

SUBJECT: ENGH 0890 and 0990 Matriculation Patterns for 711 Students: Comparing the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum to the Portfolio Curriculum

DATE: 8 June 2005

This memo, that is a research report, completes my responsibilities for receiving release time for the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005 semesters. Writing fourteen reports were among my responsibilities associated with the release time. This is the fourteenth, and all fourteen are available on the department's website.

Case Study as Answering Research Questions

In a case-study methodology, a research inquiry may be more aligned with a naturalistic inquiry and less aligned with a scientific inquiry that defines a true experiment. Said another way, because of concerns regarding validity and reliability, a case-study methodology is preferable to suggest answers to the following questions.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Do matriculation, transferability, and retention become confounding factors to the point of preventing a demonstration or proof of the long-term benefits of a basic writing curriculum at UVSC?
- Are the ENGH 0890 and 0990 portfolio curricula more difficult than the pre-portfolio curricula?
- Is a ENGH 0890 or 0990 class who earns a high collective GPA from their basic writing teacher more likely to complete subsequent composition courses with higher grades, compared to classes who earn lower collective GPAs from basic composition teachers?
- When considering student grades in required composition courses (ENGH 0890, ENGH 0990, ENGL 1010, and ENGL 2010/2020) are adjunct faculty or tenure-track and tenured faculty more effective teachers?

ENGH 0990 QUESTIONS

- Does the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum better prepare ENGH 0990 students for ENGL 1010?
- Do ENGH 0990 portfolio students achieve higher grades in ENGL 1010 than the average ENGL 1010 student?

ENGH 0890 QUESTIONS

- Does the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum better prepare ENGH 0890 students for ENGH 0990?
- Is poor placement effecting student performance in the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula for ENGH 0890?
- Is ENGH 0890 a discouraging course?

Research Design

Herein, two curricula are examined: a pre-portfolio curriculum and portfolio curriculum. Previous to and during the fall of 2002, most ENGH 0890 and 0990 faculty members were not centering their teaching around portfolios, much less coordinating objectives for portfolios across sections. Herein, this curriculum is called the "pre-portfolio curriculum." In the fall of 2003, however, all ENGH 0890 and 0990 faculty members centered their teaching around portfolios and met the same curricular objectives for portfolios. In this report, this curriculum is called the "portfolio curriculum."

Research evidence presented herein, subsequently, is organized around comparing the pre-portfolio curriculum to the portfolio curriculum for both ENGH 0890 and 0990. This comparison allows for some limited conclusions regarding the two curricula and student grades, and matriculation through required composition courses: ENGH 0990, ENGL 1010, and ENGL 2010 or 2020.

Table 1. Representative Sampling

Course, Curriculum, Semester	Enrollment According to VAX Inclusive of Ws & UWs	Number Necessary for a Representative Sampling	Actual Sampling Number Inclusive of Ws & UWs
ENGH 0890, Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	259	154	166 Representative
ENGH 0890, Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	208	135	162 Representative
ENGH 0990, Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	469	211	194 Almost Representative
ENGH 0990, Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	409	198	189 Almost Representative

Note: The representative sampling numbers have a degree of accuracy of +/- .05. This case study is defined by 711 students: the total of the students whose grades were tracked regarding the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula in ENGH 0890 and 0990 during the fall semesters of 2002 and 2003.

A Case Study with Multiple Perspectives on Sampling

Given a case study methodology, findings are relevant to particular situations and are not given to board generalizations. A variety of research descriptions regarding sampling help us to understand this case study.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLING. A representative sampling defines one research perspective for comparing the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula. Table 1 lists how many students are needed for a representative sampling.

Table 1 indicates that the sampling of ENGH 0890 students, regarding the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula, is representative. Therefore, ENGH 0890 findings are reasonably true for all of the ENGH 0890 students in the given semesters. In contrast, also as indicated by Table 1, the sampling of ENGH 0990 students, regarding the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula, is almost but not quite representative. Therefore, regarding ENGH 0990, findings are less certain to be representative of all the ENGH 0990 students in the given semesters.

SAMPLING AS RELEVANT TO AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE. This research’s validity increases if the pre-portfolio students have similar experiences as the portfolio students in all possible or reasonable ways except for the curriculum, the independent variable. To be specific, ideally speaking, all the classes represented in the pre-portfolio curriculum in the fall of 2002 and portfolio curriculum in the fall of 2003 should be meeting at the same time of day; be taught by the same teachers; and have the same contact hours in terms of online instruction, and computer lab and classroom hours. These qualities of the research setting are potential sources for error.

As read in Table 2, regarding class schedules and teachers, the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio sampling is fairly comparable to the portfolio sampling with some of the following notable exceptions. The fall of 2003 classes include an online instruction hour; whereas, the fall of 2002 classes do not have that hour. Another contrast is found in that Jamie Beck teaches at 12 PM in the pre-portfolio curriculum but at 1 PM in the portfolio curriculum.

