

## EDITORS' COLUMN

### **The Corequisite Landscape and Envisioning Beyond the Horizon**

This second installment of a two-part special issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing* continues to focus on accelerated developmental learning and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here we feature articles sharing ways that English departments, writing programs, faculty cohorts, and individual instructors have responded to and facilitated pedagogical shifts during this period of unprecedented global upheaval. As the articles and reflections in *JBW* 43.1 reveal, faculty at open-access institutions, and especially those teaching students in need of developmental coursework, faced heavy increases to already full workloads during the pandemic lockdowns. In particular, the emotional support sought by students, colleagues, friends, and family far outpaced what many of us could feasibly provide during the global crisis. And for some such increased emotional labor and the shift to remote instruction arrived in tandem with changes to developmental curricula. Amidst a growing national push to shift to the accelerated learning program or a corequisite model of developmental education, and coinciding with a prolonged pandemic, the contributors featured in this second installment show how they and their colleagues have adapted or re-adapted the accelerated model to best suit the needs of their local community, their instructors and their students.

For some years now, many open-access institutions have been shifting developmental coursework from a primarily prerequisite, multi-semester framework to a corequisite model that integrates reading and writing instruction and connects a one-semester developmental course to a credit-bearing college composition course. Students who would have had to take one or two (or more) semesters' worth of "remedial" reading or writing before being allowed to enroll in freshman composition can now enroll in the credit-bearing course in their first semester while also taking a corequisite support course. Research conducted and published by instructional faculty, by outside researchers, and by non-profit funders demonstrates the greater effectiveness of corequisite instruction over and above "traditional" remediation, or the prerequisite model.

Two recent reports make these conclusions clear. Complete College America's 2021 report, "No Room for Doubt: Moving Corequisite Support from Idea to Imperative," highlights data from university systems in Georgia,

New York, and West Virginia to confirm the effectiveness of corequisite courses for increasing graduation and retention rates and provides recommendations for adopting and scaling corequisite instruction. Furthermore, in “National Report on Developmental Education: Corequisite Reform Is Working,” composition scholars Patrick Sullivan and Peter Adams provide an overview of pass rate data from community colleges across the United States. As these and other studies show, corequisite courses allow more students from all backgrounds, especially students of color, to enroll in and earn transferable writing credits within their first semester of college rather than hold them back in remedial courses where the vast majority “stop-out” before they take any credit-bearing writing course. Acceleration, then, provides many students with access to credit-bearing courses, and it helps to reduce the high levels of attrition associated with prerequisite developmental course work.

The mid- to late-2010s saw important movements to expand corequisite developmental education across many community colleges and open-access institutions in the United States. Interested faculty, administrators, and independent researchers took note of the successes reported by Peter Adams and his colleagues at Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), and their Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) began slowly spreading and expanding to other colleges. State legislatures also weighed in, and in their report cited above, Sullivan and Adams outline the various state mandates that have required public colleges and universities in the US to shift their developmental coursework away from a prerequisite model and to a primarily corequisite model in reading, writing, and math. They identify eleven states that have enacted this shift through legislative measures, and they include the year of each state mandate’s passage: Connecticut (2012), Florida (2013), Tennessee (2013), Indiana (2013), West Virginia (2013), Georgia (2015), Texas (2017), California (2017), Nevada (2019), Colorado (2019), and Louisiana (2022). In these states, local governments, persuaded by research that reveals important flaws in traditional remediation, held colleges to sometimes strict and quick timelines in order to enact curricular changes.

As this timeline demonstrates, for some states and many colleges in them, the corequisite model has been in place for a number of years before the COVID-19 pandemic. For others, these curricular changes were just beginning or were in their infancy when the pandemic forced us inside our homes, in front of our computer screens, teaching students whose faces we no longer saw and whose voices we rarely heard. This was the case in Nevada (2019), Colorado (2019), Louisiana (2022); and in some colleges within CUNY and SUNY, the large public systems in New York. These instructors

and their students in these places struggled to teach and to learn critical reading, writing, and thinking, both in the newly developed corequisite courses and in “mainstream” writing courses in an almost entirely remote teaching environment.

