

RE: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses: Curriculum: Student Motivation; Online Curriculum; and the Writing Center

DATE: 16 November 2004

This is the second memo to focus on the data gathered with the program-wide survey: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses. Here, the topics are Curriculum: Student Motivation; Online Curriculum; and the Writing Center. In the attached Tables 1 and 2, summative results for relevant questions are found for ENGH 0890 and 0990 regarding the spring of 2003, spring of 2004, and the fall of 2003. The following results are often but not always interpreted in light of the following context:

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Note</i>
Spring 2003	The previous curriculum was in effect. (Not every course had an online hour scheduled but all courses had a computer lab hour scheduled.)
Spring 2004	The program-wide portfolio curriculum was in effect. (All course had an online hour and computer lab hour scheduled.)

Here, we have an opportunity to compare one spring semester with another: the spring 2003 semester represents the previous curriculum and the spring 2004, the new portfolio curriculum, to be referred to as “portfolio curriculum” hereafter.

Fall 2003 The first portfolio curriculum semester.

CURRICULUM: Student motivation

In general, we have used the same placement system during the three semester.

18. I should have been placed in this course.						
ENGH 0890			ENGH 0990			
Agree	I don't know.	I should have been enrolled in a higher course.	Agree	I don't know.	I should have been enrolled in a higher course.	
54%	20%	20%	67%	15%	13%	SPR 03
59%	11%	25%	65%	16%	18%	SPR 04
53%	22%	21%	62%	14%	21%	FALL 03

Regarding the three semesters, I have calculated that 55% was the average percent of ENGH 0890 students who agreed with their placement, and 65% was the average for ENGH 0990 students. As if by coincidence, Jeff Hoyt found that 55% of ENGH 0890 students were placed accurately and 63% of ENGH 0990 students were placed accurately when correlating DRP and COMPASS placement scores to final course grades as he did for 431 ENGH 0890 and 0990 students in the spring of 2003 (Matzen & Hoyt, 2004, pp. 4, 6). We seem to have a convergence of students' perceptions and quantitative data analysis here. *Critical Question:* If unfair placement affects our students in negative ways, can we change the current placement system for our students? Currently, not only are many of our students misplaced but also they feel that they are misplaced.

Their perception may affect their motivation to do well in ENGH 0890 as well as ENGH 0990. About motivations and placement, more of the ENGH 0990 students agree with their placement perhaps because they are not in ENGH 0890, and likewise, fewer ENGH 0890 students agree with their placement perhaps because they are in the “lowest” English course. In general, it may be reasonable to assume that a fairer placement system may improve students' motivations and that the current, generally unfair,

placement system may discourage students doing well in ENGH 0890 or ENGH 0990, both five-credit courses.

Regarding the previously mentioned data analysis completed by Jeff Hoyt, the strongest correlation between items on the questionnaire and final course grades involved the following question.

16. What percent of assignments did you complete during this course?		
ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990	
All Assignments	All Assignments	
42%	53%	SPR 03
57%	47%	SPR 04
47%	45%	FALL 03

As read in the published findings, relevant to the Spring of 2003, “Only 42% of ENGH 0890 students and only 53% of ENGH 0990 students reported completing all of their assignments. A large decline in GPA is found among the students who report completing less than all assignments” (Matzen & Hoyt, 2004, p. 6). Possibly, many of the uncompleted assignments are online assignments. But apparently whether our students are experiencing the previous curriculum (no online hour) or the portfolio curriculum (an online hour) and whether they are in ENGH 0890 or 0990, completing their assignments seems problematic. By inference, their final course grades are being affected.

Critical Question: How can we motivate more students to complete more assignments? And are the online assignments, the ones not being completed?

Another indication that our students may have poor motivation may be found in their not attending all of their classes.

15. What percent of classes did you attend?				
ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990		ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990
All Classes	All Classes		Almost All	Almost All
29%	35%	SPR 03	66%	55%
25%	34%	SPR 04	65%	58%
37%	32%	FALL 03	57%	62%

Regarding the “all classes” response, more ENGH 0990 students apparently are attending “all classes” as compared to ENGH 0890 students, which may be another indication that motivation is a greater problem among ENGH 0890 students.

For these three semesters regarding ENGH 0890 and 0990, approximately a third of our students are attending all of their classes. When we consider the response of “almost all” regarding how many classes are being attended, we may want to ask ourselves if having about two-thirds of our students attending “all” and “almost all” of their classes is a satisfactory rate of attendance. Attending “all classes” in the portfolio curriculum is defined as three to four, 50-minute meetings a week in either ENGH 0890 or ENGH 0990.

