Balancing the Real and Ideal: Program Design as a Collaborative Process in Mainstreaming Approaches to Basic Writing

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This essay describes a pilot program of a co-requisite Learning Support writing course (ENGL 0999) that adapts features of Studio and Accelerated Learning programs to a two-semester sequence of First Year Writing. The program was designed to cultivate critical reflection, writing knowledge transfer, and student-led discussion. Narratives from the program director (Mendenhall) and a lead instructor (Brockland-Nease) discuss challenges in developing the pedagogical and programmatic support necessary to engage students and communicate with other writing instructors in the co-requisite format. The authors argue that ongoing, collaborative program design plays a critical role in supporting pedagogy for courses that, by design, serve as adjuncts to core writing classes.

The increasingly popular decision to mainstream basic writing has taken multiple forms in the 21st century, as basic writing scholars negotiate ambivalent feelings about how institutions treat basic writers. On one hand, many in the field have long expressed concern over stigmatizing students by labeling them and enrolling them in separate courses. On the other hand, basic writing scholars have been reluctant to concede to state or institutional demands to raise admissions requirements and reduce remediation, thereby restricting access to higher education for many students (Sternglass vii-viii). As programs seek to serve students in these contexts, they have inevitably adopted different forms: stretch courses, writing studios, accelerated learning (AL) programs, writing center collaborations, and directed self-placement. This diversity reflects the ways composition programs have heeded Rhonda C. Grego and Nancy S. Thompson's call for the field to "fine-tune our understanding of the different starting points embodied by the complex relations among students, institutional infrastructure, and community history at any

given educational site" (44). Programs begin from different starting points, and the field's scholarship and teaching is richer when we account for their unique locations.

To that end, this essay describes our experience developing and piloting a curricular redesign of our institution's Learning Support writing course, transforming the course from a 3-credit hour prerequisite course into a 1-credit hour co-requisite course (ENGL 0999) taken alongside our first year writing (FYW) sequence and based on the studio model designed by Grego and Thompson, which shares many features with AL programs. Both AL and studio programs provide students with small class sizes, teach writing in the context of learning that occurs in FYW, place basic writers in heterogeneous FYW sections, and address students' learning behaviors and attitudes as much as writing content (Adams et al. 61-63). However, AL programs emphasize cohort learning by placing students with the same instructor for FYW and the co-requisite course, arguing that shared experience and bonding improves student retention (Adams et al. 60). In contrast, studio programs place students from different sections of FYW in a co-requisite class not taught by any of the students' FYW teachers, encouraging reflection on differences in writing assignments, instructor expectations, and students' attitudes about their identity and location in the university (Grego and Thompson 10). In developing our program, we incorporated elements of the studio model to cultivate critical literacy and frank discussion about the nature of college-level writing; however, in implementing the course, instructors found it challenging to achieve student-led discussion and reflection because our department had not yet developed adequate pedagogical and programmatic support necessary to promote intrinsic motivation in participating students. As we reflect on our pilot year, we suggest ways programs and instructors can address problems with students' intrinsic motivation in either studio or AL

programs by ensuring co-requisite courses provide students with concrete tasks designed for writing transfer.

When we began developing our Writing Studio program, we imagined a class in line with the published scholarship on AL and studio programs: a student-directed workshop format where students could vent frustrations about writing to an instructor who could channel those emotions into productive institutional critique and rhetorical analysis. We quickly learned that we brought to the Studio class our own "myth of transience"[1]—assuming students could cultivate the habits of mind for success in writing in just two semesters. We found instead that students arrived with varied vocabularies, dispositions, and preparation that impacted how they engaged in studio work. What the co-requisite format offers, however, is a chance to meet students where they are in a more personal, small-class format in a way that can *begin* to teach them to be motivated learners and writers *if* the studio class offers concrete tasks for students and ensures instructors are adequately supported.

The student-driven workshop format of the co-requisite course has been a critical feature of recent approaches to mainstreaming basic writing. Describing their studio-like program, Judith Rodby and Tom Fox present lesson planning for the co-requisite workshop as extemporaneous: students walk into class, explain what they are working on in FYW, and "the instructor and the students decide on the agenda for the day" (92). Similarly, Grego and Thompson describe how students arrive to class commenting on their work in progress, and after "everybody has arrived, the leader forms an initial agenda… based on what this group needs or 'brings to the table this week'" (11). In AL formats, workshop pedagogy can be more predictable, given that the co-requisite class and FYW class share the same instructor; however,

workshops are still student-directed. For example, Adams et al. describe how a class begins with student questions that lead to freewriting activities, *ad hoc* grammar lessons, and other invention and revision activities (57). These approaches value impromptu lesson planning because students direct the nature of the learning experience.

Furthermore, the student-directed nature of co-requisite courses presumably creates an environment where students feel free to examine their emotional lives and institutional contexts. John Paul Tassoni and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson describe the goal of their studio program as teaching students "about contextuality—both how context impacts on a rhetorical project and ways in which rhetors engage with particular contexts in order to achieve their ends" (69). To examine contextuality,

> Students and instructors work together in the workshop to examine individual, diverse writing curricula in order to uncover the rhetorical situation, including the contextual constraints and determinants, of particular writing assignments; teacher expectations; and social issues in students' lives at home, work, and in the university. (70)

This student-directed critical literacy project occurs without grades (aside from attendance grades) to penalize students (Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson 76). The co-requisite format, then, attempts to create an alternative institutional space for student learning.