As read in Table 3, but compared to ENGH 0990 classes, the ENGH 0890 classes that represent the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula have greater contrasts in terms of contact hours and teachers. In Tables 3, as in Table 2, the

bold print that begins with an asterisk represents some of the variations in class schedules and teachers. Also, ENGH 0890 classes have the same major contrast just mentioned for ENGH 0990 classes: The fall of 2003 classes include an online instruction hour; whereas, the fall of 2002 classes do not have that hour.

Table 2. Details of ENGH 0990 Sampling (Fall 2002 & Fall 2003)

<i>Sampling of ENGH 0990: Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall 2002</i>	<i>Sampling of ENGH 0990: Portfolio Curriculum, Fall 2003</i>
Four classroom meetings and one computer lab meeting (4 hours & 10 minutes of contact hours) per week. ENGH0990-001 (7AM Willburn) ENGH0990-005 (9AM Matzen) ENGH0990-007 (11AM Jeffery) ENGH0990-008 (12PM Beck)	Three classroom meetings and one computer lab meeting (2 hours and 30 minutes of contact hours). ENGH0990-001 (7AM Willburn) ENGH0990-006 (9AM Matzen) ENGH0990-008 (11PM Jeffery) ENGH0990-013 (1PM Beck)* <i>*Different class time in Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i>
Three classroom meetings and two computer lab meetings (4 hours & 10 minutes of contact hours) per week. ENGH0990-009 (12PM Bender)	Two classroom meetings and two computer lab meetings (2 hours and 30 minutes of contact hours). ENGH0990-011 (12PM Bender)
One classroom meeting and one computer lab meeting (4 hours & 30 minutes of contact hours) per week. ENGH0990-015 (4PM Tyler)	One classroom meeting and one computer lab meeting (3 hours & 20 minutes of contact hours) per week. ENGH0990-018 (4PM Tyler)
One classroom meeting (2 hours & 5 minutes) and one computer lab meeting (1 hour & 15 minutes) per week. ENGH0990-602 (6:30PM Smith)	One classroom meeting (3 hours & 20 minutes) and one computer lab meeting (50 minutes) per week. ENGH0990-602 (6:30PM Smith)
Completely on online. ENGH0990-X01 (Online Forrest)	Completely on online ENGH0990-X01 (Online Forrest)

Table 3. Details of ENGH 0890 Sampling (Fall 2002 & Fall 2003)

<i>Sampling of ENGH 0890: Pre-Curriculum, Fall 2002</i>	<i>Sampling of ENGH 0890: Portfolio Curriculum, Fall 2003</i>
Four classroom meetings and one computer lab meeting (4 hours & 10 minutes of contact hours) per week. ENGH0890-002 (8AM Markovic) ENGH0890-005 (10AM Matzen) ENGH0890-006 (11AM Marrott) ENGH0890-003 (9AM Bender)	instruction. ENGH0890-004 (9AM Williams)
One classroom meeting (1 hour & 40 minutes) and one computer lab meeting (1 hour & 40 minutes) ENGH0890-009 (2PM Curtis)	<i>*Different teacher in the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i> ENGH0890-004 (10AM Matzen) ENGH0890-006 (1PM Marrott)* <i>*Different class time in the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i>
One classroom meeting (2 hours & 5 minutes) and one computer lab meeting (2 hours & 5 minutes). ENGH0890-601 (6:15PM Markovic)	Two classroom meetings (1 hour & 40 minutes) and two computer lab meetings (1 hour & 40 minutes) ENGH0890-007 (2PM Curtis) ENGH0890-002 (9AM Bender)* <i>*Different class time the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i>
Two classroom meetings (1 hour & 40 minutes) and online	Two classroom meetings (2 hours & 30 minutes) and one

computer lab meeting (55 minutes).

ENGH0890-601 (6PM Stout)*

****Different time and teacher in Pre-Portfolio Curriculum***

Two classroom meetings (1 hour & 40 minutes) and online instruction.

ENGH0890-003 (9AM Williams)

To summarize this section, regarding ENGH 0890 classes, the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula include a representative sampling of individuals but contrastive class schedules and teachers. Regarding ENGH 0990 classes, the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula include nearly representative sampling of individuals and comparable class schedules and teachers. However, in both ENGH 0890 and 0990 classes, an additional “treatment” of portfolio students is that they receive at least one hour of scheduled online instruction, not received by all pre-portfolio students.

Confounding Factors: Matriculation, Transferability, and Retention

In this case-study, matriculation, transferability, and retention confound as well as limit answers to this question: Does the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum benefit students more? As confounding factors, matriculation and transferability are discussed next.

Two assumptions may ground our inquiry. First, we assume that what is learned in one composition course, ENGH 0890 for instance, prepares students for the next course, ENGH 0990 for instance. This is “transferability” or the idea that a student should take concepts and skills, learned or developed in one composition course, and apply and develop them in the next composition course. Subsequently, to assume that transferability occurs is crucial to study how well one composition course and curriculum prepares students for the next composition course and curriculum. However, when students do not enroll in composition courses consecutively, studying transferability is somewhat confounded because as a semester or more passes in between required composition courses, students may retain less from the previous composition course. The assumption of transferability weakens, that is, as consecutive matriculation lessens.

