Does Introductory Writing Instruction Help Students To Succeed At Montclair State University?

Sean Molloy

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons, and the Language and Literacy Education Commons
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Does Introductory Writing Instruction Help Students To Succeed
At Montclair State University?

by

Sean Molloy

A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts in English with a Concentration in Writing Studies
August 2010

The College of Humanities
And Social Sciences
Department of English

Certified by:

Dr. Marietta Morrissey
Dean of the College of Humanities
And Social Sciences
August 19, 2010

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Emily J. Isaacs, Thesis Sponsor
Dr. Jessica Restaino, Committee Member
Dr. Melinda Knight, Committee Member
Daniel Bronson, English Department Chair
Does Introductory Writing Instruction Help Students to Succeed at Montclair State University?

ABSTRACT: This study examines whether Montclair State University (MSU) students who were placed into an introductory writing course between 2005 and 2009 later succeeded as measured by retention rates, academic advancement and available grade data. While available data was limited, retention rates and grade data suggest that most of these students have succeeded so far at MSU. The study also submitted an online survey to former introductory writing course students which asked whether they believe that their experience in that course was an actual contributing cause to their academic success. Survey responses of 68 students confirm that most believe the course made them stronger writers and helped them to succeed at MSU. In particular, these students say they learned a number of writing concepts and skills in the introductory course that were actually useful to them in other writing courses.
DOES INTRODUCTORY WRITING INSTRUCTION HELP STUDENTS TO SUCCEED AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY?

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by

SEAN MOLLOY

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2010
Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr. Steve Johnson, the Director of MSU's Office of Institutional Research and his associate Fenghua Peng for their kind assistance and guidance. Professor Melinda Knight and Professor Jessica Restaino have taught me an awful lot about teaching writing; both also gave up a day of their summers to read a long draft of this thesis on short notice and both provided me with invaluable insights. Professor Restaino also helped to hatch and shape the ideas and approach for this study in her awesome Composition Theory class two years ago.

Mostly, I need to thank Professor Emily Isaacs. It's easy to dig around in other people's backyards, but much scarier to dig around in your own. Doctor Isaacs patiently allows even her most difficult students to dig around in and to question the First Year Writing Program which she has administered for a decade now. Doctor Isaacs does not hesitate to submit her own work to repeated scrutiny (and she often initiates such scrutiny herself) because she is a caring teacher, a confident and careful scholar and a courageous researcher.
Table of Contents

I. Introduction: Is Introductory Instruction Worth Its Costs?.................................1

II. Overview: Methods, Findings, and Conclusions....................................................4

A. Have the 2005 to 2009 ENWR 100 Students Succeeded So Far at MSU? .......... 4
B. Did ENWR 100 Help These Students to Succeed?.............................................. 7

III. Background: Introductory Writing Instruction at MSU..................................10

A. Success at MSU: Explosive Growth and Rising Graduation Rates .................... 10
B. The First Year Writing Program at MSU............................................................. 11
C. Introductory Writing Instruction at MSU from 1975 to 2009.............................. 12
D. ENWR 100 Students: Fighting To Succeed at MSU.......................................... 16
E. Placement Testing at MSU; Building a Body of Programmatic Knowledge........... 18

IV. Do ENWR 100 students succeed at MSU?..........................................................19

A. ENWR 100 students Had High Retention Rates over Two, Three and Four Years.. 19
B. The Fall 2005 ENWR 100 Students Have Progressed Toward Graduation......... 22
C. 2002 MSU Freshmen With Low SAT Verbal Scores Had High Retention Rates... 24
D. Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Students Succeeded In ENWR 100 and College Writing I... 25
   1. Most Fall 2007 Students Succeeded in ENWR 100 Itself................................... 25
   2. Fall 2007 Students Who Failed ENWR 100 Did Not Succeed at MSU............... 26
   3. Many Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Students With “NC” Grades Did Not Succeed........... 27
   4. ENWR 100 Students Struggled but Were Mostly Successful in College Writing I...31
E. 2007 ENWR 100 Students Were More Successful Than Mainstreamed Students.... 33

V. Did ENWR 100 Help Students to Succeed at MSU?...........................................35

A. Students in this Survey Believe ENWR 100 Did Help Them............................... 35
B. Students Learned Writing Skills and Concepts in ENWR 100............................... 38
C. ENWR 100 Students Needed the Skills They Learned in ENWR 100............... 40
D. ENWR 100 Was More of a Barrier for Students Who Repeated It..................... 45
E. Individual ENWR 100 Instructors Seem To Impact Student Success....................49

VI. Conclusion: Introductory Writing Courses Can Be Shown to Promote Student Success..........................................................53

Works Cited..................................................................................................................57

Appendix A – Student Survey Email Invitation Form (Approved by IRB 11/5/09)

Appendix B – Student Online Survey Form (Approved by IRB 11/5/09)
Does Introductory Writing Instruction Help Students to Succeed at Montclair State University?

I. Introduction: Is Introductory Instruction Worth Its Costs?

Close to half of America’s current thirteen million college students have been placed into at least one remedial, basic skills, developmental or introductory course. Colleges and universities across America offer introductory courses to over a million students a year—at tremendous cost. Yet, “many drop out before getting a degree” (Dillon). This study focuses on the academic success of students who were placed into an introductory writing course, (Introduction to Writing, ENWR 100) at Montclair State University between 2005 and 2009.

Introductory writing courses seem to be under perennial attack from friends and foes alike. In 1985, Mike Rose argued that an ideology of intellectual inferiority permeated remedial instruction (Gleason 560). In 1993, David Bartholomae saw basic writing programs as an attempt to bridge differences and enable students, but also as an expression of an institutional desire to produce “basic writers” (8). Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson go even further, arguing that the basic writing program at their large state university system is “driven by institutional hierarchies and history, politics and public relations—not by... student needs” (63). Ira Shor has characterized basic writing programs as a kind of apartheid (Shor 100). Only last year, Rose criticized “[p]owerful—and limiting—assumptions” which underlie skills-based “traditional remedial writing

---

1 Any study of remedial, developmental, basic skill, or introductory courses at once faces a problem of terminology. Here I use sometimes use different terms where they are employed by my sources. I use “introductory” to describe ENWR 100 because it is not a basic writing skills course. ENWR 100 students are encouraged and required to develop and complete portfolios of sophisticated, college level essays.
courses" (Rose 2009). And, as Barbara Gleason notes with concern, attacks on remediation have come not only from "sympathetic" voices to but also from "forces opposed to the admission of 'unqualified students'" (560). Tara Parker also notes that "many policy makers and members of the general public argue that college remediation is too expensive and has surpassed its utility" (2). CUNY, once the birthplace of open enrollment, reversed course in 1998 and eliminated remedial instruction at its four-year colleges (Gleason 561). To some, the CUNY message was clear: "Sending the youth of Harlem to college is useless; the taxpayers should stop wasting their money" (Weiner 522, quoted by Gleason).

Although graduation statistics vary by study, it is clear that students placed into introductory courses often struggle to succeed. A 1999 Department of Education study found that among four-year college students tracked for twelve years, 69% ultimately completed their bachelor's degrees. But only 60% of students who were placed into non-reading remedial courses and 39% of students who were placed into remedial reading courses earned their degrees (Adelman). A 2004 Department of Labor study of both two-year and four-year public college students found that although 57% of college students who took no remedial course earned a bachelors' degree within eight years, only 39% of students who took one remedial class (other than math or reading) earned a bachelors' degree within eight years. Students placed into remedial math or reading classes fared even worse. And, only 20% of students who took two or more remedial classes earned a bachelor's degree (Wirt 63).

2 By contrast, Rose suggests a six-part formula for a successful introductory writing program. Such programs: "set high standards, are focused on inquiry and problem-solving in a substantial curriculum, use a pedagogy that is supportive and interactive, draw on a variety of techniques and approaches, are in line with students' goals, and provide credit for coursework" (Rose 2009).
Public college and university administrators are under tremendous pressure to reduce these costs of introductory instruction or to justify them. It is fair for taxpayers, legislators, administrators, teachers and students to ask whether their time, effort and money are being well spent. But, Henry Levin and Juan Carlos Calcagno recently observed that the “ongoing debate about remediation continues without a useful knowledge base that could inform policy makers, educators, scholars and students about the effectiveness of different approaches to remediation”(1).

Academic success or failure is always a complex, human process and one single factor is rarely determinative. Where at-risk students succeed, many forms of assistance may deserve credit: ESL programs, counseling, financial aid, learning communities, tutoring, writing centers, athletics, and leadership programs. Some students may lack the necessary preparation, focus, maturity, time, money, or support to succeed in college, even with extra help. Colleges may offer students too little academic help, the wrong kind of help, or too much help. Some multi-lingual students may fail writing courses because they do not yet have sufficient English language skills. Placement into introductory courses is just one element within this complex reality.

Nonetheless, research which gauges when and how introductory course students succeed can help to build a cumulative body of knowledge that can guide all stakeholders. Wherever introductory courses can be shown to lead to practical success, taxpayers and legislators may be more willing to fund them, administrators may be more interested in offering them, teachers may be more excited to teach them, and students may be more committed to invest their time, effort and money in learning from them.
II. Overview: Methods, Findings, and Conclusions.

This study explores two main questions about students who were placed into ENWR 100 at MSU between Fall 2005 and Spring 2009. First, I consider how well these ENWR 100 students have actually succeeded at MSU based on available grade and registration data. Second, having found evidence that most of these ENWR 100 students have succeeded so far, I consider the responses of 68 of these students to an online survey which asked whether they believe ENWR 100 actually helped them to succeed.

A. Have the 2005 to 2009 ENWR 100 Students Succeeded So Far at MSU?

The obvious ultimate metric of academic success is graduation. Marcia Dickson tracked her Ohio State writing students and reports that about half continued their studies successfully at that university while another 25% went on to continue their studies at other colleges (183). Graduation rates are compelling evidence. However, I could not review any graduation data for ENWR 100 students or any individual student transcript data. (MSU does not track graduation statistics for its ENWR 100 students.) And, most of the students in my study population have not been at MSU long enough to meaningfully measure their matriculation rates. Over time, this information will be available to MSU for internal review purposes and it would add strong evidence of actual ENWR 100 student success rates.

How else do we measure student success? One powerful tool is to look closely at the academic records of students, as compared to other students at the same school. Barbara Gleason of CUNY closely examines her students' transcripts-- and looks in particular at how her remedial writing students performed in other courses. She notes that “[o]rganizing and reviewing up-to-date transcript files offer a powerful alternative to the sorts of anecdotal evidence that too often influence writing program policy
decisions….transcripts ‘tell us what really happens, what courses students really take, the credits and degrees they really earn, the degrees they really finish and when those degrees are awarded’” (568-69, quoting Adelman). A 1989 NJ Department of Education study tracked successful remedial student retention rates, passing rates in subsequent writing courses, and GPA (Norbert 209). In their 2008 study, Miriam Goldstein and Dolores Perrin track success rates in a community college psychology course among students who had previously succeeded in various levels of English courses. Evaluating their basic writing “studio” approach at the University of South Carolina, Grego and Thompson calculated that between 94 to 100 percent of their students went on to pass the mainstream required writing course for three years in a row (63, n.1).

