

RE: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses: Support for a Faculty Mentoring Program, Matriculation, Retention

DATE: 15 December 2004

This is the third memo to focus on the data gathered with the program-wide survey: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses. Here, student responses have implications for a faculty mentoring program, matriculation, and retention. In the attached Tables 1 and 2, you will find summative results for relevant questions. Analysis of results follow regarding ENGH 0890 and 0990 and the spring of 2003, spring of 2004, and fall of 2003. Analysis may be read in light of this context:

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Note</i>
<b>Spring 2003</b>	<b>The previous curriculum was in effect.</b>
<b>Spring 2004</b>	<b>The program-wide portfolio curriculum was in effect.</b>

[The spring semesters represent comparing the previous curriculum to the program-wide portfolio curriculum, both semesters having comparable students we assume.]

<b>Fall 2003</b>	<b>The first portfolio curriculum semester. [“Portfolio curriculum” refers to the program-wide portfolio curriculum begun in fall 2003.]</b>
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## **SUPPORT FOR A FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAM**

According Jeff Hoyt in “First Year Retention at Utah Valley State College: A Follow-Up Study” (January 2001), the following figures characterize retention of freshmen regarding the fall of 1999. Jeff’s full report is available at <http://www.uvsc.edu/ir/retention/fall9900nr.html>.

- “Data in system show that percentage of students in the fall 1999 cohort who were still enrolled Fall 2000 was about 41%.”
- “The fall to fall retention rate for all degree-seeking, first-time freshmen students, who are not serving mission, joining the military, and transferring is about 62% (including part-time students.”
- “The retention for all first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen is 68%”

On our questionnaire, approximately 51% of ENGH 0890 and 0990 students claim that experiences outside of class negatively affected their academic process during the course, experiences such as personal, health, family, or financial difficulties. This 51% statistic, I think needs to be examined in light of Jeff’s finding that about 62% of freshmen return to campus for their sophomore year regarding the 1999 cohort. In other words, in general, the college has problems retaining its students, and this problem is most evident between the freshmen and sophomore year. Because a majority of our students are freshmen and about half of a freshmen class take one or more remedial course, our department and school should accept some responsibility for retaining them.

Regarding our students having hardships outside of class, apparently that burden is shared almost equally by ENGH 0890 and 0990 students, neither group being significantly more troubled than the other.

<b>20. Experiences outside of class negatively affected my academic progress during this course (such as personal, health, family, or financial difficulties).</b>						
<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>			
No Response	Agree	Disagree	No Response	Agree	Disagree	
2%	49%	49%	4%	48%	48%	<b>SPR 03</b>
4%	56%	40%	2%	46%	52%	<b>SPR 04</b>
2%	53%	45%	3%	54%	43%	<b>FALL 03</b>

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.

Regarding our students in the spring of 2003, Jeff and I correlated the questionnaire results with final grades and timed-essay scores, and stated:

The second most influential variable on course grades [besides assignment completion] is having adverse events – personal, health, family, or financial difficulties – outside of class negatively [affect] academic progress. (Matzen & Hoyt, 2004, p. 6)

In other words, the results of question 20 suggest that we – the School of General Academics – need to provide our students with support services to help them address their personal, health, family, and financial difficulties.

*Critical Question:* How can our department address our students needing help with adverse events – personal, health, family, or financial difficulties?

In the review of literature about first-generation students, bridge, transition, development, remedial, or first-year “orientation” programs, a number of strategies have been found to retain students successfully who are at risk, peer advisement and faculty mentoring being two strategies among others. Questionnaire items 19a and 19b may suggest whether our students would be more responsive to peer advisement or faculty mentoring.

<b>19b. I am encouraged to stay in college because I feel free to ask my English teacher for help and advice.</b>						
<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>			
No Response	Agree	Disagree	No Response	Agree	Disagree	
4%	72%	24%	6%	80%	14%	<b>SPR 03</b>
4%	84%	12%	4%	76%	20%	<b>SPR 04</b>
7%	69%	25%	5%	77%	18%	<b>FALL 03</b>

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,” “disagree,” and “makes no differences” responses.

In general, whether the course is ENGH 0890 or 0990, a majority of our students suggest a willingness to ask faculty members for help. This willingness may be a basis for a faculty mentoring program that addresses our student’s needing help with hardships outside of class. This willingness, reflected in “agree” percentages ranging from 69% to 84%, is superior to comparable percentages regarding peer support (see question 19a).

*Critical Question:* Will our research evidence and the review of literature about faculty mentoring persuade our dean to support a pilot study into the effectiveness of faculty mentoring?

This fall semester, I postponed proposing a pilot for a faculty mentoring program until a time when full support was forthcoming from the dean’s office.

<b>19a. I am encouraged to stay in college because of the support of my peers in this course.</b>						
<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>			
No Response	Agree	Disagree	No Response	Agree	Disagree	
11%	44%	45%	11%	49%	40%	<b>SPR 03</b>
10%	63%	17%	9%	51%	40%	<b>SPR 04</b>
8%	61%	31%	7%	54%	39%	<b>FALL 03</b>

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,” “disagree,” and “makes no differences” responses.

