

Resumers in and beyond a Writing-Intensive Preparatory Course: Challenges, Assets, and Opportunities

KENDON KURZER, NATASHA J. LEE, AMY MACIAS-STOWE, MARY HER, AND NIEVA MANALO

This paper features the experiences of three resuming students in and beyond a writing-intensive (WI) preparatory course at a large public university. The resumers (who are paper coauthors to elevate the voices of resuming students) identified key course themes as being particularly valuable as they transition into higher education after extended time away and prepare for their required WI courses: discipline-specific genre conventions, source integration and citation norms, audience awareness, collaboration via course discussions and group projects, and reviews of general academic composition conventions. Key areas that could strengthen the course for future resumers and highlight their role as classroom assets include emphasizing the value of their lived experiences in course discussions and formal assignments, regularly soliciting information about students' anxiety levels to provide increased support, and better tailoring content to student needs (such as linguistic features).

Introduction

In college writing classes, returning/resuming/adult students (various terms have been used; we use the term *resumers* since several authors of this paper self-identify with that label) often stand out among traditionally aged students. This distinction may be felt most acutely by the resumers themselves (Colvin, 2013), but their classmates and instructors contribute by projecting reductive stereotypes onto them. This demographic of resuming students actually encompasses great diversity in age, family status, motivation for continuing school, occupation, prior academic experience, and more (Grabowski et al., 2016; Lin, 2016). Every resumer has personal challenges and goals, but each may encounter a common barrier in the writing classroom: the transition (back) to academic writing (Frankenfield, 2018; Gillam, 1991; Peters et al., 2017). Resuming students may be separated from prior classroom writing by years spent writing in specific professional contexts, writing for personal means, or barely

writing at all (Cleary, 2012; Gillam, 1991; Peters et al., 2017). An instructor and curriculum should acknowledge and account for this distance, especially in introductory writing classes, or students may lose confidence in their writing abilities, which can snowball into insecurity over their place in the university (Gillespie, 2001; McLeod, 1995; Warren, 1992).

Transitioning to Academic Writing through Resumers' Personal Experience

A well-established strategy to reintroduce students to academic writing is incorporating their personal experiences into assignments. Common models include low-stakes journaling, free-writing exercises, or discussion posts (Bardine, 1995; Khoo & Kang, 2022; Thompson, 2011; Warren, 1992), but student experiences can also be integrated into more formal—while still flexible—writing assignments. This flexibility includes affording students agency in choosing their own writing prompts and topics, whether personal or disciplinary (Cleary, 2012). Resuming students likely have more varied experiences than traditionally aged students, and these events are central to their more developed core identities (Gillam, 1991). The fact that students find writing assignments with which they have a personal connection more engaging (Eodice et al., 2017) is especially pertinent for resuming students who are particularly mindful of their commitment to classes because of their sacrifices made when returning to school (Colvin, 2013; Ruecker, 2021). This mindfulness can lead to an appreciation of, pride in, and ownership of writing as a directly applicable skill for resumers (Gillespie, 2001; Warren, 1992).

In more general writing courses, asking students to explore their own academic subject is also an opportunity to introduce WID values. Stressing WID themes highlights how the specialized knowledge that resuming students have can be purposefully used in academic writing. Students returning to academia from the workplace may have recent writing experience, but they may be aware that they are dealing with different expectations and methods now. While their prior skills can be applicable to academic writing, the transition “requires rhetorical consciousness on the part of the writer,” even “the most competent writers” (Peters et al., 2017, p. 4). Of major concern are the specific academic conventions for target audience, tone, and purpose (Gillam, 1991; Gillespie, 2001; Peters et al., 2017). Implementing these conventions as expected in a particular discipline can be irritating and confusing for resumers, especially if they have a defeatist approach toward their own ability (McLeod, 1995; Warren, 1992). Effective strategies to help resumers practice these conventions include frequent low-stakes assignments, explicit definitions of terms, scaffolding major assignments, and models of effective writing (Cleary, 2012).

