What Difference Do Writing Fellows Programs Make?[1]

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IN THEIR INTRODUCTION to the special issue of *ATD: Across the Disciplines* on "Writing Fellows as Agents of Change," Brad Hughes and Emily B. Hall point out that "[s]ince the early 1980s, Writing Fellows programs have influenced how writing is learned, taught, and practiced across the disciplines." Such programs—which go by many different names—typically link peer writing tutors to specific discipline-based courses, often formally designated writing-intensive. Although the arrangements of different programs vary, Margot Soven describes the most common structure is one in which these peer tutors "read the drafts of all the students in the course" to which they are attached and "give both written and oral feedback, usually meeting with their students after having read the drafts" ("WAC" 204; see also Haring-Smith 124–25). Harriet Sheridan and Tori Haring-Smith are typically credited with having developed this approach to writing across the curriculum (WAC) in the late 1970s and early 1980s at Carleton College and Brown University (see Russell 283; Soven, "WAC" 201–5). As the special issue of *ATD* attests, this approach to WAC has been the subject of renewed interest and attention in the last decade; in her essay in *WAC for the New Millennium,* Margot Soven argues that such peer tutoring approaches have become "the new mainstay of many WAC programs" ("WAC" 200; see also Spigelman and Grobman 5).

At the same time—from both outside and within the field of writing studies—there have been calls to support statements about what helps students learn to write with hard data. Following upon Richard Haswell's "NCTE/CCCC's Recent War on Scholarship," Chris Anson called upon writing program administrators of all types to undertake the kinds of research that would help move conversations about writing and writing instruction "from belief to evidence, from felt sense to investigation and inquiry" (12). For writing fellows programs, this charge leads us to a deceptively simple question: Does working with writing fellows—that is, being required to draft and revise multiple papers in light of feedback from trained peer tutors—help students improve as writers over the

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course of a single semester? Or, as we put it in our title, what difference, if any, *do* writing fellows programs make?[2]

Much of the work on writing fellows programs to date focuses on the ways such programs can change colleges' and universities' cultures of writing. Assessment of these programs seems to have largely relied on "surveys completed by tutees, faculty sponsors, and the fellows themselves" (Soven, "Survey" 65–66). Such data provide invaluable information. They let us see how writing fellows themselves benefit from having been tutors (see, for example, Dinitz and Kiedaisch; Hughes, Gillespie and Kail). They also let us see how students' and faculty's understandings of writing and the writing process change through their participation in such programs, significant indicators of an attitudinal shift (see, for example, Haring-Smith; Mullin; Severino and Knight; Soven, "Survey"). This approach can also help us learn about collaboration between peer writing tutors and non-writing studies faculty through writing fellows programs, including concrete information about how those collaborations transform syllabi, assignments, and pedagogy in writing-intensive courses (see, for example, Gladstein; Zawacki).

For many years and at many institutions, such data have been essential to demonstrating the success of such programs. But in recent years, conversations about the assessment of WAC initiatives have increasingly emphasized the importance of *direct* measures of student learning (see Anson; McLeod; Kistler et al; Walvoord). It is no longer enough to conclude that students "*believe* that their papers improve" (Soven, "Survey" 66; emphasis added) or to find slowly and impressionistically that "faculty stop complaining about student writing" (Haring-Smith 130) a few years after a writing fellows program has been launched. Instead, we need to formally assess what happens *in* and *to* the student writing itself, documenting to the best of our ability *what difference* this pedagogical structure makes in the writing of individual students.

Like any research question about student learning, the task of identifying how writing fellows programs help students improve their writing is difficult. Such programs rely on two intertwined interventions: they structure a process of drafting and feedback into disciplinary courses; and they rely on the feedback of trained peer writing tutors. The centrality of this approach to WAC pedagogy makes it worth further study; an exploration of how those interventions differentially impact student learning lies beyond our scope. Scholarship in the teaching and learning, second language, and writing center fields has addressed questions about the impact of peer tutors on students' writing processes, showing that trained peer feedback can help students improve, transform, and deepen their writing on a single assignment (see, for example, Bell; Berg; Falchikov; Harris; Min; Stay). But in writing-intensive courses with attached peer tutors, students generally work

with the writing fellows on more than one assignment, and often on several assignments throughout the term. To assess the impact of such an iterative structure, we need data about students' arcs of improvement over the course of the semester. In addition to knowing whether or not students' revised papers are better than their drafts and whether or not they *believe* that experienced peer feedback helps them improve as writers (as shown in Light 63–64), we also need to know whether the writing of students in courses with attached writing fellows actually improves more than the writing of students in comparable courses without attached writing fellows.

