready to help me get through this." In many ways, the redesigned supervised study course resembles Rose's model of intensive, individualized intervention, as described in *Lives on the Boundary*. Supervised study provides professional tutoring and mentoring support for students who have fallen through the cracks of our educational system, but it does so within the context of a credit-bearing course rather than out of the kindness of an individual teacher's heart or as an optional service provided by a tutoring center. Changes to the placement, instruction, and assessment of this 1-credit course are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Supervised Study

	Original Model	**Current Model**
Referral Procedure	• Unregulated and poorly defined	• Systematic referral across FYW using a common rubric
Curriculum	• Instructor creates learning activities based on the student's agenda • No syllabus • No common assignments	• Instructor consults with the referring instructor • Common syllabus • Emphasis on rhetoric, research, revision, and reflection

	Original Model	Current Model
Assessment	• None	• Baseline assessment in first year • Course evaluations collected every semester • OIRA assessment currently in progress to compare writing course grades, GPAs, and retention/completion rates of supervised study students to students who were referred but did not enroll

A CULTURE FOCUSED ON STUDENT SUCCESS

As the sections above demonstrate, there have been a number of positive changes to both courses as a result of our redesign efforts, but the most significant changes can be seen in the culture of the first-year program and in its valuing of underprepared student writers. Some of those changes are detailed below.

Table 2: Changes to Department Culture

Before the Course Redesigns	After the Course Redesigns
No one oversaw the administration, curriculum development, and assessment in the course.	A Basic Writing Committee comprising full-time and part-time faculty is directly responsible for overseeing the administration, curriculum development, and assessment for the course. Part-time faculty who serve on this committee receive stipends to compensate them for their time and efforts.
Tenured and tenure-track faculty did not teach basic writing or supervised study.	Full-time faculty are encouraged to teach these classes (although, to date, only Lori and Elizabeth have done so).

Before the Course Redesigns	After the Course Redesigns
All basic writing students were required to take basic writing and Composition I before enrolling in Composition II.	An optional placement essay provides basic writing students with an opportunity to enroll directly into Composition II.
There was little to no collaboration between basic writing faculty and the writing center.	The embedded writing specialist program, currently directed by Elizabeth, and required writing center visits for basic writing students allows for greater collaboration with the writing center.
Basic writing students were only rarely recommended to enroll in the supervised study course as the basic writing class was viewed to be the only necessary intervention for students at this level.	Basic writing students are regularly encouraged to enroll in this course.
No referral rubric for supervised study.	A referral rubric guides the recommendations that faculty make and shapes our conversations about the kinds of issues developmental or struggling writers may experience.
No syllabus, course goals, or specific learning objectives for supervised study.	A common syllabus provides theoretical consistency and pedagogical structure, while preserving flexibility to address individual student needs.

Prior to the redesigns of these courses, our underprepared writers were not recognized as a department or program priority, and as a result, both of these courses fell through the cracks.

Toward a New Integration of Support for Basic Writers

As our history of these courses illustrates, writing instruction at Oakland University was both treated with suspicion by early faculty across campus and embraced by our own colleagues in rhetoric. Our senior colleagues in the Writing and Rhetoric Department cut their teeth in the Learning

Skills Department, developed and taught a variety of reading and study skills courses, supported first-year students with a private writing center, and eventually helped to shift our program's focus to upper-level writing and rhetoric courses and a new undergraduate degree program. In our revisions to basic writing and supervised study, we were conscious of the fact that we were both standing on the shoulders of giants and altering curricula over half a century in the making.

Our most recent efforts to support developmental students have focused primarily on curricular reforms to bring basic writing and supervised study in line with our department's values and expectations for all writing instruction. These redesigns have led to some successes; for example, a sizable number of our basic writing students now complete an optional placement essay and advance on to Composition II. Because the focus and approach to our supervised study class has improved, we have also begun promoting the course as an option for advanced writing-intensive courses across campus, and we have more than tripled (from two to seven) the number of supervised study courses offered each year. We have also come a long way since Elizabeth and our department chair met with the associate dean to explain what supervised study was and why a student athlete had been referred to the course. Two years ago our athletic department required that new, at-risk, student athletes enroll in three of our courses during the second summer semester: Basic Writing (WRT 102), College Reading (WRT 140), and Supervised Study (WRT 104). Our Associate Athletic Director of Student Services described this sequencing of the classes as "incredible" for her new students, noting that the three classes combined had led to "the highest success rate . . . of our incoming freshmen" since she joined the university eight years ago.

We believe our curricular reforms have improved student retention and contributed to student success overall, and some early data confirms this. However, we are also considering a new model for administering basic writing, one that will transition our current prerequisite 4-credit basic writing course into a 5-credit Composition I course, placing our students into a first-year, credit-bearing course within their first semester ("TYCA" 235). This new course will provide our basic writing students with multiple layers of writing support from their own course instructor, a supervised study instructor, an embedded writing specialist, and required visits to the writing center. As we develop this new approach, we have considered several existing models for basic writing instruction; however, no existing model quite fits our institutional context. We believe our proposed model for providing stu-

dents with multiple layers of support synthesizes many of the best practices in basic writing pedagogy that were developed while our own basic writing curriculum was stuck in a current-traditional rut.

Grego and Thompson's innovative Writing Studio model of basic writing has inspired many other writing programs to develop institution-specific solutions to a seemingly universal problem ("The Writing Studio" 67). Their reinvention of basic writing instruction includes small-group workshops for mainstreamed basic writing students, led by peer tutors and writing specialists. In many studio-based models, the classroom teacher assumes the role of a tutor for an extra hour of small-group writing instruction (e.g. Rigolino and Freel; Rodby and Fox; Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson). Since our redesigned basic writing curriculum already features embedded peer tutors and small group workshops, our proposed multi-layered support (MLS) model integrates one of the features of the elective supervised study course that our students value most: one-on-one supplemental instruction with a writing faculty member who is not their classroom writing teacher.

Our assessment of the supervised study course and teacher evaluations also demonstrated that our students appreciate the extra time that they have to work on assignments for their basic writing courses with the help of their supervised study instructor. In this way, our model resembles Arizona State University's *Stretch Program*, which was designed to provide "more time to think, more time to write, more time to revise" (Glau 31). However, several features of the stretch model preclude it from being a viable option for our basic writing students. For example, the stretch model requires a two-semester, 6-credit course sequence—ideally taught by the same instructor (33). As a part of another retention initiative, we experimented with scheduling a cohort of students with the same first-year writing instructor for the entire academic year, a learning community option promoted by our first-year advising center. Unfortunately, we learned that logistical problems make such scheduling constraints untenable for many of our students. In addition, Oakland's emphasis on decreasing the time required to complete an undergraduate degree is at odds with the slower pace of the stretch model.

Similarly, De Paul University's School for New Learning developed their writing workshop model of basic instruction because the stretch model was impractical for their unique population of adult learners (Cleary 40). Based on a coaching model of instruction, a writing workshop serves "undergraduate and graduate students from across the university" (39), as well as basic writers, in a credit-bearing course with up to ten students per section (43). We have been successful in keeping our Composition I and Composition II

courses capped at 22 students per section and lowering that number to 18 for basic writing and 20 for fully-online FYW courses, but De Paul's ten-student workshop model is unfeasible in our current institutional context. Like a writing workshop, the supervised study component of our MLS model will support student writers at any level in writing or writing intensive courses—not just FYW students. But unlike the workshop model, each student in supervised study has an individual tutorial with a second instructor.

One of the key features of our proposed MLS model is that the combination of our existing separate courses, basic writing and supervised study, will not be optional for the student. The redesigned basic writing curriculum already integrates embedded writing specialists and writing center consultations. Unfortunately, the fourth component of the MLS model, the faculty-directed individual tutorial, is still an underutilized resource. Many basic writing support programs rely on self-selection, such as the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) developed at the Community College of Baltimore County. The ALP model combines voluntary heterogeneous grouping (regular Composition I sections that include 40% self-selected basic writing students) with a 3-hour, non-credit-bearing "companion course" taught by the same instructor (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, and Roberts 57). Our experience with the supervised study course suggests that self-selection into a separate, credit-bearing course for 30–60 minutes of individualized instruction—even with an instructor's explicit referral—is not an efficient mechanism for supporting basic writers. Even after our course redesign, too many students referred for supervised study fall through the cracks because, at present, we do not require students to enroll in this course.

Implications for the Multi-Layered Support Model

Like the community college students that Rebecca Cox interviewed for her book, *The College Fear Factor*, many of OU's basic writing students "perceive every dimension of college and college coursework as overly confusing and too difficult" and have "avoided the forms of active engagement that would have improved their chances of succeeding" (40). Engagement with university support services is a necessary, but not sufficient, criterion for college success—for as many studies have demonstrated, students who could most benefit from support services are often unwilling or unable to seek them out (e.g., Addison and McGee; Cox; Drake; Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson).

In their 2010 survey based on the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] and WPA "deep learning" practices, Joanne Addison and Sharon

James McGee found that although 89% of college teachers reported that they refer their students to institutional writing support services, only 25% of college students reported ever actually using them (159–60). This finding certainly holds true on our own campus. In the 2011 NSSE assessment, Oakland scored just slightly below average among Writing Consortium institutions for first-year students reporting that they had visited a writing center or tutoring center (*NSSE11*). In light of these findings, the multi-layered support model that we discuss in this section offers a more directive approach to meeting the needs of basic writers by providing those students with additional exposure to campus support services.

Our proposed MLS model course will deliver the intensive peer and instructor support that we believe our basic writing students need to pull through the difficult transition from high school to college. This model begins with an understanding that "the best programs work on multiple levels, integrate a number of interventions [and] emerge [not only] from an understanding of the multiple barriers faced by their participants, but also from an affirmation of the potential of those participants" (Rose, *Why School?* 143–44). Thus, we are moving toward combining our current prerequisite 4-credit basic writing course and optional 1-credit supervised study course into a single-semester, 5-credit course parallel to our existing Composition I course. Rather than automatic placement into a basic writing course, Oakland's basic writing students will be required to sign up for a multi-layered support Composition I course that will provide four distinct layers of instruction and support:

- a course instructor administering the revised basic writing curriculum
- a second faculty member working as a supervised study instructor;
- an embedded writing specialist who provides in-class peer tutoring support, and
- two required visits to the writing center to meet with other undergraduate tutors

This multi-layered support design will require that basic writers enroll in one credit more of Composition I instruction than their peers, but it will eliminate the need for a traditional basic writing class, focusing both our faculty's and our program's efforts on providing underprepared writers with the resources they need to succeed in our first-year curriculum. Like the University of New Mexico's Stretch/Studio Program, which was awarded the 2016

Council of Basic Writing Innovation Award, we believe our multi-layered support model "aligns with the national trend to reduce 'remediation' in higher education" and could result in significant gains in our students' college readiness and success (Davila and Elder).

CONCLUSION

Pressures to redesign the administration of our developmental classes arrive on two fronts, from legislative efforts to influence university curricula through new and increased accountability measures and from university administrations hoping to improve retention and completion rates in the face of shrinking enrollments and dwindling state budgets. Steve Lamos identifies these threats to "high-risk programs in four-year institutions, [including] pressures toward excellence, stratification, anti-affirmative action, and cost-cutting" (*Interests* 152). And in a 2012 article for this journal, Lamos suggests that "the logic driving BW elimination seems to be that institutions cannot compete for prestige if they support supposedly 'illiterate' students who do not belong within their walls in the first place" ("Minority-Serving" 5). These attitudes may be reflected in administrative and political ambivalence towards postsecondary developmental writing instruction, and even in our own departmental attitudes towards these courses.

Our course redesign demonstrates a significant transition in our administration of basic writing instruction at Oakland, helping us to reject an institutional perception of the basic writing course and its students as "separate from, and clearly not equal to, the academic mainstream" (Shapiro 27). This revision replaces our "prerequisite model" (Lalicker) with a multi-layered support model that challenges the history and "institutional culture" (Shapiro 26) of developmental instruction at our university, and it anticipates legislative mandates that might eliminate our department's responsibility for the education and success of our basic writing students. Like our colleagues who assessed the effectiveness of OU's academic support programs in 1984, we recognize the "political and social justice reasons. . . to retain and significantly improve and strengthen" our support for at-risk students ("Preliminary Report" 72). And like our colleagues in TYCA, we acknowledge the importance of developing curricula that attend to "local context," provide "appropriate faculty training and input" (227), and take into account our institutional history, disciplinary knowledge, and pedagogical expertise.

Notes

1. These developmental courses included RHT 045 Communication Skills, a 6-credit course "introducing new students to the basic language arts skills of reading, writing and speaking needed for success in the university;" RHT 102 Basic Writing (4 credits) ; RHT 104 Supervised Study (1-2 credits); RHT 111 Writing and Reading for Non-Native Speakers (4 credits); RHT 120 College Study Skills (4 credits); RHT 140 College Reading (4 credits); and RHT 142 Efficient Reading (2 or 4 credits) (*OU Undergraduate Catalog,* 1999-2000, 210).
2. For more information about how the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* informed the redesign of Oakland's basic writing class, see Ostergaard, Driscoll, Rorai, and Laudig.
3. This scale was initially developed to assess the composition II course, with the expectation that it would also be used to assess student writing in upper-level courses in the major. Thus, we anticipated that composition II students would score in the 3–4 range, while a score of 5 would indicate an advanced level of writing.
4. When asked how the supervised study course could be improved in course evaluations, 54% of the students said they liked it the way it was, while 33% of the students wanted longer or more frequent tutorial meetings.