Davis et al. also argue, based on their AL program, that co-requisite workshops should address student affect (7). They note that being labeled remedial and "entering the unfamiliar terrain of the academy" can produce "emotional triggers" that "adversely impact students' motivation and elicit certain unproductive behaviors" (Davis et al. 7). Davis et al. recommend

improving student motivation by teaching students "self-regulatory practices," which they describe as "a well-planned system of goal-setting and self-monitoring activities" (8). Similarly, Rigolino and Freel's "intensive" model, which involves a paired FYW and co-requisite course taught by the same instructor, encourages institutional critique alongside more traditional process workshop activities like brainstorming and researching (58). They describe the co-requisite course as "a space where students… can step back and evaluate their writing in a context which encourages broader critiques of the academy, their roles as students, as well as their roles in the world outside of academia" (58). In mainstreaming approaches where the FYW and co-requisite courses share an instructor, discussions of affect can be fostered by assignments, like literacy narratives, that bridge both courses. Shared instructor formats do not have the added pressure of negotiating students' disparate experiences of FYW assignments, expectations, and instructor feedback. Yet shared instructor approaches may for that same reason struggle to foreground the institutional contexts of student learning. Given the short amount of time in each week's workshop and the demanding pace of FYW, the co-requisite course may more easily become another class session of FYW, albeit one that provides students more control over the time and activities.

Complicating matters further, recent studio scholarship underscores how difficult it is for students and instructors to engage in institutional work and affective work. Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson acknowledge that institutional constraints make moments of institutional critique "transitory at best" and "unpredictable for the student" (72). They describe how "the pedagogy and assumptions driving a writing class" often "remain unknowable and unimaginable to students" (Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson 89). Chris Warnick, Emily Cooney, and Samuel Lackey similarly note their struggle to get students to attend class, much less to discuss writing

as "part of a larger institutional dialogue in which everyone—students, faculty and administrators—has a stake" (83). They suggest a Supplemental Instruction model in place of a studio, which would provide more concrete activities, such as "large-group writing workshops led by Studio faculty, podcasts that present interviews with students and faculty from across campus about issues related to academic writing, and public lectures in which instructors from different disciplines present their ongoing research" (Warnick, Cooney, and Lackey 92). The Supplemental Instruction model described would provide a more predictable program experience, but it also limits instructor access and eliminates the possibility for instructors to moderate serendipitous (and transitory) moments of connection among students. Such moments are critical to achieving the theoretical goals of mainstreaming programs.

Like other programs, our studio pilot has struggled to achieve student-directed learning. Our experience discussing and revising the program based on these struggles led to this essay. We—an assistant professor with a specialization in rhetoric and composition and a veteran instructor with experience teaching basic writing in a variety of contexts—worked together (along with other instructors in the program) to address ongoing pedagogical concerns while attempting to meet the larger programmatic goals that seemed at times unreachable. In the process of working collaboratively on this program, we found that sharing our different values, challenges, and goals led to a holistic understanding of the issues we needed to resolve in revising the program. To showcase the value of sharing differences in collaborative program design, we have chosen to split the following sections of this article. The narrative split, we believe, usefully foregrounds the convergences and divergences in our investments and experiences as program designer and as instructor. Our divided sections highlight the issues any writing program faces when subjected to multiple points of assessment (programmatic and

classroom assessment) by multiple constituencies (Learning Support, First Year Experience, FYW, individual instructors, and students). Program directors strive to promote institutional critique and a nuanced theory of writing while also seeking assessment evidence to sustain these programs. Instructors deal with the challenges of silent students, empty classrooms, and students' desire for writing instruction to operate a particular way. These constraints make program development, support, and assessment a tricky process in constant need of revision and improvement. In mainstreaming approaches to basic writing programs, these challenges are exacerbated by the fact that such programs are designed to operate on the margins of FYW. Such programs therefore underscore the problems that learning environment can pose to fostering the motivation essential to teaching for writing transfer. Ongoing, collaborative program design thus plays a critical role in supporting pedagogy.

Mendenhall's Narrative: Negotiating Institutional Realities in the Design of a Co-Requisite Studio Program

The decision to mainstream basic writing at our institution came entirely as a result of external forces. In early 2014, as part of our state's university system-wide retention initiative entitled Complete College Georgia (CCG), our university was asked to transform developmental courses in writing and mathematics, part of the university's Learning Support program, into co-requisite rather than prerequisite classes wherever possible. As the directors of Learning Support explained, CCG had determined that students taking basic writing were leaving institutions before they ever made it to FYW, even when they successfully completed the remedial course. The same observation has been noted in basic writing scholarship as a justification for mainstreaming (Adams et al. 52). Because mainstreaming reduces the stigma of placing students

into basic writing and reduces the time students take to earn credit toward a degree, it may enhance student retention and success (Adams et al. 60). According to CCG guidelines, a co-requisite support course would "provide 'just-in-time' support to students while they are also taking an entry-level (gateway) collegiate course in mathematics or English" (Brown 1).

While CCG emphasizes supporting student success in ways consistent with basic writing scholarship on mainstreaming, its language also implicitly describes students as almost out of time as they encounter the barrier of "gateway" courses. This language is indicative of the problematic view of basic writers. For example, placement into remediation is based on an arbitrary score called the English Placement Index (EPI), formulated using a student's high school grade point average, SAT Verbal or ACT English scores, and (where applicable) a timed writing exam. This placement method can undermine student motivation and cause students to resent the course, especially when students do not receive adequate explanation about why they placed into the course. The CCG initiative allows programs significant freedom to design the course, although it recommends an AL model, suggesting the co-requisite course be a 1-2 credit-hour course taken alongside the gateway course and taught by the same instructor. The curricular revision required by CCG thus allowed us to invent a program in line with Adams et al.'s recommendation that basic writing courses function as "more path than gate, leading students to success rather than barring them from it" (51).