In Tables 3 and 4, consecutive matriculation, or the lack of, is reported for the ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio and portfolio students. Specifically, in Table 3, only 39% of the students enrolled in the pre-portfolio ENGH 0890 curriculum matriculate consecutively into ENGH 0990. Likewise, in Table 4, only 29% of the students enrolled in the portfolio ENGH 0890 curriculum matriculate consecutively into ENGH 0990. Consecutive matriculation is so poor that findings regarding transferability may have lower validity. Said another way, because of poor consecutive matriculation, the benefits of the basic writing curriculum may be greater than demonstrated herein.

The validity of this case study, regarding matriculation’s effect on transferability, would increase if the grades of students who had enrolled consecutively into composition courses had been separated from the grades of students who had completed composition courses at any time. The significance of matriculation and transferability, however, had not been anticipated prior to data collection and analysis. Therefore, that analysis is not available for this case study.

Setting research design aside, the remedy for the effect of poor consecutive matriculation seems fairly simple – require all students to enroll in and complete composition courses consecutively. But that simple remedy may be unfair to students who have been misplaced into their first composition courses at the college (see Matzen & Hoyt, 2004). Perhaps, when placement into composition courses improves, consecutive matriculation should be required.

Another confounding factor for findings is poor retention as read in Tables 3 and 4. So many ENGH 0890 students leave the college after that course (29% of pre-portfolio students and 41% of portfolio students) that findings regarding the remaining students performance in ENGH 0990 become less reliable (see Tables 3 and 4). Likewise, so few ENGH 0890 students return for their sophomore year (28% of pre-portfolio students and 43% of portfolio students) that findings are less reliable regarding ENGL 1010: over half of the original number of ENGH 0890

students have left the college prior to beginning their sophomore year or having the opportunity to enroll in ENGL 1010 (see Tables 3 and 4). That said, we may want to note that even though fewer portfolio students remain on campus after ENGH 0890, in comparison to the pre-portfolio students, significantly more of the portfolio students did return for their sophomore year, again in comparison to the pre-portfolio students (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Matriculation and Retention in ENGH 0890, the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum

	COURSE 1 ENGH 0890: Fall 2002	COURSE 2 ENGH 0990: Spring 2003	COURSE 3 ENGL 1010: Summer 2003 or Fall 2003	COURSE 4 ENGL 2010 or ENGL 2020: Fall 2003 or Spring 2004
ENGH 0890 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum	Graded Students: 150 Us/UWs Students: 16 Total Sampling: 166 Students who left after semester: 48 (29% of sampling).	Consecutive Enrollment: 65 (39% of sampling). Students who left after semester: 25 (15% of sampling). Students with ENGH 0990 grade earned whenever: 78 (47% of sampling).	Consecutive Enrollment: 37 (22% of sampling). Students returning for sophomore year: 46 (28% of sampling). Students with ENGL 1010 grade earned whenever: 59 (36% of sampling).	Consecutive Enrollment: 20 (12% of sampling). Students with ENGL 2010/2020 grade earned whenever: 32 (19% of sampling).

Table 4. Matriculation and Retention in ENGH 0890, the Portfolio Curriculum

	COURSE 1 ENGH 0890: Fall 2003	COURSE 2 ENGH 0990: Spring 2004	COURSE 3 ENGL 1010: Summer 2004 or Fall 2004	COURSE 4 ENGL 2010 or ENGL 2020: Fall 2004 or Spring 2005
ENGH 0890 Portfolio Curriculum	Graded Students: 144 Us/UWs Students: 18 Total Sampling: 162 Students Who Left After Semester: 66 (41% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 47 (29% of Sampling) Students Who Left After Semester: 22 (14% of Sampling) Students with ENGH 0990 grade earned whenever: 61 (38% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 19 (12% of Sampling) Students returning for sophomore year: 69 (43% of Sampling) Students with ENGL 1010 grade earned whenever: 28 (17% of Sampling)	Data not collected.

In Tables 5 and 6, consecutive matriculation, or the lack of, is reported for the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio and portfolio students. Specifically, in Table 5, only 52% of the students enrolled in the pre-portfolio ENGH 0990 curriculum matriculate consecutively into ENGL 1010. In Table 6, only 42% of the students enrolled in the portfolio ENGH 0990 curriculum matriculate consecutively into ENGL 1010. Similar to ENGH 0890 (Tables 3 and

4), consecutive matriculation is again poor so that the benefits of the basic writing curriculum, either the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum, may be greater than this case study suggests.

Regarding retention, many ENGH 0990 students leave the college after that course (26% of pre-portfolio students and 35% of portfolio students, see Tables 5 and 6) but not as many as compared to ENGH 0890 students (see Tables 3 and 4). The total of ENGH 0990 students, returning for their sophomore year (48% in both the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula), is under 50% of the sampling. This makes findings for ENGL 2010/2020 less valid. Said another way, so few ENGH 0890 and 0990 students are being retained that findings related to ENGL 2010/2020 are not trustworthy. Because not enough students are retained, answers to this question – Does the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum benefit students more in terms of completing ENGL 2010/2020? – are not trustworthy. The untrustworthy data for ENGL 2010/2020 is found in Table 9.