As an independent investigator, I was restricted by FERPA limitations and MSU policy and could examine only limited students’ “directory data” which showed me their semesters of attendance at MSU and their classification (freshman, sophomore, etc.) in each semester. But I did have access to more detailed student data (without student identifiers) for the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students as this data had already been gathered by The English Department for internal study purposes. For the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 group, I was able to evaluate their actual success rates and grades in ENWR 100 and in College Writing I, the mainstream MSU expository writing course. Using directory data, I was able to calculate retention rates for all these ENWR 100 students through 2009.

In their 2004 study at a rural Midwestern community college, Denise Crews and Steven Aragon compared subsequent grades of students who completed a developmental writing course with those of students who received similar placement test scores but

---

3 I want to thank Dr. Steve Johnson, the Director of MSU’s Office of Institutional Research ("OIR") and his associate Fenghua Peng for their assistance and guidance.
elected to bypass the remedial course. They concluded that the successful remedial students received higher grades in a subsequent writing course and had higher GPAs over three years than similar students who bypassed remediation. (5). Isaacs identified a group of misplaced writing students in the Fall of 2007 which allows for a similar comparison here.

One concern about all these studies is that they can confuse correlation with causation. Levin and Calcagno note that the “main statistical problem in estimating the effectiveness of remedial courses is that it is difficult to identify a casual relationship between remediation and educational attainment” (6). The mere fact that introductory course students succeeded as a group academically does not directly evidence that the success was caused by the remediation itself. (However, where introductory course students later succeed in mainstream writing courses, or when they are more successful than similar groups of students, the gap between correlation and causation becomes less clear.) Regardless of causation, proof of actual student success is almost certainly a precondition to stakeholder support for remediation. Conversely, many educational stakeholders would be unlikely to support any introductory course that is shown to closely correlate with academic failure.

A second concern is that all students should be fairly considered. Counting only successful remediation students creates an unfair “apples to oranges” comparison. Students who complete remedial courses may be more successful than students do not take such courses—but such success may be due more to the qualities (tenacity, determination) that made them succeed in the first course rather than their writing skills. For example, the 1989 NJ DOE study measured the success only of successful remedial
students, excluding the 16% of students who failed to complete the remedial courses, and skewing the resulting claims. For example, if all remedial students were included, the 48% percent two year retention rate cited in the study would have been only 40%. Similarly, in 2004, Crews and Aragon found that community college students who successfully completed a remedial writing course earned higher average grades in a later writing course than similar peers who had bypassed the remedial course (6). However, they compared only 384 successful remedial students to 285 by-passers; they excluded 600 students who had failed the remedial course as well as an unspecified number of remedial course drop-outs (3). In this study, I attempt to maintain apples-to-apples comparisons by counting all ENWR 100 students in success rate statistics—including those who were unsuccessful in ENWR 100 itself.

The data available here suggests that these ENWR 100 students have succeeded well so far—as measured by their retention rates, their overall progress towards graduation, and the success of the Fall 2007 students in ENWR 100 and College Writing I. As one example, the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 Retention Rate was 88.6% as compared to 81.3% for all 2005 MSU freshmen. The two year retention rates for these ENWR 100 students was 74.3% as compared to 71.9% for the 2005 MSU freshmen. The ENWR 100 three year retention rates (71.4%) were still slightly higher than the 2005 freshmen (68.1%).

B. Did ENWR 100 Help These Students to Succeed?

If grade and retention statistics can only directly evidence student success and not the causes of that success, how can we measure the subjective and complex truth of whether a remedial course actually helps students who take it? One direct way to gauge
how a course affected students is to ask them. In a 2009 Public Agenda study, Jean Johnson and John Rochkind conducted a telephone survey in which they asked 600 former students their “major reasons” for dropping out of school (7). In 2006, noting that writing teachers “have long intuited that students’ beliefs about themselves play a crucial role in their ability to learn how to write,” Ed Jones of Seton Hall conducted a 2006 psychological study of college freshman basic writers; he compared student writing test scores with student responses to a survey in which he asked students about their confidence and sense of self-control in their writing courses (209). Based on the survey and test grades, Jones concluded that these students’ confidence in their own writing skills (self-efficacy) and their belief that their efforts controlled how well they succeeded in the writing course (internal locus of control) were a “particularly important predictor of success in weak writers in first semester courses” (209).

While academics are sometimes skeptical about research based on students’ perceptions, Peter Cohen’s meta-analysis of 41 studies of the validity of student ratings of instructors led him to conclude that the “weight of evidence suggests that student ratings are not influenced to an undue extent by external factors such as student characteristics, course characteristics, or teacher characteristics” (282). Further, Cohen found that his meta-analysis “provides strong support for the validity of student ratings as measures of teaching effectiveness” (300). Ken Bain notes that the key to effective student surveys is to ask what students learned and whether teachers stimulated their interest in the course subject matter (13).

In order to gather direct evidence as to whether ENWR 100 promotes student success, I invited 872 former ENWR 100 students to complete an online survey which
asked them how ENWR 100 helped (or did not help) them to succeed at MSU; 68 students completed this poll. The email invitation is attached here as Appendix A. The survey, which was hosted on surveymonkey.com, is attached here as Appendix B. I was able to use skip-logic to jump students past questions that did not apply to them. Students also could elect to skip any question after the mandatory consent form and a few did skip some questions. The survey asked students how they felt about ENWR 100 and about their writing after they took ENWR 100. It also asked what writing skills and concepts they learned in the course, and whether those skills and concepts actually helped them in other MSU courses. Although the poll shared some elements with a course-end student survey—like those student ratings validated by Cohen—this survey was critically different in that it asked students to evaluate their experience as students over a time frame ranging between one and four years. About fourteen of the 68 respondents were my former ENWR 100 students. At least two respondents were already MSU graduates. As a whole, these students strongly and directly confirmed that they believe ENWR 100 contributed to their academic success at MSU.

---

4 At the request of the MSU IRB staff, I sent invitations only to students with current, valid MSU email accounts. These verified and password-protected addresses ensured that the responses came from the actual students. But, this limitation also had the obvious effect of excluding 214 ENWR 100 students who no longer retained their MSU email accounts. Most of these students had been unsuccessful at MSU and their voices were not included. In the end, I believe that the exclusion of the voices of unsuccessful students is regrettable but not fatal. The group data I consider here to gauge ENWR 100 success rates includes all ENWR 100 students, so my conclusions about their success as a group should be a fair, apples-to-apples assessment. I do not use the online survey here to demonstrate that ENWR 100 students do succeed, but rather to investigate whether successful ENWR 100 students were assisted or hindered by ENWR 100. For that purpose, I believe the poll serves well even with this significant limitation.

5 This is based on my memory and some survey comments. I do not have student rosters of the eight ENWR 100 writing sections that I taught at MSU between Fall 2005 and Fall 2007. And, I promised respondents that I would not share their names with MSU.
III. Background: Introductory Writing Instruction at MSU.

A. Success at MSU: Explosive Growth and Rising Graduation Rates.

MSU’s 218 acre campus sits atop the First Watchung ridgeline between Garrett Mountain to the north and Quarry Point to the south; a few spots have excellent views of mid-town Manhattan, only twelve miles away to the east. Founded as a teachers’ college in 1908, MSU boomed after World War II. It began offering liberal arts degrees in 1966 and soon after reorganized into a full multi-departmental university (MSU History). Enrollment has risen steadily over the last fifteen years as MSU has expanded its dorm system and moved away from its roots as a commuter school. Undergraduate full time-enrollment almost doubled over the last fifteen years (from 7,033 to 12,981) and so did total undergraduate semester hours (from 105,492 to 194,715) as more undergrads began to attend MSU on a full-time basis. (OIR Enrollment, Figures Two and Three).

As MSU has doubled in size (and contrary to national trends) its graduation rates have climbed steadily over the last decade. Only 11.1% of MSU’s 1991 freshmen graduated in four years; 37.9% graduated in five years, and 49.9% graduated in six years. But nine years later, 27.8% of MSU’s 2002 freshmen graduated in four years, 54.3% graduated in five years, and 62% graduated in six years. (OIR Retention, Table 6). Now a comprehensive public university, in academic year 2008-09, MSU awarded 55 different undergraduate degrees to 2,675 students. (See the summary table below on page 41,

---

6 A December 2009 working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research finds that overall college completion rates have dropped in the United States over the last two decades, especially at less selective public four-year colleges and at two-year colleges (1,2). The NBER study finds “a marked reduction in institutional resources” per student, marked by increasing student-faculty ratios, is to blame for three quarters of this reduction in matriculation rates, not weaker student preparation (5). According to a 2009 Public Agenda study, “only 20 percent of young people who begin their higher education at two-year institutions graduate within three years. There is a similar pattern within four-year institutions, where about 4 in 10 students receive a degree within six years” (Johnson and Rochkind 2).
drawn from OIR Graduation, Table Three.) All these MSU graduates—whether majoring in Biology, English, Dance, Math or Music—have at least one thing in common. They had to successfully complete MSU’s mandatory two semester writing course program.7 And, if their placement test scores were too low, they also had to complete MSU’s introductory writing course, ENWR 100.

B. The First Year Writing Program at MSU.

MSU requires students to complete two one-semester college writing courses. College Writing I, Intellectual Prose, ENWR 105, is a college freshman composition course that most MSU students take in their first semester. ENWR 106 ("College Writing II") focuses on literary analysis and theory. This first year writing program is shaped by Isaacs’ belief that “[f]orty years of research and study have convinced writing studies scholars that writing is a complicated, variable, and inconsistent intellectual process involving multiple brain areas and social interaction (Isaacs and Molloy 519).”

The main writing focus in College Writing I and College Writing II is to develop students’ abilities to craft persuasive and argumentative academic essays through a recursive, multiple-draft process. This focus is consistent with a “sea change” shift in emphasis from personal narrative to argument in college writing programs over the last two decades which aligns MSU with the “overwhelming” majority of writing program teachers who “focus on argument-- and research—based writing” (Lunsford and Lunsford 793).

7 A few students placed out of these courses based on English AP test scores. Some students may avoid the writing sequence at MSU by completing it at other schools and transferring the credits. But no such transfers appear in the available 2007 ENWR 100 student data or in the 68 sets of student responses to my online poll. More research is necessary to fully examine this possibility. But no such transfers appear in the available 2007 ENWR 100 student data or in the 68 sets of student responses to my online poll.
Based on placement test scores, between ten and thirteen percent of incoming MSU students are required to take MSU’s additional one-semester, three credit introductory writing course, ENWR 100. Most students placed into ENWR 100 complete it in the Fall of their freshman year or in the preceding summer. Many ENWR 100 students are also Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) students. Most EOF students take ENWR 100 in the summer semester before their Freshman Year. The EOF students “must be members of economically disadvantaged families [and] have a background of academic under preparedness”. Typically they have low SAT scores and many come from “school districts where the quality of education is below par”. In addition to “maximum” financial aid, MSU EOF students receive “a broad range of academic support services, including counseling, tutoring, leadership development, and workshops” (EOF). Although my data did not break out the EOF students as a separate group, the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Summer ENWR 100 student groups are almost entirely EOF students, a highly at-risk and marginalized group.8

C. Introductory Writing Instruction at MSU from 1975 to 2009.

MSU first offered an introductory “Writing Workshop” in its 1975 undergraduate catalogue (Adams 22). In 1977, as standardized-testing fever began to sweep the nation, the New Jersey Board of Higher Education mandated a new, EBS-designed, multiple-choice Basic Skills Test to assess and place incoming public college students into appropriate writing courses. The Board also mandated minimum standards based on these new test scores and required that students who scored below mandated “cut” scores

---

8 Interestingly, the summer EOF ENWR 100 sections are administered separately by Doctor Janet Cutler, an MSU English Professor who specializes in film studies. Cutler hires a different group of instructors for the EOF ENWR 100 summer sections although the basic approach of the course aligns with the ENWR 100 program administered by Isaacs.
receive remedial instruction on a non-credit basis (Adams 25). The MSU English faculty opposed many of these test-centric mandates, but in 1981, MSU was forced to convert the Writers' Workshop into "Basic Freshman Composition," a developmental prerequisite to its required composition and literature courses (Adams 25-27).