Redesigning basic writing as support along a learning path aligns with research in composition arguing that students need to learn writing knowledge and the habits of mind for success in writing to encourage transfer for long-term success in writing tasks. As research on writing instruction has shown, long-term student success in writing requires rhetorical

awareness, a functional vocabulary for writing tasks, and meta-cognitive articulation of students' writing processes (see Beaufort; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak). Basic writing scholarship confirms that transfer is an issue for basic writing students. Rodby and Fox note this limitation in their experience with prerequisite basic writing:

> The basic writing students who had achieved a degree of comfort and expertise in the curriculum of basic writing… did not bring that comfort and expertise with them to first-year writing. Even at the most banal level, the ability to punctuate a sentence, for example, expertise from Basic Writing courses did not appear to transfer automatically to first-year writing. (88-89)

Similarly, Tassoni and Leweicki-Wilson argue that underprepared students need to understand the rhetorical contexts of writing and writing rules to "become more skilled agents who can then decide how to use writing 'skills' for the ends they wish to achieve" (70). In the narrative of their experiences developing a studio program at Miami University in Middletown, Ohio, they describe students' difficulty deciphering assignments and instructor comments that lack rhetorical context (Tassoni and Leweicki-Wilson 87-89). A co-requisite learning support course taken alongside FYW contains potential as a space that can help students learn to articulate how the evaluation of writing occurs as part of a larger educational system rather than as a function of instructors' idiosyncrasies.

As Yancey et al. explain in *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing,* time, disposition, and educational context are critical elements in the transfer of writing knowledge. They argue that to succeed in writing tasks across the university, students need to learn how their approach to writing tasks influences their success in writing (19). Students'

approach to writing tasks, Yancey et al. suggest, impacts transfer as students adopt either problem-solving or problem-exploring dispositions, the latter of which sets students up to approach new writing tasks with the curiosity, motivation, and reflection to complete them more successfully (11). It would seem, then, that a studio format offering "just in time" instruction is well positioned to influence positively student motivation by shaping students' theories of and attitudes toward writing tasks (Yancey et al. 23).

To foster discussion of different tasks and audiences in writing, I incorporated the studio model's insistence on different instructors for FYW and the co-requisite course. This decision was also partly pragmatic. Our university's First Year Experience (FYE) program similarly involved a 1 credit hour class paired with a core class, both taught by the same instructor. The logistics of two sets of paired courses would be difficult to schedule; additionally, in practice our FYE program had difficulty convincing instructors to view the additional 50-minute, 1 credit hour session each week as a distinct course from the core class, and so the FYE course became simply another hour of the core class. I was committed to the small student-driven format of our co-requisite learning support class, and so I decided to follow the studio model's recommendation of different instructors.

Additionally, I thought the studio model would work well for another reason. Our university has a two-semester FYW sequence, and I wanted the co-requisite course to span *both* semesters. Anecdotally, I heard students struggled more with the second semester of FYW, ENGL 1102, than the first, ENGL 1101. Based on this evidence, I suspected students would need support as they navigated the different demands of FYW in both semesters. Given how difficult transfer of writing knowledge is from one semester to the next, I argued that limiting ENGL

0999 to a single semester undermined the theoretical purpose of mainstreaming basic writing students in the first place. The decision to require ENGL 0999 for two-semesters added another complication to scheduling and staffing, leading me to use the studio model. To simplify scheduling, I decided students from ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102 should be placed into the *same* sections of ENGL 0999. I thought that combining ENGL 1101 and 1102 students in the same writing studio would encourage discussions of the relationship between the two semesters of FYW that would facilitate transfer. Furthermore, experienced 0999 students in their second semester of FYW could serve as mentors, articulating their learning strategies and experiences with newer FYW students. The mix of students could facilitate the format envisioned by Warnick et al., characterized by "sharing feedback on one another's writing and exchanging ideas on how to address the concerns they face as writers—whether it's tackling sentence-level errors or interpreting an instructor's comments" (76). These experienced students could also provide motivation for new students, demonstrating the possibility of their own success in FYW.

As Brockland-Nease's narrative details in the next section, the design of the program opened new ways of teaching basic writing but also led to instructors experiencing challenges with student motivation, attendance, and discussion that made achieving the learning outcomes for the course difficult for students and instructors. The feedback that instructors like Brockland-Nease gave to me about teaching the course continually referenced the ways that the marginal location of the studio course requires ongoing evaluation, revision, and instructor support. The size of the program presented one programmatic challenge that impacted instructors. I designed the course under the impression that we had only a dozen students placed into basic writing in any given semester, so two sections of the course would suffice. However, a larger than anticipated number of students led to more sections, which instructors graciously agreed to take

on at the last minute. This larger number of sections required us to retrofit staffing, training, and instructor support as we encountered changes in program size. Brockland-Nease details below the difficulty instructors experienced communicating with the FYW instructors to collect assignment prompts, syllabi, and student progress reports throughout the semester. A lack of communication among instructors made it difficult to plan studio sessions and work with students. Furthermore, student attendance and participation problems required instructors to be creative in working with the few students who did show up to classes. These conditions were frustrating for instructors and for myself as the program designer—even though the scholarship on studio and other mainstreaming programs warned about these problems.

As the program designer, I decided to create an informal book group reading Grego and Thompson's *Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces* to solicit advice from instructors. Through the book group and other exchanges, instructors made suggestions regarding the support structures necessary to improve the experience of teaching the studio class. After the pilot year of the program, I met with studio instructors to create solutions to the problems they identified. We determined that some of the problems with teaching the studio class effectively were related to the need to better prepare and inform both studio and FYW instructors about the program. As a result, we created informational handouts that established a common set of expectations about teaching in the program (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

In the next section, Brockland-Nease describes how the program design can lead to low attendance and participation among students. To address those issues, the instructors and I worked on reframing the assessment of students' studio work. In the initial design of the program, our grading system simply included attendance, participation, and a writing journal, as

the scholarship on mainstreaming programs describes. However, instructors and I felt that this grading method reinforced traditional assessments of student learning. The most substantial programmatic revision that emerged from our conversations, then, was to replace traditional grading percentiles with a points system, in which students attended class and completed activities to earn a certain number of points that would lead to a satisfactory final grade in the writing studio (see Appendix C). The points system allowed us to codify the kinds of activities we wanted students to engage in—reflective thinking, task planning, evaluating writing tasks and peers' work, and so on—with concrete activities. The points system also reframed the work of studio in a way that "shares responsibility and negotiates most of the work (as well as the terms by which that work is done) with students" (Inoue 71). In other words, students are graded based on the work they choose to complete, and the grade process is reframed as earning points rather than losing points on assignments. We hope this new assessment model will reinforce the dispositions and habits we want students to learn in studio in a way that makes participation in the course less punitive.