Giving students control over their writing process is important for resuming students with nontraditional academic backgrounds although asking students to blend their life experiences with academic writing expectations can induce anxiety. Michelle Navarre Cleary (2012) shares how a resuming student struggled to write a research essay about ballet, a subject she had extensive experience with, because of her insecurity with school and miscommunication with her instructor. The student had never considered ballet in an academic sense before, and the perceived uncrossable distinction prevented her from realizing that the purpose of this assignment was to introduce her to academic research through a familiar domain. Without structured support, resuming students may find tackling both the unfamiliar nuances of academic writing and personal anxiety difficult. This example also demonstrates the importance of understanding the root cause of writing anxiety, which is crucial to combating it.

While instructors may be aware of resuming students' anxiety about writing, they cannot understand how to address this anxiety without coming to know the student individually. Resumers likely have many sources of writing anxiety, including generalized anxiety and insecurity over being a nontraditional student (Colvin, 2013). Gender-related anxiety plays a role, with female resumers often feeling more insecure and anxious than male counterparts (Lin, 2016; Thompson, 1981). Instructors can evaluate students' anxiety levels directly through surveys or individual conferences (McLeod, 1995; Warren, 1992) and then follow up with personalized feedback. Resuming students may prefer constructive criticism and distrust praise, which they might interpret as patronizing and unhelpful (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Other studies report that resuming students appreciate encouraging, positive feedback, especially when such feedback is empathetic to their position in the classroom and affirms their progress (Cleary, 2012; McLeod, 1995).

Finding the right balance and strategy for each student is difficult, but it is a key part of student empowerment and improvement. Alice M. Gillam (1991) recommends that at the beginning of the course, students produce "an experience portfolio including a prose vitae describing significant life experiences, a writing history and writer's profile, and writing samples" (p. 12). Such an assignment compels students to reflect on their experience with writing in different domains and provides them with instructor feedback; it also opens discussions about acknowledging different forms of writing, student attitudes, and self-perception of ability, which can reassure resumers that they are not alone in their experience or anxiety. These discussions can also be held via informal digital class forums to help resumers form supportive communities within the classroom (Khoo & Kang, 2022; Ruecker, 2021). Both the resuming student and instructor benefit from acknowledging and addressing anxiety

in the classroom instead of letting it prevent constructive feedback and genuine writing improvement.

Instructors' Role in Resumers' Success

Instructors may assume that they are prepared to teach resuming students, but this expectation may be unfounded. Many introductory writing classes are taught by teaching assistants who may be inexperienced writing teachers (Winzenried, 2016) or untrained to work with nontraditional students (McLeod, 1995). Although graduate students are increasingly resuming students themselves and thus may foster empathetic connections with undergraduate resumers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023), they still benefit from resources such as professional development workshops. Writing across the curriculum (WAC) workshops can be especially useful as they spark conversations between instructors about pedagogical approaches or student trends that administrators may miss (McLeod, 1995).

Instructors have the potential to significantly impact students' success. Many resuming students cite disagreements or perceived disrespect from their instructor as a major detriment to their academic performance, especially in already anxiety-inducing writing classes (Cleary, 2012; Fairchild, 1999). Common issues include strict policies around attendance or late work, which can unfairly exclude resuming students who have more responsibilities outside of school (Ruecker, 2021). While instructor-student interactions primarily occur through academic avenues such as feedback on assignments or lectures, more personal connections frequently form within the classroom. Susan H. McLeod (1995) shares how a spontaneous talk between a resumer and their writing instructor concerning the student's anxiety about standing out led to the instructor sharing her own experience as a resuming student. The instructor continued to give encouraging feedback throughout the course, which ultimately led to the student wanting to take more writing courses. These empathetic moments create valuable spaces for the resumer to feel acknowledged and empowered in college. To better create these spaces, writing program administrators can foster connections between instructors who are themselves resumers by highlighting,—with instructor permission—that fact on instructor profile websites and in advertisement materials.