From 1989 to 1991, the New Jersey Department of Education required all students to retake the Basic Skills Test as an exit exam after completing remedial courses. MSU participated, but under protest, as "most MSU Basic Composition Faculty strongly disagree[d]" with this use of the test. (Nash, quoted in Adams at 32). In 1988, faced with a growing testing culture that sought to measure students' college writing skills based on solely multiple choice test responses, MSU Writing Director James Nash introduced a semester end portfolio review system and "no credit" grades which have been important elements of the course ever since. (Adams 33-34). This no-credit ("NC") grade was issued to students whose semester-end writing portfolios showed their writing skills as not developed enough for College Writing I. The NC grade does not affect GPA or academic standing and students do not get college credit for the course; essentially the NC is a do-over grade which requires the student to retake ENWR 100. Creating the NC grade and the portfolio review system allowed the MSU English faculty to offer introductory writing courses for college credit for students who received passing grades, and it fostered a complex approach to writing in the introductory course which aimed to produce a portfolio of revised, thoughtful and complex writing—rather than aiming to improve basic skills on a multiple-choice exit exam.

9 The NJDOE tracked all the test results and found that remedial writing courses assisted underprepared students both to improve their writing skills (as measured by the test) and to succeed in college (Norbert at 209). The NJ DOE study assumed that a timed one shot Basic Skills Test was a valid and reliable measurement of college writing ability. In 1988, MSU Professor and Freshman English Coordinator Jim Nash argued forcefully against the validity of this position (Nash 1988, Adams 33).
In 2000, MSU Freshmen Writing Director Emily Isaacs marshaled a course name and description change, and Basic Composition was renamed as Introduction to Writing. Isaacs' 2000 course description captures the main focus of ENWR 100 over the last decade. She describes it as a "writing-intensive workshop that stresses the development of thinking and writing abilities through frequent writing assignments. Emphasis is on the writing process—prewriting, drafting, revising, using peer review and teacher critique, editing and proofreading" (Isaacs 2000, quoted in Adams 44). Since at least 2000, ENWR 100 has functioned largely as a rehearsal for College Writing I. It is currently described as a "writing-intensive workshop that stresses the development of thinking and writing abilities through frequent writing assignments" (Course Description).

ENWR 100 students are expected to complete a substantial amount of revised prose, often three or four main essays completed in three drafts each, as well as additional shorter assignments. Broadly grounded in composition theory, ENWR 100 contains elements of growth/expressivism: process drafting, prewriting techniques, peer assessment. But, it also emphasizes social constructivism, with an ultimate focus on constructing persuasive and argumentative essays that address and incorporate outside sources. Reading anthologies have been strongly recommended to provide both source material and unit themes. Students of all first-year writing courses are required to purchase mechanics handbooks. Isaacs recommended Diane Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* from 2005 to 2009-- and I required all my ENWR 100 students to use it, together with several different recommended anthologies. (Isaacs introduced a uniform

---

10 This same language still appears in the current ENWR 100 course description. (2010 Course Description).
ENWR 100 anthology and a uniform customized Hacker handbook in the Fall of 2009.

Instruction includes some elements of punctuation, grammar, syntax, proofreading, revision, editing and paragraph structure. The method of instruction uniformly includes a commitment to a recursive, redrafting writing process. However single draft essays, forms of journaling and self-evaluative pieces are sometimes included. Instructors also review plagiarism, appropriate use of sources and MLA forms of citation. There is no exit exam. At the end of the semester, ENWR 100 students are required to submit finished, final portfolios of their work (Course Description).

Through 2008, portfolios were selected by course instructors for review by Isaacs and an informal committee of MSU writing instructors. They asked a single question about the work in each portfolio: “Is this student ready to take College Writing?” By focusing on this practical question, the portfolio assessment was designed to meet Brian Huot’s challenge “to decide what a department or program wants to know about their students’ writing, their teaching, and the overall effectiveness of the writing program” (151). This review process also reflects the complex theoretical stance of the course itself. Although one narrative essay can be submitted as part of each portfolio, strong narrative writing is not alone sufficient. Committee review focuses strongly on clarity, thesis, coherent argument, and appropriate use of sources. The reviewers also consider basic traditional rhetoric concerns of mechanics, errors, syntax and clarity. Students who are not passed by the Department Committee generally receive a “No Credit” grade which does not affect their GPA. They do not receive academic credit and are required to repeat ENWR 100 before they can register for College Writing I.
Unlike any exit exam, this entire assessment process is designed to empower the writing faculty as the primary assessors of their own students' work. Not all portfolios are reviewed by the Committee; writing instructors choose which student portfolios need Committee assessment. Moreover, the Committee's finding is advisory only. The final grading decision rests with the writing instructor. For example, after my first semester as an ENWR 100 instructor in 2005, I felt some of my students who received NC reviews were ready to advance to College Writing I -- but I had focused their work too much on narrative; I received approval to assign them passing grades. This assessment process was also an important learning experience for me as a teacher. I adjusted my teaching practices to align more closely with the sourced-argument focus in College Writing I.

While students are placed into ENWR 100 based on standardized test scores, Isaacs empowers and encourages writing faculty (often adjunct instructors) to evaluate their students quickly and suggest replacements for students whose actual essays demonstrate they are ready for College Writing I despite their SAT scores.

D. ENWR 100 Students: Fighting To Succeed at MSU.

I taught eight sections of ENWR 100 between 2005 and 2007. When students first entered my ENWR 100 classroom, many hated writing-- virtually all believed they could not do it. Clearly at-risk of failure, their insecurities as students and as writers were often apparent in their slumped shoulders and averted eyes. All of them had been labeled as inadequate by a series of standardized tests running from kindergarten up through high school, the SATs, to their MSU placement tests.—including their assignment to my
introductory writing class. Many had grown up in the poorer communities that encircle Montclair: Paterson, Asbury Park, Red Hook, Irvington, or East Orange. Some were multi-lingual immigrants who learned English only as a second or even third language. Some came from vocational high schools where they had received virtually no academic instruction. Very often, their parents were not college graduates or were immigrants who did not understand how college works and who could not provide them with the sophisticated support and guidance that more affluent students take for granted. A few were athletes who had studied very little in high school except playbooks and game films. Many had not yet learned basic student survival skills. They had to learn quickly in college how to improve their focus, commitment, punctuality and organization.

Yet, despite all these obvious barriers to their academic success, all these students were fighting to succeed at MSU. All had struggled to get admitted despite low test scores. All aspired to succeed as students, to graduate, and to improve their lives. Some students juggled impossible work and school schedules. Some strove to overcome learning disabilities or language barriers. Many also provided critical support to their often fragile families.

It is fair to ask how many of these extra challenges should affect instruction—how far we should bend to help our students when they fail to meet our expectations. Isaacs encourages her writing instructors to see supportiveness as a sliding scale, with the most support being appropriate in ENWR 100, less support in the mainstream writing courses, and even less in upper level writing courses. The ENWR 100 instructors from 2005 to 2009 tended to be highly empathetic teachers who were personally engaged in

11 New Jersey's Kindergarten to second grade students take the "Terra Nova" tests. Third to Eighth Graders all take versions of "NJ ASK" tests. Ninth and Tenth graders take more "Terra Nova" tests. Eleventh graders and some twelfth graders take "HSPA" tests. (See, e.g. 2009-10 Linden Public Schools.)
the success of their students. This anecdotal impression is reinforced by the very low failure rate among the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 instructors—including me. We were reluctant to fail our students so long as they were working hard to produce substantial work and to improve their writing skills. Weaker students rarely failed ENWR 100; some received the less punitive NC grades based on reviews of their final portfolios. An “F” grade in ENWR 100 usually meant a student simply gave up. And, the students who gave up in ENWR 100 often struggled across the board in all their other classes.

E. Placement Testing at MSU; Building a Body of Programmatic Knowledge.

In 1997, the NJ Basic Skills Test was discontinued and MSU instituted its own in-house Basic Writing Skills placement test (Adams 38). Versions of this in-house test were used until 2006, when—despite English Department objections voiced by Isaacs—MSU adopted the SAT Critical Reading Test and SAT Writing Test scores as its sole placement metrics. The MSU English Department had objected to the new system on several practical and theoretical bases, but they were overruled, in part because they lacked quantitative research data to back up their arguments. As a result, Isaacs has instituted several studies to determine the effect of these placements as well as appeal processes and other re-placement measures to minimize misplacements based on these test results (Isaacs and Molloy 533-535).
IV. Do ENWR 100 students succeed at MSU?

A. ENWR 100 students Had High Retention Rates over Two, Three and Four Years.

MSU’s OIR measures how many MSU students graduate and how many continue to study at MSU over time (retention). I have four years of registration data for the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students. The chart below summarizes the retention rates for these students over one year, two years and three years, as well as the retention rates for all MSU 2005 full-time freshmen. To make a direct, apples-to-apples comparison here, I also break out the 175 Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students who were freshmen. Almost nine in ten ENWR 100 students continued to study at MSU one year after they took ENWR 100-- an excellent retention rate in absolute terms and also in comparison to all 2005 MSU freshmen. The two year and three year ENWR 100 Fall 2005 student retention rates were also higher than the comparable 2005 MSU freshman averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Entire Group (Cohort)</th>
<th>One Year Retention Rate</th>
<th>Two Year Retention Rate</th>
<th>Three Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005 MSU Full Time Freshmen</td>
<td>1,868</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 2005 ENWR 100 Students (includes apparent grads)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 ENWR 100 Students—Freshmen only</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this registration data, both the ENWR 100 students as a whole and the ENWR 100 freshmen were more likely than the incoming class as a whole to stay in

\[OIT\text{2009, Chart Five.}\]
school at MSU for two, three, or four years. The greatest retention advantage for ENWR 100 students was in the year immediately after they took the ENWR 100 class, but the ENWR 100 students remained more likely to continue their studies throughout the four year span.

In a March 2009 Report, OIR calculated and compared retention and matriculation rates for MSU students from as early as 1991 to 2007. In fact, the one year retention rates for the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students were at least 3% higher than the same rate for any complete class of MSU freshmen between 1991 to 2008, and the Fall 2005 Intro student retentions rate was 5% higher than the average one-year retention rate for all MSU freshmen over that 17 year span (83.2%) (OIR Table 7).