While the Studio program that I designed remains new and in need of ongoing assessment and revision, the process of developing the course has created opportunities for collaboration that support a more nuanced understanding of writers and the FYW program on our campus. The conversations among myself and the studio instructors, the studio instructors and the FYW instructors, and the department and learning support have been valuable first steps in moving our department toward a more cohesive writing program.

Brockland-Nease's Narrative: Pedagogical Challenges in Piloting a Co-Requisite Studio Course

Grego and Thompson's prologue to *Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces* emphasizes the importance of the *place* of basic writing on a university's campus and in its curriculum (5, 14-24). Our university's response to the CCG initiative shifted responsibility for teaching basic writing courses from the institution's Learning Support office to our department's FYW program. Furthermore, the conversations described in the final paragraphs of Mendenhall's narrative above prompted and constituted greater interaction among instructors in our composition program than I have experienced teaching basic writing composition in a prerequisite format, helping us to "resist the isolation from each other effected by higher education institutional structures" (Grego and Thompson 24). Cooperation among our program designer, department chair, learning support administrators and gateway and studio instructors has created a teaching environment that is both more integrated into the mainstream curriculum and open to ongoing reflective evaluation and innovation. All of these factors—a positive teaching environment, receptivity to new ideas, and support from colleagues—have been influential in our university's launch of a potentially effective program.

Nevertheless, it is useful to consider that practical realization of the student-driven aspect of the course was problematic during our pilot year. Instructors found that students unfamiliar with university and studio environments require significant direction and confidence in order to contribute to class sessions. The studio goal is an idealized one; the reality we encountered during our pilot year was that students tended to default to the banking concept of education, waiting for instructor guidance at each step of the participation process, from preparing before

class to initiating discussions to responding to classmates' comments and requests. In order to provide the kind of guidance our studio students need, studio instructors require a fluent understanding of not only the goals (which are largely common across the department) but also the assignments and course calendars (which are markedly diverse) of each of their students' gateway instructors. Thus, organizing and delivering an effective co-requisite support course serving the students of several composition instructors at once demands an ongoing conversation among all instructors involved, both prior to and throughout the semester; as Mendenhall's narrative has indicated, that discussion forum was not in place when our pilot year began. My account of our first semester of ENGL 0999 details the learning curve through which we realized that our existing communication plan needed improvement.

After being introduced to the studio model concept a few months prior to the course's launch, I began planning the course's pilot with mixed feelings about three features: meeting one hour per week, following a student-driven agenda, and coordinating the course with composition sections led by a variety of instructors. While each characteristic offered opportunity to approach learning support from what were for me new perspectives, the three combined seemed a recipe for chaos and possible failure to serve student needs effectively. Prior to ENGL 0999, I had about twenty years of experience teaching prerequisite basic writing courses on two-year college and university campuses, where I found frequent and regular contact with my students essential for helping them shift out of existing, ineffective habits and attitudes and develop new paradigms for academic success, particularly in writing. One fifty-minute session a week seemed too infrequent a sequence in which to establish the trust required for students to feel confident asking questions, trying new techniques and sharing their writing. I was accustomed to learning support courses that met for two or three sessions per week, where the more frequent contact built peer

familiarity and provided opportunity to return to ongoing discussion topics before student interest waned. On the other hand, I felt some optimism that reducing the required attendance time would lessen student resentment and make the class seem, to students, more of an opportunity than an imposition. The key would be making sure we didn't waste the little time we had; therefore, I thought we needed a plan for moving forward in the course.

Having each class meeting led by student-suggested topics and activities seemed another way to address negative preconceptions about the course by demonstrating its potential to make an immediate difference in student understanding and performance on papers. However, as decades of research have demonstrated, students' academic underperformance has as much if not more to do with understanding the system of education, with its myriad unspoken assumptions, than with lack of mastery over concepts that can easily be put into question form, such as "When am I supposed to use a comma?" (see, for example, Shaughnessy 4-13; Bartholomae and Petrosky 4-6; Grego and Thompson 14-18). A successful student-driven course demands that students be *driven*—already motivated to take advantage of resources like peer workshops and question-and-answer sessions. I worried that my students, unfamiliar with what was expected of them as college students and as ENGL 0999 students, would sit, fairly passively, and wait to be *instructed* and released. I felt the need to develop a course outline that would give students some idea of what kinds of discussion points we might explore and when each topic might be most useful to them. I was willing to deviate from that outline, but it felt important to have it available, not only as a prompt for suggestions but also as back-up in the event that no one raised any questions or topics at a session.

Given the co-requisite status of our course, it made sense that ENGL 0999 students would be most likely to ask questions about topics and activities from their FYW courses, so I set out to contact those instructors to get a sense of their course plans. I wouldn't know exactly which 1101[1] instructors would share my students until I could see my students' schedules, so as I waited for students to be placed into the pilot sections of 0999, I incorporated an outline similar to the schedule suggested in Mendenhall's course proposal into my co-requisite course syllabus. Because our department publishes a common set of objectives for FYW courses, I was confident that most if not all students would be doing similar activities (such as reading model essays, developing first drafts, and engaging in peer review) at about the same time during the term. Therefore, my ENGL 0999 course outline specified that, for example, during the third session of our course we would talk about issues related to drafting their first major essay.

Alongside this chronological framework, my syllabus imposed two other structures on the course experience in the form of attendance and participation requirements. The CCG guidelines specify that "a student's grade in the co-requisite course need not be the same as the grade in the gateway course" (Brown 2), suggesting that something other than success in the gateway course might measure a student's performance in ENGL 0999. Given these not entirely consistent expectations, the logical criteria for evaluating the support course are attendance and participation. I adopted the formula for student evaluation that the program designer had developed as part of her proposal for the course:

Attendance (30%): Attendance for each class session is worth 2% of your total grade.