Table 5. Matriculation and Retention in ENGH 0990, the Pre-Portfolio Curriculum

	COURSE 1 ENGH 0990: Fall 2002	COURSE 2 ENGL 1010: Spring 2003	COURSE 3 ENGL 2010/2020: Summer 2003 or Fall 2003
ENGH 0990 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum	Graded Students: 172 Us/UWs Students: 22 Total Sampling: 194 Students Who Left After Semester: 51 (26% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 100 (52% of Sampling) Students Who Left After Semester: 42 (22% of Sampling) Students with ENGL 1010 grade earned whenever: 118 (61% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 47 (24% of Sampling) Students returning for sophomore year: 94 (48% of Sampling) Students with ENGL 2010/2020 grade earned whenever: 72 (37% of Sampling)

Table 6. Matriculation and Retention in ENGH 0990, the Portfolio Curriculum

	COURSE 1 ENGH 0990: Fall 2003	COURSE 2 ENGL 1010: Spring 2004	COURSE 3 ENGL 2010/2020: Summer 2004 or Fall 2004
ENGH 0990 Portfolio Curriculum	Graded Students: 153 Us/UWs Students: 36 Total Sampling: 189 Students Who Left After Semester: 66 (35% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 79 (42% of Sampling) Students Who Left After Semester: 27 (14% of Sampling) Students with ENGL 1010 grade earned whenever: 96 (51% of Sampling)	Consecutive Enrollment: 35 (19% of Sampling) Students returning for sophomore year: 90 (48% of Sampling) Students with ENGL 2010/2020 grade earned whenever: 35 (19% of Sampling)

Retention is poor enough that the validity of findings regarding composition courses after the initial one (either ENGH 0890 or ENGH 0990) become questionable. Only 47% of ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio students complete ENGH 0990 (Table 3), only 38% of ENGH 0890 portfolio students complete ENGH 0990 (Table 4), only 61% of ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio students complete ENGL 1010 (Table 5), and only 51% of ENGH 0990 portfolio students complete ENGL 1010 (Table 6). Because the numbers are higher for ENGH 0990, findings for ENGH 0990 are more valid than those for ENGH 0890. Still, all the numbers are low enough that this case study's findings may be questionable.

This case-study not only suggests the importance of inter-connected issues like matriculation, transferability, and retention but also indicates possible answers to our previously mentioned research questions.

Matriculation into ENGH 0990

In the fall of 2002 in the pre-portfolio curriculum, 150 ENGH 0890 students received final grades and 16 additional ENGH 0890 students received Ws or UWs, making a total of 166 ENGH 0890 students in the sampling. For comparison, in the fall of 2003 in the portfolio curriculum, 144 ENGH 0890 students received final grades and 18 additional ENGH 0890 students received Ws or UWs, making a total of 162 ENGH 0890 students in the sampling. The pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula students in ENGH 0890, consequently, are comparable in terms of the students receiving final grades, Ws, or UWs.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Is the ENGH 0890 portfolio curriculum more difficult than the pre-portfolio curriculum?

Compared to the pre-portfolio curriculum, the number of students in the portfolio curriculum increase in these three categories (see Table 7):

- Students repeating ENGH 0890
- Students receiving Ws and UWs
- Students leaving campus after ENGH 0890

Table 7. ENGH 0890: Indicators of Student Success and Failure.

Course, Curriculum, Semester	Students Repeating ENGH 0890	Students Receiving Ws or UWs	Students Leaving Campus after ENGH 0890	Student GPA
ENGH 0890, Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	2	16	48 (48 is 29% of 166)	3.06
ENGH 0890, Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	9 (Increase of 7)	18 (Increase of 2)	66 (66 is 41% of 162. An increase of 12%.)	2.67 (Decrease of .39 GPA)

In Table 7 and all other Tables, “GPA” means the average GPA for a specific group of students. With that as well as Table 7 in mind, if the ENGH 0890 portfolio curriculum is more difficult than the pre-portfolio curriculum, we may expect the student GPA to decrease in the portfolio curriculum. In Table 7, because that is what happened, we have another indication that the ENGH 0890 portfolio curriculum is more difficult than the ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio curriculum.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Is poor placement effecting student performance in the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula for ENGH 0890?

In ENGH 0890 in the fall of 2002 and 2003, poor placement may be effecting some students’ curricular performances and choices. Poor placement may explain why some ENGH 0890 students are receiving Ws and UWs, and others are skipping ENGH 0990. In the pre-portfolio curriculum, 9.6% of ENGH 0890 students received Ws or UWs (16 of 166 total students), and in the portfolio curriculum, 11 % of ENGH 0890 students received Ws or UWs (18 of 162 total students). In addition in the pre-portfolio curriculum, 22 students or 15% of the 150 students receiving grades skipped ENGH 0990, and in the portfolio curriculum, 9 students or 6% of the 144 students receiving final grades also skipped ENGH 0990.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Is ENGH 0890 a discouraging course?