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Appendix A

WRT 104 Supervised Study Common Syllabus (Excerpt)

WRT 104: Supervised Study (1 or 2 credits) Tutorial instruction in areas mutually agreed upon by student and instructor such as independent or academic writing projects. May be taken concurrently with other writing and rhetoric courses (7 weeks or 14 weeks). May be repeated for up to 8 credits. Graded S/U.

Course Goals: Students in WRT 104 will develop effective strategies for a process-based approach to writing that will equip them to respond appropriately to a variety of writing assignments in their first-year writing or writing intensive courses.

Specific Learning Objectives: At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to

- interpret the rhetorical situation (audience, context, purpose) that a writing assignment asks students to address
- identify the requirements of a specific writing assignment
- use a variety of techniques to generate ideas and to draft, organize, revise, edit, and reflect on their writing
- recognize and correct patterns of error in standardized edited English that interfere with or distort meaning
- produce academic prose that demonstrates an understanding of college-level argumentation (or other course-specific writing tasks)

Course Procedures: WRT 104 instructors meet with each student individually for one half-hour per week (for one credit) at a regularly scheduled time mutually agreed upon between the student and the WRT 104 instructor. Students are required to bring course materials for their first-year writing or writing intensive course (see Required Text(s) and Supporting Course Material above), drafts in progress, graded papers, and other materials as directed. Individual class sessions will involve a one-on-one tutorial related to writing course material.

Weekly Schedule and Topical Outline: The WRT 104 instructor will contact each student to arrange a regular meeting time. The specific weekly activities will be determined by student and instructor.

Suggested weekly schedule:

- Weeks 1-2: Goal Setting
- Week 3: Interpreting Writing Assignment Instructions

- Weeks 4-5: Review of Assignments (graded, in-progress, and forthcoming)
- Week 6: Mid-Semester Evaluation and Reflective Essay
- Weeks 7-11: Individualized Writing Workshops
- Weeks 12-13: Portfolio or Final Project Review
- Week 14: Exit Interview and Course Evaluation

Appendix B

WRT 102, Basic Writing, Course Goals

Original Course Goals

- Develop critical and analytical reading and listening skills
- Translate good thinking into the appropriate written form for a task and an audience
- Make a connection between reading and writing
- Communicate thoughts clearly and effectively in discussions and text, including asking questions at appropriate times
- Understand writing as a process (not a product)
- Approach each writing task with appropriate writing strategy and tools
- Develop confidence in their ability to accomplish a writing task
- Write complete sentences in the four basic patterns (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex)
- Add visual literacy to their definition of composition
- Develop editing skills (specific punctuation and grammar strategies)
- Appreciate the complex and personal effort involved in the craft (art and science) of writing

Revised Course Goals

- Approach writing as a multi-step, recursive process that requires feedback
- Compose their texts to address the rhetorical situation
- Synthesize information/ideas in and between various texts—written, spoken, and visual
- Reflect on their own writing processes and evaluate their own learning

- Adapt their prior knowledge and learning strategies to a variety of new writing and reading situations in college and beyond
- Develop the habits of mind of effective college writers and readers

Appendix C

WRT 104 Referral Rubric

Students whose first week essays demonstrate weaknesses in at least two of the numbered rubric categories below should be referred to WRT 104. Please note that rubric category #4 applies only to WRT 160 Composition II students.

First Week Essay Evaluation Criteria for WRT 104/ESL Referrals		Instructor's Comments:
1.	Difficulty reading or interpreting the assignment instructions. This may include:	
	a. inappropriate response to the prompt (off-task or off-topic; does not answer the central question)	
	b. misinterprets the content of the quoted or summarized passages in the prompt	
	c. issues of comprehension that may be related to ESL or Generation 1.5 language fluency	
2.	Does not meet the basic requirements of the assignment. This may include:	
	a. under-developed response (fewer than 250 words, lists ideas)	
	b. inability to organize using essay conventions (lacks thesis or loses focus, lacks structure)	
3.	Difficulty with standard edited English, appropriate for academic discourse. This may include:	
	a. errors in sentence structure and syntax that substantially obscure or distort meaning	
	b. error patterns in grammar and conventional usage (not spelling, punctuation, or inconsistent proofreading)	

FOR WRT 160 STUDENTS ONLY: 4. Difficulty constructing an evidence-based argument. This may include:		
	a. overly simplistic response (does not engage with complex issues)	
	b. biased response (relies entirely on personal opinion or belief)	

Storyboarding for Invention: Layering Modes for More Effective Transfer in a Multimodal Composition Classroom

Jon Balzotti

ABSTRACT: This article describes an innovative pedagogical technique for multimodal composition courses: the use of storyboarding as an invention tool across multiple composition platforms. Student response data and our textual analysis of their multimodal texts over a two-year period reveal some challenges when new media projects are taught alongside traditional essay writing. Our research also shows that basic writing students were more likely to see similarities between the two assignments when they were asked to use a similar process of invention. Utilizing composition concepts in tandem to compose two similar but different products (essay and video) that ostensibly reside in different spaces and times provides unique opportunities for teachers and students in the basic writing classroom to discuss conventional compositional moves—context, style, evidence, warrants—and to discuss argumentation more broadly. Reemphasizing the role of invention in multi-modal instruction as a critical component in the process of new media instruction may help students' ability to transfer writing knowledge from one assignment to another.

KEYWORDS: multimodal; new media; invention; transfer; video; composition; storyboard; basic writing

Composition teachers today are more open to the notion of multiliteracies and more inclusive of assignments that teach communication modes that are audial, visual, spatial, architectural, and gestural, as well as linguistic (New London Group; Kress and Van Leeuwen; Kress). But mere exposure to and study of different literacy practices, such as those listed above, do not, by any means, ensure students learn how to use different modes productively nor how each might be blended together to create rhetorically effective products of communication. Kathleen Blake Yancey argues this point

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when she says students need greater familiarity with intertextuality; that is, they need to understand how to create "relationships between and among context, screen, image, the visual, the aural, the verbal, and with repetition and multiplicity as the common features" (95). Madeleine Sorapure agrees with Yancey that students must develop the ability to blend modes, but teachers must also realize that new media projects complicate an already difficult task of learning to write well. In the traditional writing classroom, she says, students are "worry[ing] only about working with text, and this is challenging enough." In a multimodal classroom, "students are being asked not only to use several different individual modes, but also to bring these modes together in space and time" (4).

Part of the problem with integrating multimodal assignments in a writing class is the perceived distance between modes, a perception some students have that these assignments exist in separate times and in separate spaces (Sorapure 4). The challenge, then, is in trying to bridge this perceived gap by designing and implementing classroom strategies that help students develop modal relationships for a more coherent learning experience. Developing modal relationships in the writing classroom requires feedback and formative instruction, as Lisa Bickmore and Ron Christiansen state, "so students can try and try again" (240). If proficiency with different modes represents a key outcome of the new media composition classroom (Hull and Nelson), then instruction must provide students with opportunities to practice new media across a range of literacies.

Given many of these challenges and opportunities when teaching a multimodal curriculum, our writing program in conjunction with the university's Upward Bound program[1] decided to offer a new course for basic writing students, Writing and Thinking (WRT) 1005, and to assess its impact on students' learning. I describe some of the challenges we faced teaching film production in a writing course and how the use of storyboarding as a transfer tool helped students mediate perceived differences between their new media projects and their more traditional academic writing. Specifically, I report how three teachers introduced students to a wide range of new media projects and included with each of those assignments a storyboarding exercise. My goal is not to present a panoramic view of a particular invention technique but rather to reveal how invention can impact students' ability to transfer experiential knowledge from traditional academic essay writing to a new media project, and vice versa, creating a conceptual link across a range of writing and new media assignments.

Storyboarding for Transfer

Firstly, a separation should be made between the conceptual skills of organization that the storyboard genre teaches and the larger outcome of transfer, which is defined by Christiane Donahue and Elizabeth Wardle as the ability to move or shift "knowledge, strategies, skills, or abilities developed in one context [for use] in another context." They point to information from psychology that indicates transfer is a byproduct of individuals and context interacting, as "situated, socio-cultural and activity-based" (Donahue and Wardle). To explore the activities of teachers and students as they attempt to bridge the gap between modes, products, and processes, *transfer* is defined here as an activity related to sociocultural learning.

When one thinks of transferring literate practices, it is wise, as James Gee suggests, to note what "tools" are being used and into what discursive pedagogies these practices are embedded, as "literacy" has "no generalized meaning or function apart from the specific social activities which render it 'useful' and which it in turn shapes" (37). Transfer in terms of literate practice calls for shifting, as it is precisely movement and shift that allows literate practices to transfer and to transform, to change from one domain, activity, or purpose to another. In this sense, transfer allows us to think of literate practices as adaptable, able to move away from what has previously been fixed or conventionalized. Through these practices, transfer does not rely on a "singular, canonical" language-based approach (New London Group 3), such as the traditional academic essay. Indeed, Brian Street laments that a singular reliance on the formal literacy prototype we call academic writing has marginalized "other varieties" (326) of texts and asserts that attempts to regulate or mandate a prototype represents a type of ideological gatekeeping—a blockage or barrier rather than flow.

With the idea of ideological gatekeeping in mind, we can begin to understand why, as Donahue and Wardle note, some scholars question the very idea of attempting transfer via the conventionalized or formalized practice of academic writing. Additionally, Jenny Edbauer elaborates that "when positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second. . . . Movement is entirely subordinated to the positions it connects" (21). In other words, conventional academic writing alone restricts some students' ability to transfer knowledge from the known to the unknown. Favoring the idea of exchange and movement, better transfer is possible when we employ a broader notion of what gets transferred or exchanged and how invention, as in the use of storyboarding, can be used to

facilitate transfer of literate competence, as in the case of new media projects transferring to and from traditional academic essay writing.

Stephanie Boone and her co-authors argue that for transfer to be effective, students need to make connections between classroom writing and other writing: that is, writing in all its complexity, writing that necessitates communicating with multiple audiences in multiple modes and contexts (see also Eich; Bjork and Richardson-Klavehn). Donahue and Wardle assemble key points on transfer on their Teaching Composition listserv post, noting transfer is heightened when:

- "first and following tasks are similar" (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking)
- "similarities [between contexts/situations] are made explicit" (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström call it "expansive learning")
- "material is taught through analogy or contrast" (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking)
- the learning environment is supportive of "collaboration, discussion," and appropriate "risk-taking" (Guile and Young)
- learners "have opportunities to share and be inspired by a common motive for undertaking a specific learning task" (Guile and Young), and
- students "[see] texts as accomplishing social actions" through a "'complex of activities' rather than as a set of generalizable skills" (Donahue and Wardle)

Because multimodalities focus on literacies beyond traditional boundaries and draw from modes of representation beyond written and oral language, they present students with an opportunity for transfer. Storyboarding can provide basic writers a low stakes environment where they can experiment with different modes and different ways of communicating meaning.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson drawn from our observation of students using storyboarding in the basic writing class is the emphasis placed on sequencing and play, a discursive practice that stresses change and creativity. Jody Shipka asserts that students are better able to transfer experiential knowledge when they develop "rhetorical, material, and methodological flexibility," a flexibility best learned through play in the invention stage of the composition process (285). Further, she argues that such an approach requires students to learn by doing, by *playing* with different methods and materials while composing communication (291). Katherine Ahern has

pointed out that when her students use intermediary writing to describe music, an exercise she calls "tuning," the intercessory step actually changes the listening experience, creating a collaborative learning environment where students *play* with the musical sounds and their "cultural and contextual association[s]" (84). This process of tuning, or playing, in the writing classroom represents a workable solution to what Lillian Bridwell-Bowles describes as our tendency to teach fill-in-the-blank academic essay writing assignments (56). The focus on play during the invention stage gives basic writers the space, opportunity, and freedom to experiment with different approaches as they work to define their communication goals.

Storyboarding for Discovery

The most recognizable feature of the storyboard genre is of course its use of sequential images. But for the comic writer and scholar Will Eisner, sequential art actually begins and ends with writing. In his book *Comics and Sequential Art*, Eisner explains that the first step for the sequential artist is to use writing to discover an idea. The discovery helps the artist make critical decisions later in the storyboard process, as she creates and arranges the images for each panel. According to Eisner, after the images are arranged, the author again uses writing to create dialogue and descriptions. In the three-step storyboard invention process, images and text become "irrevocably interwoven" into a fabric made by the different modes of communication (122).

Inherent in the storyboard genre, then, is a practice of weaving modes together and developing modal relationships. Eisner explains this act as welding together images and sound:

> An image once drawn becomes a precise statement that brooks little or no further interpretation. When the two are mixed, the words become welded to the image and no longer serve to describe but rather to provide sound, dialogue and connective passages (122).

Writing becomes sound, dialogue, and connective passages when the storyboard writer deploys words "to expand or develop the concept of the story" (123). Each mode, he says, "pledges allegiance to the whole" and the writing acts within the whole to connect the visual material of the sequence (123). In Eisner's view, sequential art creates a more "precise statement" of an idea, because writing alone only directs the reader's imagination, but image and writing together continue to focus the author's ideas and present the reader with a more accurate, cohesive depiction of the author's imagination (122).

