

Campus Collaboration for Creating Evolved Remedial Classrooms

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education mandates entry assessment of reading, writing and math skills of all beginning first year students to define initial course placement. Bridgewater State College has an expressed interest in minimizing the number of beginning students who must complete developmental writing and math courses for no college credit. Targeted course initiatives have evolved as the means for supporting successful completion of for-credit courses by students who would otherwise be required to first complete developmental courses.

In the Spring of 2004, faculty in the English department and Academic Support Administrators worked together to determine a model of first year writing for at-risk and/or remedial students. This model, if successful, would replace the existing course, Freshman Skills 101, a not-for-credit remedial course taught to the lowest achieving students by various part time faculty hired in the English department. Anecdotally, both faculty engaged in working with the at-risk population and the Academic Support Administrators understood the failure of the not-for-credit model. Students taking less credit than their more academically savvy peers in their first semester, without support in their other classes, and often taking another not-for credit math class, floundered in their first crucial semester at college and often landed on academic probation as soon as their second. Many students could not recover from that status and would eventually drop out of the institution.

What we were witnessing then is understood now as a pedagogical mechanism that, while well-intentioned, only slowed students forward academic motion. The U.S. Department of Education 2006 publication “The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School Through College” identifies specific characteristics of successfully graduated college students. What becomes clear from Toolbox indicators is the need for consistent forward progress and rigor over and beyond what is typically required. Additionally, having to take remedial courses worked *against* a student successfully graduating from college. The model employed in 2004 to help at-risk students was actually contributing to future failure.

Working together, faculty and administrators developed a course that would, on the surface, function the way any ENGL 101 course would work: students would earn the same three credits as everyone else; their transcript would indicate that they had completed Writing I (a college General Education Requirement). But students would also participate in academic support experiences attached to the class:

Student would meet directly after class once a week in a book club with a smaller cohort of their classmates. This attached support was put in place to deal with the inadequate reading skills these at-risk students displayed.

Also, once a week, students would meet with a peer-writing fellow to discuss whatever writing they were working on that week. The peer fellow would be a trained writing consultant working out of the writing center. The peer fellow would attend class with the students at least once a week and work closely with the faculty member to tailor conferences to particular student needs.

In the Fall of 2004, four sections of the new Targeted ENGL 101 debuted with evidence that this model could be successful. Subsequent conversations between faculty and administrators led to the addition of another support: weekly study skills meetings with a graduate assistant in the research and study skills center on campus. A peer advisor was eventually connected to the cohort. And this population also receives intensive advising in the Academic Achievement Center.

How many people are involved in targeted course initiatives?

2007F

TENGL101: 10 sections (182 students placed)

100 people were involved in TENGL101 in some meaningful way. These people included instructors, advisors, graduate assistants, undergraduates in roles of peer advisor, writing fellow, and book club co-facilitators, faculty directors of AAC learning assistance, and book club facilitators drawn from administrative and staff ranks across the campus (43 people in 2007F).

Outcomes for students

- Students placed in TENGL101 and TMATH 100 avoid initial placement in non-credit developmental courses.
- **TENGL 101** students consistently successfully complete ENGL101 at a high rate:
 - In 2005F, the **D/F/W/IN** among TENGL 101 sections was **18%**, compared to **16%** among regular sections
 - In 2006F, the **D/F/W/IN** rate among TENGL 101 sections was **19%**, compared to **15%** among regular sections
 - In 2007F, the **D/F/W/IN** rate among TENGL 101 sections was **12%**, compared to **12%** among regular sections
- The rate of **academic probation** among special placement students after 2005F was **19%**, compared to **16%** among all beginning first year students. After 2006F, these rates were **22%** compared to **14%**, and after 2007F, the rates were **20%** among special placement students compared to **12%** among all beginning first year students.
- The rate of **academic dismissal** among special placement students after 2005F was **12%**, compared to **6%** among all beginning first year students. After 2006F, these rates were **7%** compared to **6%**, and after 2007F, the rates were **6%** among

special placement students compared to **5%** among all beginning first year students.

- Subsequent success in ENGL 102:
 - 2004F TENGL 101 cohort -- **25%** D/F/W/IN in ENGL 102, compared to **18%** D/F/W/IN among students who either earned initial placement in ENGL 102 or first completed regular ENGL 101.
 - 2005F TENGL 101 cohort -- **17%** D/F/W/IN in ENGL 102, compared to **16%** D/F/W/IN among students who earned initial placement in ENGL 102 or first completed regular ENGL 101.
 - 2006F TENGL 101 cohort – **25%** D/F/W/IN in ENGL 102, compared to **15%** D/D/W/IN among students who earned initial placement in ENGL 102 or first completed regular ENGL 101.

- Subsequent success in mandatory First Year Seminar (FYS) – students placed in TENGL 101 are required to postpone enrollment in FYS until the second college semester to avoid enrolling them in 2 writing intensive courses in the first semester.
 - 2006F TENGL 101 cohort – **12%** D/F/W/IN in 2007S FYS, compared to **19%** among all other students enrolled in FYS

	D/F/W/IN		D/F/W/IN
'05F TENGL101	18%	'05F Not placed TENGL (space limit)	50%
Subsequent ENGL102	17%	Subsequent ENGL102	33%
'06F TENGL101	19%	'06F Not placed TENGL (space limit)	36%

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