New Approaches to Basic Writing

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UW-Eau Claire Context – 2010

• Blugold Commitment Differential Tuition
• New Composition Director
• First-year Writing Program in need of reform
• Basic Writing within First-year Writing Program
Issues with Old Model

- Placement issues
- Curriculum issues
- Staffing problems
- Student learning issues

*The standards for the writing were very low.*
*I was never challenged.*

Sophomore, Music Education Major, Baseline Survey, 2010
Student Learning – Old Model

ENGL 099 Pass Rate

- Pass
- Not Pass
Student Learning – Old Model

• From 2001-2011, 6% to 32% of students did not pass the remedial writing course
• Average of 21% not passing
• In one horrendous semester, 50% of the students in the course did not pass
• In a subset for whom we could gather retention data:
  • Of the New Freshman (53) who took ENGL 99 during their first year, 42% (22) were not retained to their second year.
    • 10 were first generation students
    • 10 were students of color
    • 7 were low income
Research on Basic Writers

- Curricular Approaches that do not Work
  - Grammar/correctness
  - Developmental model
  - Additional/non-credit requirements
Research on Basic Writers

• Curricular Approaches that Work
  • Small class size
  • Differentiated instruction
  • Rigorous curriculum with high standards
  • Additional supports – writing center, writing fellows, studio classes
  • Countering stereotype threat
Creating a New Model

- Gathered Baseline Data
  - Faculty conversations
  - Student survey
  - Student focus groups
- Blugold Commitment Differential Tuition Grant
  - Research & best practice models including basic writing
  - Writing program redesign
  - Consultations with stakeholders across campus
  - Curriculum overhaul
  - Professional development program
- Student-Faculty Research Projects
Blugold Seminar in Critical Reading & Writing
WRIT 114, 116, 118, 120

- Not sequential
- Each fulfills University Writing Requirement
- Same course outcomes & curriculum
- Different methods and pedagogies: pace, level of depth, and types of support
- Sustainable staffing model
- Ongoing professional development & teacher support
Blugold Seminar Performance Data

Group Mean GPA by Course – 2011-12

WRIT 114  WRIT 116  WRIT 118
Student Learning – New Model

WRIT 114 Pass Rate

- Fall 2011
- Spring 2012
- Fall 2012
- Spring 2013

Pass
No Pass
Student Learning – New Model

• 12/262 Students in WRIT 114 did not pass
• Overall no pass rate of 5%
• Of those 12 students, only 5 were not retained
  • Of those 5 students, 2 first generation, 2 low income, and 1 student of color
• 72 of these students would have taken English 099
  • Of these 72 students, 6 did not pass (8%)
  • Of those 6, only one was not retained

I thought it was a good challenge. . . I hate English, but I feel really proud of myself.

Freshman, Intensive Blugold Seminar Focus Group, Spring 2013