Other scholars have developed a more rhetorical perspective of sequential art. In his book *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud extends Eisner's idea of sequential art by focusing on the concept of "deliberate sequencing" and defining sequential art as an act of communication with a particular goal (8). Ben McCorkle suggests that sequential art is actually better termed "sequential rhetoric," the deliberative sequencing of ideas for rhetorical effect. Both McCloud and McCorkle highlight sequential art as goal-driven communication that accomplishes the writer's objective. For writing teachers, however, Dale Jacobs' description offers something else entirely. Echoing Shipka's flexibility and invention, he offers sequential art as a "site of imaginative interplay" (182). What Jacobs adds to the conversation about sequential art is an intellectual space for considering storyboarding as a site for invention and exploration in the basic writing classroom (182), a space where students may experiment and discover different ways to conceptualize an idea.

Students often see the storyboard exercise as merely an arrangement of visual pictures, and so they struggle to see its value for their writing. Many students in the 1005 class initially resisted teachers' efforts to use storyboarding as an intermediary step, a place to organize their composition. When asked by the teacher to work on their storyboard, some students said the storyboard seemed like busy work, distracting them from finishing their project. The students' view of storyboarding did not consider the invention strategy as a site for thinking, exploring, and discovery—a place to "play" with different modes, to conceptualize their ideas, or to transform fragmentation into a unified whole.

In a typical storyboard exercise the first year of our pilot, our teachers began by assigning a larger task and asking the students to organize some of their ideas on the storyboard. These larger assignments varied; for example, one assignment might have been to create a video documentary, and students needed to think through the genre expectations before arranging different parts of their video essay on the storyboard sequence. Paired with the video assignment, only a few students struggled to understand the usefulness or value of their storyboard exercise. But when asked to create a storyboard for the written argumentative essay, many students struggled to see the need for this intermediary task. To address this problem, we set three goals for the following year:

1. Provide more opportunity for students to experiment and play with the storyboards

2. Model for students how the storyboard can weave modes together for rhetorical effect
3. Demonstrate to students how the storyboard shows a similar process of invention between traditional and new media assignments

Since one of the primary goals for the course was to help students develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between new media assignments and traditional academic essay writing, teachers were asked to use more class time to show how storyboarding could be used for both visual and written assignments, for example, to effectively experiment with different ideas, create relationships among the different parts of the composition, and to visualize their argument as a whole. The exercise was therefore adapted by teachers from a simple organizational tool into a tool for transfer.

To help students see the potential of storyboarding for writers, each of the three instructors in the 1005 course used professional examples like Figure 1 to explain how writers develop an idea by weaving language, images, and icons. The following example was used by some teachers to show

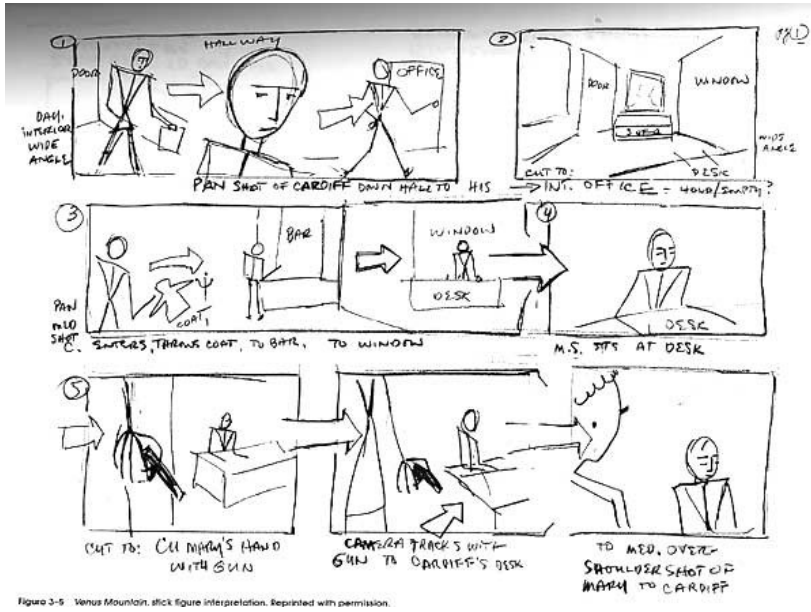

Figure 3-5 Venus Mountain, stick figure interpretation. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 1. Venus Mountain Stick Figure Interpretation. *Comics and Sequential Art* (Eisner 2004).

three distinct modes of communication all effectively communicating the professional writer's vision for a scene in the film *Venus Mountain*.

Much like comics, the visual scene of this storyboard uses panels to communicate a series of actions—Mary holding a gun or Cardiff sitting at his desk. The sequencing of visual images as panels organizes actions, but also provides nuance by revealing characters' gestures, facial expressions, and body language. The images reveal what Eisner calls the "silent interactions" (57) of storyboard characters. Cardiff, unaware of Mary's threat, sits quietly at his desk. The sequence of images communicates a writer's style while incorporating other modes to communicate a clear intention and a vision for the film—modes working together. While some of these sketches are simple and straightforward, others require more work to decode. When image and language are combined, meaning becomes far less ambiguous as the storyboard becomes on intermediary space of sequential rhetoric. Panel 5, for example, uses a caption to tell the reader that the figure holding some kind of object is "Mary" and that the object in her hand is a "gun." Words and phrases, such as "pan shot" and "day, interior wide angle," communicate how the scene looks, how it should feel. As a tool for the writer, language also names characters and objects. It tells the who, what, where, when, and why of a scene. This idea of clarifying the message helps students see the reader-writer contract and how the different modes in the storyboard impacts the writer's job of communicating complexities of ideas to the reader. Language and image weave a unique modal relationship within the storyboard genre and can lead students to see how to express their ideas in a rhetorically effective manner.

The third mode in the storyboard is less obvious than image or language. The storyboard icon, in this case the writer's use of arrows, indicates movement in the panel. In some cases, a particular object must travel from one location to another. A coat might be flung onto a coat rack or a character might walk down a hallway. In either case, the arrows serve to indicate what can't be expressed by either the simple sketch of the scene or through the writer's use of language. And while icons appear less in this storyboard than other signs, regardless of frequency they add an important layer, not ornamental but necessary: they tell the reader how things *move*.

Writing and Thinking (WRT) 1005

Given the restricted access to higher education for first-generation and low-income students, along with the many challenges of progressing and

doing well, the Upward Bound program partnered with University Writing to offer a new course for basic writers and to assess its impact on preparing students for their first-year writing course. The new course was called Academic Writing and Thinking (WRT) 1005, and as implied by its name, the course tried to create a productive exchange between familiar and unfamiliar literacies. The summer course included biweekly argumentative essays asking students to read carefully and develop a two- to three-page written response. In addition, students worked to develop a twelve-minute video documentary. The students could choose any topic for their documentary and were required at different times during the semester to write an in-class reflection on their experience writing and creating the film. One question related to what specific connections they could see, if any, between writing and their new media project.

In the first year, fifty students were required to storyboard only their videotext and not their written essays. As I already noted, after speaking with instructors of the course, our research team found that students questioned the new media project in their writing class. For the second year, we asked teachers to invite students to storyboard both the new media project and the written assignments. As researchers, we wanted to know—if storyboarding could be used successfully as an organizational tool for filmic text, could it also be used for written essays and would that affect students' perception of the two seemingly disparate assignments? It is important to note that the amount of time the instructors invested in teaching video in the classroom increased from the first year to the second year, and led more students to see connections between composing a videotext and composing an essay. Collectively, these students' responses build a case for increased time for multimodal learning and for rethinking invention as a site of interaction among modes in the multimodal classroom.

Participants and Study Protocol

Beginning in their freshman or sophomore year of high school, students enrolled in the Upward Bound program spend time after school and on weekends preparing for college. Before these students begin their first semester of college, they participate in a summer jump-start program designed to prepare them for general education requirements at the university. For the duration of the summer, Upward Bound students reside in dorms on campus and complete homework sessions and attend group events with on-site team leaders.

Fifty students enrolled in WRT 1005 and were told on the first day of class that they would learn to employ academic discourse conventions along with film and digital technologies—using such tools as camcorders, cameras, and video editing software to create their own short films. Both types of literate practices, the written and the multimodal practices, would provide students a range of opportunities to practice composition in an academic context.

The six-week, three-credit summer course was organized to include both traditional academic writing and a new media project. This meant that students were asked to write weekly argumentative essays responding to the reading in class while also working to create a documentary on an idea inspired by their time in class. The research team also asked students to write two in-class reflections, one at the midterm and one at the end term, describing their experience in the course. One question asked the students what specific connections they could see, if any, between writing and video production.

In the first year of the study, students were required to storyboard their videotext and not their written essays. After the course had concluded, some of the students in their final interview said that they saw the two activities as separate, and some went so far as to question the teacher's decision to include video production in a writing class. These responses led us to re-emphasize the storyboard's potential as a mode of invention and critical thinking. In the second year, instructors were asked to include the storyboarding exercise for both the traditional academic essay writing and the new media project.

The classroom-based fieldwork analyzed for this article includes participant observation and field notes; video recording of class time and homework activities; video-recorded individual interviews with students, instructors, program staff, and tutors; focus groups; and document collection, including written and digital student compositions. The research team gathered the qualitative data over the course of three years, with primary emphasis placed on data collected during the six-week summer courses, designed to help students make the transition from high school to college curricula. We collected pre- and post-interviews conducted with 30 students who participated in the study. In the interviews, we asked students to discuss their experiences in the course in general and with storyboarding in particular. Post-interviews asked students to talk about their experiences in their new writing course, focusing on any activities that they believed had supported their efforts to write better. The interviews helped us identify different themes in the students' experiences within and across these courses. As noted, students also

wrote midterm and final reflections in their six-week summer course with Upward Bound. Researchers sat in the back to observe many of the classes and also collected student reflections. Taken together, these data allowed us to note and compare a variety of impacts and to confirm patterns across data sources (Hammersley and Atkinson; Maxwell).

Growth through Storyboarding: Victoria[2]

In this section, I offer two typical student examples of storyboarding created in the second year of the study. As one of the researchers for this study, I collected student work throughout the semester and after each student completed their final film project. The two storyboards were chosen by our team as representative of larger trends in the two courses. The storyboards, whether expressed in alphabetic or pictorial mode, were a major part of the students' composition processes. Figure 2, for example, is emblematic of many of the students' preferences when storyboarding the written essays. The decision to use text over images was common and did not reflect any instruction given by the teacher. The storyboards for the film were less uniform and in many cases the students used different text-to-image ratios.

For the first storyboard writing task, Victoria and her class were asked by their teacher to read and respond to Amy Tan's essay, "Mother Tongue." Tan's essay explores the different "Englishes" Tan used as an adolescent and how those languages shaped her identity. Before writing their essays, Victoria and her classmates were asked to explore their ideas. Some of the students used images in their storyboard, but most relied on alphabetic text. Victoria's example shows the class's preference when sequencing their ideas for an academic paper. This preference for alphabetic writing in the storyboard surprised us as researchers, as we expected to see students use more images to visualize their ideas.

Without being directed, Victoria lists the generic moves of the academic essay on the left side of the storyboard: intro, body, and conclusion. While her storyboard uses text to represent her ideas, the panels rely on the chronology of typical academic essays. However, the storyboard allowed Victoria to play with the ordering and content in the "intro," as her erased text indicates that her first introduction was revised; and when asked, she explained that she moved that content to the body of the essay. She decided that her ideas about writing and reading should come after she had introduced Tan's essay to the reader. The storyboard gave Victoria time and space to think about her reader's needs and how best to frame her argument.

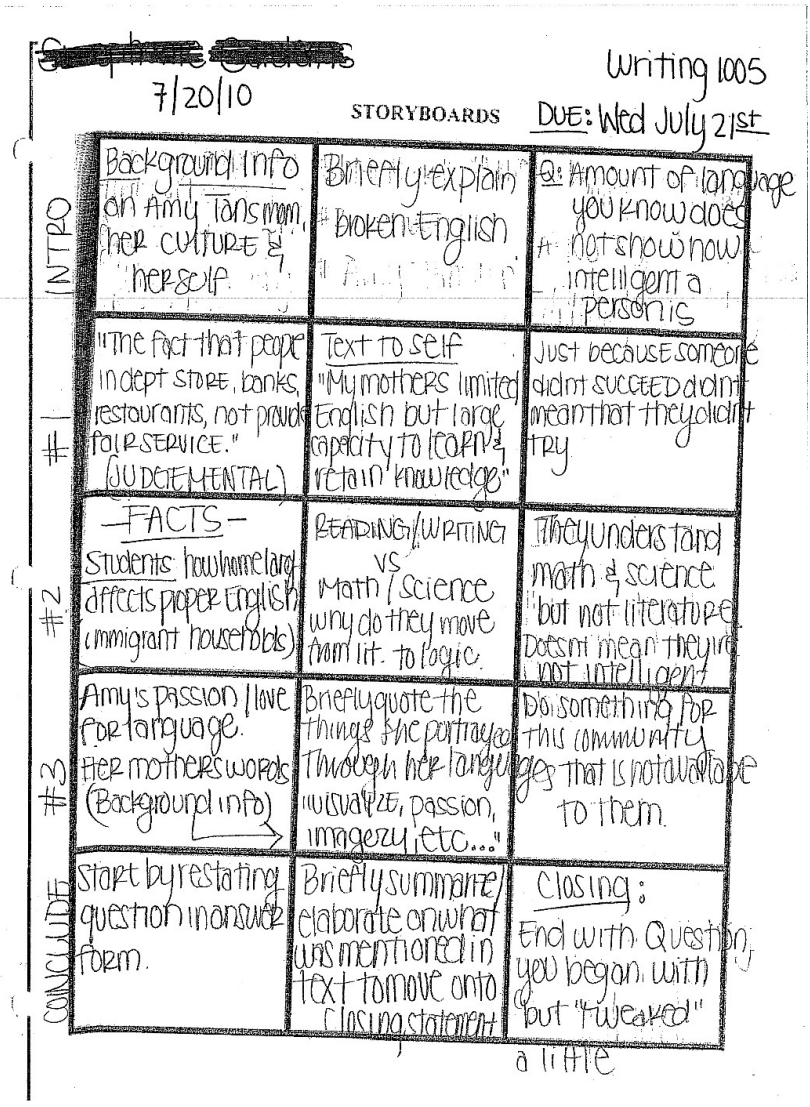

Figure 2. Victoria's Storyboard for Her Essay.