Resumers' Access to Resources outside the Composition Classroom

While resumers can conceivably access resources outside the composition classroom, these resources may not always be readily available given resumers' extracurricular constraints. For example, writing centers can provide personalized feedback from tutors and introduce WAC values (Salem, 2014; Soven, 2011), but resuming students may be unable to access writing center support as many campus systems are not designed for students with business-hour commitments, like jobs or family

responsibilities, or those unfamiliar with navigating campus infrastructures (Colvin, 2013). Resources and communities that accommodate resuming adult students' needs are important, but targeted support systems are still needed at many institutions (Bay, 1999; Ruecker, 2021).

A few scholars have explored resumers' experience in WAC/WID writing classes, such as Diane S. Thompson (2011), who shows how experience with discipline-specific writing instruction can increase confidence, and Kathleen J. Cassity (2005), who discusses how nontraditional students should draw upon their personal experiences in WAC contexts. Similarly, Margaret Jeanine Rauch (2020) calls for proactive instructional approaches that address both discipline-specific techniques and student anxiety. However, the field still experiences a dearth of relevant research; moreover, much of the existent research either does not distinguish resuming students from the even broader category of nontraditional students or centers models of first-time or graduate students (Bardine, 1995; Gillespie, 2001; Peters et al., 2017). While these studies begin to frame critical facets of learning for resumers, we risk strengthening the barriers against resuming undergraduate students by largely ignoring their unique experiences. Using a WAC/WID model, instructors and program administrators can effectively address the needs of resuming students by explicitly acknowledging their transition back to academic writing, their individual life experiences, and the barriers they face.

This project contributes to the literature on resumers in WAC contexts by centering the voices of three resumers as coauthors of this paper: Amy Macias-Stowe, Nieva Manalo, and Mary Her, all of whom took a WAC course taught by Kendon Kurzer designed to prepare them for their junior-level writing-intensive (WI) requirement. While Kurzer has guided the framing of this project, each of the three resumers bring their own voices and perspectives.

Our Context

At California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), students are required to fulfill writing requirements at various stages of their undergraduate experiences: first-year composition, second-year composition, and the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR), which is a California State University system-wide requirement. At CSUS, the GWAR includes a placement score and a writing-intensive (WI) course that is typically taught by a faculty member in a student's major department. (Most majors require that their students take certain WI courses, while some do not require specific courses; students in these majors may take any WI course available to them.)

Prior to enrolling in their WI course, students obtain a GWAR placement score either via a portfolio submitted early in their junior year or a WI preparatory class.

The class, titled “English 109W: Preparing to Write in the Disciplines,” is a three-unit course designed to prepare students to succeed in their WI courses. As much of the work associated with WAC and student support occurs in the context of writing centers (Salem, 2014) or graduate programs (Soven, 2011), our course is somewhat unique: it is a formal, credit-bearing undergraduate course positioned to support students, like the resumers noted in this project, who come from a wide range of backgrounds.

Our Resumers

When teaching this course during the fall of 2023, Kurzer was happy to discover that the course featured several resumers, three of whom expressed a willingness to participate in this project documenting their experiences with the WI preparatory class and into the first part of their WI course. This section introduces the resumers who contributed to this project. As their backgrounds are essential to informing their experiences, quite a few details are provided.

Amy Macias-Stowe is a fifty-two-year-old Mexican American new grandmother who grew up in a bilingual household and who routinely code-switches between English and Spanish. Spanish continues to be a central part of her life today although Macias-Stowe considers English to be her primary language. Macias-Stowe retired from the beauty industry after twenty-five years as a licensed cosmetologist and now works for the university as a service coordinator.

A communications major/Spanish minor, Macias-Stowe enrolled in junior college out of high school and dropped out after two years to enroll in cosmetology school. Macias-Stowe then returned to junior college in 2008, taking one or two classes per semester toward her associate’s transfer degree due to family and work demands. After changing her major three times, she finished her degree and then took a five-year break before enrolling in a four-year university. Prior to our class together, Macias-Stowe had been at CSUS for four semesters on a part-time basis, taking a few required general education courses and many communications classes. Macias-Stowe questioned whether she should enroll in the WI preparatory courses or attempt for a passing portfolio. Ultimately, she decided to take the course because she had not written extensively in roughly six years and lacked confidence in her writing ability.