ENGH 0890 may be too easy for some students which poor placement would explain and/or too discouraging to students because it is a non-credit bearing course. Either circumstance may affect matriculation. In the pre-portfolio curriculum, 43% of ENGH 0890 students (65 of 150 students receiving grades) do not matriculate into ENGH 0990 in the following semester, and in the portfolio curriculum, 33% of ENGH 0890 students (47 of 144) students receiving grades do not matriculate into ENGH 0990 in the following semester.

Previous department research reports also suggest that significantly fewer ENGH 0890 students matriculate into ENGH 0990 in consecutive semesters as compared to the number of ENGH 0990 students who matriculate into ENGL 1010 in consecutive semesters. These circumstances may exist because ENGH 0890 is a discouraging course. To explain, in the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio curriculum in the fall of 2002, 58% of ENGH 0990 students who received final grades matriculated into ENGL 1010 the following semester, and in the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum in the fall of 2003, 52% of ENGH 0990 students who received final grades matriculated into ENGL 1010 the following semester. These figures are higher than the comparable, previously stated ones for ENGH 0890.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Does the pre-portfolio or the portfolio curriculum better prepare ENGH 0890 students for ENGH 0990?

In the spring of 2003, 65 of the former ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio students enrolled in ENGH 0990. But, regarding all 78 of the former ENGH 0890 students who eventually completed ENGH 0990, 2.56 was their GPA in ENGH 0990. In the spring of 2004, 47 of the former ENGH 0890 portfolio students enrolled in ENGH 0990. But, regarding all 61 of the former ENGH 0890 students who eventually completed ENGH 0990 – now a portfolio curriculum course – 2.76 was their GPA. Because the portfolio student GPA is .2 higher than the pre-portfolio student GPA, perhaps the portfolio curriculum better prepared ENGH 0890 students for ENGH 0990. To reinforce that possible finding, in the fall of 2002, the GPA for the pre-portfolio ENGH 0890 students was 3.06. Then, their GPA in ENGH 0990 was 2.56, a .5 decrease. In comparison in the fall of 2003, the GPA for the portfolio ENGH 0890 students was 2.67. Then, their GPA in ENGH 0990 was 2.76, a .09 increase. This higher GPA in ENGH 0990 may be explained by the ENGH 0890 portfolio curriculum better preparing students for the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum, as compared to how well the ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio curriculum had prepared students for the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio curriculum.

Matriculation into ENGL 1010

Table 8. ENGH 0990: Indicators of Student Success and Failure

Course, Curriculum, Semester	Students Repeating ENGH 0990	Students Receiving Ws or UWs	Students Leaving Campus after Semester	Student GPA
ENGH 0990, Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	9	22	51 (51 is 26% of 194)	2.86
ENGH 0990, Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	7 (Increase of 2)	36 (Increase of 14)	66 (66 is 35% of 189. An increase of 9%.)	2.82 (Decrease of .04 GPA)

In the fall of 2002 in the pre-portfolio curriculum, 172 ENGH 0990 students received final grades and 22 additional ENGH 0990 students received Ws or UWs, making a total of 194 ENGH 0990 students in the sampling. For comparison, in the fall of 2003 in the portfolio curriculum, 153 ENGH 0990 students received final grades and 22 additional ENGH 0990 students received Ws or UWs, making a total of 189 ENGH 0990 students in the sampling. The number of students in the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula and in this research are comparable, in other words.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Is the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum more difficult than the pre-portfolio curriculum?

The same trends found in the ENGH 0890 data are also found in the ENGH 0990 data. Compared to the pre-portfolio curriculum, the number of students in the portfolio curriculum increase in these three categories (see Table 8):

- Students repeating ENGH 0990
- Students receiving Ws and UWs
- Students leaving campus after ENGH 0990

Furthermore, if the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum is more difficult than the pre-portfolio curriculum, the student GPA may decrease in the portfolio curriculum. Therein, the GPA is slightly lower. In Table 8, as compared to Table 7, the difference between the pre-portfolio and portfolio student GPA seems negligible, which may be due to ENGH 0990 students being better motivated to matriculate into ENGL 1010.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Does the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum better prepare ENGH 0990 students for ENGL 1010?

In the spring of 2003, 100 of the former ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio students enrolled in ENGL 1010. Regarding all 78 former ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio students, who eventually completed ENGL 1010, 2.77 was their GPA for ENGL 1010. In the spring of 2004, 79 of the former ENGH 0990 portfolio students enrolled in ENGL 1010. Regarding all 96 former ENGH 0990 portfolio students, who completed ENGL 1010, 3.04 was their GPA. Because the portfolio student GPA is .27 higher than the pre-portfolio student GPA, the portfolio curriculum seems to better prepare ENGH 0990 students for ENGL 1010.

RESEARCH QUESTION: Do ENGH 0990 portfolio students achieve higher grades in ENGL 1010 than the average ENGL 1010 student?