### Retention Rates for Students Who First Took ENWR 100 from Fall 2005 to Spring 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENWR 100 Student Groups</th>
<th>Number and (%) of Freshmen Retained To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 05</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 06</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined 05-06</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 06</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 06</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 07</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined 05-07</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 07</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 07</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 08</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined 05-08</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Excludes two apparent early graduates.
While I have less available directory data for the ENWR 100 students from 2006 through 2009, it is possible to calculate some of their retention rates as well. The chart below measures the retention rates for all the groups within this study for whom I had at least two follow-up semesters of directory data. For students who took ENWR 100 as summer students, I calculated their one year retention based on fall semester one year later. For freshmen students who first took ENWR 100 in the Spring, I assumed they were second semester freshmen and calculated their one year retention based on the following fall semester.\textsuperscript{14}

Without any extra help, we would expect ENWR 100 students to struggle at MSU more than other students. How did retention rates for all these ENWR 100 student groups compare to the overall MSU student body? The ENWR 100 students outperformed their peers in every one of the six retention categories I could measure with the available data, as shown below:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & Intro\textsuperscript{13} & All\textsuperscript{15} & ENWR & All & ENWR \\
 & 100 & MSU & 100 & MSU & 100 \\
 & 05-06 & 05-06 & 06-07 & 06-07 & 07-08 \\
\hline
Retained To & 88.9\% & 81.3\% & 91\% & 81.6\% & 88.5\% \\
Second Year &  &  &  &  & 81.9\% \\
\hline
Retained to Third & 73.5\% & 71.9\% & 75.6\% & 73.6\% & -- \\
Year &  &  &  &  & -- \\
\hline
Retained to Fourth & 70.9\% & 68.1\% & -- & -- & -- \\
Year &  &  &  &  & -- \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{ENWR 100 Student Retention Compared to Average MSU Student Retention from 2005 to 2009}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{14}OIR Director Steven L. Johnson confirmed that OIR calculates retention rates for Fall students as I do here, based on their registration status in subsequent fall semesters. MSU does not calculate retention rates for students who begin their studies in the Spring (Johnson email). OIR did not provide me with directory data for any semesters before students took ENWR 100, so I do not know when Spring ENWR 100 students began studying at MSU. In any event, the Spring ENWR 100 groups here are all very small groups and their retention rates over time align with to the Fall and Summer ENWR 100 groups.

\textsuperscript{15}All MSU data here drawn from OIR 2009, Table One.
Although more information regarding graduation rates is needed, this data suggests that MSU’s ENWR 100 students are succeeding well as measured by retention—both in absolute terms and as compared to their fellow MSU students.

**B. The Fall 2005 ENWR 100 Students Have Progressed Toward Graduation.**

By charting changes in student classification, it is possible to roughly gauge the academic progress of the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students over eight semesters. The chart below breaks down the enrollment and classification of all Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students over eight semesters, showing the overall academic progress of the whole group.\(^{16}\)

Although 175 students (92%) in the Fall 2005 group took ENWR 100 as freshmen, nine were sophomores, three were juniors and three were seniors. As a group, these 190 students made clear academic progress over four years.

OIR has not yet reported 2005 student body four-year graduation rates. But, the four year graduation rates for 2004 MSU students was 30.7% with an additional 36.4% of

<p>| Four Year Registration Status of MSU Students Who Took ENWR 100 in Fall of 2005 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Spring 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Spring 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Spring 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Spring 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Students(^{17})</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen (0-30 Credits)</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores (31-60 Credits)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors (61-90 Credits)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors (91+ Credits)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Graduates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{16}\) Where a student reached senior status and completed two semesters after ENWR 100 (such that they could have also completed College Writing I and College Writing II) and then stopped taking classes or began attending graduate classes, I classified that student as a graduate.

\(^{17}\) Excludes two foreign exchange students.
students retained into their fifth year, for a combined graduation/retention rate of (67.1%), (OIR, Chart Five). Although this comparison is not exactly apples-to-apples, the ENWR 100 students show at least a similar academic progress/retention pattern to the MSU total student body. About two-thirds (66.3%) of the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 Students (126/190) were either still MSU students or were apparent graduates in the second semester of their fourth year after taking ENWR 100. And, 47.9% of the ENWR 100 students (91/190) were seniors or graduates after four years—suggesting a strong four year graduation rate for the Fall 2005 ENWR 100 students. Twenty-five ENWR 100 students (13.2%) were classified as juniors after four years, having made significant academic progress. Only seven students were still sophomores and only one was still a freshman.18

It is noteworthy that three of these students took ENWR 100 as seniors. There are a small group of MSU students who are able to delay their writing course requirements, yet who otherwise succeed at MSU. Rose came to my ENWR 100 class as a successful senior completing her degree in computer technology. An adult student who had earned a college degree in China before she emigrated to the United States, Rose was extremely nervous about her writing skills and she dreaded taking my course; Rose had maneuvered to delay her required writing courses until they became an actual barrier to her graduation. For Rose, these three writing courses functioned as a substantive requirement, not a foundational one. They required her to learn skills and concepts that she did not believe would assist her in her academic or business career. Rose struggled at first in my class but she worked extraordinarily hard to improve her composition (and

---

18 Three of the eight ENWR 100 students who remained underclassmen after four years had taken off between two and four semesters and then reenrolled at MSU.
English language) skills and she ended up completing essays that were amazing. She graduated three semesters later and went on to earn a master’s degree at MSU. I feel that Rose expanded her horizons and learned something valuable in my class. But clearly, my class did not help her to succeed as at MSU, except possibly to help her get through the next two MSU required writing courses.

C. 2002 MSU Freshmen With Low SAT Verbal Scores Had High Retention Rates.

On a possibly related note, OIR also noted in its 2009 Retention report that the “relationship between SAT scores and success (as measured by retention and graduation) is weak” (OIR, Selected Findings). In 2002, MSU students were placed into ENWR 100 based on a combination of their SAT verbal scores and a similar in-house placement test; many of the lowest scoring MSU freshmen would have been also placed in ENWR 100 that year.19 Normally, we would expect the least prepared students to struggle the most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Groups</th>
<th>No. in Group</th>
<th>Retained 2d year</th>
<th>Retained 3rd Year</th>
<th>Retained 4th Year</th>
<th>Graduated in 4 Years</th>
<th>Graduated in 5 Years</th>
<th>Graduated in 6 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All 2002 MSU FR</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATV 600-690</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATV 500-590</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT 400-490</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT 300-390</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 SAT verbal scores over 530 exempted these students from ENWR 100. Lower scorers were required to take the in-house test which was dominated by similar multiple choice questions but included a timed essay. Most ENWR 100 students likely came from the 300-390 group, with some from the 400-490 group.
in college. However, these MSU students defy that assumption. The SAT 300-390 students had the highest one year retention rates (88.9%) of any of these groups—a one year retention rate also almost identical to those I find in 2005, 2006 and 2007 ENWR 100 students. The SAT 300-390 student graduation rates remained several points below all-student averages, but reached an impressive 56.4% within six years. Review of the 2002 ENWR 100 students’ retention and graduation rates may confirm the pattern of success emerging so far in the 2005 to 2007 ENWR 100 students.

D. Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Students Succeeded Well In Both ENWR 100 and College Writing I.

In 2008 and 2009, Isaacs compiled grade data for Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students who later registered for College Writing I—the mainstream composition course required of all MSU students. This additional grade data allows for the kind of detailed transcript review advocated by Gleason to understand how ENWR 100 affected these students.

1. Most Fall 2007 Students Succeeded in ENWR 100 Itself.

As an important first step to gauge student success, most of these students succeed in ENWR 100 itself. In the Fall of 2007, 181 MSU students were placed into ENWR 100. Fifteen of these students withdrew from the course and I exclude them here. Of the 166 “true” ENWR 100 students, 128 (77%) students received some passing grade and were authorized to move on to College Writing I. Of the unsuccessful ENWR 100 students, very few failed outright: only 15/166 students (nine percent) failed
ENWR 100. In this important and direct first instance, ENWR 100 did not act as a barrier to success for 77% of the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students.

2. Fall 2007 Students Who Failed ENWR 100 Did Not Succeed at MSU.

Of the 15 students who received an F in Fall 2007 ENWR 100, not one succeeded at MSU. Only 9% (15 of 161) students received a failing grade in ENWR 100. None went on to register for Prose 105 within twelve months. These F students were eligible to retake ENWR 100 and receive a passing grade. Seven gave up after one attempt. Eight tried to retake ENWR 100, all in Spring 2008. All eight retakers struggled not only in ENWR 100, but across all their courses. Only four of eight passed ENWR 100 on their second attempt. Although some of these students showed some gains in other courses in the Spring of 2008, all continued to struggle overall and all eight dropped out of MSU after the Spring semester.

This across-the-board academic struggle suggests that these students did not fail ENWR 100 because of their weaknesses as writers specifically or because of their experience with ENWR 100 —so much as because other conflicts or issues which made them unsuccessful students in general. For example, this was true of the students who failed my ENWR 100 classes in the Fall of 2007. All failed due to excessive absences and incomplete work—not because of the quality of their writing skills or the inadequacy of the work they did complete.

My student "Jimmy" had been a high school athlete; he played baseball, football and basketball. Jimmy struggled in my ENWR 100 class for two months, until November 7th. Already far behind, he gave up completely and attended no more classes. But before he gave up, Jimmy submitted seven essays; I gave him grades of: B(2), B-(2),
C and No Credit(2). Most of his written work was acceptable. My NC grades functioned as “do-over” offers because Jimmy did not follow the assignment instructions for those essays. But Jimmy also failed to hand in three papers completely and he failed to resubmit the two NCs. He missed five out of sixteen classes before he gave up and stopped coming altogether. He also failed to complete more than half of the homework reading assignments. Repeated coaching and warnings didn’t help much. Jimmy struggled in his other courses that semester as well. Jimmy registered for ENWR 100 again in the Spring 2008 semester but struggled again. He dropped out after the Spring semester.

The low overall course failure rate (less than 10%) and my informal discussions with other ENWR 100 instructors reinforce that we were invested in the success of our students and were reluctant to fail students who tried hard and completed the course based solely on their weak writing skills. Most of the students who failed ENWR 100 were like Jimmy. They failed because something was preventing them from focusing enough to succeed as college students. More data is needed to evaluate this small group, but their failure appeared to be broad-based and not caused by their experience with ENWR 100.

3. Many Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Students Who Received “NC” Grades Did Not Succeed.

The 14% (23 of 166) of Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students who received NC grades are more difficult to classify. These students did complete the work in ENWR 100 and their failure to advance is directly based on their weak writing skills in their final portfolios. There is no doubt that the NC grade acts as a literal barrier to advancement. It labels students (again) as inadequate writers. It denies them college credit for a course
they have completed. It requires them to start over and retake the very same course. The effects of this setback can be significant. Only 6 of 23 (26%) of these Fall 2007 "NC" students registered for Prose 105 within a year and only 3 of 23 (13%) received passing grades in that time.

Anecdotally, the effect of the NC grade seems to have an impact beyond its substantive assessment. In the Fall of 2007, I sent seven student portfolios for review by the English Department Committee. All seven students had improved their writing skills and learned a lot in my class. All seven completed the course, including portfolios of revised essays. In my judgment, all seven students represented a limited range of relatively weak writing skills—there was very little difference between all seven students— but the effect of the Committee’s decisions were substantial. Three students received credit from the committee. All three passed Prose 105 within one year, with grades of at least C+. The four students who received NC grades struggled much more. Only one of them went on to successfully retake ENWR 100 and Prose 105 within one year. One student gave up and dropped out of MSU after one semester. My experience with this class suggests that the NC grade acts as a substantial barrier for students who could otherwise succeed at MSU.