We have carried out such a study at Pomona College, an elite liberal arts college with a student body of 1500 and a student-to-faculty ratio of 8 to 1. Pomona has a long commitment to WAC but no corresponding writing fellows program. Although Margot Soven reported in 1993 that Pomona was developing such a program for its first-year seminars ("Survey" 60), this never came to fruition. We were able to take advantage of this absence when we launched a pilot writing fellows program as a new writing-in-the-disciplines initiative of our writing center in 2007 by designing and conducting a quasi-experimental study of the impact of writing fellows on student writing over the course of a single semester. We launched this initiative without the mandate of an explicit writing-intensive requirement; in fact, the college had done away with such a requirement in 2004. It was our hope that a writing fellows program would provide a more flexible, grassroots approach, offering faculty interested in 1) assigning a process of drafting and revision and 2) focusing more explicitly on teaching writing in their discipline additional support for doing so. In conducting the study, we also wanted to better understand the impact of this approach on student writing so that we could, depending on the results, either further publicize the program internally or redirect our energies to other WID initiatives.

Before beginning the research, we received approval from our institution's Institutional Review Board; all participants—faculty, writing fellows, students, and readers—agreed to participate in the study.[3] The study compares time-sequenced portfolios of student writing from two sections of the same course, only one of which required students to turn in drafts of and meet with dedicated writing fellows for feedback on each of the three papers both sections assigned. There were ten participating students in the section with attached writing fellows and fourteen in the section without. Once we collected the portfolios, we hired a team of external readers to assess the essays in both sections, evaluating each paper individually and assessing the improvement of the writer across the portfolio. To assure consistent, objective assessment, we normed the readers at the start of the portfolio evaluation process and made sure that they had no knowledge of the experimental nature of one of the sections.

Our hypothesis, based on the indirect data reported in the literature and on an earlier pilot study by Regaignon, was that all students' writing would improve over the course of the semester, but that the writing of the students in the course with writing fellows would improve more than that of the students in the non-writing fellows course. In this article, we present findings that confirm this hypothesis, offering concrete evidence of the positive impact that working with writing fellows has on student writing. Certainly, our study is small and exploratory; the number of students in each section is small enough that it makes drawing clear conclusions difficult. Despite this limitation, however, we believe that our study helps to demonstrate the effectiveness of writing fellows program pedagogy; in other words, that students who draft and revise in light of feedback from trained peer tutors multiple times over the course of the semester may very well show more improvement than those that do not work with fellows.

In other words, writing fellows programs do seem to make a positive and measureable difference in students' writing.

Methodology

In the fall of 2008, we collected the three papers each student wrote while taking English 67, Literary Interpretation.[4] This is our institution's gateway course to the English major; it demands that students pay close attention to textual and literary analysis and typically centers on discussion, reading, and writing. Sections are capped at eighteen students, and the department offers two each semester. Most of the students enrolled in the course in any semester are in their first or second year at the college. In the fall of 2008, students did not know when they were choosing between the two sections that either would have attached writing fellows; they signed up—as students usually do—based on preferences for time slot or faculty member. We're therefore confident that students interested in focusing on their writing did not self-select into the section with attached writing fellows.

The faculty members teaching the course that fall agreed to participate in the study and to assign a similar sequence of three papers, beginning with two shorter, analytical papers (5–6 pages) and ending with a longer paper (8–10 pages) that required original research. In both sections, the types of tasks assigned in the first and second papers were quite similar: each asked students to use a theoretical text as a lens onto one or two literary texts. The third paper was much more difficult than the earlier papers because it asked students to conduct and integrate their own research while making an original argument about a text, all in a longer format than they had done previously. The control (nWF) section did not require students to draft their papers and no writing fellows were

assigned to work with students. The experimental (WF) section required students to go through a full process of drafting and revision for each of the three papers: After turning in a complete draft, each student received written feedback from one of the fellows, met with her to talk about revision strategies, and then revised the paper before turning it in to the professor.

Faculty at Pomona typically work closely with students, particularly in relatively small classes such as English 67. Both of the participating faculty met with students regularly in their office hours, answered questions about course material and papers by email, and so on. (See Spohrer for an apposite description of how the faculty at many small liberal arts colleges work with students.) However, neither faculty member offered significant or regular feedback on the students' drafts this semester; they primarily commented upon the versions turned in for a grade. Nonetheless, it's quite possible that some of the difference we observed between the two sections can be attributed to differences between the two faculty members' teaching. (Analogously, if both sections had been taught by the same individual, we would have to consider the possibility that the professor's awareness of the study might have affected the results.)

