



SoTL Grant Closure Report (2014-15)

I. Basic Information

Title of Project: **Writing Fellows Assessment Project**

Investigator(s) Information

Principal Investigator:

Name: Amanda Gaddam
College: College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences and School for New Learning
Department: University Center for Writing-based Learning, Department of Writing, Rhetoric, & Discourse, and SNL Writing
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Other Investigators (Co-Pi):

Name	College	Department
Kelly Tzoumis	College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences	Public Policy Studies
Matthew Pearson	--	University Center for Writing-based Learning (UCWbL)

II. Project Update

Research Questions

1. To what extent does working with Writing Fellows help students create more effective writing projects than students who do not work with Writing Fellows?
2. How are the writing projects produced by students working with Writing Fellows improved?

Progress Report

Given its scope and time limitations when training and working with student research assistants, this project is still in progress, though between 70%-75% of the data collection is complete. Using a sample of 80 drafts that went through both scoring and norming procedures, some preliminary statistics were performed (see Appendices A & B for more details). Approximately half of the sample worked with Writing Fellows.

1. The Relationship between Writing Elements and the Course Grade when using Writing Fellows

Using nonparametric statistical testing, the preliminary results showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between the use of Writing Fellows and any of the five elements coded for the papers. However, the results show that there is a statistically significant and moderate relationship between receiving a higher rating on Source and Evidence, and the student’s course grade for those students who had a Writing Fellow assigned to their class.

Specifically, those students who had a Writing Fellow had a statistically significant relationship between the higher the Source and Evidence rating and the higher their course grade (Kendall’s=.443, sig=.000, n=45). There was no statistically significant relationship between Source and Evidence rating with course grade for those papers without a Writing (Kendall’s=.307, sig=.219, n=45). This is an important finding that will be further investigated with the larger sample.

Symmetric Measures

Control: Writing Fellow						
0=no writing fellow assigned				Asymp. Std.		
1=writing fellow assigned			Value	Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
0	Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.307	.232	1.252	.210
		Kendall's tau-c	.240	.192	1.252	.210
	Gamma	.464	.334	1.252	.210	
	N of Valid Cases	17				
1	Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.443	.086	4.361	.000
		Kendall's tau-c	.352	.081	4.361	.000
	Gamma	.736	.116	4.361	.000	
	N of Valid Cases	45				

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

2. Modeling Student Outcomes

There was a statistically significant relationship when using the model of writing elements as independent variables in predicting course grade as the student outcome data. Specifically, the variables that were significant in predicting student course grade included the rating for the “Sources and Evidence” category on the rubric, gender, and major. There was a statistically significant and moderate relationship for those students who had higher “Sources and Evidence” ratings, who were female, and had majors in the College of

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 Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (Adjusted R²=.606, std beta₄=.689 sig=.026, std beta₆=1.248 sig=.000, std beta₇=1.253 sig=.000). These students were more likely to receive higher course grades. Additional sampling and testing are required to determine if the variable of Writing Fellows had an impact.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.846 ^a	.716	.606	1.677

a. Predictors: (Constant), major, controlsyn, Analysis, Sourcevid, Genre, context, gender

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-8.029	3.235		-2.482	.023
	B1 Context	.799	.592	.258	1.350	.194
	B2 Analysis	-.277	.648	-.072	-.427	.674
	B3 Genre	-.310	.628	-.089	-.494	.628
	B4 Sourcevid	1.648	.680	.362	2.425	.026
	B5 controlsyn	.327	.424	.099	.772	.450
	B6 gender	9.061	1.759	1.248	5.150	.000
	B7 major	1.189	.245	1.253	4.862	.000

a. Dependent Variable: coursegrade

Implications of early findings

Based on this early subset of the data, it appears that Writing Fellows help students create more effective writing projects than students who do not work with Writing Fellows. They specifically have an impact on using and synthesizing outside sources in writing, a crucial academic skill for critical thinking and expression, which directly reflect in course grades. Where the Writing Fellows had no statistical impact is on the elements of context, analysis, and control of syntax and mechanics. It is anticipated that when the larger sample is completed, additional relationships among these four writing elements will become apparent.