In ENGH 0890 and 0990, students who felt the least support from their peers are in the previous curriculum (see spring 2003, ENGH 0890 and 0990,) and those who felt the most support from their peers are in the portfolio curriculum (see spring 2004 and fall 2003, ENGH 0890 and 0990). Perhaps, here we are finding that the portfolio curriculum better supports process-approach pedagogy and collegiality among students as suggested in an earlier memo. Noteworthy, too, is that apparently more collegiality exists among ENGH 0890 students as compared to 0990 students.

## **MATRICULATION**

<b>22. In my next semester, I plan to enroll in ENGL 1010.</b>								
<b>ENGH 0890</b>				<b>ENGH 0990</b>				
No Response	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Response	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	
2%	41%	15%	15%	7%	81%	2%	12%	<b>SPR 03</b>
4%	31%	24%	41%	1%	75%	2%	22%	<b>SPR 04</b>
3%	26%	38%	33%	3%	77%	4%	16%	<b>FALL 03</b>

As may be expected, our ENGH 0990 students have a greater expectation of matriculating into ENGL 1010 than our ENGH 0890 students. ENGH 0990 students are more than twice as likely to have that expectation as compared to ENGH 0890 students. Perhaps, a majority of our ENGH 0890 students, however, would not expect to matriculate into ENGL 1010 because ENGH 0890 is a prerequisite for ENGH 0990.

Then again, an ENGH 0890 student may retake the DRP and COMPASS tests to “place” into or “qualify” for ENGL 1010. This possibility may explain why 41% and 33% of ENGH 0890 students were not sure about enrolling in ENGL 1010 (see the “undecided” category for the spring 2004 and fall 2003). Another explanation for the “undecided” responses for ENGH 0890 students is that the question

apparently suggests to them that they may enroll in ENGL 1010 after ENGH 0890. Perhaps, considering that possibility for the first time as they completed the questionnaire, some students responded with “undecided.” Or were the “undecided” students considering the possibility of retaking the DRP and COMPASS when answering this question?

Regarding “undecided” ENGH 0890 portfolio students, both 41% and 33% are a stark increase as compared to 15% for the previous curriculum. Note that 15% is comparable to the “undecided” totals for ENGH 0990. Perhaps, ENGH 0890 portfolio students felt that their learning in the portfolio curriculum merited their considering a “move” into ENGL 1010. Hence, the higher “undecided” numbers.

*Critical Question:* Should we change question 22 because we believe that ENGH 0890 students would generally not have the expectation of matriculating into ENGH 0990 or because we are not sure how best to interpret responses?

**RETENTION**

As stated earlier, about 63% of the freshmen class does not return for the sophomore year. So we might expect approximately 63% of ENGH 0990 students to NOT expect to continue their education at UVSC.

21. I plan to continue my education at UVSC.								
ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990				
No Response	Agree	Disagree	Transfer/Mission	No Response	Agree	Disagree	Transfer/Mission	
3%	78%	3%	16%	6%	81%	2%	11%	<b>SPR 03</b>
3%	84%	4%	9%	2%	78%	2%	15%	<b>SPR 04</b>
2%	87%	2%	10%	2%	86%	3%	9%	<b>FALL 03</b>

Note: Under the heading Transfer/Mission, students who have one of the following two responses are combined: “I plan to transfer” and “I plan to go on a religious mission.” For both ENGH 0890 and 0990 courses, however, the range of responses for “I plan to go on religious mission” range from .7% to 2.5%.

What is curious about both ENGH 0890 and 0990 students is the large number who self-report an expectation to continue at UVSC. *Critical Question:* Are our basic writers more likely, than the average college student, to expect to continue at UVSC?

Also, according Jeff Hoyt in “First Year Retention at Utah Valley State College: A Follow-Up Study” (January 2001), 31% of non-returning first time freshmen explain their absence by choosing to serve a mission. Yet, according to our questionnaire, from .7% to 2.5% of our students expect to begin a mission after their spring 2003, spring 2004, or fall 2003 semesters. *Critical Question:* Do significantly fewer of our students really plan to serve a mission as compared to other freshmen?

**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**

Support for Faculty Mentoring Program

- How can our department address our students needing help with adverse events—personal, health, family, or financial difficulties?
- Will our research evidence and the review of literature about faculty mentoring persuade our

dean to support a pilot study into the effectiveness of faculty mentoring?

#### Matriculation

- Should we change question 22 because we believe that ENGH 0890 students would generally not have the expectation of matriculating into ENGH 0990 or because we are not sure how best to interpret responses?

#### Retention

- Are our basic writers more likely, than the average college student, to expect to continue at UVSC?
- Do significantly fewer of our students really plan to serve a mission as compared to other freshmen?

#### 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.