Of course, this practicing with chronology seems rather insignificant until Victoria's essay storyboard is compared to her film storyboard.

The two storyboard activities were spaced three weeks apart. Victoria and her classmates were told they could use whatever storyboard platform was most useful. This time her instructor gave the class a general overview, explaining different camera shots, angles, and important techniques for blending different modalities in film.

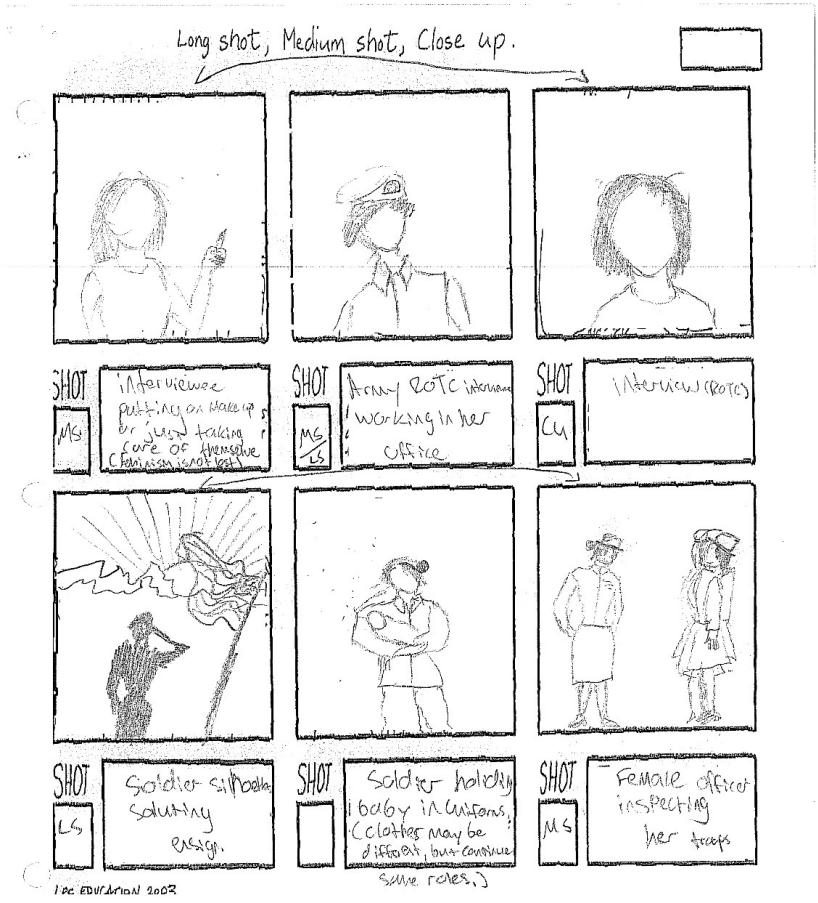

Figure 3. Victoria's Storyboard for Her Film Assignment.

Victoria's film project focused on female cadets in the army: their experiences both as new recruits and as students at the university. She conducted a series of interviews with four female cadets and one male recruiter on campus. She asked her female participants to talk about moments they felt part of the group and times they felt like outsiders. She asked, what was most difficult about being a woman in the military? She worked specifically with young new recruits, hoping to learn something about the transitional period of basic training and active military service. As researchers, we were impressed at her passion for the project and interest in the subject. Victoria told us in an exit interview that she had never worked so hard on an assignment for school.

In the storyboard above, Victoria again begins by introducing her subject and preparing her reader for her argument. She uses recognizable symbols of patriotism and domesticity to communicate her central argument that many female cadets in the army feel struggle with their military identity and social pressures related to female domesticity. Panels 4 and 5 show two very different social obligations, though they come from the same interviewee. Throughout her documentary, Victoria highlights the patriarchal and patriotic culture of military service and the difficulty many of her interviewees faced as they negotiated what it means to be a soldier and a woman in the military. Victoria's storyboard is part of a larger series of storyboards, some depicting images of the film, others filled with messages and quotations. Throughout the storyboard writing process, we observed Victoria using an intermediary writing task to *play* with ideas about women, identity, and patriotism. She used the storyboard to find ways of expressing her findings from the interviews, and played with different visual symbols, audio narration, and written words on the screen. We watched as Victoria wove the different elements of her composition together to create a rhetorically powerful visual experience for the audience.

Finding Connections: Emilia and Lucas

Many students, like Victoria, used the storyboard to play with different ideas and to create powerful arguments through film. But the overall goal of WRT 1005 was to help students see a similar process of composition between the traditional essay and the new-media project. Therefore, teachers were asked in the second year to emphasize the invention process and to encourage students to think about connections they saw between assignments. Our research team found that students with very different writing difficulties found the storyboard helpful during the discovery stage of their writing. Two students in the study, Emilia and Lucas, demonstrate unique responses to the intermediary writing task and show how storyboarding helped to facilitate multimodal transfer.

For an early writing assignment, Emilia's teacher asked her to respond to Sherman Alexie's essay, "Superman and Me." Emilia received a poor grade for her writing, and the teacher commented that Emilia had presented mostly personal observations and feelings on a general subject, but that she had not engaged with the reading through critical response. Her second essay received similar comments. However, on her third attempt, when she was asked to storyboard the essay, she saw a marked improvement in her grade

and her instructor's comments were much more positive. Her instructor mentioned that the third essay had a more "deliberate approach to her subject," was more "focused" and used "excellent examples" to make her point. While some of Emilia's progress was expected, as she continued to practice writing in a writing course, Emilia also included in her written essays examples from her video project, and revealed how her storyboard and video project became a source of ideas for her essay writing. The repeated instances in which Emilia used the storyboard and her video project as a way to maintain focus in her essays demonstrated a synchronicity that showed a connection between new media production and the challenge of learning the academic essay.

Emilia's essay writing continued to improve as she outlined her essays in the storyboard and as she continued to draw from her film project assignment. Her classmate, Lucas, however, struggled to respond to the teacher's request that he develop more cohesive paragraphs and respond more directly to the class readings. While his film was one of the most complex and successful in the class, he continued to struggle to understand the academic essay genre. He struggled to see a larger pattern for the essay, to find a central claim, and to marshal evidence in support of that claim. However, his film project received one of the highest grades in the class. He told his teacher he had been working all semester to retain a certain "feel" for the film, one that stayed true to the film's topic and argument. After the class had concluded, he also said that his success with the film assignment gave him motivation to continue to develop as a writer. Of course, students often bring with them different levels of expertise in writing, just as they bring greater degrees of familiarity with technology and visual design. But Lucas' experience reveals how confidence gained in one assignment might provide help in another, especially if students are taught to see a similarity across different modes and types of assignments.

Recasting Invention as Transfer

Collectively, the students' work in WRT 1005 builds an optimistic perspective on both invention and transfer. Invention matters, and a large number of the students found the activity of storyboarding, whether low- or high-tech, to be a great help to their writing as they organized ideas into a sequence, considered the rhetorical effect on audience, and negotiated the difficult task of blending modes. We also noted in our in-class observations that the repetition of the composition process and the layering of alphabetic

and video assignments created rich classroom discussion about how to make an argument in both writing and videotexts. When we asked the students in WRT 1005 to reflect on their storyboarding and to tell us if they noticed any similarities in the different types of assignments they were doing in the course, the students said that the exercise helped them see a similar process of making arguments. I have included a few of Victoria's responses from the second year of the study to illustrate some of the themes revealed by students' responses. Following, Victoria writes about having to storyboard her alphabetic essay. Specifically, she describes how the storyboarding technique helped her find a thesis and eventually her argument:

> I struggled to come up with an idea but worst of all how to put it all together. Until one day in class our writing professor showed me the relationship between writing an essay and composing a film, it was the same thing! I literally was amazed but I was also amazed at the fact that I hadn't noticed it before.

Victoria's enthusiasm stemmed from a class period where her instructor asked the students to compose storyboards for their written essay and to compare that storyboard with one they had created for their video project. In her first interview, Victoria mentioned her frustration at having to compose a video in a writing class. Why was she "wasting time creating a video instead of learning how to write for college"? After the storyboarding exercise, where Victoria was asked to storyboard her written essay, Victoria explained that the relationship between the two assignments was now much clearer to her. In her third interview, Victoria reported that she began to see a marked improvement in her writing, and according to the instructor, she "showed a greater command of the argument and a much more focused thesis statement." In the final reflective essay, Victoria was asked to explore any connection she might see between her weekly argumentative essays and her film. Victoria responded by noting her increased familiarity with some of the concepts related to academic writing discussed in class.

> If you were to look up the definition of "composition" in any dictionary, it would only give you a short answer such as, "the act of combining parts or elements to form a whole." Now if you were to ask me what the definition of composition was, I'd probably give you the same answer. Just until recently, I didn't know what this word meant. But even after reading the definition, I didn't fully understand what it had to do with writing, that is until I thought

> about my writing and filming process. Writing and filming are two ideas that are obvious and not so obvious at the same time. What I mean by this is that it is obvious that you have to write something in order to come up with a film but what is not so apparent is that filming is like writing an essay. You need a good opening statement, background info, a thesis, and a few examples to support your idea, and end with a powerful conclusion.

Not surprisingly, Victoria, like many of the students in the class, reached for concepts and terms discussed by the teacher when comparing her new media project and her essay assignment. Isaac, a student who struggled with organization, echoed Victoria's positive experience with the storyboard activity, commenting on the similarity he noticed in the two approaches to making an argument. He writes in his reflection: "As I had explained earlier, I have learned that film and writing just go hand-in-hand like peanut butter and jelly. They are actually two forms of the same process: drafts, editing, revising, final drafts." The analogy between peanut butter and jelly and writing and filming was a bit unique. But both Isaac's and Victoria's responses suggest that the fundamentals of meaning making were made clearer when the students were asked to draw on their experience with both assignments and see differences and similarities. Unsurprisingly, many students used composition concepts discussed in class—draft, revising, editing, and thesis—in their written responses to talk about similarities between video and essay writing. From a writing instruction standpoint, greater connectivity between assignments suggests a scaffolding technique that may improve the writing process for basic writers. Recasting the writing process to include processes of invention that help students make connections among assignments of different modes constitutes an important step towards greater transfer in the writing classroom.

Making Connections through Storyboarding

To reiterate, one of our goals was to observe the experience of these student "filmmakers" to determine the kinds of transfer that many students actively involved in storyboarding can generate in a multimodal first-year composition class. Scholars in basic writing suggest that instructors need to make connections between modes more transparent and more accessible to students. Invention strategies, such as storyboarding, link modes to repeatable compositional activities and can demonstrate to students the

interconnectedness of different modes of communication, fostering the transfer of writing knowledge.

While a majority of students indicated they came to the course with a basic understanding of many of the concepts we discussed in the basic writing course—such as audience, thesis, argument, writing process—we observed an increased familiarity with those terms as they used them with more frequency in their reflection and were able to apply those concepts to two seemingly different assignments. Thus, the link provided by storyboarding may help some students overcome preconceived notions that the new media project and the traditional academic essay are unrelated activities, but, more importantly, this invention exercise may also help them deepen their understanding of composition concepts. By comparing and contrasting Emilia's and Lucas' experiences with both forms of composing, we see how two students developed unique understandings of writing and of their capacity to use multiple modes for a blended approach to communication.

Emilia's and Lucas' experiences demonstrate many of the benefits of storyboarding. We observed that, like many of the students in the class, these students appeared more able to *see* the argument they were trying to make. And as Victoria began to use storyboarding as an invention technique, she also made better connections among her ideas and a more focused response to the reading. Interestingly, both Emilia and Lucas started to make more consistent arguments from their films to their written essays. Students who used storyboarding as an invention exercise learned to employ *literacies* in more and flexible ways: solving problems, exploring ideas, making arguments based on rhetorical situation or need and supporting ideas with evidence. Teachers also learned from their students, and saw the value of intermediary writing tasks as they observed their students working to connect ideas between modes. Now in its sixth year, WRT 1005 continues to be an important bridge between the Upward Bound program and our first-year writing course.

If we are to answer the call of composition scholars who argue that the classroom must keep pace with the changing nature of communication, then scholarly projects that seek to understand and address students' conceptualization of what academic writing requires might provide data that can lead to greater synchronization of compositional modes. The storyboarding technique is one example of an intermediary space where students can see similar processes of invention across modes of communication. In addition, the technique may increase the likelihood that students will internalize rhetorical concepts, because composition in many modes offers students op-

portunities to compare the deployment of those abstract concepts in at least two spaces. Utilizing composing processes in tandem—towards similar but different products, essay and video, and which ostensibly reside in different spaces and times—provides unique opportunities for teachers and students to discuss conventional compositional moves and discuss argumentation more broadly.