There are several other potentially confounding factors. First and perhaps most significantly, we did not have a third experimental section, in which students received feedback and met with their professor throughout the semester; we cannot therefore speculate to what extent the attached writing fellows structure compares with a structure in which faculty require drafts of each paper, respond with written feedback, and meet with each student to brainstorm revision. Second, students in both sections were not prohibited from visiting the writing center. Our records indicate that six of the fourteen students in the control section visited the writing center for assistance on at least one paper. That said, drafting and revision were not required for students in this section and it's worth noting that no student in this section visited the writing center more than twice that term. Two students in the experimental section visited the writing center in addition to their required meetings with their writing fellow, though these were both drop-in appointments with their regular course fellow to continue working on their papers for English 67. Finally, the design of our study offers no way to identify whether the writing fellows' written or oral feedback was more influential in students' revision plans (and their improvement), if it was the combination of the two, or if perhaps it was simply the effect of drafting and revising, and the requisite increase in time on task.

All students in both sections were asked if they were willing to allow their papers to be collected and assessed anonymously; all but one student gave permission. The participating students also completed a survey about their experience in the course at the

end of the semester (see Appendix A for the student survey). Complete portfolios were collected for all participating students, for a total of ten portfolios from the WF section and fourteen portfolios from the nWF section. We deliberately did not include drafts in the portfolios because doing so would have revealed which final papers were the result of such a process and which were not, possibly skewing the readers' impressions. Once all papers were collected, identifying information was stripped from them and they were assembled into time-sequenced portfolios, each of which was assigned a random number. We wanted the readers to assess the papers individually but also, and more importantly, to comment on each writer's trajectory across the semester. It was this development—or lack thereof—that we were most interested in. While collecting portfolios of time-sequenced writing may result in a bias to show improvement, any bias would have affected both sections equally. Though there is continued discussion of how to improve portfolio assessment, this is a common and accepted technique for assessing learning at all levels of education (see, for example, Davies and LeMahieu; Elbow and Belanoff; Klenowski; Klenowski, Askew and Carnell).

The two fellows assigned to work with students in the WF section had experience both working in the writing center and writing papers in the discipline of English studies. Their writing center training had included an initial day-long orientation followed by biweekly meetings throughout the year to discuss both writing center and composition scholarship and specific tutoring issues as they arose. The fellows had considerable practical experience, as well; both were first-semester juniors and this was their third semester working in the writing center. In addition, since both had taken English 67 (although not with either of the faculty participants) and one was an English major and the other an English minor, they consciously approached their work with the students in the WF section as specialists in the discipline, rather than as the generalists they are in the writing center. Nevertheless, even with specific disciplinary knowledge, they worked with the students primarily on general issues of writing and the writing process. This is standard tutorial practice for writing fellow courses (see Gladstein). Following the usual procedure in our writing center, the fellows wrote up consultation reports—typically within 48 hours—describing and reflecting on their meetings with the student writers. Each writing fellow met with the same group of students for each paper; as a result, each fellow had an ongoing relationship with her group of students and knew how their writing was progressing.

We recruited six outside readers from the writing program faculty at a nearby college to assess the portfolios. Because these instructors aim to assign similar grades across their sections and they participate in a grade norming exercise at the start of each year, we

expected that this would provide us with a set of pre-normed readers. Readers assessed the portfolios both qualitatively and quantitatively, focusing both on the individual papers and on students' arcs of improvement across the semester (see Appendix B for a sample scoring sheet). They wrote thumbnail descriptions of each paper and then scored each on a scale of 0-5, giving each paper scores for five specific criteria as well as a holistic score. (The five criteria were argument, organization, evidence and analysis, use of secondary sources, and style.) The readers then responded to a series of questions to provide a narrative assessment of their impressions of the student's improvement. A score of 0 meant that the paper showed no mastery of the element or assignment, while a 5 indicated that it was a near-ideal example. To help the readers relate these numerical scores to a more familiar scale, we gave each number a rough letter-grade equivalent: 5 was some kind of A, 4 was a B+, 3 was a B, 2 was a B-, 1 was some kind of C, and 0 was some kind of D or F. Finally, we determined that the line between proficient and not-proficient college-level writing was between a 1 (some kind of C) and a 2 (a B-) (see Appendix C for the complete scoring rubric). To meet our standards for proficient college-level writing a paper had to have an argumentative thesis and a focused, progressive structure. Even the best "book report" papers would fail to meet this standard, while papers that were problematic in other ways but did have these features would be proficient, if barely.

Before the assessment of the portfolios began, we had the readers participate in a norming exercise to make sure they would assess the papers similarly. We began by asking them to brainstorm to specify the characteristics of an ideal paper for each scoring criterion. We then asked them to collaborate to assess three individual essays representing the range of writing in these portfolios. After reading and discussing these three essays, we found readers were generally assessing the papers similarly both qualitatively and quantitatively. Two readers were randomly assigned to each portfolio, and the reader pairs assigned to each portfolio changed throughout the assessment to avoid individual rater bias. The readers assessed the portfolios in numerical order, so that they encountered portfolios from both the nWF and WF sections at random. While the readers knew that they were considering portfolios from two different sections of the same course, they had no idea of the primary difference between them.