My student “Tony” was a likable, hardworking young man. Before entering MSU, Tony had attended a vocational high school where he received virtually no writing instruction. After he received an NC grade in ENWR 100, he continued as an MSU student and passed ENWR 100 on his third attempt. But Tony earned only 19 credits in his first two years at MSU. He lost six credits for his two unsuccessful ENWR 100 attempts.
Even if Tony ultimately succeeds at MSU, it is clear that ENWR 100 has been (at least in part) a barrier to his success. At a minimum, it will take him five years to graduate. After two years at MSU, he had not yet attempted Prose 105. What is more difficult to assess, however—and what the grades alone cannot tell us—is whether the three semesters of extra writing instruction Tony received at MSU have also improved his writing skills enough to enable him to succeed at MSU. Clearly, Tony needed extra help with his writing. But, given its high cost to Tony, was repeating ENWR 100 the most effective way to deliver that help to him?

In 2009, the English Department took a closer look at the progress of the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 NC student group into their fourth semester. Slightly over half of the NC students (12 of 23) were still studying at MSU—a pretty low one and a half year retention rate of 52.2%. (By comparison the two year retention rates for all MSU freshmen and for the 2005-06 ENWR 100 freshmen were all in the 71-74% range.) But, these NC students were more tenacious than

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Closer Look at the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Students with “NC” Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENWR 100 Students w/ “NC” Grade in Fall 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students still enrolled at MSU as of Spring 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students who took ENWR 100 again by Fall 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students who took ENWR 100 a third time by Fall 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students who succeeded in Writing 105 by Spring 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students who Registered for College Writing II by Spring 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“NC” Students with all successful grades except ENWR 100 in at least one semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the ENWR 100 “F” students. To earn the initial NC grades, they all completed ENWR 100 once. Only three NC students gave up and dropped out after receiving their initial NC grade. The vast majority (20 of 23 or 87%) had attempted ENWR 100 a second time
within four semesters. Like my student Tony, many (7 of 23 or 30%) attempted to pass ENWR 100 three times within four semesters. But only 4 out of 23 (19%) of these students had successfully completed ENWR 100 within three semesters. And these students were not struggling in all their other classes. Just over half these students had completed one or more semester where their ENWR 100 NC grade was their only non-passing grade. For these MSU students, ENWR 100 was the hardest academic challenge they faced at MSU.

Unlike the “F” students, most of the “NC” students were somewhat successful at MSU—except in their writing courses. All this writing instruction may have helped some of these students, but their high grades in other courses and low retention rates evidence that repeating ENWR 100 was a complete barrier to success for many of them and a partial barrier to success for the rest. Given that almost half of these NC students struggled and dropped out by their fourth semester, there may be a better way for MSU to help them with their writing skills.

This may raise the question whether NC grades are necessary because the purpose of course grades is not merely to gauge future success, but to assess some academic competency – here, college writing ability—and record that assessment for the benefit of the student, future teachers, the institution, even future employers. Certainly, grades in other college courses represent some form of assessment of substantive achievement which benefit many stakeholders beyond the individual students. Students with high grades use them as a competitive academic credential in many ways: they can transfer to other colleges, seek scholarships, join honor societies, apply to graduate schools, and compete for better jobs.
But, I suggest here that the purpose of introductory course assessment is more narrow because these courses exist solely to benefit students who need extra help. Universities do not offer these courses for their own benefit. In general, they seek out and admit the most qualified students in order to raise their prestige and secure high retention and graduation rates. Indeed, CUNY abandoned remedial instruction at its four year colleges precisely because it found all such remedial instruction worked against its institutional interests. Introductory course assessment should serve the sole (or at least primary) purpose of helping students to succeed. This is one reason introductory writing course exit-tests are fundamentally misguided. They seek to impose an objective (and deeply flawed) assessment of substantive achievement that does not benefit individual students in any way. Rather, the exit tests serve to “protect” the interests of the institutions which administer them.

I note that a less punitive impact might allow the NC committee and instructors to set the bar for ENWR 100 students even higher. For example, if the result of failing committee review was a C or D grade in ENWR 100 and placement into a more supportive, five-credit version of College Writing I, students who need more extra help would receive it without facing financial and academic penalties. Instructors and committee members might be more willing to require that borderline students move forward with extra help than to send them back to retake ENWR 100.

4. ENWR 100 Students Struggled but Were Mostly Successful in College Writing I.

Overall, 113 of 166 ENWR 100 students (68%) registered for Prose 105 within twelve months and 99 students received passing grades in College Writing I. (Although possible, I found no evidence that students tried to take a College Writing I equivalent
course elsewhere. Rather, some students elected to delay registering for more writing courses at MSU or were forced to delay because they did not successfully complete ENWR 100.) In all, although this group had an 87% one year retention rate, their success rate in College Writing I was only 60%. Moreover, only 46% earned a grade of C or better in College Writing I and only 39% earned a grade of C+ or better. These relatively low success rates in College Writing I suggest that one of the biggest challenges faced by these ENWR 100 students at MSU was completing College Writing I. MSU may eventually alter its first year writing program to include more different forms of writing: building wikis, making movies, blogging, or writing poems, plays, autobiographies or short stories. If so, altering ENWR 100 to align with this new focus would likely make good sense. But as things stand, the strong alignment between ENWR 100 and College Writing I should be a strength of ENWR 100--especially if students strongly agree that ENWR 100 taught them writing skills and concepts which prepared them for the challenging College Writing I.

| Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Student Success in ENWR 100 and College Writing I |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fall 2007 ENWR 100 Course Results | College Writing I Course Results Through Fall 2008 |
| Total Students | F Grade | No Credit (NC) Grade | Passed ENWR 100 on first try (Not F or NC grade) | Attempted College Writing I within one year | WD or INC Grades | F Grade | Passing Grades | C Grade or more | C+ Grade or more |
| 166 | 15 | 23 | 128 (77%) | 113 | 4 | 10 | 99 (60%) | 76 (46%) | 65 (39%) |
E. 2007 ENWR 100 Students Were More Successful Than Under-prepared Students who were placed directly into College Writing I.

In the late Fall of 2007, Isaacs was concerned that too few students had been placed into ENWR 100 using new SAT placement rules. She asked Writing 105 instructors to identify all those students who (in the instructors’ judgment) were underprepared and who the instructors believed should have been placed into ENWR 100. The College Writing I instructors identified 161 underprepared College Writing I students who should have been placed into ENWR 100. This large group of reported misplacements was remarkable—almost equal in size to the 166 students who had been placed into Intro100. Isaacs and I then analyzed the success of the underprepared students who had been mainstreamed into Prose 105. (Here, the “Mainstreamed Group”.)

We found that that the Mainstreamed Group struggled both in College Writing I (GPA 1.57) and more broadly in their first year grades (GPA 2.36). The Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students—although weaker students based on their SAT scores—had a slightly higher overall first year GPA of 2.42 (Isaacs and Molloy 531-32).
The Mainstreamed Group offers some insights into the complex ways that remediation affects student success. Using an apples-to-apples comparison in the chart above, the short-term relative success of the Mainstreamed Group and the ENWR 100 Group is mixed. Mainstreaming does not add extra miles to the marathon of college—as such, the Mainstreamed Group got off to a faster start than the ENWR 100 students. All the Mainstreamed Group students were placed into College Writing I in the Fall 2007, while only 68% (113 of 166) ENWR 100 students had registered for the course by Fall 2008—one year later. More mainstreamers also passed College Writing I in Fall 2007 (77% or 125 of 161) than ENWR 100 students did by Fall 2008 (60% or 99 of 166). In this important sense, ENWR 100 acted to hinder and delay student success.

(Interestingly, the students who received NC grades account for half the difference in passing rates. Only three of the 23 NC students passed College Writing I by Fall 2008.) Student choice accounted for much of the remaining difference in College Writing I registration rates and passing rates as well, as ENWR 100 students could choose to delay attempting College Writing I and many did so.

But, on the other hand, the ENWR 100 students who took College Writing I received much higher grades than the Mainstreamed Group. The Mainstream Group struggled tremendously in College Writing I, with high rates of failure, withdrawal/incompletes and borderline passing grades. More than half received a grade lower than C; almost none earned a grade higher than C+. The ENWR 100 students had far fewer College Writing I failures, withdrawal/incompletes and borderline passes. On an apples-to-apples basis, the ENWR 100 students earned more grades C or higher (78 to 76), C+ or higher (64 to 35), B or higher (18 to 3) and As (3 to 0). MSU has not yet
tracked the two groups further. But, based on this data, it is possible that the ENWR 100 students to have continued to be far more successful in other writing classes as well.

V. Did ENWR 100 Help Students to Succeed at MSU?

In a December 2009 online survey, I asked these former ENWR 100 students about their experience with the course and its actual effects on their academic careers at MSU. My purpose in the poll was not to create any form of statistical analysis. Rather, the idea was to provide an opportunity for the voices of a group of these students to address directly the impact that ENWR 100 had on them—a kind a subjective, poly-vocal approach that could directly evidence whether Intro 100 played a positive role in the lives of these students. Although I expected more recent ENWR 100 students to be most responsive, the 68 respondents divided fairly evenly over the four year span studied: Fall 2005 (9), Spring 2006 (2), Summer 2006 (3), Fall 2006 (12), Spring 2007 (1), Summer 2007 (5), Fall 2007 (9), Spring 2008 (0), Summer 2008 (6), Fall 2008 (15), Spring 2009 (0), and Unclear (6).22 In every section of the survey, I included open ended questions to ensure that the actual voices of these students would emerge through the charts and summaries.

A. Students in this Survey Believe ENWR 100 Did Help Them.

Most students (67.2%) believed that ENWR 100 improved their writing skills; only 20.3% disagreed. One Fall 2005 student added that ENWR 100 “made me a better and more confident writer” (S5). This student also sent me a follow-up email in which noted that he was a recent MSU graduate and in which he added that ENWR 100

22 The six unclear students gave only partial electronic signatures. I could not ask for permission to access individual students' transcript data because existing IRB/FERPA rules prohibited seeking transcript release consents using electronic signatures.
was one of the most influential classes in my career at MSU. Before taking [this] class, I strongly believed that I would not be able to make it through college. Considering that English is my second language and the fact that I always disliked going to school, I strongly believe that I have done well at college because of what I learned [in ENWR 100] (Email 12/2/09).

A significant minority expressed neutral or negative feelings as well. One student wrote that “I only took it because I had to” (S5). Another wrote that ENWR 100 “didn’t teach anything new” (S6). A third remembered that “we really didn’t do anything” (S8). Another offered a more mixed assessment: “It was a great learning experience but it was not very challenging” (S12).
Most students also agreed that ENWR 100 made them more confident writers, with 57.8% responding positively and only 26.9% giving negative answers. One student added: “I took the class as a personal choice, not because I had to. I was a returning student (after 8 years) and felt I needed help “remembering how to write”. I had a great experience and the biggest benefit was my boost in confidence” (S7). Another wrote simply: “It made me more confident as a writer” (S46). But again, there were negative responses as well. One student called that “ENWR 100 was by far my worst writing course at MSU....I believe the class only discouraged me. My 105 and 106 classes are far more helpful and encouraging to improve my writing” (S41).