There is a caveat to this generally positive argument for storyboarding in the composition classroom: these assignments are time consuming and sometimes include a degree of student resistance to using a nonstandard technique for composing. But, as Sara Chaney suggests, resistance in the basic writing class can become a "catalyst" to success (25), and I would add that intermediary writing tasks can help students cope with divergent expectations of what should or should not be part of a writing class. Our research with Upward Bound students and storyboarding suggests that expanding students' literate actions to visual modes of invention is likely to enhance transfer knowledge as basic writers work hard to create informed arguments in a multimodal classroom. Contemporary technologies afford new ways of imagining compositional invention. If we believe that different viewpoints are "inseparable from their distinctive modes of representation," then we also must begin to seek "alternatives" (Weaver 62, 50) for standard essay writing and to use modes in tandem as we approach any literate activity. Storyboarding contributes to our knowledge of experiences beyond conventionalized essayistic possibility and supports students' transfer of sophisticated literate practices.

Notes

1. The Upward Bound program was established nationally in 1965 as one of the Federal TRIO programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A focus of the program, as listed in the mission statement, is "to identify qualified individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, to prepare them for a program of postsecondary education, [and] to provide support services for such students who are pursuing programs of postsecondary education." Prior to the development of the WRT 1005 course, The Upward Bound Program reported that a large number of its students struggled to pass their first-year writing course. Many students repeated the first-year writing course. Both Upward Bound and Writing Program administrators felt these students needed additional prepara-

tion for academic writing. The goal of WRT 1005 is to ease the transition between home literacies and university academic literacies.

2. All names of teachers and students used in this article are pseudonyms.
3. Participant consent to reproduce student work was gathered through consent forms approved by the university institutional review board.
4. Thanks to both Sundy Watanabe and Christine Searle for their contributions to the research team.

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Self/Portrait of a Basic Writer: Broadening the Scope of Research on College Remediation

Emily Schnee and Jamil Shakoor

ABSTRACT: This article explores one basic writer's evolution as he moves from the lowest level of developmental English at a community college to graduate with a Bachelor's degree. Combining personal narrative, essay excerpts, and textual analysis, this piece aims to expand the borders of scholarship in composition studies to include basic writers as co-authors. In painting an intimate and detailed portrait of one student and his writing, we hope to broaden the scope of what counts as research on college remediation, add texture and complexity to the debate over what it means for basic writers to journey towards academic success, and contest the notion that developmental education is a detriment to students. We conclude with reflections on the lessons learned from paying close attention to the college experiences of one basic writer.

KEYWORDS: college remediation; developmental English; community college; student authorship; literacy narrative

INTRODUCTION

Community colleges came out of the shadows and gained a foothold in the national debate over the future and direction of higher education after President Obama's 2015 proposal to make community college education free for the vast majority of students ("White House Unveils"). This newfound awareness of community college parallels growing public and policy-maker concerns over low completion rates: nationwide just one quarter of community college students graduate in three years (Juszkiewicz; National Center on Education and the Economy; Snyder and Dillow). While the causes of the low community college graduation rate are myriad and varied, students'

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lack of academic preparation and their subsequent placement into required remedial[1] classes are often cited as a primary factor in low retention and graduation rates[2]. The critics of college remediation, relying on a number of widely cited large-scale quantitative studies that examine the impact of remediation on students just above and below the cut-off score, contend that mandatory placement in developmental education impedes students' progress to degree (Bailey; Calcagno and Long; Complete College America; Mangan; Martorell and McFarlin). This current attack on college remediation, articulated as concern over student outcomes, is only the latest iteration of a decades-long assault on basic writing that has been well documented in the pages of this journal (Otte and Mlynarczyk; Smoke "What is the Future?"; Weiner).

Yet the national movement against developmental education sits in uncomfortable tension with the experiences of many basic writing students. Beneath the torrent of media pronouncements and policy initiatives aimed at ending college remediation, the almost eight million community college students who attend our nation's two-year institutions remain largely invisible, reduced to a series of disheartening numbers and statistics. What gets lost in this highly contentious, politically charged debate are developmental students themselves—their stories, voices, and perspectives. In this article, we attempt to provide answers to questions posed by Trudy Smoke more than a decade ago: "What about the students? What do they think? How are they affected by this important debate?" ("What is the Future?" 90). To do so, we explore one basic writer's journey, told through his retrospective narrative and analysis of his college writing, as he moves from the lowest level of developmental English at a community college to graduate with a Bachelor's degree. In painting this portrait, we aim to broaden the scope of what counts as research on college remediation (beyond and beneath the numbers); expand the borders of authority and authorship in scholarship on basic writing to include student writers; and contest the notion that developmental education is a detriment to students.

METHODOLOGICAL STANCE: MOVING FROM PARTICIPANT TO RESEARCHER

This article grew out of a mixed-methods longitudinal study that explored 15 community college students' experience of remediation in the context of a first-semester learning community. The study focused on students' perceptions of their placement in the lowest level of developmental English

as well as the potential of learning communities to enhance students' experience of remediation (Schnee). Jamil was one of the research participants; Emily was one of the principal investigators (and the instructor of the first developmental English class Jamil took). Though Jamil is demographically similar to many students placed in basic writing at our college[3]—and to those participating in the original study as well—over the course of three years of ethnographic interviews, Jamil stood out in several ways: his five year trajectory from the lowest level of developmental English to a Bachelor's degree; the astute reflections he offered the researchers on his experiences in higher education; and, most significantly, his absolute conviction that remediation was essential to his college success. Jamil knew little of the controversy surrounding the future of college remediation, yet his outward story seemed to epitomize a remarkable defense of basic writing.

Rather than more research aimed at documenting the failures of remediation, we believed it would be important to consider what we could learn from one success. As his former teacher, Emily wondered what a retrospective review of the essays he produced over five years in college might reveal about the development of Jamil's writing skills. The questions that framed our collaboration were: What might be learned from inviting Jamil to write the narrative of his college experiences, through remediation and beyond, *in his own words and from his perspective*, as part of a collaborative inquiry into his development as a writer? Would close examination of the essays he wrote over his five years as a college student—and the retrospective narrative itself—confirm or complicate Jamil's or Emily's reflections on his journey? What might this in-depth portrait add to the increasingly polarized and politicized debate over the future of basic writing? And might our experiment in co-authorship work to broaden the parameters of scholarship in basic writing?

This project also grew out of Emily's deep desire—after years of solitary work conducting the longitudinal study on developmental writers—to engage students more powerfully and equally in research, writing, and their own self-representation. What began as a somewhat impetuous comment ("We should write an article together!"), made during the final ethnographic interview of the longitudinal study that precipitated this piece, has evolved into a multi-year collaborative experiment on writing across genre, positionality, and difference[4]. Inspired by autoethnography's "rich tradition of critical self-study" and commitment to "relational ways of meaning making," we framed our exploration of Jamil's experience as a dialogic inquiry (Sawyer and Norris 2-3). Thus, we locate this piece at the epistemological

crossroads of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot), narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly; Richardson), and critical participatory research (Fine; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson). From these rich and disparate traditions, we borrow a commitment to the nuance of individual lives, the power of stories to create meaning, and the urgency of engaging research participants in constructing knowledge for social change. While we write in the tradition of composition scholars whose work challenges hierarchical pedagogical practices and positions undergraduates as co-authors of their own educational experiences, our intent is not to explore neither contest what happens in classrooms, but rather to enact the principles of dialogic pedagogy as much as possible in our research endeavor (Freire; Grobman; Tayko and Tassoni).

We are keenly aware of the potential inequalities in student-faculty co-authorship, particularly in which the student is both "study participant" and "co-author" (Fishman and Lunsford qtd. in Grobman 181), yet we embrace the challenges of this "experiment in writing across differences" based on the trust developed over our now almost ten year friendship (Lico and Luttrell 669). Though several decades of age and experience—as well as differences in gender, education, and social class—separate us, our collaboration is rooted in deep respect, genuine affection, and a shared propensity for brutal honesty. In hindsight, it's clear that our collaboration unofficially began in Jamil's first semester of community college. During walks back to Emily's office after class, Jamil taught Emily a thing or two as he dissected his experience of remediation with her. Later, as a participant in Emily's longitudinal study, Jamil was a key informant whom Emily engaged in frequent member checks to test the interpretive validity of her emergent findings (Guba and Lincoln). His wise and penetrating analysis of his college experiences led to new understandings of the research data and inspired this piece. Thus, we view our collaboration as a longstanding balancing act in which we combine our different strengths—Jamil's insider standpoint and Emily's researcher lens—to depict one student's experience of college remediation. Over time, we have accepted the validity of our different voices and perspectives and "work[ed] diligently and self-consciously through our own positionalities, values, and predispositions" to offer scholars of basic writing this collaborative rendering of one young man's complicated and textured journey from basic writer to college graduate (Fine 222).

To produce this essay, both authors analyzed all available data from the larger study—a sampling of Jamil's writing (eight drafts of the only essays he saved) composed over the course of his five years in college, five semi-structured interviews conducted over the three years of the previous study,

quantitative data collected from institutional records, as well as a series of dialogic interviews conducted as the co-authors worked on this article and Jamil composed his retrospective narrative—and pooled our analyses to write this piece. We each had multiple opportunities to read, revise, and re-think every section. Though we began our collaboration with a general sense that remediation was a positive experience for Jamil, we did not have pre-determined hypotheses that we set out to prove. Rather, we employed a grounded theory approach to data analysis, letting our questions and Jamil's evolving narrative guide the telling (Glaser and Strauss). As we reviewed and discussed the data and wrote our ways into this piece, the central themes emerged: For Jamil, remediation was a tremendous asset that provided him a foundation of confidence and skills necessary for future academic success. Further, his strong motivation played a crucial role in his ability to benefit from developmental education. Exposure to academically rigorous courses and experiences, particularly in an intensive summer "Bridge to Baccalaureate" program, were pivotal to Jamil's decision to transfer to a four-year college. And, perhaps most critically, in this era of "quick fix" approaches to remediation, our findings highlight the significance of *time* to the development of Jamil's writing abilities, including the need for a long view of students' writing development that moves beyond basic writing and composition courses into the disciplines.

Single Case Research in Basic Writing

Scholarship on basic writing has a strong history of single student case studies (see Buell; Pine; Roozen; Smoke "Lessons"; Spack; Sternglass "It Became Easier"; as well as Zamel and Spack as exemplars of case study scholarship in composition). However, few of these studies directly engage the student-participant as a partner in setting the research agenda, analyzing data, or co-authoring the findings of the research. Our collaboration builds from and extends the case study tradition, eschewing traditional modes of researcher interpretation in favor of self-representation whenever possible. Further, despite an upsurge of interest in undergraduate scholarship in the field of composition, we found few published studies in which a basic writer served as co-author. Thus, we concur with Leary's assertion that "students' voices have not been adequately included in the conversations that are happening about them in composition studies" and write, in part, to fill this gap in the literature (94). Our intent in this piece was to engage Jamil in the public debate over college remediation as we took readers along on his

personal journey, through the inclusion of his retrospective narrative and lengthy excerpts of writing done during his time in basic writing and beyond.

While we make no specific claims about the universality of Jamil's experience, the acceptance of case study research in composition underscores the importance of locally generated knowledge to our field and acknowledges the value (and limitations) of extrapolating from a single case. Our intent in this piece is not to argue that Jamil's experience speaks for all basic writers, but to invoke Michelle Fine's notion of provocative generalizability which "rather than defining generalizability as a direct and technical extension of a finding or set of findings . . . offers a measure of the extent to which a piece of research provokes readers or audiences, across contexts, to generalize to 'worlds not yet,' in the language of Maxine Greene; to rethink and reimagine current arrangements" (227). We hope that a close look at Jamil's experience of developmental education and his evolution as a writer will move our readers, and ultimately those who determine policy, to "rethink and reimagine" the value and future of college remediation (227). Additionally, we encourage our readers to consider this single case through the lens of Ruthellen Josselson's call for the "amalgamation of knowledge" through meta-analysis of small-scale qualitative studies such as ours (3). It is our hope that the publication of this account will open the door to many others like it, each portrait one piece in the "multilayered jigsaw puzzle" that comprises basic writing, moving our field beyond a focus on the "commonalities and disjunctures . . . [of] individual studies to larger frameworks of understanding" (4-6).

A Note on Structure

Lastly, we include a note on the unconventional structure of this essay, which intersperses Jamil's retrospective personal narrative, excerpts from his college essays, and our analysis of his writings organized chronologically—to parallel his development—around four emergent themes: *the power of motivation, the importance of writing after remediation, the value of academic rigor,* and *the significance of time*. Our decision to pivot between personal narrative, essay excerpts, and textual analysis was deliberate and a reflection of both our writing process and the methodological goal of engaging Jamil's voice and viewpoint directly in the research product. Because we wanted to *show* (as well as tell) the story of Jamil's development as a writer, we knew that his essays had to feature prominently in this piece. Our challenge was to situate these essays—which, with the passing of time, have become artifacts

of prior experience—within the contours of Jamil's current writing and his reflections on his college experiences. The retrospective narrative, which initially emerged as a springboard, a way for Jamil to write his way into our still amorphous ambition to co-author this piece, soon became a pillar of our work. As Jamil drafted each section of his narrative, we went back to the essays and interviews produced during those time periods looking for textual evidence to confirm, complicate, or illuminate the most salient themes. We held lengthy working meetings in coffee shops, mulling over how the essays, interviews, and evolving narrative fit together (both as we drafted the original manuscript and over many rounds of revision). Emily took copious notes of these reflective conversations, which found their way into the final product as well. Though unconventional, this mélange ended up feeling like the truest representation of Jamil's deep and textured experience that we could muster.