Critical Question: How can we motivate our students to attend more classes? By scheduling class meetings to last longer than 50 minutes?

Perhaps, another indication that curricular structures are not helping students' motivations may be found in their responses to the following question:

17. ENGH 0890 and 0990 credit hours do not count toward graduation. This situation....						
ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990		
Is ok, I am reviewing my high school English.	Is not ok because I am learning new skills.	Does not matter to me		Is ok, I am reviewing my high school English.	Is not ok because I am learning new skills.	Does not matter to me
31%	52%	13%	SPR 04	28%	57%	9%
28%	53%	15%	FALL 03	25%	61%	12%

Note: This question was not asked in the spring of 2003. Also, percentages do not add up to 100% because this table does not include students who responded to other questions but not this one.

Although a majority of ENGH 0890 and 0990 students indicate that they would like their course to be credit-bearing for graduation purposes, more ENGH 0990 students express that desire than ENGH 0890. This may indicate that more ENGH 0990 students are more self-assured about the worthiness of ENGH 0990, and by implication, these ENGH 0990 students may be better motivated to persist toward graduation. We may interpret, moreover, the response “does not matter to me” as suggesting that some ENGH 0890 and 0990 students have difficulty associating their course with “goal attainment” or graduation. The fact that their courses are non-credit bearing, for graduation purposes, may suggest to them that they are not “college material.”

Critical Question: Can we improve our student's motivation by re-starting our efforts to have ENGH 0990 count as elective credit?

ONLINE CURRICULUM

I think that the best way to interpret the next table is to compare the Agreement to the Disagreement column. With that comparison in mind, more of our ENGH 0890 and 0990 students “agree” that the online assignments are helpful. Two to three times as many students agree that the assignments are helpful as compared to those who disagree.

I am reluctant to interpret this data further for these reasons:

- Sampling sizes per online program are relatively small.
- During the spring of 2003, an online instruction hour was not scheduled.
- Many contract and non-contract faculty members are still refining their uses of online technology.
- Many of our students are first encountering online technology in our courses so that their “learning to use computers” and their “learning to write papers” may be difficult to distinguish.

8a-c. Having assignments due online helped me develop my writing skills: (Online program is named.)	
ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990

	No Response	Agreement	Disagreement	No Response	Agreement	Disagreement	
WebCT	20%	60%	20%	45%	42%	13%	SPR 03
	51%	43%	7%	38%	40%	22%	SPR 04
	25%	62%	13%	52%	40%	9%	FALL 03
Hacker	<PH Words in Question.>			<PH Words in Question.>			SPR 03
	44%	47%	9%	28%	48%	24%	SPR 04
	56%	30%	14%	15%	72%	13%	FALL 03
Longman	73%	15%	12%	68%	24%	8%	SPR 03
	77%	17%	5%	40%	42	18%	SPR 04
	72%	21%	7%	31%	56%	13%	FALL 03

Note: In this table, the percentages under the heading No Response represents the total of students who responded with “no response” or “have not used.” Also, the percentages under the heading Agreement represent the total of students who responded with “strongly agree” and “agree.” Likewise, the percentages under the heading Disagreement represent the total of students who responded with “strongly disagree” or “disagree.”

In the following question, we assume, all students are representing their perception of the usefulness of the hour that is scheduled in a computer lab for all courses and in all three semesters.

9. I think meeting in the computer lab was valuable.								
ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990				
No Response	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	No Response	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
2%	54%	37%	7%	4%	57%	32%	7%	SPR 03
5%	53%	29%	12%	3%	61%	29%	7%	SPR 04
3%	45%	41%	11%	2%	66%	28%	5%	FALL 03

Note: The percentages under the Agree heading are the total of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses, and the percentages under the Disagree heading are the total of the “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses.

Responses to this question seem to indicate that a majority of our students agree with this statement: “I think meeting in the computer lab was valuable.” It seems noteworthy, too, that during the two portfolio curriculum semesters (SPR 04 and FALL 03), more ENGH 0990 students find the computer lab valuable as compared to the ENGH 0990 students who find it valuable when experiencing the previous curriculum (SPR 03). Also, for all the semesters, more ENGH 0990 students find the computer lab useful than ENGH 0890 students. Here again, I am examining the percentages under the Agree heading. Perhaps ENGH 0990 “portfolio students” find the lab valuable or useful because the portfolio curriculum encourages more independent learning, conducive to a computer lab setting.