Portfolios were assessed until two readers agreed within one numeric score on all of the overall and the majority of criteria scores, though they could be two numeric scores apart on no more than two of the criteria scores and none of the overall scores. If scores within this range weren't achieved by the first two readers, we asked a third reader—also randomly assigned—to assess that portfolio. We continued in this way until we had two readers with this level of agreement on the quantitative scores.

Because we ran out of time (and funding) to arrive at this level of agreement for all portfolios, one of the authors (who had previously taught in the same program as the readers, and who likewise did not know which section each portfolio came from) assessed five portfolios. Of the twenty-four portfolios, six portfolios required just two readers, twelve required three readers; five required four readers, and one required five readers. When there were multiple readers, if two sets of readers met this overall standard, we selected the scores from the pair of readers with the fewest differences. Once we had selected the pair of readers with the fewest disagreements, we considered the qualitative and quantitative assessment of only these two readers to examine each student's evolution as a writer.

We were, frankly, surprised that it often took several rounds of scoring to reach the level of agreement we required, especially since the readers take part in norming exercises regularly as part of their teaching responsibilities. There seem to have been several factors at play. First, it is important to note that the readers were almost always in general agreement. Each portfolio required two readers to agree (within one number) on 10 of 12 criteria scores and all three overall scores. Seldom did readers have more than five criteria differences or one overall difference. Second, we had limited time to work with the readers to get them to arrive at similar scores across papers—another morning of norming would have, we think, made an enormous difference but we had neither the time nor the funds. Third, a few portfolios proved especially challenging to assess, which is clear from the readers' own narrative evaluations: one reader commented on the portfolio that required five readers that it was "a really hard portfolio to get a handle on. A flawed but promising first essay gives way to two subsequent papers of high style and intellectual vacuity. What happened here? What to do?" (JN: P387).[5]

This is a small-study of what happened to student writing over the semester in two sections of a single course, taught by two faculty members during a given semester at a particular institution. Nonetheless, the methodology and findings may well be transferable to other contexts.

Results and Discussion

For proponents of writing fellows programs—and, indeed, of peer tutoring more generally—our results are encouraging. We find that working with the writing fellows multiple times over the course of the semester results in a positive and measurable difference in students' writing: The overall writing scores of students in the section with attached fellows shows statistically significant improvement, while the writing of students in the section without attached fellows does not.

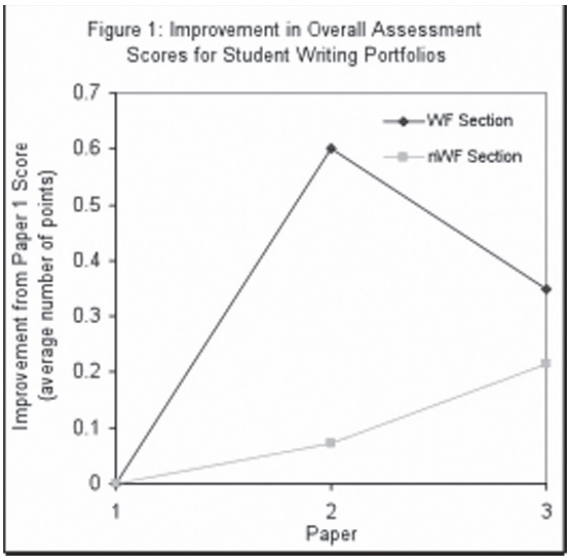
MEASURABLE DIFFERENCES

Both our quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate that students who worked with writing fellows as part of their course improved more than students who had not. Results from the student survey demonstrated that students in the section with writing fellows learned about the importance of writing as a process and writing in the discipline, while students in the section without writing fellows did not. Results from the portfolio assessment demonstrate that the writing of students in the section with writing fellows improved significantly over the semester, while the writing of students in the section without writing fellows did not.

The findings from our end-of-the-semester survey of students corroborate the indirect evidence of student learning reported in the literature (see Soven, "Survey"; Zawacki). In our end-of-semester evaluation, all but one of the students in the study reported feeling that they had learned writing skills that they would use after they completed the course. However, the responses of the students in the nWF section to the question, "Do you feel your writing has improved through taking this course? In what ways?" were less enthusiastic than those of the students in the WF section. Only three (30%) of the latter group gave negative or lukewarm responses to this question, ranging from "I don't think we wrote enough to have really improved" to "I think it has. It's hard to tell." By contrast, eight (57%) of the students in the nWF section gave negative responses, including a blunt "No" and several tepid "Not really"s.