As part of his dissertation research, Eldon McMurray has analyzed some relevant data. According to his data, from 1996 to 2004, 2.8 was the GPA in ENGL 1010 for 27,732 students who had not completed CTRS 1170. In our case study, 3.04 was the GPA in ENGL 1010, regarding the 96 ENGH 0990 portfolio students who matriculated into ENGL 1010. This GPA is above the GPA for the ENGL 1010 (non CTRS 1170) students in Eldon's research. For our ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio students who matriculated into ENGL 1010, their GPA in ENGL 1010 was 2.77. Unfortunately, their GPA is .03 lower than the GPA for the ENGL 1010 (non CTRS 1170) students in Eldon's research. Therefore, the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum apparently better prepares students for ENGL 1010 as compared to the ENGH 0990 pre-portfolio curriculum.

That said, we should also consider that Eldon's large sampling of ENGL 1010 students includes some of our pre-portfolio and portfolio, case-study students who matriculated into ENGL 1010 but who did not complete CTRS 1170. In other words, benefits of the ENGH 0990 portfolio curriculum may be greater than indicated here.

Case Study: Validity of GPA Analysis

In this case study, GPA may indicate whether the pre-portfolio or portfolio curriculum benefits students the most, regarding both ENGH 0890 and 0990. Stated simply, if the portfolio students earn higher grades than the pre-portfolio students in subsequent required composition courses, this suggests that the portfolio curriculum is more beneficial. However, the validity of the GPA data is questionable not only for reasons stated previously and also because of re-applying the idea of representative sampling.

In Table 1, representative and nearly representative samplings are defined. While the information from Table 1 is repeated in Table 9, Table 9 re-applies the idea of a representative sampling. To be exact, in Table 9, the total number of students who receive Us or UWs is considered a population for which a representative sampling number may be derived. To explain by example, in Table 9, 166 ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio students received either Us, or

UWs, or received grades. The target number for a representative sampling of that 166 population is 113. But, only 85 of the previous ENGH 0890 students earn grades in ENGH 0990, far away from a representative sampling. Hence, the average GPA for those students is not representative either. Table 9 embodies applying this logic to successive composition courses.

In Table 9, 13 opportunities exist to create a representative sampling. Each box that contains the word “Total” represents one opportunity to create a representative sampling. Thirteen boxes contain the word “Total.” However, in Table 9, we only have 3 representative samplings, 2 nearly representative samplings, and 7 not representative samplings – bringing into question the trustworthiness of the GPA data in general. Said another way, the validity of GPA findings decrease as students matriculate. Because ENGL 2010/2020 is the last course in the composition sequence, findings regarding it have the least validity. For that reason, findings for that course are not discussed or analyzed herein, despite the fact that empirical data for ENGL 2010/2020 exists in Table 9.

Table 9 Validity of GPA Analysis in Terms of Representative Sampling Sizes

Course, Curriculum, Semester	Enrollment	COURSE 1	COURSE 2	COURSE 3	COURSE 4
		ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990	ENGL 1010	ENGL 2010 & ENGL 2020
ENGH 0890 , Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	Enrollment: 259 Representative Sampling Number: 154	Us/UWs Students: 16 Graded Students: 150 (3.06 GPA) Total: 166 (This is a representative sampling of 259.)	Us/UWs Students: 7 Graded Students: 78 (2.56 GPA) Total: 85 (Not a representative sampling of 166; 113 is.)	Us/UWs Students: 7 Graded Students: 59 (2.9 GPA) Total: 66 (Not representative.)	Us/UWs Students: 3 Graded Students: 32 (2.93 GPA) Total: 35 (Not representative.)
ENGH 0990 , Pre-Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2002	Enrollment: 469 Representative Sampling Number: 211	(Not Applicable)	Us/UWs Students: 22 Graded Students: 172 (2.86 GPA) Total: 194 (This is nearly repre- sentative of 469.)	Us/UWs Students: 8 Graded Students: 118 (2.77 GPA) Total: 134 (This is a representative sampling of 194; higher than 129.)	Us/UWs Students: 2 Graded Students: 72 (3.21 GPA) Total: 37 (Not representative.)
ENGH 0890 , Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	Enrollment: 208 Representative Sampling Number: 135	Us/UWs Students: 18 Graded Students: 144 (2.67 GPA) Total: 162 (This is a representative sampling of 208.)	Us/UWs Students: 6 Graded Students: 61 (2.76 GPA) Total: 67 (Not a representative sampling of 162; 114 is.)	Us/UWs Students: 2 Graded Students: 28 (2.77 GPA) Total: 30 (Not representative.)	(Not Available)

ENGH 0990, Portfolio Curriculum, Fall of 2003	Enrollment: 409 Representative Sampling Number: 198	(Not Applicable)	Us/UWs Students: 36 Graded Students: 153 (2.82 GPA) Total: 189 (This is nearly repre- sentative of 409.)	Us/UWs Students: 10 Graded Students: 96 (3.04 GPA) Total: 106 (This is not a represent- ative sampling of 189; 126 is.)	Us/UWs Students: 0 Graded Students: 35 (3.17 GPA) Total: 35 (Not representative.)
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Case-Study as a Reflection of Grades and Teachers

During data gathering and analysis, the opportunity presented itself to organize GPAs in rank order according to teachers and sections. In Table 10, GPA data is organized by basic writing classes. Also, in Table 10, section numbers and teachers names are found although data is still organized into four larger groups:

- ENGH 0890 Fall 2002 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum
- ENGH 0890 Fall 2003 Portfolio Curriculum
- ENGH 0990 Fall 2002 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum
- ENGH 0990 Fall 2003 Portfolio Curriculum

Therefore, in Table 10, the left most column lists the four sections with the highest GPAs regarding the aforementioned four general groups. In general, seven or eight classes compose each of the general groups (see Table 2).