Nieva Manalo is a forty-one-year-old Filipina mother who currently works as a full-time nurse while pursuing her bachelor’s degree in nursing. She speaks Tagalog and Visayan, another Filipino language. Manalo returned to school the semester she took the WI preparatory course (along with two other core nursing classes) after a 17-year break after finishing her associate’s degree in nursing.

Because she had last written an essay seventeen years ago, Manalo opted to take the WI preparatory course. She did not feel confident submitting a written portfolio and wanted to be prepared for her WI course the following semester. She initially felt intimidated and nervous about the WI preparatory course but knew it was “a necessary evil” to prepare her for her future writing demands.

Mary Her is a sociology major in her senior year and an administrative assistant at a private therapy clinic. Like Manalo, Her took the WI preparatory course (in addition to a few core sociology courses) during her first semester back in school after a ten-year hiatus. While the other resumers had associate’s degrees from community colleges, Her’s previous higher education experience was also at CSUS. Because of this previous experience, and unlike the other students, Her was required to enroll in the WI preparatory class. While she could have challenged this requirement, she decided to simply take the class.

Her felt stressed and worried on the first day of class after seeing how many writing projects Kurzer had scheduled. She knew that she would have to spend more time on this class because writing is “one of [her] weakest subjects.” Unfortunately, due to changes in her work schedule, Her ended up needing to drop her WI course at the time of writing this paper; she plans on taking it a subsequent semester.

Our Writing-Intensive Preparatory Class

Using a WAC framework, Kurzer’s WI preparatory course primarily featured assignments that required students to identify which WI course they were expected to take—along with the specific writing assignments required in that course—and research discipline- and career-specific genres and writing expectations they likely would encounter in their upper-division major classes and beyond (similar to Winzenried, 2016). The first assignment was a combination of a literary reflection and an analysis of artifacts (syllabi and assignments, if available) of the WI course students would take. In this assignment, Kurzer hoped his students would reflect on their reading and writing journey within the context of upcoming WI expectations as a way to connect their past learning with their future disciplinary literacy development (as discussed in Gillespie, 2001). The second assignment was a genre analysis that required students to find several samples from different genres about a related topic and analyze certain features (audience, purpose, rhetorical tools, support, structure, language, etc.). Students had the option of writing this assignment in partnerships or small groups based on shared disciplines. The collaborative third assignment was a writing guide in which students shared their research on disciplinary conventions and expectations, including a discussion of some common genres. This group project also included a presentation.

When Kurzer started the class (which he taught for the first time the semester of this study despite teaching similar classes at other institutions, and he has extensive experience teaching WAC/WID classes), he anticipated that the students would typically have progressed through the first- and second-year writing requirements and thus would be prepared to dive into disciplinary discourse expectations quickly. However, that proved not to be the case, as many students expressed the desire to discuss basic academic writing expectations first. Accordingly, classroom discussions early in the term featured introductions to some foundational topics like organization, idea development, and source use, prior to getting into content like discipline-specific norms and genre awareness.

Resumers' Positive Experiences in the WI Preparatory Course

All three resumers named in this paper identified various features of the WI preparatory course that they appreciated as they embarked again on their higher education journey. First, the resumers valued the emphasis on discipline-specific genre conventions in course discussions, which explicitly featured discipline-specific audience needs and expectations. As a result, Macias-Stowe felt more prepared to produce writing in communications contexts, and Manalo was better able to understand which forms and genres of writing are likely to be emphasized in and beyond her nursing classes. Class discussions and course assignments gave students space to explore these academic and professional expectations in an authentic manner. The three resumers, who had career experiences to draw on, especially saw the benefit in breaking down the types of writing they would be expected to produce.

Macias-Stowe and Her both appreciated the salient focus on audience awareness within particular disciplines. Her noted that she wanted to ensure that she was adhering to academic norms for discipline-specific audiences, which is a prevalent concern for resumers (Peters et al., 2017). The course also covered style and citation conventions (APA in the case of the three resumers, though MLA and Chicago were also discussed) as well as source integration techniques (for instance, Kurzer emphasized the importance of relying on paraphrases over extensive direct quotes to ease reader comprehension).