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[1] During our Fall 2015 pilot, we only had ENGL 1101 students in the ENGL 0999 co-requisite course since we were just beginning the new program format.

Participation (40%): Participation will be assessed after every class, and will include demonstrating preparedness for class, speaking in class discussions, being involved in workshops or writing activities, and preparing homework assignments.

Writing Journal (30%): You should have at least one writing journal entry per week. Writing Journal entries should list current challenges you are addressing in your writing, including issues of content, organization, usage, and style, or questions related to grammar and usage that you have researched and answered throughout the week.

I anticipated that the explanatory details accompanying these percentages would indicate to students the level of activity expected of them in and outside of class, particularly in the distinctions between simple *attendance* and *participation*. I expected the separate measurements to reinforce my message to students that they were both entitled to and responsible for directing the content of the course sessions.

As the course began, I soon realized that my syllabus was unrealistic in two respects: the course outline did not correspond effectively to the schedules adopted by my students' ENGL 1101 instructors, and because the syllabus did not make clear to students the relationship between their composition course and the co-requisite, I had not adequately explained the participation requirements of ENGL 0999. The first problem was rooted in my faulty assumptions about department knowledge of the course; the second was more successfully addressed as the course proceeded.

In our first semester of 0999 implementation, I taught two sections of the co-requisite course; enrollment was capped at 8 students per section. My students were distributed fairly evenly across four different instructors' ENGL 1101 sections, and I strove to gather assignments and syllabi from each of them. In retrospect it is clear that my efforts to get a sense of each instructor's course plan were not thorough enough; my assumptions about our similar approaches to ENGL 1101, together with my hesitation to appear to be questioning any instructor's decisions about his or her course, were at fault. I had copies of some of their syllabi (some but not all of which included assignment specifications and course calendars), and I knew what textbooks they intended to use (not all of them had selected the same texts). Two instructors provided me copies of their first assignments, which proved helpful later in the term as I discovered that students did not always bring those assignments to our sessions together.

All of the instructors were unfailingly supportive in their responses to my requests for information about their courses. However, they did not share a strong and consistent understanding of the concept of the co-requisite course. Two weeks into the semester, none of my students had received essay-length assignments yet. This foiled our course calendar's plans for analyzing the assignment prompts students had received and beginning work on drafts. As the course continued, students received assignments, but their due dates were widely disparate from one 1101 section to another, making it difficult to identify a workshop focus in which all of the students or even smaller subsets of them were prepared to participate. Furthermore, the assigned composition processes for each section were diverse: some students had composed entire drafts during their 1101 class meetings and had no copies to share in our session; other students were conducting research activities on topics unfamiliar to the larger group; still others were engaged in a series of short writing assignments (one paragraph to one page) for the first

several weeks of the course. My conversations with the 1101 instructors had never reached the level of specificity in which those instructors described in detail the progression of assignments within their courses, so I was unprepared for the extent of the disparity among my students' goals within each weekly session.

Grego and Thompson respect that disparity as an opportunity for promoting critical thinking and metadiscourse among emerging students/writers. Diverse approaches to composition instruction can launch student discussion about the larger purposes of assignment specifications and instructor strategies, a process they term "theorizing the cross-section" (55, 125). In my courses, the diversity we encountered was difficult for students and for me to envision in terms of contrasting approaches to common goals because the tasks that students undertook during our weekly meeting days were not neatly comparable. In a single session, for example, one student brainstormed for a paragraph-length reaction to a magazine advertisement, while another revised a narrative essay draft (but had trouble separating revision from proofreading), while a third requested guidance on MLA documentation form for an op-ed assignment. Coupled with irregular attendance, which I will address below, this degree of diversity among the assigned projects in any given week made it difficult for students to engage in peer support activity or discussion beyond a sequence of one-on-one conversations with the instructor. Students were receptive to my own efforts to highlight opportunities for transferring knowledge from one assignment to another and frequently commented that such explanations were "helpful"; however, such moments shifted the course spotlight from student interaction to a more traditional, albeit impromptu, lecture-like format.

A fairly immediate result of this difficulty in finding common ground for discussion was a decline in student attendance and participation. Students confused about how to work together sometimes opted not to attend at all; others attended but did not bring work or questions with them. Given the misalignment between my pre-course planning and actual FYW course schedules, students were not able to rely upon our syllabus for guidance about what they should be doing each week. To find a solution, I turned to our journal assignments as sources of common materials and concepts among all of the students in my course. Detailed, restrictive journal prompts that called for students to include passages from their current or completed 1101 assignments generated a body of work that would be meaningful to our entire group in the subsequent week's meeting. While our sessions continued to begin with an invitation to each student to call for feedback on a particular issue, question, or piece of writing, when students did not respond to that invitation, we would turn to the journal submissions available on our course website. Because those submissions came in prior to class, I was able to preselect potentially productive examples for examination and discussion by the group and to prepare questions prompting critical analysis. When the submissions came from works still underway, students were able to suggest strategies for revision and improvement.

While the journal activity was successful in stimulating student reflection and critical thinking and provided student-generated examples for discussion of error, audience analysis, process strategies, and research practices, it remained a hit-and-miss strategy in terms of its correspondence to activities simultaneously underway in the gateway courses. In part because our course meets only once a week, and because I count on the students to select the excerpts they share in their journal posts, it is common for our 0999 discussions to lag behind their most

opportune moments for promoting success on FYW assignments. This falls short, to some degree, of the goal of "just-in-time" support that the co-requisite is intended to provide.