RESEARCH QUESTION: Is a ENGH 0890 or 0990 class who earns a high collective GPA from their basic writing teacher more likely to complete subsequent composition courses with higher grades, compared to classes who earn lower collective GPAs from basic composition teachers?

Of the 16 classes with the highest GPAs (far left column in Table 10), only 5 classes appear in the top rankings found for the next required course in composition. Next is an example of, and explanation for, how to read Table 1.

Regarding the first class in the first column in Table 10, among the ENGH 0890 pre-portfolio classes in this case study, ENGH 0890 Section 601 taught by Markovic ranked first with a GPA of 3.3. Her class (“601 Markovic”) is found in the second column under the heading “0990 GPA Ranking.” Specifically, students from her class had an average 2.81 GPA when completing ENGH 0990. That GPA ranked them second among the other comparable groups of students who completed ENGH 0990 in this case study.

Based on the limited data in Table 10, if ENGH 0890 or 0990 students earn a high GPA as a class, not necessarily will those students do well in subsequent composition courses. To reinforce that finding, only one teacher’s name (i.e., Matzen in bold print in Table 10) consistently appears in the rankings of student GPAs in all required composition courses after the initial composition course (ENGH 0890 or 0990). But, that same teacher’s name only appears once in the far left column (see ***ENGH 0990 Fall 2002 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum*** in Table 10), which reinforces the earlier finding: higher grades in ENGH 0890 or 0990 for a group of students do not necessarily mean higher grades for the same group in subsequent required composition courses. Instead, the reverse seems more likely. Only 5 of the 16 classes (i.e., 31%) with higher, initial GPAs (far left column in Table 10) are the same classes who earn higher GPAs in the next composition course (second column in Table 10). These 5 classes appear in italic printing in the far left column in Table 10.

Table 10. Rankings of GPA in Required Composition Courses

<i>ENGH 0890 Fall 2002 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i>
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0890 GPA Ranking	0990 GPA Ranking	1010 GPA Ranking	2010/2020 GPA Ranking
(1) 3.3 (601 Markovic)	(1) 2.94 (004 Williams)	(1) 3.56 (004 Williams)	(1) 3.85 (003 Bender)
(2) 3.23 (009 Curtis)	(2) 2.81 (601 Markovic)	(2) 3.05 (005 Matzen)	(2) 3.81 (005 Matzen)
(3) 3.03 (002 Markovic)	(3) 2.56 (009 Curtis)	(3) 2.94 (601 Markovic)	(3) 3.28 (002 Markovic)
(4) 3.03 (003 Bender)	(4) 2.53 (006 Marrott)	(4) 2.79 (002 Markovic)	(4) 3.03 (004 Williams)
	(4) 2.53 (005 Matzen)		
<i>ENGH 0890 Fall 2003 Portfolio Curriculum</i>			
0890 GPA Ranking	0990 GPA Ranking	1010 GPA Ranking	
(1) 3.16 (007 Curtis)	(1) 3.18 (004 Matzen)	(1) 3.47 (007 Curtis)	
(2) 3.1 (002 Bender)	(2) 2.92 (003 Williams)	(2) 3.07 (004 Matzen)	
(3) 2.98 (601 Stout)	(3) 2.85 (006 Marrott)	(3) 3.0 (002 Bender)	
(4) 2.78 (003 Williams)	(4) 2.75 (007 Curtis)	(4) 2.94 (006 Marrott)	
<i>ENGH 0990 Fall 2002 Pre-Portfolio Curriculum</i>			
0990 GPA Ranking	1010 GPA Ranking	2010/2020 GPA Ranking	
(1) 3.28 (001 Willburn)	(1) 3.19 (015 Tyler)	(1) 3.58 (602 Smith)	
(2) 3.23 (015 Tyler)	(2) 3.06 (X01 Williams)	(2) 3.38 (005 Matzen)	
(3) 2.94 (602 Smith)	(3) 3.05 (005 Matzen)	(3) 3.32 (008 Beck)	
(4) 2.90 (005 Matzen)	(4) 3.01 (009 Bender)	(4) 3.28 (007 Jeffery)	
<i>ENGH 0990 Fall 2003 Portfolio Curriculum</i>			
0990 GPA Ranking	1010 GPA Ranking	2010/2020 GPA Ranking	
(1) 3.37 (011 Bender)	(1) 3.25 (013 Beck)	(1) 3.75 (602 Smith)	
(2) 3.31 (001 Willburn)	(2) 3.17 (001 Willburn)	(2) 3.7 (X01 Williams)	
(3) 2.95 (013 Beck)	(3) 3.16 (006 Matzen)	(3) 3.67 (011 Bender)	
(4) 2.91 (602 Smith)	(4) 3.07 (018 Tyler)	(4) 3.36 (006 Matzen)	

RESEARCH QUESTION: When considering student grades in required composition courses (ENGH 0890, ENGH 0990, ENGL 1010, and ENGL 2010/2020) are adjunct faculty or tenure-track and tenured faculty more effective teachers?