Manalo noted that she valued the critical thinking and analysis skills emphasized and presented in the class, while Macias-Stowe appreciated the first assignment (the literacy reflection/WI course introduction assignment) as a refresher in academic writing and found that she had retained more knowledge on the fundamentals of writing than she previously thought and thus felt more confident in her abilities. Manalo similarly felt better prepared for her WI course because of the guidance afforded by that assignment. These sentiments are echoed by other resumers, who often report gaining confidence in their academic abilities after taking writing classes

that feature clear, comprehensive instructions and frequent writing practice (Cleary, 2012; Warren, 1992).

Similarly, the resumers all noted and appreciated the collaborative writing afforded by the class (especially as students could write several assignments with partners or in small groups). Macias-Stowe mentioned that collaborating with others allowed her to share some of her knowledge and understanding of academic writing. Her recognized her role in fostering a collaborative atmosphere and accordingly felt that she was an asset in enhancing the students' overall learning experience. These experiences align with the recommendations of Mary K. Morrison (1994), who promoted collaboration as (1) a way to assimilate older students into the classroom community, which is typically dominated by younger students, as an opportunity for them to share their unique personal expertise; (2) a reassurance that other students are not perfect writers either; and (3) a more engaging and valuable approach for adults than traditional lecturing.

The resumers also reported that they felt like they were explicitly treated as assets in this WI preparatory course, a value strongly valued by Morrison (1994). For example, Her noted that she actively participated in course discussions by sharing her lived experiences beyond higher education. Manalo similarly commented that because she possessed a mindset that, in her own words, was "more mature and purposeful" (common characteristics of resumers mentioned in Bay, 1999), she was more open-minded than some of her younger peers in class and could serve as a mentor to help guide them, especially regarding what might be impactful in terms of content and expressing thoughts in writing. These and similar dialogues can help resumers reconcile their coexisting identities of being experienced working adults and inexperienced students, resulting in positive self-reflection and academic production (Gillespie, 2001).

Beyond the class, Macias-Stowe is invested in the project represented by this article as she hopes that it will assist other students in understanding the challenges that come with returning to writing in academia at a "later age" (her words). She hopes to reflect the idea that if she can be a successful academic writer "at her age," then anyone can. This goal is shared by many older female resumers who experience structural challenges and a subsequent determination to succeed upon returning to the university (Fairchild, 2019). Kurzer would like to note that Macias-Stowe has always been quite invested and self-motivated in her learning and thus should recognize her own role in contributing to her success.

Resumers' Experiences in Their Writing-Intensive Courses

While Her needed to withdraw from her WI course due to her work schedule shifting last minute—highlighting a common issue for resuming students (Colvin,

2013; Grabowski et al., 2016)—Macias-Stowe and Manalo both enrolled in a WI-requirement-fulfilling course the semester after taking our preparatory course; at the time of writing this paper, they had been enrolled in the class for roughly four weeks, although the first week was impacted by a faculty strike. Both Macias-Stowe and Manalo shared that they felt much more prepared to succeed in their WI course because of their efforts and instruction in our preparatory course.

Partway through the semester of her WI course, Manalo reported that she felt more confident in her ability to break down the prompts of the WI course and organize her responses. She feels increasingly intentional and reflective about her approach to writing, and thus she is now a strategic writer who plans meaningfully as she writes. Manalo commented specifically on her confidence regarding her preparation for writing her first essay for her nursing WI because of what she learned from our preparatory course, stating that it “helped [her] immensely.” Macias-Stowe also feels more confident and noted in particular that she has “reached another level of academic learning” and feels prepared to succeed. In particular, she feels that the preparatory course helped her better analyze meaningfully and develop appropriate content, rather than being distracted by other concerns like formatting or organizing the paper as she appreciated the review of the fundamentals of academic organization expectations we covered.

Macias-Stowe also commented that the preparatory course “perfectly covered the fundamentals of academic writing” as it stressed skills that are essential in her WI course, like synthesizing materials and producing papers supported by course readings. Macias-Stowe noted that her WI course builds on the foundations laid by the preparatory course by challenging students to analyze course readings in a more nuanced, complete manner. She was grateful for the practice afforded by assignments like the genre research project from our course that required analysis. Such practice can be very effective when explicitly linked to discipline-specific analysis, which includes both reading and writing in a certain style (Winzenried, 2016).