Even more striking is the fact that students in the WF section exhibit a metacognitive understanding of the relationship between the disciplinary mode of analysis they learned that semester and their writing skills. (This kind of metacognition is being increasingly understood as essential for the transfer of knowledge from one context to another; see the discussion in Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi; see also Fraizer.) In their response to the end-of-the-semester survey question about writing, these students frequently connect critical thinking, literary analysis, and writing skills: "I think I've gotten better at developing interesting ideas," wrote one student; another wrote that she was "more conscious of connecting my ideas back to my thesis." Some of these students also exhibited an increased awareness of their own writing processes and a greater sense of their ability to evaluate and improve their own writing: "I have a more clear idea of where I need improvement"; "getting feedback … has improved my writing by making me more aware of what I need to work on"; "I learned to plan my writing." By contrast, four students from the nWF section make a clear distinction in their responses to this question between so-called writing skills and the discipline-specific skills of the course: "Not my writing style," one student writes, "but overall experience in the field of literary interpretation"; another

comments, "No. Critical thinking has improved."



The quantitative data from the external readers confirm the students' own impressions about their development as writers. Because this is an exploratory study, we set our p-value to 0.10, an accepted value for this kind of study (see Cohen, "Power Primer" and *Statistical Power*). Figure 1 shows the average overall improvement scores for each paper, separated by section.[6] At first glance, it seems that student writing in both sections improved across the semester, with the WF writers showing more marked improvement overall. The average score of students in the WF section improves 0.60 points from the first paper (P1) to the second paper (P2) and then regresses somewhat on the third paper (P3) for a total 0.35 gain. Students in the nWF section show a steadier arc of improvement—from 2.57 on P1 to 2.79 on P3—but for a smaller total gain of 0.22 points.[7]

However, we find that the gain by students in the nWF section is likely not, in fact, statistically significant. The average improvement from P1 to P3 was not significantly greater than zero ($M = 0.21$, $SD = 1.19$, $N = 14$). These results are confirmed by two-tailed t-tests comparing the overall scores of P1 with P3 ($p = 0.51$). In contrast, we find that the improvement in writing across the portfolio seen in the WF section is statistically significant. In the WF section, average student improvement was 0.35 levels between P1 and P3 ($SD = 0.58$, $N = 10$). (In the WF section, even though there appears to be a regression in overall scores from P2 to P3, this difference is not statistically significant at the 0.10 level.) Again, these results are confirmed by two-tailed t-tests comparing the overall scores of P1 and P3 ($p = 0.089$). Furthermore, the p-value is less than 0.10, which means that it meets the standard for statistical significance in exploratory studies (see Cohen, "Power Primer").

These results allow us to state that requiring students to submit drafts, receive written feedback from, and then talk through their work and their plans for revision with trained

peer writing fellows results in a statistically significant improvement in their overall writing score over the course of the semester *even when the final assignment is more difficult than those that preceded it.* Students in a different section of the same course, with similar assignments and expectations but without attached writing fellows and required revision, did not show statistically significant improvement in their writing across the semester. It's worth noting that when assignments were similar—as in the case of P1 and P2—the results were even more dramatic. Students in the WF section improved by 0.60 levels between those two papers ($p = 0.024$), while students in the nWF section improved only 0.07 levels ($p = 0.686$).

Richard H. Haswell argues that "[d]evelopment in writing involves a change in status not from beginner to finisher but from experienced to more experienced" (*Gaining Ground* 18). It seems that writing fellows may be particularly helpful when students are consolidating their understanding of a particular type of assignment or genre of writing, that they may help students gain experience more quickly. In Haswell's terms, this could well be because working with peer tutors multiple times over the course of the semester helps students understand themselves as learners (see *Gaining Ground* 16–20). As we saw in the students' own evaluations, students in the WF section gained important insights into their own writing processes and into the relationship between the "content" of the course and discipline-specific writing skills they learned in it. The writing fellows' reports of their consultations with students also support the contention that these meetings help students better understand the expectations of the assignment and of the genre. Reflecting on a meeting with a student on the first paper, the fellow noted that "there were two key problems we both felt needed to be dealt with: 1) her argument—she hadn't really made an explicit argument because she didn't know how to tie all of her ideas together, and 2) her use of her poem—instead of using her poem as a lens to better understand theory (the assignment), she had done the reverse, and she had set up a parallel comparison between the poem and the theory when she really wanted to use the poem to complicate the theory" (ER: P387–1).[8] In her draft for P1, then, the student had not yet made an explicit argument nor addressed the assignment completely. Reviewing the meeting with the same student on the second paper, the fellow noted that the student "was more comfortable with this essay than her last…. Her argument was all there, we just had to reframe it in a way that highlighted how she was building upon [the author's] ideas" (ER: P387–2). As a result, we expect that if, following P3, a second research paper has been assigned as P4, we would see a trajectory of improvement similar to what we saw between P1 and P2, as students begin to fully understand the new assignment and consolidate their skills.

Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

In some ways, our findings simply confirm what many faculty, WAC directors, and writing center directors have known for a long time: writing fellows programs do make a difference in students' writing. This approach to WAC makes both faculty and students across campus more conscious of the expectations of discipline-specific writing; installs a process of drafting, feedback, and revision at the heart of courses in many diverse disciplines and interdisciplinary fields; and—we argue here—helps students make more progress as writers in discipline-specific courses than they do otherwise.

Although our sample size is small, the similarity of our research context to other programs and the statistical significance of our primary conclusion—that student writers improve more markedly over the course of a semester with required rounds of revision in light of peer feedback than without—suggests that our findings may well be transferable to different fields and courses, as well as to different types of institutions. Transferability depends on the degree of similarity among specific contexts (see Mertens; Lazaraton); conclusions from small quantitative studies conducted in particular research contexts in many fields have been found to be transferable to other, similar situations (see, for example, Duff). Indeed, our research context is quite similar to that of many institutions—not just small liberal arts colleges: we have a relatively new writing fellows program; our fellows had some basic training working in the writing center and taking courses in this specific discipline, but they had not taken a formal course in writing theory and pedagogy; the faculty across the institution care about student learning but have only limited additional time to spend responding to student writing; and the ongoing challenge for our WID initiative is to foster a pedagogy of drafting and revision beyond the first-year seminars.

There are at least two reasons to be cautious about the transferability of our findings, however. First, both sections of this course were small and, as a result, students in both sections received considerable attention from their professors. Still, students in the writing fellows section also received considerable attention from the attached fellows, including one-on-one meetings to discuss each paper draft. We believe that this model might transfer well to other contexts, including classes with more students where the professor might have less time to spend with each student. Indeed, having more fellows attached to each course could, perhaps, assure that students get the feedback they need on each paper draft. Second, the study was conducted with students taking the introductory course to the English major. As a result, it is unclear whether these findings might be applicable to students taking courses and writing papers in other disciplines. However, WAC literature argues extensively that assigning a process of writing and revision allows students to

dig more deeply into material in any discipline or interdisciplinary field (see Bazerman; McLeod, "Pedagogy"; Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh). We are therefore cautious but optimistic that our findings may transfer to other contexts; as we discuss in conclusion, we encourage these kinds of additional research.

But there are also important limitations to our results. The results of this study tell us nothing about students' longitudinal development as writers, given that we followed them only for a single semester. In addition, we do not know what difference the discipline (English studies) of these courses may or may not have made. Finally, we cannot speak to whether it was the additional rounds of revision or the peer feedback that was the decisive factor in students' improvement, since in writing fellows programs those two are intertwined. We hope that writing center and WAC directors at other institutions will find our results useful in advocating for the establishment or maintenance of writing fellows programs on their own campuses. (We have certainly found them helpful at our own institution.) In many ways, this is a pilot study that offers empirical evidence for one of the central claims of WAC pedagogy: that revision in light of feedback not only improves individual papers, but helps students become more accomplished writers in the field. Larger studies could further investigate this contention, examining (for example) a wider disciplinary array of courses in order to learn to what extent this findingtransfers beyond English studies. Subsequent studies might also answer questions we could not address here: Is it the requirement to revise or feedback that has the greatest impact? Does the author of the feedback—faculty or peer tutor—matter? Does the form (written or in conference) matter?

Our focus in this article has been on the product, the actual papers the students wrote for English 67 in the fall of 2008. That focus has been necessary because our goal has been to see if mandating that the students incorporate certain steps into their writing processes made discernable differences in their writing over the course of a single semester. For better or worse, it's often useful to be able to point to specific, measurable improvements *in student writing itself.* What we've found is that writing fellows programs do, indeed, seem to make a difference: students who were required to work with writing fellows in an introductory English course wrote papers that showed measurable and statistically significant improvement over the course of the semester, while students who were not required to work with writing fellows in a different section of the same course did not (see Figure 1).

There are a number of implications to these findings, as well as avenues for further research in this direction. The connection we've found between process and product can help faculty in writing studies and across the disciplines think about ways to incorporate

revision with feedback into their courses with the concrete promise that it will directly help students' learning. Our future research will deepen our understanding of what happened in these writing fellows courses. One area we explore in more detail in a different article is whether working with writing fellows most helps students struggling in the discipline or those students who are already quite accomplished writers in that field. In addition, we hope to design a follow-up study to explore the extent to which working with writing fellows seems to enhance students' metacognitive understandings of writing and critical thinking. In addition, our findings offer writing centers and WAC programs concrete, replicable evidence of the impact trained peer tutors can have, contributing to the growing body of studies that this is both an efficient and effective way of supporting student writers. It's our hope that further analysis of our data will allow us to see the connections between the writing fellows' training, what they focus on in their consultations with students, and the specific areas in which students improve. Writing fellows give us a way to do WAC that is productive in many ways, providing writing centers and programs with "ambassadors" (Severino and Knight) who work from the ground up to promote shifts in institutional culture. The fact that writing fellows offer the faculty and students who work with them immediate benefits may—at many institutions, and certainly at ours—be the crucial incentive to let them in the door and into the course.