Considering all the sections in this case study, 14 adjunct faculty members (48%) and 15 tenure-track or tenured faculty members are represented (52%) (see Table 2). In Table 10, when we review the teachers names in columns 2, 3, and 4, we find the following is true:

- 23 tenure-track or tenured faculty members are represented in columns 2, 3, and 4 (62%).
- 14 adjunct faculty members are represented in columns 2, 3, and 4 (38%).

These percentages are encouraging for suggesting that quality teaching is being done by adjunct faculty members as well as by tenure-track or tenured faculty members.

Conclusions and Implications

This case-study highlights the significance of poor retention and poor consecutive matriculation regarding attempts to measure the benefits of the ENGH 0890 and 0990 portfolio curriculum by analyzing grades in subsequent, required composition courses. Poor retention means that, because significant numbers of students are leaving the college after completing a composition course, proving that one composition course prepares students for the next becomes difficult. In addition, because the students who are retained often do not matriculate through composition courses in consecutive semesters, the assumption that students are transferring composition knowledge from one course to the next is weakened.

One implication of this case study may be that the department participate more in efforts to retain students, and a second implication may be that the department consider requiring ENGH 0890 and 0990 students to matriculate through composition courses in consecutive semesters. Both implications suggest a better developed or more focused advisement program for ENGH 0890 and 0990 students than presently exists. To improve retention through advisement, in other words, the department may want to propose, support, and/or develop a more intensive advisement program, one supplemented by peer advisement and/or mentoring program for instance, for select full-time ENGH 0890 and 0990 students. It seems reasonable to focus on select full-time students, first, because full-time students are demonstrating a greater commitment to their education; second, because these students may find consecutive matriculation through composition courses and intensive advisement desirable; and third, because the limited resources in the School may make focusing on some, not all, ENGH 0890 and 0990 students, a necessity.

Perhaps ideally speaking, too, placement into ENGH 0890 and 0990 should improve and/or consecutive matriculation should be required, prior to completing a second case study or a case study similar to this one. With improved placement and matriculation, validity would increase in terms of analyzing the grades in subsequent composition courses after ENGH 0890 and/or ENGH 0990, and presumably, the demonstrated benefits of the ENGH 0890 and 0990 portfolio curriculum would also increase.

But, if resistance to a policy change exists within the college, school, or department – regarding requiring and enforcing consecutive matriculation in ENGH 0890, ENGH 0990, and ENGL 1010 (and ENGL 2010/2020) – the department may conduct a case study in which portfolio students are divided into two groups: those who complete composition courses consecutively and those who do not. This case study would probably show that consecutive matriculation means higher GPAs in subsequent composition courses. (The data for such an analysis exists in this case-study although that analysis has not been completed due to time limitations.)

Based on the limited evidence in this case study, although the portfolio curriculum for ENGH 0890 and 0990 seems more difficult as compared to the pre-portfolio curriculum, the portfolio curriculum seems most beneficial to students. That is, the portfolio curriculum seems to better prepare ENGH 0890 students for ENGH 0990 and ENGH 0990 students for ENGL 1010 as compared to the pre-portfolio curriculum. Nevertheless, ENGH 0890 may be a “discouraging” course, which again emphasizes the need for accurate placement into that course.

In the pre-portfolio and portfolio curricula, regarding ENGH 0890 and 0990, adjunct faculty seem to be teaching students as well as tenure-track or tenured faculty if GPAs are true indicators. This finding may or may not be reinforced by data analyses regarding the program-wide questionnaires and SRIs. Also, at this time, the relevant program-wide questionnaire data is not available. To use the program-wide questionnaires to validate teaching practices for both adjunct and tenure-track or tenured faculty may necessitate a policy change.

Perhaps a policy change should be considered so that the Chair may review all the teachers’ individual results, regarding the program-wide questionnaires for the purpose of acknowledging and awarding “best practices” of teachers (not for the purpose of negatively influencing hiring or tenure processes). If this wider context was developed, along with peer observation reports, contract faculty would be better positioned to promote adjunct

faculty members in terms of writing recommendation letters for them, assisting their qualifying for full-time faculty positions, and supporting their candidacy in advance degree programs.

Said another way, this case study suggests that alternative, empirical measures exist for teacher effectiveness as compared to relying solely on SRIs as the empirical measure. Because select items in the program-wide questionnaire focus specifically on measuring students' perceptions of composition lessons, program-wide questionnaire results for individual teachers may have greater validity than the SRIs regarding promoting or advancing the careers of individual teachers. That is, the department may consider using the program-wide questionnaires to validate good teaching, to motivate teachers to teach well, and to help teachers advance their careers.