We recognize that this piece may "not *sound* or *feel* like [a] typical academic article . . ." yet we firmly believe that this rendering offers readers a more fine-grained and authentic depiction of Jamil's journey through higher education than any sole authored piece by either of us could (Tayko and Tassoni 10, italics in original). In highlighting both Jamil's present and past writing, and his metacognitive reflections on his own growth, we aim to counter static conceptions of students who begin their college careers in remediation while expanding the ever-widening borders of "authorship and authority" in composition studies to include basic writers in the still nascent movement of ". . . students writ[ing] themselves into disciplinary conversations and challeng[ing] faculty/scholar-constructed representations of them" (Grobman 176-77).

JAMIL'S JOURNEY

Taking "Another Shot at School"

To begin, we invite our readers into the first section of Jamil's retrospective narrative in which he introduces himself and describes what led him to enter higher education in 2008 after spending several years out of school.

> A few months after dropping out of high school in 10th grade, I earned a GED, but it would be nearly two years before I walked through the gates of community college. My mother, being severely undereducated and suffering from crippling anxiety, never had the ability to support my academic growth; growing up in a

ghetto, with peers that did not offer any intellectual stimulation, dampened my ability to develop socially and led to a kind of seclusion from the rest of the world; finally, around the age of sixteen, I was experiencing symptoms of Tourette's Syndrome which made it increasingly difficult to do well in school and eventually led me to drop out one year after diagnosis. After leaving high school, I hit an all-time low—my medical issues intensified and I felt an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. My situation became more desperate when I started abusing drugs. I lost precious friendships and, in an attempt to combat loneliness, began to associate with others similar to me—high-school dropouts on a downward spiral. For a little over a year I was only semi-conscious of myself and the world outside of my bedroom; the majority of my days consisted of inebriation, watching television, and playing hours upon hours of video games. Any hope I had for ending the cycle of poverty I was born into was quickly fading; I began to experience suicidal ideation and endured breakdowns.

Sometime around February 2008, I decided I needed to transform my life. This would not come easy; in order for me to successfully change it was imperative to rid myself of addiction and the people I was associating with. Out of great desperation, I applied to work as a camp counselor a long distance from New York City—a kind of rehab incognito. By the end of the summer, I was no longer in the vice-like grip of addiction and I had even stopped smoking cigarettes. My medical conditions significantly subsided and for the first time, I befriended decent people—individuals who were in college and experienced the better side of life. The time I spent working at camp served as a catalyst to develop new social skills, confidence, and clarity. I was ready to take another shot at school.

Theme 1: The Role of Motivation – "An Enduring Commitment to Learning and Growth"

Jamil showed up in developmental English on the first day of his first semester in community college having already read the course text, a short novel Emily would spend much of the next few weeks cajoling and commanding many of the other students to purchase. It was not until several months later that Jamil confessed to Emily, his instructor, how frustrated and disheartened he was to have been placed in this class, the lowest level

of developmental English at the college and how much he "did not like the idea of being in a classroom that I wasn't getting any credit for." Nevertheless, Jamil's high level of motivation to take advantage of *everything* the class, and Emily, had to offer effectively masked how "pissed off" he was at this placement. Instead of shutting down, Jamil sought success with a vengeance, writing no less than five drafts of the first essay Emily assigned. Jamil vividly recalls this first essay writing experience in college:

> Not too long after the first week of class, I was required to write an essay on a reading by Malcolm X and compare personal experiences. This would be the first time in years I would write an essay and the first time I had ever used Microsoft Word. As I look back at a hard copy of this essay, I find each page flooded with comments. For starters, I titled the page "Malcolm X," the writing was not in the required MLA format, and there was no heading. After learning of all of these mistakes I remember thinking to myself: "If I didn't know to write a heading, there must be so much more I need to learn." I became more determined to develop my writing and overall academic skills.

Despite Jamil's strong motivation and ambitions for himself as a writer, his score of 4 (out of a possible 12 with 8 the minimum for passing) on the university's writing assessment test was what landed him in developmental English. Such low scores are not unusual for students who, like Jamil, have been out of school for several years and have done little to no writing in the interim. However, with hindsight, Jamil is quick to acknowledge that he "definitely needed a remedial course" and Emily concurs. Early in our collaboration, as we begin to compose this piece, Jamil looks back at the essays he produced in that first semester and categorizes his writing as "simple, not [having an] expansive vocabulary, not much original thought or argument, [having] awkward wording." Though he is characteristically harsh with himself in this assessment of his writing, Jamil and Emily agree that his ideas were strong—the "content was there"—and that his primary challenges in the first semester, like those of many basic writing students, were with mechanics (learning to identify and correct the very many errors in spelling, punctuation, and syntax that plagued his early essays) and grasping the conventions of academic essay structure and development.

In his retrospective narrative, Jamil describes the strategies he employed to improve his writing, which involved an intense focus on under-

standing writing conventions and a willingness to spend hours revising every essay draft:

> For the entirety of the first semester, I worked desperately to improve my reading and writing ability. I carefully read all of the comments that filled the margins, spent nearly three hours a day writing and rewriting, and analyzed the style of writing by authors I was reading. I can recall breaking down paragraphs and attempting to understand what made a paragraph a paragraph. I tried to understand what it was about the content in the first sentence that made it an introductory sentence, how it connected to the second sentence and the purpose of the content in the second sentence, how a line of reasoning was threaded throughout a paragraph and how it was concluded. I tried to understand how writing worked on a macro (meaning and content) and micro (punctuation and structure) level. Draft after draft, I would use a newly learned mechanism of writing. If, in the first draft, I was advised how to properly use a comma, I would, in the following draft, attempt to write in such a way that would require a lot of comma use so that I might develop my comma placement. In a sense, my writings revolved around my ability to use punctuation. I was in the process of developing a foundation, and I had yet to develop a unique style of writing and the ability to write fluidly. I used every page as if it were a training ground for grammar instead of a canvas for expression and thought.

Jamil's strategy of using instructor feedback to hone in on understanding and correcting mechanics proved effective in producing subsequent drafts with notably fewer errors in punctuation, grammar and syntax.

Nevertheless, Jamil's attention to instructor feedback was not limited to mechanics and each draft of his essays demonstrated substantial changes in essay structure, development, and the degree of specificity and clarity with which he expressed and supported his ideas. An early draft of his essay on motivation, which began with the simple declaration: "I have learned a lot from Malcolm X" evolves, by the fifth and final draft, into a thoughtful comparison of the role of motivation in his and Malcolm X's life:

> *Motivation is a beautiful thing to possess, it's what helped Malcolm X change his life. An inmate doesn't just decide to pick up a book one day and begins to desire the ability to read and write. No, there has to be something that compels one to make such a drastic change in their life.*

> *In Malcolm X's case what initiated his motivation in learning to read and write, was the lack of knowledge, lack of acknowledgement and the fact that Malcolm X was unable to communicate with the individual he had admired, Elijah Mohammed. Malcolm X had found his inability to communicate with Elijah Mohammed very frustrating, in which case this was one of the main determinant factors that led to Malcolm X's intense motivation.*
>
> *In my case, "I needed to walk the grounds of what felt like hell", before I found any motivation. I found myself engaging in self abusive, life threatening and socially inappropriate behaviors which were getting me nowhere in life. After about four years of such an extreme and dangerous life style, I decide I wanted to make a change in my life. The determinant factor in leading to my motivation of wanting change in my life was, the fact that I knew there was a better life out there than the one I was currently living; a life that did not involve being depressed every day, one that did not involve self abuse, one that did involve disrespect towards me and others, one that did not involve addiction, and one that did not involve me worrying about coming home to a safe environment, having food on the table and not being able to pay for school.*

Such reflection on his academic and social background prior to entering community college and his strong motivation to succeed was an outstanding feature of much of Jamil's early written work. However, by the end of the first semester, his final essay, entitled "What is intelligence?" integrated ideas from two course texts, posed compelling rhetorical questions around which he advanced an argument in favor of the theory of multiple intelligences, and attempted, albeit clumsily, to integrate concepts learned in his introductory psychology class. In this essay he questions, "How can it be that people considered geniuses are not universally intelligent?" and goes on to argue that "the idea of having an I.Q. test determine how productive, successful, and satisfying a person's life was going to be is a complete injustice and needs to stop!" While not a perfect essay—and one Jamil later critiques as "making super bold statements which are not supported" and using clichéd references to historical figures (John Lennon and Henry Ford among them)—Emily believes that it represents a remarkable transformation for a writer in the short span of a twelve-week semester. Jamil's experience in basic writing highlights the powerful role of motivation—what he now calls his "almost pathological determination to do well"—to the development of

his academic literacy skills. As he demonstrates in the essays he composed in basic writing and affirms in his retrospective narrative, "I had come to college with determination and an enduring commitment to learning and growth."

Theme 2: Writing Beyond Remediation – "I Learned How to Learn"

In this section, we explore how Jamil's development as a writer continued upon his exit from remediation as he moved through freshman composition and began taking courses in the disciplines. In his retrospective narrative, Jamil reflects:

> Completing all of the remedial requirements was an academic milestone—I was proud to be a part of the mainstream college population. However, the celebration did not last long; aware of my less-than-adequate academic foundation, I came to understand that conquering remediation was only one of the many battles for knowledge and success that I would have to overcome. Fortunately, as a result of good timing and luck, I was able to dramatically increase my critical thinking and writing ability over the span of a semester when I enrolled in a philosophy course by the name of Logic and Argumentation the semester before I took Freshman composition. After purchasing the textbook, *The Art of Reasoning*, I was deeply concerned about my ability to do well in the class, because prior to enrollment, I had no true understanding of logic. Fortunately, as the class progressed, so did my knowledge of the subject. The content taught in this class enabled me to better organize my thoughts, formulate, break apart and analyze arguments, and it enhanced my understanding of categorization and the meaning and function of definitions and concepts. By becoming aware of, developing, and utilizing *cognitive tools* such as methodical analysis and categorization, my ability to examine a reading or lecture increased exponentially; I developed a kind of meta-awareness of content being studied, an understanding not limited to concrete immediate material, but one that was able to grasp the abstract, such as the workings of pedagogy.
>
> Surely enough, these *tools* enabled me to tame streams of thought and channel them into well-structured and meaningful sentences, paragraphs and pages. No longer crippled by the arduous task of

> writing without decent analytic, categorization and augmentation ability, I was able to devote more time to the abstract aspects of subject matter and, in effect, deepen my understanding of concepts and issues concerning politics, philosophy, psychology, and many other areas of study. After completing the logic course, all other classes became easier to manage and do well in. Part of this was due to being in school for a year, but I attribute much of my progress to the cognitive skills I became aware of and enhanced in the logic course. In a sense, I learned how to learn.

Jamil's assessment of the importance of the logic class to his academic development comes from the vantage point of time and distance; this insight does not surface as a prominent theme in the interviews conducted during this period, nor is it evidenced in the writings he saved from this semester. However, what is striking are the changes Jamil expresses in his feelings about writing at this time. No longer is writing just a monumental challenge to be tackled and conquered on his way to the fulfillment of other academic goals but a source of deep satisfaction and pride. Just one year after entering remediation, during one of the interviews conducted for the study that preceded this one, Jamil commented, "I learned a lot in English. I wrote something just yesterday and I showed it to [my friend] and she was like, it looks like somebody else wrote it. . . . I'm really happy that now I can get the maturity of my thoughts across accurately." What began as a chore imposed by academic gatekeeping was transformed for Jamil as he assumed the mantle of writer: "I don't think I could have been more far behind than when I first started . . . and I've developed this newfound appreciation of writing. . . . I look at it as an art now. It's amazing!"

This awareness of writing as an art form can be seen in the few pieces of writing Jamil saved from his third semester in community college when he was enrolled in freshman composition. It is in this period that Jamil develops his skills as a storyteller and begins to use language in a rich and graceful way. An essay entitled "What's in a Name?: The Dimensions of a Name" begins with a carefully drawn snapshot of the embarrassment his unusual name has caused him over the years and leads into a lovely description of his birth and naming, which concludes:

> *"Jamil," my father said, "his name is Jamil." He had decided on the name long before my birth. Little did he know what he was getting his light skinned son into by giving him an Arabic name. Unfortunately,*

> *my father passed away when I turned three years of age. Not only did he leave behind a family, but he also left a name behind, an empty name, the name I bear with me always.*

The essay goes on to provide the reader with an evocative description of Jamil's early memories of his Pakistani father and then attempts to connect his own experiences with those of Gogol, the main character in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*:

> *I remember the scents, taste and styles of the food my father prepared when I came to visit him. I loved the dishes he made; my favorite was the chicken curry. I remember the smell of the apartment when he began to cook; it was filled with the aroma of spices like cinnamon, curry, black pepper, and cloves. My father would spend hours cooking, much like the Indian mother Ashima in The Namesake. The Namesake is a novel written by Jhumpa Lahiri, the book is about a Bengali family and the struggles they have living in America.*

It is here that the writing falters as Jamil seems unable to settle on a clear focus for this essay. He wanders through various well-told anecdotes from his own life and the novel, hints that having an unusual name can be a character-building experience, but never lands on a clear answer to his own guiding question, resorting to the obvious: "What's in a name? I encountered many answers to my question." Looking back, Jamil remembers being passionate about this essay and having a strong sense of pride in it—one that he no longer quite feels. With hindsight, Jamil accuses his younger self of being "a bit overly dramatic" in writing that his father "left a name behind" and he wishes he'd found "a more educated way to express my thoughts . . . about the social aspect of having a name that doesn't fit the face."