In hindsight, Manalo appreciated the preparatory course’s focus on audience awareness that has enabled her to think critically about who would be reading her work and why (echoed in Schneider, 1988). She now tailors her content and approach to be more effective in her WI course. Macias-Stowe similarly appreciated the explicit guidance on APA formatting and identifying wordiness markers, like excessive passive voice, which she identified as one of her continuing biggest challenges in crafting tight, effective prose in her academic papers.

Collectively, Macias-Stowe and Manalo’s initial experiences indicate that the WI preparatory course adequately prepares resuming students to succeed in their WI course, which is taught in their home departments by disciplinary faculty who are not explicitly trained to teach writing. While many students test out of the WI

preparatory course by submitting a passing portfolio, and though (as Macias-Stowe noted) taking an extra course may feel unnecessary, moving forward with confidence into the challenge of upper-division writing may be worth the effort and time required to take an additional class, especially for resumers (Rauch, 2020).

Suggestions for Strengthening the WI Preparatory Course, Specifically for Resumers

The three resumers identified the WI preparatory course as an environment that, while conducive to their learning and enabling them to succeed in their WI courses, still did not fully embrace their roles as returning students. Although Kurzer's class included multiple low-stakes assignments and scaffolded major projects—an approach that has been shown to effectively support resuming students (Cleary, 2012)—more targeted support for these particular students' needs would have been welcome. One suggestion is to take more time at the beginning of a term to solicit thoughts from students regarding what they hope to learn from the class; while Kurzer uses a general survey to ask students about their perceptions of their mastery of academic reading and writing, a more effective survey could get into specifics—such as organization, source use, idea development, and language support—and then the instructor and students could craft the schedule of topics to be covered in the class together (similar to a suggestion from Cleary [2012], who asked students to describe their prior learning experience and their traits as a writer.) Giving students opportunities to frame the course and its focus would be one way of better ensuring that resumers' more diverse needs are adequately addressed.

While the resumers felt like they were assets to the environment of the WI preparatory course, Kurzer in hindsight noted that several of the assignments could be more deliberately leveraged to highlight the contributions of the real-world experiences of the resumers. For example, the first assignment, a literacy narrative that asks students to reflect on their previous writing experiences and then connect to their future writing expectations for their specific WI course, could be reframed to include writing on the job (as highlighted in Gillam, 1991, and Peters et al., 2017) rather than assuming that students have just written for academic purposes prior to taking our class. That inclusion would emphasize and validate the experiences of our resumers. Similarly, in later assignments in which students research writing expectations in their target careers, Kurzer could again emphasize that some students can speak authentically to those expectations of writing in various careers. Manalo, for example, as a practicing nurse, could share her experiences (beyond the spur-of-the-moment in-class discussions in which she brought up those experiences).

Additionally, while the resumers recognized the value of collaboration in writing via peer reviews and the extra support afforded by writing papers with a partner, they

noted that they occasionally felt that they shouldered more than their fair share of the work. They also recognized that such collaboration resulted in challenges regarding aligning schedules and deciding who would cover which topics. Some resumers may be uninterested in working with younger classmates, which can lead to further social isolation and age-related insecurity (Ruecker, 2021). Still, research indicates that collaborative activities can be valuable, especially for female resumers, who may be more comfortable with the supportive, reciprocal dynamics of peer-review work, while also familiarizing students with audience awareness (Schneider, 1988).

The resumers also shared that they experienced the anxiety that research shows is particularly common to returning female students (Colvin, 2013; Fairchild, 2019). Macias-Stowe felt anxious when presenting her research findings on writing expectations in communications contexts. Manalo felt overwhelmed and intimidated by all the prompts and topics covered in the preparatory course, especially as she was also juggling a full-time job and family responsibilities (a common stressor for resuming students, as seen in Bay, 1999). She was sometimes unsure of how to formulate ideas and responses. Accordingly, Kurzer plans to be more deliberate about soliciting information on students' anxiety levels and to pay particular attention to resuming students. While he frequently holds individual student conferences (per McLeod, 1995), more routine surveys (Warren, 1992) could be used to track anxiety levels and help him better refine his teaching to be more supportive.