Impact

For instructors at DePaul, this project will demonstrate how allowing time for revision and providing resources like the Writing Fellows Program can enhance students' learning by helping them to evaluate and apply feedback about their writing and to make their tacit knowledge explicit in written assignments, in accordance with the UCWbL's Learning Outcomes. Additionally, this project may provide the data that writing programs and writing centers in other university contexts need to support the start up and funding requests for a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiative.

Dissemination

Preliminary findings from and other information about this project have been shared both within the University Center for Writing-based Learning Community and outside of DePaul University. First, student researchers' reflections on the data collection process were shared on [UCWbLing](#), the University Center for Writing-based Learning's WordPress blog, the UCWbL Twitter account, and retweeted by the International Writing Centers Association Twitter account to an international writing center studies audience. Second, PI Amanda Gaddam shared initial findings at the 2015 East Central Writing Centers Association Conference in South Bend, Indiana on April 10, 2015 to an audience of writing center professionals and multi-disciplinary educators from all over the country.

There are two additional avenues in the future for dissemination of these results. One is the 2016 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Houston, Texas from April 6, 2016-April 9, 2016, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. PI Amanda Gaddam is scheduled to present the final findings of the Writing Fellows Assessment Project as part of a panel with colleagues from the University Center for Writing-based Learning and the Department of Writing, Rhetoric & Discourse. We also intend to submit the write-up of our completed project to a peer-reviewed publication in the field of Writing Across the Curriculum or writing center studies (e.g. *Praxis*, *The WAC Journal*, *The Writing Center Journal*) upon completion of final analysis (projected December 2015).

III. Expense Report

All SoTL grant funds were spent hiring student research assistants to score drafts in the sample. In the initial SoTL proposal, we indicated that some funds would be used to defray the cost of attending an out-of-state conference. Because ECWCA conference costs were covered by the University Center for Writing-based Learning, we chose to add additional hours and research assistants to maximize the data collection. The following table contains the breakdown of expenditures per hour and per student research assistant.

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Student Researcher	# of Hours	Pay Rate	Expenses
Student Research Assistant #1	45	\$11.00/hour	\$495.00
Student Research Assistant #2	56.5	\$11.00/hour	\$621.50
Student Research Assistant #3	45	\$11.00/hour	\$495.00
Student Research Assistant #4	45	\$11.00/hour	\$495.00
Student Research Assistant #5	11.5	\$11.00/hour	\$126.50
Student Research Assistant #6	11.5	\$11.00/hour	\$126.50
Student Research Assistant #7	11.5	\$11.00/hour	\$126.50
Totals	226		\$2,486.00

Appendix A.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
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a. Predictors: (Constant), major, controlsyn, Analysis, Sourcevid, Genre, context, gender

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	127.839	7	18.263	6.494	.001 ^a
	Residual	50.622	18	2.812		
	Total	178.462	25			

a. Predictors: (Constant), major, controlsyn, Analysis, Sourcevid, Genre, context, gender

b. Dependent Variable: coursegrade

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-8.029	3.235		-2.482	.023
	context	.799	.592	.258	1.350	.194
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	controlsyn	.327	.424	.099	.772	.450
	gender	9.061	1.759	1.248	5.150	.000
	major	1.189	.245	1.253	4.862	.000

a. Dependent Variable: coursegrade

Appendix B.

coursegrade * Sourcevid * writingfellow Crosstabulation

Count

writingfellow			Sourcevid				
			2	3	4	5	Total
0	coursegrade	5	1	0	0	0	1
		8	0	2	1	0	3
		10	0	1	0	1	2
		11	0	4	6	1	11
		Total	1	7	7	2	17
1	coursegrade	0	0	2	0	0	2
		4	1	0	0	0	1
		5	0	3	0	0	3
		6	0	1	0	0	1
		8	0	3	0	0	3
		9	1	3	1	0	5
		10	0	4	2	0	6
		11	0	11	12	1	24
		Total	2	27	15	1	45

Symmetric Measures

writingfellow			Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
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