While this essay showcases Jamil's increasing fluency with language, particularly his ability to narrate a story with grace and emotion, structural challenges remain: he is not yet able to use the specific to illustrate a larger point, to effectively connect his own narrative to the themes of the novel, and to focus his writing around a central purpose. Ironically, it is precisely those academic skills Jamil was exposed to in the logic course that seem to be lacking in this essay—the ability to weave a strong and coherent argument out of the lovely shards of anecdote and literary analysis. It is not until Jamil is well into his tenure at a four-year college, taking upper level classes in his major, that strong evidence of the kind of well reasoned argumentation he

learned in the logic course begins to appear in his academic essays (a finding we discuss further in Theme 4: The Significance of Time).

Theme 3: The Importance of Academic Rigor – "Becoming an Academic Soldier"

While Jamil contends that college remediation gave him an essential foundation for future academic success, writing courses alone were not sufficient to prepare him for the transition to a four-year college. Jamil credits a rigorous academic summer program with catapulting him into the more sophisticated and demanding reading and writing tasks that would characterize the last two years of his undergraduate experience. His retrospective narrative explains:

> One of the factors that played a role in my easy transition to a baccalaureate program was an experience I was privileged to have during my second year of community college: I was offered an opportunity to attend a summer "Bridges to Baccalaureate" program at Purchase College of the State University of New York (SUNY). The program consisted of one accelerated three hundred level hybrid psychology and literature course. Along with twelve other students, I was required to develop a ten-page research paper, read four lengthy books, and complete other assignments within four weeks. This was my most intensive academic undertaking to date.

Before entering the program, Jamil expressed many doubts about his ability to succeed in this academically rigorous curriculum, but he was up for the challenge: "I will struggle, but through the struggling, I feel like I will develop some kind of endurance for studying. I like to call it becoming an academic soldier." In effect, this experience served as a form of academic boot camp for Jamil. His retrospective narrative illustrates how.

> Prior to attending this program, I had not written more than four or five page papers, or read more than twenty pages a day. However, due to the fast paced nature of the program, I would frequently read sixty to seventy pages a night while completing homework assignments and other tasks. There was one afternoon I sat in a computer lab writing for six hours straight in order to meet a deadline. It is these experiences that enabled me to grow intellectually and enhance my ability to read and write. Important too is the fact that I was taken

> out of my comfort zone. The expectations of the program were quite high and, as a consequence, forced me to adapt to performing under pressure and become aware of important strategies such as time management.
>
> Although I received an "A" for the course, I felt that I wasn't able to gain much momentum while in the program; I spent the majority of my time trying to keep up. There was always more homework to complete, more articles to read and writing to plan, along with workshops. Throughout the duration of the program, there were times I felt I was inadequate as a student because many of the other students did not seem to struggle as much as I did; they seemed to have stronger writing skills and were able to manage time well. During the first week I considered dropping out. Nevertheless, after evaluating my performance and identifying my weaknesses, I became aware of the things I needed to work on. I learned the importance of time management, the need to become proficient in navigating academic databases, and further developed the ability to put work over comfort. At the end of it all, I came out a more confident and prepared student.

The culminating assignment that Jamil researched and wrote while in this pre-baccalaureate program shows that he has begun to grapple with much more sophisticated, philosophical, and psychological concepts than in any of his previous writing. In this seven page essay, written just two years after starting community college, Jamil attempts to connect and compare Viktor Frankl's ideas about existential frustration to a Freudian conception of neurosis and comes up with a cross-disciplinary explanation for the increase in psychological disorders in industrialized societies where traditional religious beliefs have largely been cast aside. Jamil describes this essay as the first paper in which he "made a conscious effort to really utilize another source of information beyond what I think or feel." The essay begins:

> *Long ago in history tradition and religion were a big part of people's lives; the practice of tradition and religion were so prevalent that dictated how people lived, thought and behaved. With the level of guidance religion and tradition offered man, it seemed to almost counter balance the loss of Paradise; man didn't have to worry about discovering values and beliefs which made him think himself a good person, the values were provided for him . . . there was little room for what causes spiritual ambivalence*

> *or, better, what Frankl terms existential frustration. Unfortunately for man, the foundation tradition and religion offers . . . does not support man as it once did; man has to endure the burden and suffering of making choices . . . (Italics in original).*

Several pages later, this essay attempts to weave together Jamil's interest in the power of philosophy and psychology to explain the human condition and homes in on his main point:

> *Unfortunately not everyone achieves a sense of meaning; while being in an existentially frustrated state, man has a lot to contend with. Though there is something intriguing that often happens to man when his will to meaning is frustrated; he develops a neurosis, but not the type of neurosis which is commonly understood in a more traditional sense. The neurosis arises not from being psychologically or biologically ill, but from being existentially ill; instead of having psychological or biological roots which cause this neuroticism, it is the spiritual dissonance (existential frustration). . . . The reality of such disorders can be found in most places in the world though, most often in heavily industrialized societies . . . because of the lack of importance the countries have given to tradition and religion.*

Jamil is passionate about the ideas he is explicating in this essay and he makes it known that his personal experience of ennui is driving his academic investigation of humankind's search for meaning. Nevertheless, the essay ends on a hopeful note as Jamil concludes that, "man is capable of finding meaning under even the worst conditions life has to offer. . . . Often times, it is hardship which affords us the opportunity to better ourselves; consequently rendering the old saying true: what doesn't [kill] me makes me stronger." Once again, Jamil uses a writing assignment to affirm the validity of his own difficult life experiences and his drive to overcome them.

This essay also points out areas for further development in Jamil's academic writing skills. There are surface errors in punctuation, spelling, and spacing. In re-reading this essay as we worked together to revise this article, Jamil is horrified to realize that his final draft contains different fonts: "Do you see this?!" he exclaims. "I can't believe there's different fonts!" More importantly, the flow of his argument is choppy at times and he appears to be struggling with some of the concepts he writes about. With hindsight, Jamil reveals that he is both proud of the academic milestone this essay represents and critical of its shortcomings. He now argues that one of the signs of maturation in a writer is to make smaller claims, support them more

thoroughly, and not assume the universality of one's own experience: "Just because it's true for you," Jamil states in one of our meetings, "doesn't mean it's true for the rest of the universe." He contends that in this essay he needed "to be more aware of counter arguments" and of doing more than "reiterating the concepts that Frankl introduces in his book." He claims that "there's not much originality in the paper . . . not too much critical thinking, though I thought there was at the time." Jamil now believes that at this point in his development as a writer, he did not yet have "the cognitive tools to plot out writing, instead of just going for it. I think I was just coming up with ideas as I went along. I was genuinely interested and wanted to find substantial ideas to fill up the pages, but I was writing on the fly." Despite this retrospective critique of his final essay, Jamil is very clear that the Bridges to Baccalaureate program was crucial to his development as a reader and writer.

The rigor Jamil encountered in this academic boot camp both echoed his intense first semester in basic writing (in which he spent "nearly three hours a day writing and rewriting") and taught him how to push through steeper academic challenges than he'd previously encountered in order to find satisfaction on the other side. Jamil explains that while he was at Purchase College, he "kind of like, passed a threshold where now I can read a dense article and not have to read the sentence three times over. And, writing papers now, I used to dread writing, like a paper of one or two pages. Now, it's like, I crave writing. I actually enjoy writing papers now." In his retrospective narrative, Jamil reflects on the development he sees in himself as a result of this summer program:

> The Baccalaureate and Beyond program at Purchase College served as a kind of test; I had a month to use everything I was taught at community college and was pushed harder than ever before. Completing the program served as a real confidence booster—I realized I was capable of a lot more than I thought. My reading, writing, and analytic skills were further developed, and I came out more eager to complete my Associate's degree and move on to earning a B.A.

Soon after his participation in the Bridges to Baccalaureate program, Jamil began to pursue transfer to a four-year college in earnest. Jamil's transfer application essay serves as a document of his intellectual journey since starting college. Though it re-hashes some of the personal history that appears in his early college essays, Jamil has come to possess both a meta-cognitive understanding of these experiences and a fluency with prose

(despite small errors in punctuation and syntax) that allow him to narrate these experiences in a less raw and more intellectually mature light. What is most evident in this essay is that he is passionate about *ideas* and the bulk of the essay focuses not on experiences (unlike his essays in developmental English) but on what he is *thinking*:

> *Going into college I decided I wanted to work toward becoming a clinical psychologist. I was always intrigued by the oddities of people suffering from mental diseases like schizophrenia and disorders such as phobias. This curiosity led to me further my studies in psychology, in particular, psychoanalysis. Studying psychoanalysis I found the concept of the subconscious and the idea of a therapy tailored to it very interesting. However, it wasn't too long until I came across a book entitled* Consciousness Explained *by Daniel Dennett. Before reading this book, I took the idea of consciousness for granted; I had no idea of the complexities that are involved in making us conscious beings. Taste, touch, sight and sound, I was clueless as to how incredibly* intricate *these systems are but more importantly, how they processed stimuli to create an experience.*

Jamil's essay then segues into his interest in philosophical questions ("Does a soul really exist? What is the thing we call a self or personality and what is it composed of?"), their connections to neurobiology ("How does the alteration of chemicals in the brain have the ability to change one's personality? What are the neurological and philosophical implications of this bizarre phenomenon?"), and his desire to enroll in a neuropsychology program and study the brain as an opportunity to help "people find truth and closure."

Jamil concludes this essay reflecting that what he proposes—to understand the human brain—is "a daunting task but, my interest in neuroscience only grows as I continue learning about the brain and the role it plays in the life of man, and I don't expect this to change. It's a life-times worth of work but I can see loving every minute of it." This personal statement, more than any other piece of writing, truly captures who Jamil was—his difficult past, his developing writing skills, his passion for learning, and his future ambition. Though not an easy or comfortable experience, Jamil's time in the academically rigorous summer program was pivotal to the development of his reading and writing abilities and to bolstering his belief that transfer to a four-year college was within his reach.

Theme 4: The Significance of Time – "Years to Develop"

In this section, we explore the crucial and multi-faceted theme of *time*, which was key to Jamil's development as a writer and his ultimate success as a student. Jamil's experiences both confirm many of Marilyn Sternglass's findings on the importance of time to the development of students' writing skills and speak back to the current push for accelerated pathways through basic writing (Edgecombe; Hodara and Jaggars; Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, and Xu). Time spent in developmental courses is often seen as derailing students from their pursuit of a degree, yet Jamil's two semesters of basic writing provided him a foundation of confidence and academic skills without which he is convinced he would have "failed miserably" in college. In his retrospective narrative, Jamil assesses the challenges he faced upon transfer to a four-year college:

> The expectations of writing ability at the four-year college were higher than that of the community college I attended. During my first semester, I enrolled in one writing intensive literature course, two philosophy courses, and a course in statistics. During the first couple of weeks, the volume of reading and writing I had to complete threatened to overwhelm me. The literature course required about three hundred pages of reading and two to three writing assignments a week. The two philosophy courses involved readings that were very dense, requiring thorough analysis and writings that were expected to be thoughtful and original while containing strong argumentation. What I found most challenging about completing all of the tasks was managing my time. I had a two-hour commute to and from campus, a part-time job, and not much time for study. To be a successful writer requires more than knowledge of grammar and structure; it is equally important to be able to endure stressors such as multiple deadlines and be able to manage time. Eventually, I found my pace and was able to do well.

During his final semester in college—just five years after entering community college and being placed in the lowest level of developmental English—Jamil wrote an essay for an upper level philosophy course that he now considers "one of my best pieces of writing." Entitled "On Soul," it attempts to disprove Socrates' cyclical argument on the immortality of the soul. In this essay, Jamil adopts the rhetorical conventions of philosophy in order to refute Socrates' notion that "the existence of the soul was [not]

contingent upon the living body," reinforcing the importance of writing in the disciplines to the development of students' writing skills. Jamil takes apart the cyclical argument step by step and disproves the assertion that "the workings of the soul were entirely independent of the workings of physical reality" by demonstrating the power of the physical world over objects, in this case a stone. In this essay, Jamil effectively mimics the philosophical tradition he is writing about, yet he still finds ways to insert his own voice: "There are physical limitations!" Jamil declares in refuting Socrates' conception that life could follow death as surely as death follows life. He also works hard to make these arguments personally meaningful and relevant to a contemporary audience. His essay ends with a forceful assertion that "accepting this notion of death . . . has made me feel livelier!" Jamil contends that "without death, there would be little drive for one to get things done and little significance in accomplishing goals; without death, one could continue to pursue a goal for all eternity." Jamil continues to grapple with some of the very questions he wrote about in his first semester in developmental English (the importance of human drive and motivation), albeit with a set of disciplinary tools he has developed to assist him.