ENDNOTES

1 We're grateful to Pomona College's Dean of the College and Board of Trustees for funding for this project, both the pilot writing fellows program and the accompanying study. Jennifer Rachford helped with the statistical analysis; Andrew Ragni '11 provided research assistance; Jill Gladstein and our anonymous *WAC Journal* readers provided helpful feedback on earlier drafts. In addition, we'd like to thank all our participants: Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Kamran Javadizadeh, who taught English 67 in the fall of 2008; Anne Allhoff '10 and Erin Reeves '10, our writing fellows; Jennifer Cotter, Chris Guzaitis, John Norvell, Rosann Simeroth, Katherine Tucker, and especially Kimberly Drake, our external readers; and—most importantly—the students in the two sections of English 67 who agreed to participate in this study.

2 We use the terms "difference" and "improvement" interchangeably to refer to a statistically significant, positive change in student writing. See below for a full discussion of our approach to assessing this.

3 Complete data and Institutional Review Board materials are available from the authors on request.

4 In the *Pomona College Catalog,* the course description of English 67 reads: "Training in certain historical, theoretical and methodological dimensions of literary study in relation to a topic chosen by the professor. Special attention to close textual analysis and to writing effectively about literature" (117).

5 We cite readers' comments on student portfolios using the initials of the commentator followed by the portfolio number. Further information on portfolio commentary is available from the authors on request.

6 We should note that students in both sections began with slightly different starting points: 2.25 on paper 1 in the WF section, compared to 2.57 in the NWF section. However, using a t-test, we find that there is no significant difference between the strting points of these two samples (p=0.48).

7 This result is strikingly similar to the result in the pilot study (Regaignon). Translating these improvements into grades, this means that the average overall scores of students in the WF section moved from a low B (2.25) to a high B (2.60), while the high average overall scores of student in the nWF section moved from a high B (2.57) to a near B+ (2.78).

8 We cite readers' comments on student portfolios using the initials of the commentator followed by the portfolio number. Further information on portfolio commentary is available from the authors on request.

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APPENDIX A: END-OF-SEMESTER STUDENT SURVEY[†]

I feel I am developing writing skills that I will use even after I complete this course.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree

Compared to my classmates, I am a highly competent writer.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree

How much of each essay do you read over again after meeting with your Writing Fellow?

☐ All of it ☐ Most of it ☐ Some of it ☐ None of it

How much of each essay do you read over again when your Professor returns it to you?

☐ All of it ☐ Most of it ☐ Some of it ☐ None of it

How many of the *Writing Fellow's* comments and suggestions do you think about carefully?

☐ All of it ☐ Most of it ☐ Some of it ☐ None of it

How many of the *professor's* comments and suggestions do you think about carefully?

☐ All of it ☐ Most of it ☐ Some of it ☐ None of it

How many of the *Writing Fellow's* comments and ideas involve:

Organization	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Content/Ideas	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Grammar	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Mechanics (i.e., punctuation, spelling)	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None

How many of the *professor's* comments and ideas involve:

Organization	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None

Content/Ideas	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Grammar	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Mechanics (i.e., punctuation, spelling)	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None

How much attention do you pay to the comments from your *Writing Fellow* involving:

Organization	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Content/Ideas	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Grammar	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Mechanics (i.e., punctuation, spelling)	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None

How much attention do you pay to the comments from your *professor* involving:

Organization	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Content/Ideas	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Grammar	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None
Mechanics (i.e., punctuation, spelling)	☐ A lot	☐ Some	☐ A little	☐ None

Generally, I learn the most when my *Writing Fellow*… [**check all that apply**]

- ☐ Comments mainly on my ideas
- ☐ Comments mainly on the organization of my essays
- ☐ Comments mainly on my writing style
- ☐ Highlights mechanical mistakes (i.e. punctuation, spelling)
- ☐ Talks with me about the questions I have about the essay
- ☐ Helps me think through my own ideas

Generally, I learn the most when my *professor*… [**check all that apply**]

- ☐ Comments mainly on my ideas
- ☐ Comments mainly on the organization of my essays
- ☐ Comments mainly on my writing style
- ☐ Highlights mechanical mistakes (i.e. punctuation, spelling)
- ☐ Talks with me about the questions I have about the essay
- ☐ Helps me think through my own ideas

What specific writing skills do you feel you have learned successfully? What specific skills do you feel you would still like to improve? Why?

- What do you feel you have gained from writing the essays assigned in this course?
- Do you feel your writing has improved through taking this course? In what ways?
- Describe what you do after you meet with and read your Writing Fellow's comments on your draft.
- Do you think your writing has improved because you met with and got feedback from a Writing Fellow on a draft of each paper? Why or why not?