I have discussed three aspects of our co-requisite course model that concerned me: the 50-minute/week contact plan, the student-driven session dynamic, and the number of instructors connected to each section of 0999. After two semesters of teaching the co-requisite course, I find each of these features to be potentially well-suited and beneficial to our university's basic writers. However, these features can also work together to undercut the effectiveness of the co-requisite. When there is broad diversity among the FYW approaches represented by the students gathered into a single 0999 section, more directive instructor leadership during 0999 sessions is required in order to identify common or complementary concepts across assignments and approaches. As Yancey et al. note, first year students lack a vocabulary for writing (34). Beginning writers are underprepared to see far enough beyond the specifications of their own assignments to frame questions for group or peer consideration; they are inclined to await direction from the co-requisite instructor. This confusion and passivity undermine student preparation for the group session, as students are uncertain about what to bring to co-requisite class from their own composition courses. With the 50-minute meeting limit and a diversity of student needs, preparation is vital if productive work is to take place within the limited contact period. Finally, when the demands of time and student hesitation mandate instructor-led activity at least at the start of the session, the connectivity between 0999 activity and correspondent FYW assignments is lost: the co-requisite course inevitably trails behind the FYW activities.

More extensive preparatory interaction between 0999 and FYW instructors is essential to designing 0999 courses more closely aligned with student challenges in the gateway courses. The

kind of structure that I originally thought my 0999 course needed would actually be more effective as part of the course administration process. Planning an effective co-requisite course demands a regimen of interaction among all instructors involved, a level of interaction not adequately attainable through the outreach of individual 0999 instructors, who are not institutionally situated to motivate closer coordination across FYW deliveries. Michele Hall Kells has commented on a problematic gap affecting basic writers at University of New Mexico campuses: "[T]he absence of support mechanisms across the curriculum for emerging college writers exacerbates students' lack of preparation for college-level writing" (90). While our university offers an array of valuable student support services, our experience with the pilot semester highlighted an under-recognized support mechanism essential for student success through the co-requisite formula: an integrated and fully informed team of faculty.

Studio Co-Remediation as a Place of Student and Institutional Integration

Our experience designing and teaching writing studio underscores the lessons of other mainstreaming scholarship: studio programs are challenging to design, implement, and sustain. Mainstreaming approaches to basic writing must be created and continually revised with attention to the local institutional context and the changing needs of students and instructors in the program. Despite the challenges of aligning idealized goals with local realities, early results of our co-remediation approach are encouraging. Although our studio pilot has not been taught frequently enough to draw conclusions about the superiority of co-requisite learning support to the older prerequisite model, reports from our university's Office of Institutional Research show that students enrolled in the Fall 2015 co-requisite course achieved an ENGL 1101 pass rate (C or better) of 74.4%, which is on par with 1101 pass rates of veterans of our prerequisite

remediation model over the past seven years: for 2009 through 2015, yearly 1101 pass rates for students who had taken Learning Support English ranged from a low of 55.9% to a high of 81.8%, with an average pass rate for the period of 70.6%. More importantly, 63.2% of the Fall 2015 ENGL 0999 pilot students remain enrolled at the university one year later. In contrast, prerequisite Learning Support English veterans for the years 2010 through 2014 never achieved a one-year retention rate higher than 60%, with an average one-year retention rate of 33.9% from 2009-2015. In other words, our initial data suggest that a co-requisite approach to mainstreaming basic writing students may in fact succeed in improving student retention while allowing them to earn credit towards their degree more quickly.

Our pilot year of co-requisite writing support has taught us that designing a mainstreaming basic writing course to operate alongside FYW, to implement pedagogical strategies for facilitating transfer, and to create an institutional space open to student's affective response to writing requires ongoing collaboration and revision. While we need to conduct additional research to determine if our studio course facilitates transfer of learning from 0999 to 1101 and 1102, we have learned that mainstreaming basic writing programs can facilitate important inter-instructor conversations that reveal challenges or blocks to achieving a program's desired result. We think this insight has important implications for mainstreaming approaches to basic writing as well as for composition programs as a whole. Although transfer scholarship posits curricular design as key to facilitating transfer, teaching a curriculum nevertheless occurs in programmatic contexts that are not always easy to control.

Although all institutional contexts are different, our ongoing learning experience has shown us that mainstreaming basic writing programs would benefit from attending to

pedagogical training, instructor collaboration, and ongoing instructor support. Co-requisite instructors need pedagogical preparation to make the student-directed nature of the co-requisite course beneficial to students. This recommendation also means we may need to reconceptualize what *student-directed* means. Students need time to reflect on writing tasks if they are to articulate effectively their attitude and the nature of their experiences. Even reflective writing, which Yancey et al. present as critical to a transfer-focused curriculum (57), requires that students are familiar with the genres of reflective writing and know how to make reflection intellectually productive for themselves. Students also need direction to assist them in paying closer attention to the language and underlying assumptions of writing tasks. On-the-spot lesson planning may be difficult if students cannot fully recollect the language of a writing prompt, an instructor's specific feedback on an assignment, or a recent lesson from the FYW class they may want to understand better. This difficulty may be exacerbated if instructors are themselves new to a student-led classroom format, whether because they are new graduate student instructors or because they are experienced instructors transitioning from a prerequisite model of basic writing. Program directors may need to develop a set of lessons or instructions that reinforce the goal of getting students to take control over the learning and writing process without imposing a pre-set schedule, which, as the instructor's narrative describes, may backfire if FYW schedules do not align.

Studio instructors also need the program director to facilitate communication between FYW and co-requisite instructors and to ensure consistency in FYW. Although we limited the FYW instructors whose classes we placed 0999 students in, we did not give those FYW instructors enough direction about what they needed to do to ensure student success. The program director can set up co-requisite courses for success by ensuring that FYW instructors

give an assignment prompt early in the semester, set the deadline for the first essay early in the semester, and give directive feedback on student writing. These kinds of programmatic interventions can help co-requisite support instructors give students concrete activities that will allow students to begin to learn about writing conventions and take an active role in the learning process. Seeing early payoff in their work could improve students' intrinsic motivation to attend and participate in the co-requisite studio course.