Furthermore, the resumers felt that they would have benefited from more support with regard to language and grammar. Her explicitly advocated for more explicit discussion of linguistic and sentence-level features. While the preparatory course covered punctuation and briefly discussed key grammatical themes like sentence structure and concision—which Macias-Stowe mentioned that she appreciated—Her felt that she struggled to apply these concepts in her writing. More grammatical lessons and exercises, especially regarding how to apply these concepts in students' own writing, would have helped. One possibility, at least for WI preparatory classes that are sheltered for multilingual students (which this course was not, although sheltered courses are offered at this institutions), would be to include some activities using Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback (DWCF). This is a particular method of coding linguistic errors in short pieces of student work, which are then edited and recoded with accompanying reflective components (see Evans et al., 2010, and Kurzer, 2023, for more information).

Conclusion

Overall, the structure at CSUS of providing a WI preparatory course that satisfies the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) in addition to a portfolio option works well for many students, especially resumers who benefit from

the additional support. The assignments of the course—which included reflection pieces, literacy experiences, and several genre analyses—align well with the needs of resumers as they work toward succeeding in their WI courses.

The elements of the WI preparatory course that Macias-Stowe, Manalo, and Her found most valuable include the following:

- Explicit instruction on, and practice researching and presenting, discipline-specific genre conventions
- Instruction on discipline-specific source integration norms and citation styles
- Instruction on audience awareness in discipline-specific contexts and how audience determines disciplinary norms for communication (also found in Gillam, 1991, and Peters et al., 2013)
- Collaboration via course discussions, peer review, and partner/group-produced papers and presentations (although collaboration could place undue responsibility on resumers to carry their peers at the same time) (Morrison, 1994)
- The opportunity to review and refine understanding of general academic composition conventions like organization, idea development, and clear and concise writing

These themes most prepared the resumers for their specific WI courses and thus should continue to be included and emphasized in preparatory courses like this one, even if many of the students do not need as much explicit review (as may be the case if they have proceeded through composition instruction on campus as typically expected).

On the other hand, some possible avenues for strengthening the WI preparatory course, especially for resumers, include the following:

- More explicit emphasis on the values resumers' experiences bring to the classroom in course discussions and on major assignment prompts (Cassity, 2005; Colvin, 2013; Morrison, 199)
- More systematic and/or regular solicitation of information about students' anxiety levels to better gauge and react to issues in a timely manner (McLeod, 1995; Warren, 1992)
- Better tailoring of course content to student needs (e.g., increased time spent reviewing academic composition norms, increased attention to linguistic forms, etc.) (Cleary, 2012; Gillam, 1991)

- More explicit guidance on group/peer expectations regarding collaborative assignments to ensure that resumers are not being asked inadvertently to perform the bulk of the work (Schneider, 1988)

Naturally, these are only a few possibilities for creating a classroom environment that better supports resumers in a WI preparatory course like that investigated here. But these possibilities should be explored to better ensure student success.

A course design that recognizes the unique challenges resumers face and assets they bring to our classroom would create increased opportunities for all students—and teachers—to learn from each other. By emphasizing resumers' voices and experiences in and beyond our classrooms—as attempted in this article—our writing programs can become more inclusive and supportive for all students, especially those facing the challenges of returning to university learning.