Critical Question: How are we to interpret that more ENGH 0990 students value the computer lab as compared to ENGH 0890 students?

Furthermore, quite a few – approximately a third – of our ENGH 0890 and 0990 students are neutral or unsure that the computer lab is valuable!?

Critical Question: How may we help ENGH 0890 and 0990 students to value their time in the lab more?

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center should play a crucial and supportive role in the basic composition program because basic writers often need “line-by-line” help when writing and revising papers and because basic writing teachers do not have the time to individually tutor their students. With that thought in mind, we may anticipate that more of our ENGH 0890 students would use the Writing Center than our ENGH 0990 students because supposedly our ENGH 0890 students need more help writing than our ENGH 0990 students.

13. For this course, I used the Writing Center.						
ENGH 0890			ENGH 0990			
More than 4 times	2 to 3 times	Never or Once	More than 4 times	2 to 3 times	Never or Once	
24%	22%	52%	32%	35%	30%	SPR 03
16%	32%	49%	19%	28%	50%	SPR 04
13%	26%	59%	23%	29%	45%	FALL 03

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because this table does not include students who responded to other questions but not this one.

From our perspective, a basic writer not using the Writing Center may be undesirable, and a basic writer using the Writing Center once, not to return again, may also be undesirable. It may be troubling to us that more ENGH 0890 students only used the Writing Center once or not at all as compared to ENGH 0990 students for the Spring of 2003 and Fall of 2003. In general, approximately 49% to 59% of ENGH 0890 students are not going to the Writing Center or are going once, perhaps to fulfill a teacher’s requiring at least one tutorial. Reinforcing the notion that ENGH 0990 students are using the Writing Center more than ENGH 0890 students is the fact that more ENGH 0990 students, for the three semesters in the table, are using the Center more than 4 times as compared to comparable figures for ENGH 0890 students.

14. The tutors at the Writing Center (or OWL) helped me to improve my writing in this course.						
ENGH 0890			ENGH 0990			
Agree	Disagree	Not applicable to me	Agree	Disagree	Not applicable to me	
64%	9%	22%	68%	14%	13%	SPR 03
48%	13%	35%	52%	12%	35%	SPR 04
54%	11%	30%	63%	11%	23%	FALL 03

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because this table does not include students who responded to other questions but not this one. The percentages under the Agree heading are the total of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses, and the percentages under the Disagree heading are the total of the “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses.

Curiously, the number of students who agreed that tutoring at the Writing Center (or OWL) helped them was highest in the “previous curriculum” or the old curriculum represented by the spring of 2003 semester. Also, more ENGH 0990 students than ENGH 0890 students agreed that tutoring at the Writing Center (or OWL) helped them when comparing ENGH 0890 to ENGH 0990.

Critical Question: How can we better utilize the Writing Center in general? Why does it seem that fewer ENGH 0890 students use the Center and are less satisfied with it as compared to ENGH 0990 students? How can we reassure ourselves that our students believe that they are receiving satisfactory tutoring and are in fact that they are receiving it?

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Curriculum: Students' Motivation

- How can we motivate more students to complete more assignments? And are the online assignments, the ones not being completed?
- How can we motivate our students to attend more classes? How can we motivate our students to attend more classes? By scheduling class meetings to last longer than 50 minutes?
- If unfair placement affects our students in negative ways, can we change the current placement system for our students? Currently, not only are many of our students misplaced but also they feel that they are misplaced.
- Can we improve our student's motivation by re-starting our efforts to have ENGH 0990 count as elective credit?

Online Curriculum

- How are we to interpret that more ENGH 0990 students value the computer lab as compared to ENGH 0890 students?
- How may we help ENGH 0890 and 0990 students to value their time in the lab more?

Writing Center

- How can we better utilize the Writing Center in general? Why does it seem that fewer ENGH 0890 students, as compared to 0990 students, use the Center in general and are satisfied with the tutoring when they do go? How can we reassure ourselves that our students believe that they are receiving satisfactory tutoring and are in fact that they are receiving it?

Reference

- _____ Matzen, R., & Hoyt, J. (2004, Fall). Basic writing placement with holistically scored essays: Research evidence. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 28(1), 2-4,6, 8, 10, 12-13.