A co-requisite program as a whole is better served by having more opportunities for FYW and studio instructors to meet with one another in person to discuss FYW syllabi, assignment prompts, and ways to ensure effective communication throughout the semester. In the process of co-researching our program and writing this article, we were able to open the lines of communication between the program director and instructors of our writing studio to develop new resources and better support structures for the program. Sharing assignments and syllabi and discussing the underlying assumptions in instructors' pedagogical decisions helps each studio instructor articulate the kinds of connections for students that can build their content knowledge of writing and meta-cognitive awareness of writing tasks. This programmatic intervention has the added benefit of helping studio instructors deal with misinformation or misunderstanding students sometimes have about writing tasks and feedback, especially in the early process of building a language to talk about writing. Better communication between studio instructors and FYW instructors, before and during a semester, ensures that both instructors are teaching the *student* rather than a course. And that is, after all, the goal of any writing pedagogy.

Appendix A: Information Sheet for Studio (ENGL 0999) Instructors

ENGLISH 0999 ("WRITING STUDIO") INFORMATION SHEET FOR 0999 INSTRUCTORS

About 0999: English 0999 is a 1-credit hour studio class that exists to help students be more successful in writing classes by teaching them to:

- Become more motivated learners.
- Become more independent about finding answers to their questions and/or responding to instructor feedback.
- Develop strategies for managing the writing process.
- Learn how revision (local and global) can improve writing.
- Learn how to respond to writing (their own and peers' work).

English 0999 is *not* a lecture course and does not replace the writing instruction that happens in 1101/2. Rather, it is designed to reinforce the content they are learning and to provide a safe space for workshopping, revising, and learning about writing in a more self-directed way alongside an expert instructor. The lecture format does not work well for 0999. We don't want the 0999 class to seem like a separate writing class where students are learning content about writing that may or may not match what they are learning in 1101/1102. English 0999 should use workshops and activities designed to help students learn about writing *in the context of their 1101/2 writing assignments*. Grammar and writing instruction should also be taught in the context of students' writing.

Your Responsibilities as 0999 Instructor

- Design lesson plans, activities, workshops, or individual work time for the 1 hour, once/week 0999 meeting. [0999 syllabus templates and activities/lesson plan ideas are available for you on Google Drive (see below)].
- Work closely with students to understand their particular needs and challenges.
- Hold office hours so students can meet with you individually as needed throughout the semester. Make yourself available to the students.
- Participate in 0999 professional development meetings when possible.
- Email and/or meet with students' 1101/2 instructors in the first week of the semester to introduce yourself and let the instructor know they can contact you about the students' work, attendance, and performance.
- Communicate with the 1101/2 instructors as needed about students' performance or any concerns you may have.
- Email and/or meet with 1101/2 instructors in the final week of the semester to get an update on students' grades and performance for your recommendation report.

- Submit a recommendation report [template available on Google Drive] in the final week of the semester including the students' 1101/2 grade, 0999 grade, discursive description of the students' performance, and a recommendation about whether they should be exempt from 0999 in the future.

Troubleshooting Challenges in Teaching 0999

- <u>Some students don't understand why they have been placed in 0999.</u> *During the advisement and registration process, sometimes students miss the memo (for whatever reason) about 0999. You may want to spend time in the first meeting discussing 0999 with students, asking them if they know what 0999 is and why they are here. The placement into 0999 is based on high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores, and possibly also a writing exam. In other words—it's pretty arbitrary. However, you want to pitch the relevance and usefulness of the class to them. Ask them how they feel about writing or get students to go around and share their worst experience in a writing class / with a writing assignment. Use that discussion to make the case that 0999 is a chance to "see behind the curtain" and better understand writing expectations and how students can successfully meet those expectations.*

- <u>Students may need guidance on how to participate in 0999 sections.</u> *It helps to provide specific instructions regarding what you want students to do and to find ways to make the class seem useful early in the semester. However, if attendance is low, it is perfectly fine to rework your lesson plan into a one-on-one conference or more individualized workshop activities.*

- <u>Students have very diverse skill sets and challenges.</u> *We recommend individualizing instruction and getting students to assess and work on their own writing needs as much as possible. Remind students that there is no universal right or wrong way to write. Try to use this as a rationale for why students need to be proactive about improving their own writing.*

- <u>Students can lack motivation to participate in 0999 sessions.</u> *Instructors have found it helpful to design class to require participation. Ask students to submit journal entries ahead of class to use in class activities. Require students to bring in concrete documents (an electronic copy of an essay draft (if working in a lab), instructor comments on the student's paper(s), assignment prompts, etc.). Give students concrete tasks to do for the next class period (e.g. research 1 grammar comment you received on your essay and prepare an explanation of that grammar rule for the class).*

- <u>Students are learning different things in their classes.</u> *Mixing students from different classes is an intentional experiment in our program. We want to emphasize to students that writing instructors have different approaches and assignments, to further dispel the common myth that there is a right/wrong way to write, and to help students understand that writing is shaped by audience, context, and purpose. However, we do want to avoid*

students seeing writing assessment as idiosyncratic. The key is to try to help students understand a common rationale across instructors' assignments, learning goals, and expectations. As the 0999 instructor, you play a key role in making the connections that help students understand writing in this more nuanced and productive way.

- <u>Students are mixed in both 1101/1102.</u> *This may seem strange, but actually students can form informal mentorships in which more experienced students can help encourage, guide, and advise the new students.*

Working with 1101/1102 Instructors

Your work supports the 1101/1102 instructors' work, and both of you are part of a team to help students succeed and to keep them motivated to complete their classes. Here are some ways to make that relationship work beneficially to help the student:

- Access the documents your students' instructors provide on Google Drive (see below). Keep yourself apprised of timelines and types of assignments as it helps you design activities and lesson plans for 0999.
- Feel free to communicate with a student's 1101/1102 instructor as needed about the student's performance throughout the semester. You are a team and can share the work of keeping the student engaged and learning if necessary.
- In the (I hope, unlikely) event that you become aware of a problem in 1101/2 or have some issue with the instructor, let me know first. I will assess the situation and take care of it for you.
- Contact the 1101/2 instructors of your students in order to assess their final grade in the core class. You will be asked to complete a recommendation form at the end of the semester that provides information about the students' performance in 0999 and 1101/2, and suggests whether the student should be required to take 0999 again. If the student has done particularly well in 1101, you and the instructor might recommend the student be exempt from 0999 in the next semester. [Recommendation reports should be emailed at the end of the semester].