References

- Bardine, B. A. (1995). Using writing journals in the adult literacy classroom: Teacher to teacher. Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Kent State University.
- Bay, L. (1999). Twists, turns, and returns: Returning adult students. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 26(3), 305.
- Cassity, K. J. (2005). *Bringing lived cultures and experience to the WAC classroom: A qualitative study of selected nontraditional community college students writing across the curriculum* (Publication No. 3171037) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Cleary, M. N. (2012). Anxiety and the newly returned adult student. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 39(4), 364–376.
- Colvin, B. B. (2013). Where is Merlin when I need him? The barriers to higher education are still in place: Recent re-entry experience. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 25(2), 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha.20014>
- Eodice, M., Geller, A. E., & Lerner, N. (2017). What meaningful writing means for students. *The Peer Review*, 19(1), 21–29.
- Evans, N. W., Hartshorn, K. J., McCollum, R., & Wolfersberger, M. (2010). Contextualizing corrective feedback in L2 writing pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(4), 445–463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810375367>
- Fairchild, S. D. (2019). Breaking the silence, reimagining justice: Voices of returning women students in community college. *Feminist Teacher*, 28(1), 1–16. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/femteacher.28.1.0001>
- Frankenfield, J. (2018). *Treating the writing trauma: Managing anxiety and promoting transfer among adult learners with workplace writing pedagogies* (Publication No. 13422277) [Master's thesis, State University of New York]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Gillam, A. M. (1991). Returning students' ways of writing: Implications for first-year college composition. *Journal of Teaching Writing*, 10(1), 1–20.
- Gillespie, M. (2001). Research in writing: Implications for adult literacy education. In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith (Eds.), *The annual review of adult learning and literacy: Volume 2* (pp. 63–110). Jossey-Bass.
- Grabowski, C., Rush, M., Ragen, K., Fayard, V., & Watkins-Lewis, K. (2016). Today's non-traditional student: Challenges to academic success and degree completion. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 8(3), 1–2. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1377>
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Khoo, E., & Kang, S. (2022). Proactive learner empowerment: Towards a transformative academic integrity approach for English language learners. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 18(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-022-00111-2>
- Kurzer, K. (2023). Dynamic written corrective feedback: A scoping review. *Feedback: Research in Second Language*, 1, 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.32038/frsl.2023.01.06>
- Lin, X. (2016). Barriers and challenges of female adult students enrolled in higher education: A literature review. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2), 119–126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n2p119>
- McLeod, S. H. (1995). Pygmalion or golem? Teacher affect and efficacy. *College Composition and Communication*, 46(3), 369–386. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/358711>
- Morrison, M. K. (1994). “The old lady in the student lounge”: Integrating the adult female student into the college classroom. In M. Reynolds (Ed.), *Two-Year college English: Essays for a new century* (pp. 26–37). The National Council of Teachers of English.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). *Characteristics of postsecondary students*. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csb/postsecondary-students>
- Peters, D. L., Goldstein, M. H., & Lax, J. (2017, June). *From industry to graduate school: How returners (re)learn how to write* [Paper presentation]. 2017 American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) Annual Conference & Exposition, Columbus, OH, United States.
- Rauch, M. J. (2020). *Perceptions of academic writing from first generation non-traditional students* (Publication No. 1850) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Mississippi]. Electronic Theses and Dissertations.
- Ruecker, T. (2021). Retention and persistence in writing programs: A survey of students repeating first-year writing. *Composition Forum*, 46.
- Salem, L. (2014). Opportunity and transformation: How writing centers are positioned in the political landscape of higher education in the United States. *The Writing Center Journal*, 34(1), 15–43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43444146>
- Schneider, H. M. (1988). The peer approach to adult learning. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 24(3), 63–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1066568880240318>

- Soven, M. (2011). Curriculum-Based peer tutors and WAC. In S. H. McLeod, E. Miraglia, M. Soven, & C. Thaiss (Eds.), *WAC for the new millennium: Strategies for continuing writing-across-the-curriculum programs* (pp. 200–232). The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Thompson, D. S. (2011). *No more a stranger: The development of academic literacy in adult English language learners in community college* (Publication No. 12066) [Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University]. Electronic Theses and Dissertations for Graduate School.
- Thompson, M. O. (1981, October). *The returning student: Writing anxiety and general anxiety* [Paper presentation]. Northeast Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College 1981, Baltimore, MD, United States.
- Warren, S. (1992, March). *Grandmothers in the classroom: How college English teachers can help those non-traditional students* [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the College English Association 1992, Pittsburgh, PA, United States.
- Winzenried, M. A. (2016). Brokering disciplinary writing: TAs and the teaching of writing across the disciplines. *Across the Disciplines*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2016.13.3.11>