Still, the pandemic has not appeared to halt or slow reforms that had already begun or were planned within writing programs. Faculty across the country continued to make the shift to accelerated learning, to adapt their pedagogy to a new model, to support colleagues and students, and to assess the success of these new courses. The strongest advocates for corequisite learning continue to push forward. As the authors of the 2021 Complete College America report write of the speed of this reform movement across American colleges, “frankly, it isn’t happening quickly enough. If our goal is to ensure every student succeeds, the corequisite model needs to become the rule, not the exception” (15). If, however, there are hurdles along the way toward accelerated learning and away from traditional remediation, perhaps the biggest for reading and writing instruction is the heterogeneity of English departments and writing programs across the country’s many and distinct two-year colleges.

In his recent essay, “Is There a ‘Good’ Writing Program in This Two-Year College? Thirty-Plus Years of Scholarship,” Jeffrey Klausman explains one of the major challenges to researching writing instruction in two-year institutions: there is not and has not been one clear picture of what writing programs look like across these schools. While most four-year college English departments have dedicated Writing Program Administrators who, often with an assistant program administrator, schedule classes, set pedagogy requirements, offer training and support for instructors, and run yearly assessments, the same is not always true of two-year colleges.

Klausman begins by reviewing research shared by Helen Howelle Raines in her 1990 essay “Is There a Writing Program in This Two-Year College.” Hoping to learn about these programs of instruction, Raines, Klausman writes, “set to work”:

She made phone calls, conducted interviews, and then developed and sent a survey, all to find out what two-year college writing programs looked like. She received 236 responses to her survey, which she analyzed, and in the most famous line from that article, she offers her confession: “Even though I began with no hypothesis to prove, I did hope to find a pattern, to see some model of community-college writing programs emerge. None did. In fact, as I interpret

the situation, two-year schools are, in many respects, as different from one another as they are alike.” (401)

Raines’s work from 1990 was later recreated by Tim N. Taylor who, as Klausman explains, found that little had changed: “what Taylor found from the 21 responses mirrored what Raines had found seventeen years earlier. . . Taylor says, in his follow-up article published in 2009, ‘In writing programs at community colleges, sharing responsibility and respecting instructor autonomy is key’ (130)” (402). So, to the modified question, “is there a standard writing program in two-year colleges?” we can most certainly say: No.

We summarize and quote from Klausman’s important article at length here because his analysis shows an important disconnect we see in the ways some reform efforts are progressing. On the one hand, there is a push to uniformly restructure developmental reading and writing pedagogy across the nation’s many access-oriented colleges; and on the other hand, there are numerous institutions that lack similarly structured or administered writing programs. Even our own two colleges, Queensborough Community College (QCC) and Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), which are both within the CUNY system, operate quite differently from one another and even more differently now than they each did five or ten years ago. An accelerated learning model devised for and successful at one college, then, may not have the same fit and impact at another college.

Since two-year colleges and many four-year colleges across the United States have long offered developmental coursework, shifting from a prerequisite to a corequisite model requires careful consideration of the needs of each institution’s local faculty groups and student populations. As Weaver, Hall and Glaessgen recently reported here in *JBW*, students enrolled in basic writing courses at their university system in Missouri often favor a “traditional” basic writing model. Through qualitative research they found that “a significant number of our students prefer a prerequisite model of writing instruction that affords them more time to work on their writing in a low-risk environment” (79). Weaver et al. show, then, that “[e]ven among 4-year institutions, the needs of Basic Writing students will vary” (79).

What we hope to show with the articles and reflections in this issue is that while one model of corequisite support for reading and writing remediation, CCBC’s Accelerated Learning Program, may be the most highly publicized and perhaps, the most frequently adopted, other forms of instruction and other methods that take greater consideration of local contexts and student populations can fall within the bounds of corequisite support

and provide similarly promising results for students. Open access colleges, their writing programs and English departments can shape or adjust this model to best serve the students in their local communities. As the writers of this issue demonstrate, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities to incorporate and develop additional reforms to placement, to pedagogy, and to professional development and collaboration. Out of necessity, many writing programs abandoned using standardized testing for more holistic or self-directed placement procedures. Writing program administrators created innovative virtual spaces for collaboration and professional development. Writing faculty redesigned curricula, implemented new pedagogical approaches, and integrated more student support across online and hybrid modalities. While many of our actions stemmed from a sense of urgency in unprecedented times, much of what we did and what the writers in this issue describe in their essays, drew on best practices and innovative approaches in writing studies. The contributors in this issue reflect upon some of these reforms and analyze the lasting effects they have had on their writing programs.