Google Drive Access

In order to facilitate easy exchange of syllabi and assignment prompts, I've created a Google Drive folder for you to upload your materials and to access 1101/1102 instructors' syllabi and assignment prompts, which should be uploaded into a specific folder for "1101/2 Syllabi and Prompts." I can also scan and upload materials for you if you'll put hard copies of documents into my mailbox. Here's a list of what you may wish to share in the "Instructor Resources" folder:

- ✓ Syllabi for your 0999 classes

✓ Journal assignments and activities that worked particularly well for you

Thank you for helping us make this program work better for everyone involved!

Appendix B: Information Sheet for FYW (ENGL 1101 and 1102) Instructors

ENGLISH 0999 INFORMATION SHEET FOR 1101/1102 INSTRUCTORS

About 0999: English 0999 is a 1-credit hour class that exists to help students be more successful in writing classes by teaching them to:

- Become more motivated learners.
- Become more independent about finding answers to their questions and/or responding to instructor feedback.
- Develop strategies for managing the writing process.
- Learn how revision (local and global) can improve writing.
- Learn how to respond to writing (their own and peers' work).

English 0999 is not a lecture course or a basic skills review, and it does not replace the writing instruction that happens in 1101/2. Rather, it is designed to reinforce the content they are learning and to provide a safe space for workshopping, revising, and learning about writing in a more self-directed way alongside an expert instructor.

How Can You Help Make 0999 Successful?

- Communicate with your 0999 instructors throughout the semester. They will inquire about your students and may need to discuss particular challenges. Feel free to email them if you need to discuss strategies for working with a particular student. 0999 Instructors can help you help the student.
- Upload copies of your syllabus and assignment prompts to our Google Drive folder (see below). Doing so helps 0999 instructors provide better instruction and guidance to the students.
- Provide students with an assignment prompt early in the course (ideally the first week of classes) so they can begin planning and working early.
- Have students' first writing assignment due by *at least* Week 4 of the semester (even a short introductory writing assignment is immensely helpful).
- Provide written feedback on students' writing by *at least* Week 6 of the semester.
- Evaluate students' performance in 1101/1102 for the 0999 instructor in the final week of the semester, giving a projected grade for the course (send an email or meet with the 0999 instructor).

Google Drive Access

In order to facilitate easy exchange of syllabi and assignment prompts, I've created a Google Drive folder for you to upload your materials, with a specific folder for "1101/2 Syllabi and Prompts." I can also scan and upload materials for you if you'll put hard copies of documents into my mailbox. Here's a list of what I would like from you:

- ✓ Syllabi for all classes with enrolled 0999 students
- ✓ Assignment prompts (as they are given to students)
- ✓ Course schedule (readings/assignments)

Thank you for helping us make this program work better for everyone involved!

Appendix C: Redesigned Assessment Practice

When	Repeatable	Points	Activity Title and Description
Anytime	15x / semester	10	**Attendance**: Attend your 0999 workshop.
When requested by instructor	3x / semester	7	**Grammar and Writing Research:** Research a specific piece of grammatical or stylistic advice you have received on your writing; prepare an informal presentation explaining that grammatical advice, including at least 2 correct example sentences revised from your own writing.
Anytime	2x / semester	10	**Grade Conference:** Calculate your current grade in your 1101/1102 class. Bring in your grades to your 0999 instructor's office and discuss your progress and plans for maintaining/improving your grade for the rest of the semester.
When you are working on a draft	4x / semester	10	**Draft Conference:** Bring a substantial draft-in-progress along with the assignment prompt to your 0999 instructor's office for a reading and feedback discussion session. Take notes during the conference, and then submit your notes and revised essay to the 0999 instructor for credit.
When requested by instructor	4x / semester	7	**Instructor Feedback Analysis:** Bring a graded essay with your 1101/1102 instructor's comments to class. Write a page analyzing what you learned from your instructor's comments and the changes you will make in your next assignment to address those comments. Be specific.
When your 1101/02	4x/ semester	10	**Meet with Your ENGL 1101/02 Instructor** Schedule and attend a meeting with your ENGL 1101/02

instructor is available			instructor to discuss questions you have about an assignment, draft, or course material. Write down your question(s) before the meeting and then write a paragraph summarizing what you learned during the meeting. Submit your questions and paragraph to your 0999 instructor for credit.
When you receive an assignment prompt	6x / semester	7	**Assignment Prompt Analysis and Planning:** Bring your assignment prompt to class, write a paragraph describing what the prompt asks you to do, and then make a plan for what you need to do (when) to complete the assignment successfully.
When you receive a journal assignment	7x / semester	7	**Writing Journal Entry:** When prompted by your instructor, complete a writing journal entry prior to class (and submit electronically or bring to class, as requested by your instructor).
When you and a peer have drafts at the same time	2x / semester	7	**Peer Draft Analysis:** Meet with an 0999 classmate to read his/her draft of an 1101/02 essay and compare it to the assignment prompt. Write a paragraph that summarizes what you think the author's point or argument is, quoting or referencing specific passages from the essay. Then write a second paragraph that describes how the essay does or does not meet the assignment prompt. Provide copies of your paragraphs to your classmate *and* to your 0999 instructor.
Total points for a 100% in ENGL 0999 = 300 Total possible points for attendance alone = 150 Minimum number of points to pass ENGL 0999 with a Satisfactory grade = 210			

Notes

[1] As David R. Russell has argued, the "myth of transience"—a term coined by Mike Rose to

refer to the belief that students can be taught how to write in a single class or program—has

influenced the way higher education deals with students who are perceived to lack writing skills.

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