- Do you think it would be beneficial to have more courses at Pomona with attached Writing Fellows, like this one? Why or why not?
- Does it matter that you received early feedback on your papers from a peer Writing Fellow, rather than the professor? In what ways?

† We developed this survey by adapting questions from those in Ferris and in Hedgecock and Lefkowitz.

APPENDIX B: READER'S REPORT FORM ‡

Reader: **Portfolio Number:**

Please rate each text on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 is poor and 5 is excellent, according to the following criteria.

Criteria	P1	P2	P3
Argument *(statement of problem & thesis)*			
Organization *(structure and coherence)*			
Evidence & Analysis			
Use of Secondary Sources*			
Style *(grammar/clarity as well as stylistic flair)*			
Overall *(please assign a letter grade as well)*			

* Write "N/A" if not applicable.

Comments

In your comments, please describe each paper in terms of the above criteria, and then assess the portfolio as a whole. You may wish to use the following questions as a guide: What were the qualities of the writing at the beginning and at the end of the semester? What has the writer learned about writing? Where did the writer backslide or hold steady? What does the writer still need to learn?

‡ We developed this scoring sheet on the basis of a scoring sheet developed for the Princeton study of Writing (see Walk et al.)

Quantitative Scoring Criteria

Please try your best to assign a whole number for each category and each paper. There is more room for nuance in the assigned grade. Slash grades (B/B+) are perfectly acceptable.

	Number	Grade
	5	A range
	4	B+
Papers above this line meet acceptable	3	B
standards for college-level writing	2	B-
Papers below this line fail to meet these	1	C range
standards	0	D / F

Qualitative Scoring Criteria

The best papers have these qualities …

Argument: Statement of Problem (throughout the paper) and Thesis

- Argument provokes meaningful disagreement
  - It pushes against something
  - Ambitious arguments are valued more than safe ones
- It demonstrates depth and complexity of thought; it is multidimensional/nuanced
- It is an argument of some kind of consequence; it has some significant effects or implications
- It engages with a real problem
- It shows a clear sense of investment by the author
- It proposes a kind of solution / conclusion / response
- It is developed over the course of the paper; it has movement
- It is appropriate for the scope of the paper, the sources, and the student
- It has a wow factor: something original, fresh, truly independent

Organization: Structure and Coherence

- It develops the argument in complex ways over the course of the paper
- There is a clear, logical progression, conceptually and structurally
- The structure is apparent without being intrusive
- The structure is not formulaic but organic, stemming from the content of the paper
- It demonstrates knowledge of and engages with counterarguments /counter interpretations/ contrary evidence
- It anticipates questions from readers and answers them
- It guides the reader through the paper towards the conclusion, in an honest and non-manipulative way
- There are, throughout, clear topic sentences, concluding sentences, and focused paragraphs; the paper hangs together as a unit.

Evidence and Analysis

EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS
• Appropriate kind of evidence • Appropriate amount of evidence • Evidence is well chosen: it is appropriate in content and length • Balance of good evidence and resistant evidence • Evidence is duly contextualized	• There is no evidence without analysis; without analysis it is just raw data • Not just summarizing the evidence but articulating its connection to the argument • The analysis pulls nuance from the evidence • The analysis is comparative

0= Absence of evidence or analysis
1= Presence of some evidence
2= Presence of some evidence that is related to the argument; if you read the author's mind, you might be able to see how it relates
3= Presence of good evidence that is relate to the argument; the author has given you enough clues that you can read into it and determine how it relates
4= Presence of good evidence that is related to the argument; the author has shown you how it relates to the argument pretty well, though you may have to think about it a bit
5= Presence of good evidence and analysis that is related to the argument; the author has shown you how it relates to and moves the argument forward

Use of Secondary Sources

- We shouldn't think of the primary theoretical texts as secondary sources in this case; they are generally serving (or should serve) as a primary text
- The paper puts multiple sources into genuine dialogue with one another
- The paper makes a clear distinction between the secondary sources and the writer's own argument
- It showcases a wide representation of sources and range of perspectives
- It shows an awareness of the scholarly debates with which it is engaging
- The sources are integrated into the argument
- The sources are introduced clearly
- The sources have functions beyond simply fulfilling the assignment's requirements or supporting the writer's claims. They might define key terms, address counterarguments, etc.

Style

- It does not distract from the argument
- It is appropriately academic
  Not so scholarly as to be unintelligible
  Not so colloquial as to be inappropriate
- The style matches the substance of the paper

- It is argument-driven
- It is appropriate to the paper
- It is clear and concise
- It is mature, confident, and elegant at times
- It is a pleasure to read
- Signposting guides the reader skillfully through the argument
- There is appropriate punctuation, grammar, and mechanics
- The paper cites sources appropriately