In the first article, “Responding to Disruption with Feminist Hospitality,” Tara Knight and Sarah Stanley describe what they call a “Hub” model in the Freshman Writing Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. These “hubs” consist of students enrolled in multiple different writing courses taught by a team of instructors who work from a shared curriculum and offer shared office hours and support for students. As they describe, the Hub structure provided space for important collaboration and support between colleagues as well as between students and faculty members. And, they explain, “In contrast to the supplementary support course model, like AWP [Accelerated Writing Programs], the Hub instead focuses on facilitating student connections and belonging within the FYC course structure” (15). Knight and Stanley provide a view into one program’s unique adoption of two key ideas undergirding the Accelerated Learning model: hospitality to students within the life and identity of the college, and enhanced support and community within the spaces of teaching and learning. They conclude with positive student success data and write, “The correlation between Hub teachers’ increased capacity to support their students and the Hub cohort’s higher pass rate in FYC [freshman year composition] suggests that it might be possible to accelerate students in a FYC classroom that provides students with additional support through team-teaching *rather than* requiring AWP students to take an additional course” (25).

Joanne Baird Giordano and Cassandra Phillips also describe their ad-

adaptation to an accelerated model in their article, “Adapting Writing Studio Pedagogy for Flexible and Equitable Acceleration.” Referring specifically to the legislative paths that characterize many schools’ adoption of a corequisite model, they write, “These mandates can be austerity measures masquerading as social justice work, especially when they are imposed on literacy programs and English Departments without input from faculty or an understanding of the locally situated needs of a program and the students it serves” (34). Giordano and Phillips propose a studio model as “a promising approach to corequisite support,” which, they write, “provides a pathway for faculty to center their teaching on responding to locally situated student needs” (34). They describe the writing studio as offering faculty a way to provide increased flexibility, support, and equity for students in the face of mandated curricular reforms. The article provides a thorough overview of the writing studio model, including its long history in practice and in writing pedagogy research, and they take readers through their own work on a multi-campus move to a studio model in Wisconsin community colleges.

For the authors of our final article, Ian Golding, Sonja Andrus, Kevin Oberlin, Brenda Refaei, and Anna Hensley, the COVID-19 pandemic brought them the perhaps surprising opportunity to create and implement a guided self placement (GSP) system for writing courses at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College (UCBA). Their article, “Crisis as a Catalyst for Change: Supporting Student Success with GSP and ALP During the Pandemic,” shares the many details related to how they and colleagues across their university system advocated for, created, and implemented an online GSP for students. Rolling out their GSP, the college then saw an increase in enrollment in the ALP courses which they had recently begun piloting. As they show, “GSP supports students in selecting a writing course that will extend their writing skills based on where they are right now, as they begin their educational journey, while the ALP course gives students the opportunity to complete a college level course when they might not otherwise attempt it without the additional support available” (74).

We conclude this special issue with a reflective article by Tara Coleman and Jacqueline Jones titled “Rebooting ALP.” At their school, Laguardia Community College (CUNY), accelerated course work has been available to students since 2011, many years prior to the pandemic. Coleman and Jones describe the strong culture of professional development in their department, and how they relied on this culture to create a “reboot” seminar for ALP faculty during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. This work allowed them to understand that a post-pandemic era does not necessarily equal “returning

to a period of stability” (80). “ALP teaching,” they explain, “appears likely to require frequent adaptation and flexibility for the foreseeable future” (80).

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has recently been downgraded to an endemic by the CDC, the effects of that era remain with us even if we have settled into a new normal. Many of the strategies we all shifted to so quickly and often without knowing exactly what we were doing, remain with us. It is our hope that the articles and reflection in this special issue help us to begin to untangle the threads of developmental education reform during a global pandemic. Each piece demonstrates an example of creative and careful response to the upheavals of the pandemic years, balancing a consideration of local needs with disciplinary knowledge. Each reveals lasting and positive changes we can make to corequisite writing programs as they continue to become a dominant model in the field of basic writing.

—**Leah Anderst, Cheryl Comeau-Kirschner, Jennifer Maloy**, guest editors, JBW Special Issue on ALP Vol. 2: Moving Forward: Rethinking ALP Structures and Faculty Development

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