Most students (54.7%) said that ENWR 100 helped them to succeed in College Writing I with only 20% giving negative responses. Students were more evenly split as to whether ENWR 100 was worth the work they did for the course, whether it helped them to succeed at MSU overall, whether the work in the course was challenging, and whether it helped them in other MSU courses—although there were more positive than negative responses in all these categories. On the whole, responses here were positive in all but one category: negative responses dominated only when students considered tuition: more responded that ENWR 100 was not worth the money they paid for it—42.2% were negative and only 34.4% were positive.

The survey did not ask students to compare ENWR 100 with other contributing factors to their success, such as counseling, tutoring, or financial aid. Such a broader focus in a future study could better establish how much credit these students would give to ENWR 100 as compared to other forms of assistance offered by MSU. Still, at a minimum, these survey responses show that most of these students believe that ENWR
100 helped them to succeed at MSU. Here, a substantial majority gave ENWR 100 direct credit for their success in College Writing I as well as in other courses at MSU.

B. Students Learned Writing Skills and Concepts in ENWR 100.

Having learned students’ overall opinions about ENWR 100, the survey then asked them specific factual questions to test the bases for those opinions. First, the survey asked whether students had learned a series of college writing skills and concepts in ENWR 100. They responded that they learned a lot about writing in ENWR 100. Their answers here were positive in every category. Of the 63 students who responded to this question, over 70% agreed that

Do you agree with these statements about what you learned in Intro 100?

![Bar chart showing students' agreement with statements about what they learned in Intro 100.](chart.png)
they learned to organize their writing around a main idea and to use and quote sources. Almost 70% agreed that they learned how to get started and how to write in multiple drafts. Over 60% agreed that they learned how to: conduct useful peer review, make persuasive arguments, avoid plagiarism, edit and proofread their writing. Only 55.5% said that they learned to write clear and interesting sentences and only 54% agreed that they learned about the rule of grammar and punctuation.

Twenty-five students added comments here as well and they were mostly positive as well. One wrote that “I learned to put my ideas in writing without fear” (S2). Another found that ENWR 100 “helped me with analyzing literature at a more abstract level” (S9). A third student felt that ENWR 100 “didn’t help me with grammar, [but] it did help me with my reading comprehension” (S12). Others found ENWR 100 helpful with topic sentences, transitions, organization, grammar, citing sources and citations (S4, S17, S21, S22). One even recalled that “it helped me with so many things” (S20). But, another found that writing in three drafts “was a complete waste” (S3). And a few confirmed that they believed they didn’t learn to make persuasive arguments, (S16), basic skills, (S11) or anything at all (S5, S17, S18, S19).

On balance, these responses provide a stronger basis to believe that ENWR 100 did help these students to succeed at MSU. All these skills are central to academic writing, and virtually all students agreed that they learned some of them in ENWR 100. These students were-- as a group-- even more positive about the skills they learned in ENWR 100 than they were in their initial assessments of the course. For example, one Fall 2008 ENWR 100 student who initially characterized ENWR 100 as a “useless amount of unnecessary work” later also responded that she learned how to avoid
plagiarism, get started on an essay, and use and quote outside sources in the class (S19). Another student who took ENWR 100 twice gave negative or very negative responses to all the initial questions about the course impact on him, but then gave positive responses to all questions about the skills he learned in the course, except two: getting started and working in multiple drafts (S57). A third student slammed ENWR 100 in the first group of questions about how it affected him and added “It made me miserable.” Yet, he later responded that he learned in ENWR 100 how to write in several drafts, use and quote outside sources, and about rules of grammar and punctuation (S64).

C. ENWR 100 Students Needed the Skills They Learned in ENWR 100 to Succeed in Other MSU Classes.

While all ENWR 100 students should have used these writing skills in College Writing I and College Writing II, a more difficult question is whether ENWR 100 students need these skills to succeed in their other courses at MSU. As one student observed in the online survey: “I am a biology major and there was no further need for writing in my major classes. I haven’t really needed writing skills anymore. But I did learn a lot” (S2). MSU students study a broad range of majors as evidenced by the 55 undergraduate degrees awarded by MSU in 2008-09. In this survey, 51 students identified themselves as studying 21 very different majors. The most common were: Family and Child Studies (8), Psychology (6), Justice Studies (6), Business, Retail Management, Finance or Accounting (8), Biology or Biochemistry (6), Physical education (3), Fashion Studies (2), Sociology (2), and Information Technology (2). These majors roughly correlate with those of the MSU student body as a whole (based on 2009 degrees conferred as noted below) although there were a few more Family and Child majors and a few less Business
majors. Interestingly, no students in the survey listed themselves as English majors (Survey 7:1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSU Undergraduate Degrees Awarded in Academic Year 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration (BS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Child Studies (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, Political Science, Sociology (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Computer Science, Molecular Biology and Physics (BS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Studies and Jurisprudence (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education, Athletic Training, Recreation Professions (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Studies (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation, Dance, Filmmaking, Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Theater (BFA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition and Food Science (BS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (BS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music (BA or BMUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 26 Undergraduate degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the impact of the writing skills and concepts that these students learned in ENWR 100, I asked students to assess the usefulness of these skills in other courses—besides College Writing I and College Writing II. Sixty students responded to this question—which came at the end of the survey. Eight skipped the question. Of those who responded, at least 65% said nine of the ten skills listed were helpful to them in other courses. The most valuable skill was ways to get started with an essay. Over 78% agreed or strongly agreed that this skill was useful; only 5% disagreed (Survey 7:5). The least valuable rated writing skill was peer review. Only 55.9% found it useful; 13.6%
said it was not useful (Survey 7:5). A few students offered supplemental responses. One wrote that:

I pretty much needed the same skills across the board. In my other classes there really wasn’t room for the entire writing process explained in 100. We were assigned a paper and told when it was due. However, I asked my professors to take a look at it before I submitted the final drafter, which I felt was helpful (S2). But another student asserted that writing “a paper is the same for each course, [and] only

the material differs (S7). A third concluded “I needed everything that I learned in that class” (S11). A fashion merchandising major noted that “I didn’t do a lot of papers in my major although I would have liked to” (S3). A psychology major complained that “the MLA style of writing that was taught in all of the writing classes was useless to me”
(S9). But another student wrote that becoming “familiar with MLA and APA formats was an advantage in ENWR 100” (S5).

As a further test of the usefulness of these writing skills and concepts, I asked students to specify how many other MSU courses had required them to write essays. Almost all responded that they had written essays in several other courses at MSU. Despite the many different majors studied by the survey respondents, only 4 out of 61 students said they had taken no other essay courses. A substantial majority, 72.1% (44 of 61) said they had taken at least one class which required essays beyond the required writing courses. And 29.5% (18 of 61) said they taken at least six other essay courses. Note that the fifteen survey responders were sophomores who only completed ENWR
100 in the Fall 2008. Fourteen students responded that they had not yet taken College Writing I. (7:2).

As a further factual check on the usefulness of these writing skills, I also asked the former ENWR 100 students to identify up to three other courses which gave them the most writing assignments. Forty-five students named at least one specific course. Thirty-six students named at least two courses. Twenty-seven students named three. (7:4). I had expected that a few courses would dominate these lists, but the responses ranged substantially. As their most demanding writing classes, students listed courses in: American sign language, anatomy, anthropology, art, art history, biology, business, child advocacy, communications, computers, conflict resolution, education, general humanities, genetics, general education, geography, health counseling, history, interdisciplinary studies, justice, Latin American studies, legal reasoning, mythology, nutrition, oceanography, philosophy, physical education, political science, psychology, religion, research methods, sex education, sociology, Spanish, speech, and women’s studies (7:4). Interestingly, these students did not identify any composition or literature class beyond the mandatory writing courses as their most demanding writing challenge at MSU.

In sum, these student responses paint a picture of MSU as an environment where college writing skills are critical to success for most ENWR 100 students. Although a few students in a few majors (music, biology) may be able to avoid writing courses, MSU requires college writing skills across its curriculum and strong college writing skills are an extremely valuable academic asset for all MSU students. The vast majority of these former ENWR 100 students responded that they learned college writing skills and
concepts in ENWR 100 that directly assisted them to succeed in numerous other courses at MSU.

**D. ENWR 100 Was More of a Barrier for Students Who Repeated It.**

Eleven students reported that they took ENWR 100 more than once. Four of these reported that received “NC” grades the first time they took it. As we would expect, the retakers’ views about how taking ENWR 100 affected them were mixed and less positive than the other ENWR 100 students. A strong majority of the retakers still agreed that ENWR 100 made them better writers and more confident writers. But few retakers believed that ENWR 100 helped them to succeed in their other courses, or that ENWR 100 was worth the work they put into it, or that it helped them to succeed at MSU. They were most negative about the cost of the course.

---

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how taking Intro 100 affected you?**

- Taking intro 100 made me a better writer.
- Intro 100 helped me to succeed in College Writing I, ENWR 105.
- Intro 100 made me a more confident writer.
- Intro 100 helped me to succeed in my other MSU classes.
- Intro 100 really challenged me to work on my writing.
- Intro 100 was worth the work I put into it.
- Intro 100 was worth the money I paid for it.
- Intro 100 helped me to succeed at MSU.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
I also asked them separately about the effects of how **retaking** ENWR 100 affected them and here they were even less enthusiastic. Not one “strongly agreed” that retaking ENWR 100 affected them in any positive way. But most of these two-time ENWR 100 takers (only one student reported taking ENWR 100 three times) did agree that they learned writing skills by retaking ENWR 100.23

These students were most negative about the cost of ENWR 100—an understandable sore point among retakers because they did not earn college credits on their first or even their second attempts. Only three of eleven respondents 27.3% reported that retaking ENWR 100 was worth the tuition cost, while 36.4% expressed no opinion and 36.4% disagreed that the cost was worthwhile. Of the five student comments, three expressed disappointment with their ENWR 100 instructors. Two added that their second ENWR 100 instructors were more helpful. (S1, S5). The third student added that his College Writing I instructor was more helpful (S3). But even the retakers, as a group, agreed that they learned many college writing skills in ENWR 100. Strong majorities agreed that they learned each of the ten writing skills listed in the survey.

The retaker group was very small and some of these retakers failed or withdrew from ENWR 100 at least once, coloring their responses. Nonetheless, as a sample of the voices of less successful MSU writing students, these voices evidence the complexity of evaluating how ENWR 100 works for retakers. While these students see ENWR 100 as more of a barrier to their success, they also recognize that it provided them with valuable writing skills, and made them better and more confident writers. They seem to be

---

23 One two-time taker noted that he will have to retake the course again after failing or withdrawing due to excessive absences in his first two attempts. (3.3/4).
students who needed extra help but were both helped and hindered by the help they received in ENWR 100.\textsuperscript{24}

For example, “Brendan” revealed deeply mixed feeling about ENWR 100 (S57). A Family and Child Studies major, he received an “NC” when he first took ENWR 100 in the Fall of 2006 and he passed ENWR 100 in the Spring of 2007. In the Fall of 2007, he reported he took College Writing I and got a D. He took College Writing II in Spring of 2008. His opinions about how ENWR 100 affected him were entirely negative. But,

\textsuperscript{24} A fair question is whether the opinions expressed by all these former ENWR 100 students are colored favorably by the passage of time and the fact they all invested substantial time, money and effort in ENWR 100 and in their careers as MSU students. However, their response to the factual questions in every case suggest otherwise. In every case, the factual responses evidence ENWR 100 as more useful than the broad perception and opinion questions. Comparing the two forms of responses, it appears that this group, as a whole, colored their opinions and perceptions of ENWR 100 in a slightly negative light—as would also make sense in the context of a mandatory, remedial course.
Brendan agreed that he learned eight of the ten listed writing skills in ENWR 100 -- all except getting started and writing in multiple drafts. And he also agreed that every writing skill listed was “very useful” in his other courses at MSU. He said he had taken six or more other writing courses at MSU, including research and methods, intro to child advocacy and child development, and that he got As and Bs in his other courses where “my writing was better” (Survey 6:1, 9). While Brendan believes that ENWR 100 did not help him in his other classes, he also recognizes that he learned many skills there that were very useful in those other classes.