This last essay of Jamil's college career shows many strengths in his development as a writer since he began college. Compared to his early essays, his syntax is clearer and more complex; much of the essay flows quite nicely; he uses more sophisticated vocabulary; and, most significantly, he is capable of detailed, logical argumentation to prove his point. Looking back, Jamil describes this essay as the first he wrote with "near 100% intention, meaning that everything that's on the paper was meant to be on the paper . . . not only in terms of conceptual accuracy, but the words and the way I expressed the ideas was very intentional." The essay argues:

> *Another flaw of the belief in the immortality of the soul, is the idea that the soul can both be effected by physical phenomena and, at the same time, be independent of the laws of physics. As I have shown above, it is only sensible that the mind is a system emerging from the workings of a brain; a brain whose constituents are properly ordered and nurtured. Clearly, the notion of the mind surviving the death of the brain falls in direct contradiction with this idea. What reason have we to believe that the mind is capable of both, being manipulated by physical events (such as the consumption of alcohol) and at the same time, act independently of the laws of physics?! . . . Clearly, there is not sufficient reason (if any), to*

> *believe the nature of the mind is an exceptional kind of entity; one subject to the laws of physics and exist independent of them at the same time.*

It is interesting to note that it is in this essay, which is written within specific disciplinary rhetorical conventions (rather than in the more generic "academic" essay style commonly assigned in composition courses), that we first see compelling evidence of the logic and argumentation skills Jamil was introduced to in his second semester of community college when he serendipitously enrolled in a logic course. Jamil attributed substantial progress in his writing skills to the mental processes he became familiar with in this class, yet it is only now, several years later, that we see them emerge so clearly in a piece of writing. Jamil's experience confirms Sternglass's finding that "the expectation that students [will] have become 'finished writers' by the time they complete a freshman sequence or even an advanced composition course must be abandoned" and underscores the significance of time for the maturation of thinking and writing skills ("Time to Know Them" 296).

Of course, Jamil's writing is still a work in progress. He continues to shy away from clear and powerful thesis statements, preferring to focus this essay around a question ("Does the soul in fact leave the body upon physical death?") rather than a declaration of his intent to disprove Socrates' cyclical argument (though this is what he does). Certain transitions between paragraphs are still rough, and the essay ends without circling back to Socrates' argument, so the conclusion feels somewhat disconnected from the body of the essay. Jamil, despite expressing pride in his work on this essay, is quick to point out its flaws. He declares some of the examples he used infuriatingly colloquial, shaking his head disparagingly at the excessively graphic language in the sentence, "if one were to get his brains blown out by a .50 caliber round. . . ." He finds his reference to major historical figures, such as Jesus and Lincoln, cliché and is convinced that he could find a more creative way of making his concluding point that "death affords character to life." Emily is struck by Jamil's ability to retrospectively assess his own writing and believes that this is one of the most important academic skills he has developed during his five years in college.

The significance of time to Jamil's development as a writer conflicts with both his own initial desire to move through developmental English at a rapid clip and the growing body of research advocating for the speed up of remediation, claiming better college outcomes for students who move through abbreviated sequences of developmental courses at an accelerated pace (Edgecombe; Hodara and Jaggars; Jaggars, Hodara, Cho and Xu). Yet

there are important ways in which time surfaces as fundamental to Jamil's experience as well: remediation as a "time to fail" and learn from that failure in a supportive environment; time management as key to his academic success and a skill to be learned alongside academic reading and writing; and finally the time Jamil needed to cultivate and adopt a scholarly identity.

PONDERING THE JOURNEY: LESSONS LEARNED

Towards the end of his retrospective narrative, Jamil looks back at his college experiences and considers his journey. He questions what his college experience might have been like without the support of basic writing classes upon entry:

> Looking back, I'm not sure how I made it through my first semester. If it wasn't for the cushion provided by remediation, I am certain I would have done poorly. Remedial classes helped lay the foundation for my academic and professional growth and enabled me to gain my footing both in classes and in negotiating the dynamics of the college environment. Remediation provided me time to learn without being penalized for making errors along the way. In retrospect, if I did not first attend this remedial English class before taking college-level English courses, I would have failed miserably.

Jamil never desired to be placed in remediation, yet his firm conviction that developmental education laid the foundation for his future college success is an important piece of the remediation story—one that must be heard by those contemplating dramatic policy changes that will fundamentally alter who can attend college and how. Closer to home, we hope that basic writing scholars are listening carefully to his story as well. Inviting students, particularly basic writing students, to breach the gates of scholarly research is a risky endeavor, though we are convinced it is a worthy one. We hope that our experiment in co-authorship inspires others to invite students into the scholarly circle as the protagonists of their stories, the researchers of their own educational experiences. We believe that this movement towards joint authorship will not only enrich the field of basic writing research, but will help, in part, to deter the larger assault on college remediation that inspired this article. Jamil's faith in the primacy of remediation to his college success is one of the most compelling defenses of basic writing that we know. To conclude, we highlight a few important lessons that we take from this self/portrait of one basic writer's trajectory.

Academic skills take time to harvest. Despite the national push for accelerated pathways through college remediation (Edgecombe; Hodara and Jaggars; Jaggars, Hodara, Cho and Xu), Jamil's experience confirms Sternglass's prior research that developing strong writing skills is a long-term process and that "students with poor academic preparation have the potential to develop the critical reasoning processes that they must bring to bear in academic writing *if they are given the time*" (296 emphasis added). The ability to accept critical feedback on his written work and take the time to painstakingly revise each and every draft was key to Jamil's development as a writer. Basic writing classes provided Jamil the foundational space and time in which to initially falter, and grow through the struggle to become a better writer, without the damaging consequences to his self-confidence or GPA associated with failure in credit bearing courses.

Writing development requires a long view. Opportunities for Jamil to expand his writing skills in composition courses after completing remediation, as well as in courses in his major, were fundamental to his progress as a writer. This finding underscores the importance of the writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines movements to students' academic growth and the need for a long view of students' writing development. Jamil's growth as a writer is mostly characterized by slow evolution rather than dramatic turning points, his progress best observed retrospectively through the illuminating lens of time. Though Jamil wanted to find immediate leaps in his writing after the logic course and his participation in the Bridge to Baccalaureate program, the evidence is not there. Jamil's experience belies the idea, so readily embraced by those who oppose lengthy sequences of remediation, that X or Y specific intervention can lead to immediate transformation in writing skills.

Exposure to academic rigor is crucial. Struggling through rigorous reading and writing assignments in the summer college transition program was essential to Jamil's ultimate college success. Through this program, Jamil developed a more realistic appraisal of his writing and the ability to gauge the distance between his academic skills and those he would need to achieve his long-term goals. Furthermore, the demands of this academic boot camp also helped Jamil learn to manage his time effectively so that he could juggle school, work, and a hefty commute in his last two years of college.

Transformation is "a lot to ask." Jamil's admonition that the journey from developmental English to college graduation is a "transformative process [that] is a lot to ask of anyone" must be taken seriously. As Jamil explains in the final paragraphs of his retrospective narrative:

> For me, success in college meant more than simply earning a degree and respectable GPA; it was a second chance to build myself, to integrate into a different community. During the entirety of my two years in high school, I attended the equivalent of about three months of classes each year, fought or witnessed fighting almost everyday, and was surrounded by drugs and gang violence. I did not partake in any extracurricular activities: I was not on a football or track team, I was not in a band—not even a student in a class. I spent the later years of junior high and two years of high school in the streets, not in a seat.
>
> College was a complete starting over for me. It was only as a college student that I learned the importance of timeliness, speaking properly, writing and networking. The whole process demanded a kind of transformation, one that could not be accomplished in one semester, by merely improving reading and writing skills. Over time, I started to build new relationships with students and professors, relationships that nurtured my growth as a student. Eventually, I began to speak, dress and behave differently—a seeming requisite to be given the time of day by a professor and considered by the academic and professional world. However, this transformative process is a lot to ask of anyone. The learning and utilization of these skills did not happen in a semester; they took years to develop, only just beginning while I was at the developmental level.

Jamil reminds those of us who teach basic writing that the space between the impulse to go back to school to improve one's social and economic status and what it actually takes to succeed can be very large indeed. Jamil's conviction that basic writing classes enabled him ". . . to acquire the academic literacy skills, motivation, and *self-confidence* to persevere and achieve in college," despite the challenges, is critical to our understanding of the worth of developmental education (Greenberg qtd. in Wiener 99, emphasis added).

College remediation must be sanctioned and valued. As Emily and Jamil worked on this piece, we would often pause to share our reflections on the process of writing together. While Emily hoped to hear Jamil express feelings of pride and satisfaction in being a co-author, or even discomfort and anger at how he and his writing are portrayed, instead, Jamil has repeatedly remarked that "re-reading these experiences amplifies my feelings of . . . inadequacy, not yet being where I want to be." While Emily was looking for

narrative closure and hoping that Jamil would feel a sense of achievement through co-authorship, Jamil ends this experience very much where his retrospective narrative begins: with a focus on the role of his background in motivating and mitigating his academic success. Despite Jamil's many outward accomplishments—he holds a B.A., is employed as a research coordinator at a major hospital, has worked as a part-time tutor in the reading and writing center of the community college he attended, and is undergoing rigorous physical training before entering the military—he reminds us that for him, and perhaps many students with similar backgrounds and high aspirations, there is always a sense of making up for lost time. College remediation, as Jamil's experience affirms, may be one of the few remaining times and spaces in higher education in which building one's confidence, while laying a previously missed academic foundation, is a sanctioned and valued educational pursuit.

Notes

1. We use the terms developmental English, basic writing, and remediation interchangeably in this article. While critics of these programs tend to use the term "remediation" in policy debates, this is not a distinction we make in this piece. However, Jamil uses the term "remediation" in his retrospective narrative while Emily is more likely to use the terms "basic writing" or "developmental education."
2. Sixty-eight percent of community college students in the U.S. must take at least one developmental reading, writing, or math class ("Community College Frequently Asked Questions").
3. Jamil grew up in poverty, in a public housing project, the child of a single mother with an eighth grade education. He received special education services while in public school, dropped out of high school, and a few years later got a GED. He is the first in his family to attend college.
4. In addition to the personal qualities mentioned earlier, Jamil emerged as a candidate for this collaboration because he was available and willing, unlike many other participants from the original study, to embark on the long and arduous journey of co-authoring a deeply personal yet rigorously academic piece on his experiences in basic writing and beyond with his former professor.

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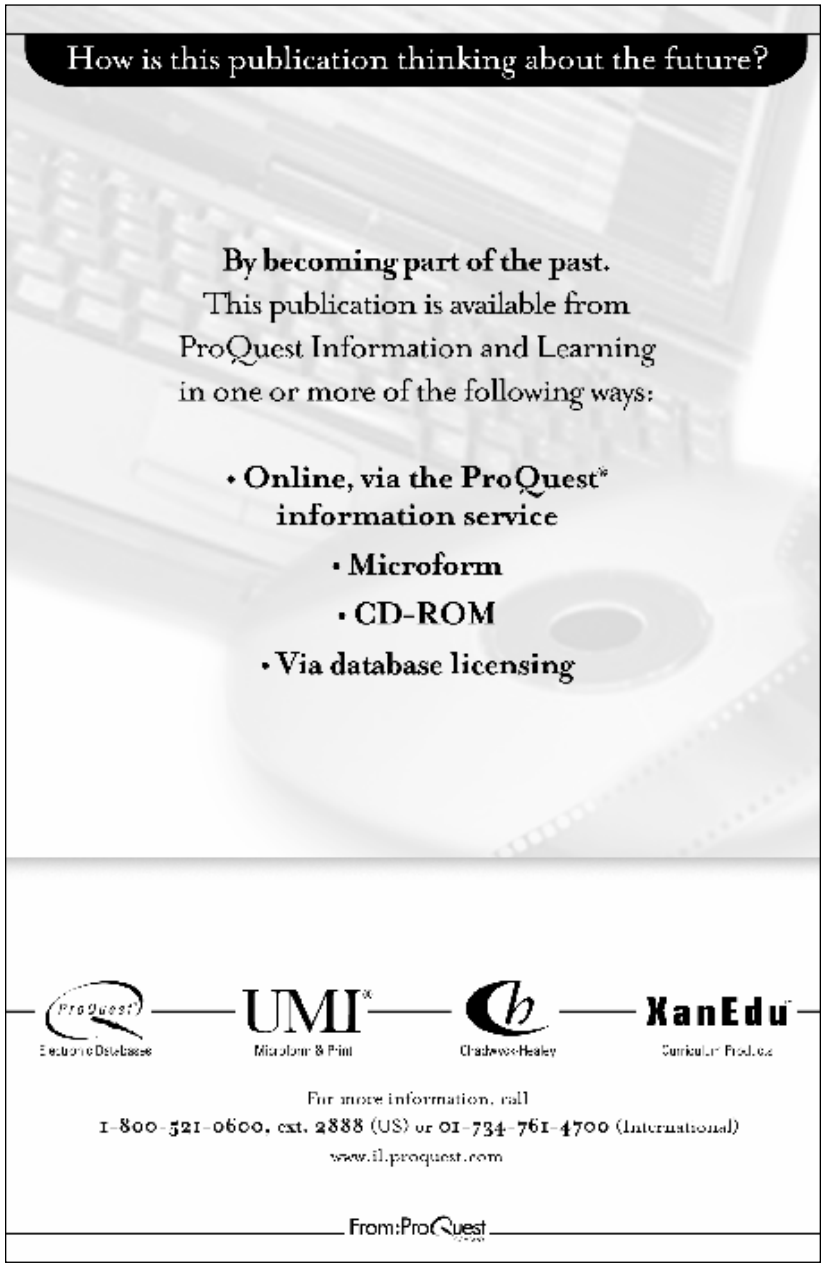
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