Do you agree with these statements about what you learned in Intro 100?

- I learned ways to help me get started...
- I learned how to write several drafts...
- I learned how to give and get useful peer review.
- I learned how to organize my writing...
- I learned how to make persuasive arguments.
- I learned how to avoid plagiarism.
- I learned how to use and quote outside sources.
- I learned how to write clear and...
- I learned about rules of grammar and punctuation.
- I learned how to edit and proofread my writing.

ENWR 100 students must repeat the class until they successfully complete it.

Based on the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students, many students who fail ENWR 100 outright
may not succeed at MSU due to factors beyond the course. Those who do complete the work, but receive an NC grade struggle much more to succeed at MSU than their peers who receive passing grades and some (at least the few who responded here) have deeply mixed feelings about whether ENWR 100 may be more of a barrier than a bridge for them. Perhaps these students (and they are a small group each semester) could benefit from some different kind of help with their writing that allows them to advance while further strengthening their writing skills.

E. Individual ENWR 100 Instructors Seem To Impact Student Success.

Students who responded to the survey had many comments, both good and bad, about their instructors. Several pointed out that one writing instructor (sometimes not their first instructor) helped them to succeed or made a special effort to help them improve their writing. Even within a strong program, we would expect that individual instructors would affect the success rates of their students. The data here (while extremely limited) suggests that instructors do matter. But, it also suggests that individual ENWR 100 grades may not be good indicators of long term success. Grades in Fall 2007 ENWR 100 sections varied substantially by instructor, from a GPA of only 0.77 to one of 2.93. But, these ENWR 100 grades had almost no correlation to success later in College Writing I.

Despite the variance in ENWR 100 grades, the percentages of ENWR 100 students for each ENWR 100 instructor who passed College Writing I within one year was fairly consistent, except for one section (Instructor G) which had received extremely low grades. For example, the single section taught by Instructor F earned the strongest College Writing I grades, although they received relatively low ENWR 100 grades.
and also had a low ENWR 100 pass rate. Conversely, the Instructor A group had by far the highest grades in ENWR 100 and almost the highest overall ENWR 100 pass rate; yet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>All ENWR 100 Students</th>
<th>Breakdown of Grades</th>
<th>Approx ENWR 100 GPA(^{25})</th>
<th>Passed College Writing I w/in one year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>15 23 7 15 86 20</td>
<td>2.26 99 (60%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0 4 0 2 10 12</td>
<td>2.93 17 (61%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2 7 0 2 20 0</td>
<td>2.35 16 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3 5 0 3 20 3</td>
<td>2.29 22 (65%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1 2 5 3 16 0</td>
<td>2.18 17 (63%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3 0 0 3 8 4</td>
<td>2.55 11 (61%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 2 0 0 8 1</td>
<td>2.00 10 (71%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 3 2 2 4 0</td>
<td>0.77 6 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

these students were by far the least likely group to go on to receive high grades in Prose 105. These distinctions suggest that the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 grades are not important to long term student success at MSU. Many of these instructors were highly empathetic teachers and it is possible that some graded their students more with their hearts than their heads.

But beyond the ENWR 100 grades, patterns of success in College Writing I varied substantially for students of different ENWR 100 instructors. The former ENWR 100 students in the survey often asserted that their ENWR 100 teachers mattered a great

\(^{25}\) I do not have actual grade information available here, so I have computed all the F and NC grades count as zero, D- to C- grades as one point, the C grade as two points, the C+ to B+ as three points and the A- to A as four points.
The College Writing I grades agree with those comments, showing substantial variations in levels of success. Fully 64% of Instructor F’s one section of ENWR 100 students went on to receive grades of C+ or higher in College Writing I within one year. Instructor C’s two sections of ENWR 100 students had similar success: 56% went on to earn C+ or higher grades in College Writing I. But only 21% of Instructor A’s students had similar success in College Writing I. In sum, Instructor F and C’s students were about three times as likely to earn a high grade in College Writing I as Instructor A’s students—although Instructor C and F awarded much lower grades in ENWR 100 itself. (Clearly, empathy alone is not enough.)

Of course, these are very small samples and the differences between classes make these apples-to-oranges comparisons. For example, in Fall 2007 Instructor C taught two sections of ENWR 100. Students in the first section went on to be much more successful...
in College Writing I than students in the second section—even though they all had the same ENWR 100 instructor. Some of these ENWR 100 sections included learning communities with unique needs. There are also the usual (and substantial differences) between students who elect early morning, afternoon, and night classes. Any further study should also consider other possible variables. Yet, more study of the impact of individual instructors over longer periods of time, and considering more classes of students, could yield valuable insights as to whether individual instructors consistently achieve better success rates for their students and—if so—how they do it.
VI. Conclusion: Introductory Writing Courses Can Be Shown to Promote Student Success.

The retention and grade data available here for the 2005 to 2009 MSU ENWR 100 suggests that they have succeeded so far as a group when considered in absolute terms and when compared to their MSU peers. Based on these initial positive results, these metrics can be retested by internal MSU studies of retention, grades, and graduation rates for larger groups of ENWR 100 students over time. All this data can build a body of knowledge about the success rates of ENWR 100 students (as well as MSU students in other introductory courses) which stakeholders can use to gauge whether the students who are placed into ENWR 100 are succeeding at MSU. Every college and university can generate these statistics and can demonstrate to all their stakeholders whether students placed into introductory courses are getting good grades, staying in school, and earning degrees.

These numbers alone do not show whether ENWR 100 and other introductory courses actually help students to succeed. But additional methods of direct inquiry such as student polls, focus groups, and interviews can show such causation. The survey here is intended as a first step toward such direct inquiry. I suggest that the purely objective numbers which measure student success: retention, graduation, and grade information—always can be strengthened, clarified and validated by asking students what they think, how they feel, what they actually learned, and whether they needed what they learned to succeed academically. Combining the voices of students with objective retention and grade data has the potential to create a powerful body of persuasive common knowledge.
that can guide all educational stakeholders in crafting effective academic assistance for students.

Although these ENWR 100 students were among the most at-risk students to enter MSU, the evidence here suggests they have succeeded pretty well so far. Among the Fall 2007 ENWR 100 students, only the small subgroup who failed ENWR 100 appear also to have failed as a group in their first year at MSU. Another small subgroup who received “NC” grades struggled in the MSU writing program and almost half dropped out within four semesters. If broader research confirms the results for these NC students, it may be possible for MSU to craft better ways to help these NC students in ways that improve their odds of success.

The 68 students who responded to the survey strongly credit ENWR 100 as helping them. Further student surveys and focus groups can allow the voices of these students to shape future course structures that will best assist them. If more evidence confirms that ENWR 100 is helping students to succeed, MSU administrators might well consider expanding ENWR 100 placements to assist more at-risk students. The evidence here suggests that an expanded ENWR 100 program could serve as a bridge to success for more students and could raise MSU’s overall student retention and graduation rates even higher—substantial and measurable practical fruits that would justify the costs and effort for taxpayers, legislators, administrators, teachers and students.

Once the value of ENWR is further established, many slight adjustments are possible because Intro 100 is so closely aligned with college Writing I. For example, if MSU raised placement cut scores to produce broader ENWR 100 placements and also offered College Writing I waivers for the most successful ENWR 100 students, the net
additional costs to all stakeholders could be minimal and the resulting writing course placements would be much more valid and reliable.

There are less tangible practical fruits here as well. The success of ENWR 100 students does more than make MSU a more successful university in terms of graduation and retention; it makes MSU a more successfully diverse university by providing a viable path to success for its at-risk students and it fosters a deeper and broader academic conversation at MSU.

And, based on the large number of writing courses taken by former ENWR 100 students, an interesting possibility here is that ENWR 100 (and the MSU mainstream writing program) are so successful in building the writing abilities and confidence of MSU students that academic writing at MSU is being promoted across the board as these more confident writers elect to take more writing courses, and teachers across the university find they can successfully incorporate substantial writing elements within different courses of study. (As another possible example of an enhanced writing culture at MSU, Isaacs has recently successfully promoted the addition of a new senior writing requirement.) The academic conversation at MSU could be benefiting directly from the sustained, thoughtful and complex inquiry which is fostered by an increased use of academic writing.

In a larger sense, if these ENWR 100 students can be shown to be successful, and if ENWR 100 can be shown to contribute to that success, it follows that the prospects of academic success for all American college students labeled as under-prepared, basic, or remedial (who are, at six million strong right now, close to half of all our college
students) can be promising as well. All the stakeholders in public education have the right to ask for evidence of the practical fruits of remediation in order to justify its substantial costs in time, energy and money. They have a right-- and perhaps even an obligation-- to ask whether all groups of students are succeeding and whether introductory courses are actually helping or hindering them. Where research shows that at-risk students are succeeding, and that introductory courses are helping them to succeed, then those courses deserve the full support of all educational stakeholders because such programs are fulfilling fundamental and critical goals of public education: Successful remedial programs offer real academic opportunity to marginalized and at-risk students who might otherwise be left behind. They foster a more diverse academy and a deeper, broader academic conversation. In the end, successful introductory courses demonstrate that the odds of success for all students can be promising.
WORKS CITED


According to the DOL, between 1992 and 2000, 61% of community college students and 25% of students who first attended a four-year college completed at least one remedial course (DOE 63). As of 2009, Michael Kirst, of Stanford, estimates “that 60 percent of students ages 17 to 20 in two-year colleges, and 30 percent in four-year institutions, need remedial courses” (2). Similarly, in their 2004 study of the effectiveness of remedial writing courses, Denise Crews and Steven Aragon catalogue 1990s studies that estimate between 30% and 70% of all American college freshmen need some basic skills support (Crews and Aragon 1). (For more similar statistics, see also sources cited in Southard and Clay at 1.) According to 1999 census figures 3.8 million students were enrolled in US two year colleges and almost 8.3 million students were undergraduates at four year colleges (Jamieson 8, Table D). The American Association of Community Colleges now asserts that two year college enrollment has now swelled to 6.5 million, almost half of all college enrollment nationwide (CC Stats). Counting 60% of these two years students and 30% of the four year students, over six million American college students right now are taking (or have taken) remedial college courses.

Excludes Summer 2005 ENWR 100 students as they were not included in this study.

OIR also excluded them from the lists provided for this study, although I count 166 ENWR 100 students from the English Department lists, while OIR’s list varies slightly with 165. Students can withdraw from a course until mid semester, with increasing tuition penalties. A few of these withdrawals may have been strategic, representing a student’s judgment that she is uncomfortable in ENWR 100 or will not succeed there. But most of them probably represent early September adjustments and shuffling. For example, the three students who withdrew from my ENWR 100 classes that semester never attended a single class. Arguably, some of these withdrawal/dropout/transfer students have been blocked by some form of barrier or gatekeeping—but even if so, it is very likely not a form of exclusion that reflects the substance of the ENWR 100 courses in any way.

Some Composition theorists have called for just such changes. In 2009, Kathleen Yancey issued a “call for action” for writing teachers to develop new models of writing, new kinds of writing courses, and new theories about teaching writing in response to complex new forms of web composition and the explosion of new web writing practices among students (1). Yancey urges all English teachers “to join the future and support all forms of 21st Century literacies, inside school and outside school”(1). Will Richardson also bemoans the slow reaction of the education system to rapidly changing realities. “Our students’ realities in terms of the way they communicate and learn is very different from our own. By and large they are “out there” using a wide variety of technologies that they are told they can’t use when they come to school” (5). Anne Herrington and Charles Moran even assert that “new electronic texts...challenge our basic notions of written texts as linear, verbal, single author texts”(2). Citing G.R. Kress, Herrington and Moran note that it may now be appropriate to think of student writers not as producers of written texts, but as designers and composers using all available resources to make meaning (4). Finally, the NCTE published guidelines for the teaching of writing in 2004 which recognized that new tools are expanding the meaning of writing beyond print alone, such that writing means “more than scratching words with pen and paper” and urged that writing instruction “must accommodate the explosion in technology from the world around us”(7).
Error: Unable to store job at printer
Reason: Insufficient disk space for this job
Solution: Delete some files from the disk before resending this job.
Appendix A
Sean Molloy Intro 100 Study

Exhibit A -- Student Survey Email Invitation Form

To: [Listserve of MSU Intro 100 students Fall 2005-Spring 2009]

From: Sean Molloy

Re: Take my 15 minute Intro 100 Student Survey and I’ll buy you a Subway sandwich

Hi! I'm Sean Molloy, a former writing teacher at MSU and a grad student here now. When I taught Introduction to Writing, ENWR 100 (Intro 100) at MSU, I saw how hard my students worked and how much they wanted to succeed at MSU.

I know that Intro 100 required a lot of your time, effort and tuition money. Some of you had to take Intro 100 more than once. Now, I am studying whether Intro 100 helps students like you to succeed at MSU.

I am writing to ask if you will take a 15 minute online survey about how Intro 100 affected you.

Based on your SAT or other writing test scores, MSU administrators believed that you needed Intro 100 to help you in your other MSU classes. I want to find out what you think.

I really appreciate your time and help. As a small thank you, I'll send the first one hundred students who answer my survey a code good for a free sandwich at the Clove Road and Route 46 Subway.

If you click this link you will jump to the survey. First, under federal law and MSU rules, I will need to tell you more about my study and then you can choose if you want to consent to participate by taking the survey. {LINK}

Thanks for your help,

Sean Molloy
Appendix B
1. Consent Form

1. Thank you for helping me with my study about Introduction to Writing, ENWR 100!

First, under federal law and MSU rules, I need to tell you more about my study. Then, if you consent to participate, please type your name in the box below and you can begin the survey right now.

STUDY TITLE: Does Introduction to Writing, ENWR 100 Help Students to Succeed at MSU?

PURPOSE: I want to learn if taking Intro 100 helps students succeed at MSU.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN: I will combine all the survey answers and other information I can gather into a master's thesis which will be published in the MSU library. I will also share what I learn with the MSU Writing Program Director. I may publish or present what I learn in other places too.

YOUR TIME: This survey should take about about 15 minutes. (If you had to take Intro 100 more than once, I'll ask you a few more questions—maybe another 5 minutes.) The completion bar at the top of each page will track your progress.

RISKS: You may feel uncomfortable answering some of these questions. But, you can skip any question or stop taking the survey at any time. And, as an MSU student, you are always free to contact MSU's free, confidential counseling services located at Gilbreth House, (973)655-5211.

BENEFITS: You probably won't benefit directly. Other students may benefit from this study because I'll share what I learn so that MSU and other schools can consider the best ways to structure required writing courses to help their students.

GIFT SANDWICH: I really appreciate your time and help. To say thank you, I'll send the first one hundred responders a code good for a free sandwich at the Clove Road and Route 46 Subway.
WHO WILL KNOW YOU ARE IN THIS STUDY? I will. But no one else will know. I don't work at MSU anymore, so no MSU teacher or employee will know that you participated or what answers you gave. MSU has also provided me with basic "directory" type data for all students who took Intro 100, which includes only your name, home address, MSU email address, the semesters you have attended MSU and your student classification (freshman, sophomore, etc.). I will keep your identity and all this information strictly confidential according to the law. You will not be linked to any articles or presentations about what I learn.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY? No. You are a volunteer! (Thank you again.) It is OK if you want to stop at any time and not be in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you skip or stop, nothing will happen to you. If you go all the way to the end of the survey form, you will still be eligible to get the free sandwich.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY? Call or write Sean Molloy, 643 Upper Mountain Ave, Montclair, New Jersey 07043, (973)801-4688, molloys@mail.montclair.edu

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS? Call or email the MSU IRB Chair, Debra Zellner(reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu (973)655-4327).

If you consent to participate in my study, please type your name in the box below and you can begin the survey right now. (Thank you!)

2. What do you think?
1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how taking Intro 100 affected you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking Intro 100 made me a better writer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 helped me to succeed in College Writing I, ENWR 105.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 made me a more confident writer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 helped me to succeed in my other MSU classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 really challenged me to work on my writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 was worth the work I put into it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 was worth the money I paid for it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro 100 helped me to succeed at MSU.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Can you tell me any more about how taking Intro 100 affected you?

3. Did you take Intro 100 more than once?

- No.
- Yes, I took it twice.
- Yes, I took it three times.
- Yes, I took it more than three times.

3. Retaking Intro 100
1. When did you retake Introduction to Writing 100 at MSU?

Please check all semesters that you took Intro 100, even if you dropped it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall, 2005</th>
<th>Spring 2006</th>
<th>Summer 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Spring 2007</th>
<th>Summer 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>Summer 2008</td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>Summer 2009</td>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how repeating Intro 100 affected you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeating Intro 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made me a better writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped me to succeed in College Writing I, ENWR 105.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made me a more confident writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped me to succeed in my other MSU classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>really challenged me to work on my writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was worth the work I put into it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was worth the money I paid for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped me to succeed at MSU.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Can you tell me any more about how retaking intro 100 affected you?

4. A few Questions about you and MSU
1. When did you first take Introduction to Writing 100 at MSU?

- [ ] Before Fall of 2005
- [ ] Fall, 2005
- [ ] Spring 2006
- [ ] Summer 2006
- [ ] Fall 2006
- [ ] Spring 2007
- [ ] Summer 2007
- [ ] Fall 2007
- [ ] Spring 2008
- [ ] Summer 2008
- [ ] Fall 2008
- [ ] Spring 2009

2. How many academic credits have you earned at MSU through the summer of 2009? (Please include any transfer credits.)

- [ ] 0 to 30 (freshman)
- [ ] 31 to 60 (sophomore)
- [ ] 61 to 90 (junior)
- [ ] over 90 (senior)

3. What is your overall Grade Point Average at MSU?

- [ ] Less than 1.00
- [ ] 1.00 to 1.50
- [ ] 1.50 to 2.00
- [ ] 2.00 to 2.50
- [ ] 2.50 to 3.00
- [ ] 3.00 to 3.50
- [ ] Higher than 3.50

4. What was your final grade in Intro 100 the first time you took it?

- [ ] Incomplete
- [ ] Withdraw
- [ ] F
- [ ] No Credit (NC)
- [ ] D- to D+
- [ ] C- to C+
- [ ] B-
- [ ] B
- [ ] B+
- [ ] A-
- [ ] A
5. What was your grade in College Writing I, ENWR 105 the first time you took it?

- I didn't take Writing 105 yet
- I'm taking Writing 105 now
- Incomplete or withdraw
- F
- D- to D+
- C- to C+
- B-
- B
- B+
- A-
- A

5. What you learned in Intro 100

1. Do you agree with these statements about what you learned in Intro 100?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I learned ways to help me get started with an essay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to write several drafts to reach a final essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to give and get useful peer review.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to organize my writing around one main idea.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to make persuasive arguments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to avoid plagiarism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to use and quote outside sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to write clear and interesting sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned about rules of grammar and punctuation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to edit and proofread my writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Can you tell me anything else about what you learned (or didn’t learn) in Intro 100?
3. After completing Intro 100, most MSU students go on to take College Writing I, ENWR 105. How long did you wait after Intro 100 to take Writing 105?

- I took Writing 105 the next semester after I completed Intro 100.
- I took Writing 105 about six months after I completed Intro 100.
- I took Writing 105 about one year after I completed Intro 100.
- I took Writing 105 about 18 months after I completed Intro 100.
- I took Writing 105 two years or more after I completed Intro 100.
- I haven’t taken Writing 105 yet.

6. Delay before Writing 105?

1. Can you tell me the reason (or reasons) why you waited to take College Writing 105 after you completed Intro 100?

7. Did Intro 100 help you succeed in other courses at MSU?

1. What is your major or main area of study at MSU?

2. When you you first take College Writing II, Intro to Literature, ENWR 106?

- Not yet
- Fall 2009
- Summer 2009
- Spring 2009
- Fall 2008
- Summer 2008

- Spring 2008
- Fall 2007
- Summer 2007
- Spring 2007
- Fall 2006 or earlier
3. How many other courses have you taken at MSU where you had to write essays?

Please check ALL choices that apply to you.

- [ ] None.
- [ ] College Writing I, ENWR 105.
- [ ] College Writing II, Intro to Literature ENWR 106.
- [ ] Besides Writing 105 and Lit 106, 1 to 3 other courses.
- [ ] Besides Writing 105 and Lit 106, 4 to 6 other courses.
- [ ] Besides Writing 105 and Lit 106, more than 6 other courses.

4. Other than MSU’s required writing course (Intro 100, College Writing I (ENWR 105), and College Writing II (ENWR 106)) which other courses at MSU gave you the most writing assignments?

First Course: 
Second Course: 
Third Course: 

5. Other than MSU’s required writing courses (Intro 100, College Writing I (ENWR 105), and College Writing II (ENWR 106)) have these writing skills been useful in your other courses at MSU?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Less Useful</th>
<th>Never Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ways to help me get started with an essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to write several drafts to reach a final essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to give and get useful peer review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to organize my writing around one main idea.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to make persuasive arguments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to avoid plagiarism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use and quote outside sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to write clear and interesting sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules of grammar and punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to edit and proofread my writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Can you tell me anything else about what writing skills you have needed (or didn’t need) in your other classes at MSU?

8. Thank you! Free Sandwich

Thank you so much for participating in my study!

Hopefully, this study will help MSU and other colleges will learn more about the best way to offer writing courses for all their students.

To say thank you, if you are one of the first 100 responders to this survey, I will email you a code for a free six inch sandwich at the Subway store located at Clove Road and Route 46, right next to the Six Brothers Diner.

Thanks again! --Sean Molloy