Realizing Distributed Gains: How Collaboration with Support Services Transformed a Basic Writing Program for International Students

Mutiara Mohamad and Janet Boyd

ABSTRACT: As part of a broad, campus-wide Writing Initiative designed to improve student-writing skills, Fairleigh Dickinson University opened a new campus writing center in fall 2006. Concurrently, a separate component of this initiative was launched to replace the English for General Purposes instruction offered in the traditional English as a Second Language program with English for Specific Purposes, which provides non-native English speakers with discipline-specific instruction to improve their English proficiency. The newly appointed directors of these programs—the authors of this article—found themselves in a fortuitous collaboration that organically shaped the services each delivered. This collaboration eventually resulted in a basic writing model permutation that speaks to current trends in the field. This article (1) provides the developmental history of our collaboration, (2) describes the model of basic writing that emerged at our institution, which although specifically designed for students who are non-native English speakers has practical implications for all basic writers; and (3) demonstrates how campus support services provide students with the means for sustainable success beyond the classroom by extending the learning community.

KEYWORDS: basic writing models; non-native English speakers; collaboration; writing centers; English for Specific Purposes; distributed resources; support services; mandatory support

A strategic planning survey put before the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University's Metropolitan campus[1] in 2003 determined that student writing proficiency was the faculty's number one academic priority. In the absence of a Writing Across the Curriculum program, the administration responded to this concern by developing a campus-wide Writing Initiative—a multi-phased, wide-ranging plan to improve student writing skills.

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Among the projects of the Writing Initiative was the establishment of a writing center that would make one-on-one tutoring available to all students. Another part of the plan was to revamp the multi-level, English as a Second Language (ESL) program that provided instruction to undergraduates only; from this emerged the new Programs in Language, Culture, and Professional Advancement (PLCPA) unit that provides one level of English for Specific Purposes instruction to both undergraduate and graduate international, non-native English speakers. Coincidentally, the new center and the new program, each with new directors hired to develop and implement these services, opened their doors to students in September of 2006. Because the Writing Initiative was not centrally coordinated, little did we—these new directors and authors of this article—anticipate that we would find ourselves in a fortuitous collaboration of support and that the services we delivered would come to be informed by but not dictated by each other's practices. Mutiara Mohamad, who has both teaching and administrative experience in English for Specific Purposes in Malaysia, was hired to direct the fledgling PLCPA, and Janet Boyd, a new assistant professor in the Writing Program with academic administrative experience, was hired to be the first Coordinator of the Metro Writing Studio. This article traces the developmental history of our collaboration and describes the model of basic writing that emerged at our institution, which although specifically designed for students who are non-native English speakers has practical implications for all basic writers.

Basic Writing Model Permutations

In their article "Re-Modeling Basic Writing," Rachel Rigolino and Penny Freel provide an overview of the main models of basic writing, as identified by William Lalicker in 1999, that were emerging to replace the "increasingly maligned non-credit baseline model": the self-directed model, by which students choose their placement; the mainstreaming of basic writers by the elimination of remediation courses; and the studio model and the stretch model by which mainstreamed basic writers are given extra time and support to complete credit-bearing composition (50). Rigolino and Freel find the "success of the various permutations of basic writing models that have evolved since the mid-1990s a testament" to all those who wish to help at-risk students (49), including ESL students. Aiming for "a more thorough re-modeling of the traditional remedial approach" at their institution, the

State University of New York at New Paltz, Rigolino and Freel implemented what they call an intensive "seamless support" model by integrating an extra workshop hour into the regular composition course (taught by the same instructor), and by requiring students to complete weekly tutoring hours (51). This is not unlike the model developed and implemented at John Jay College before it begin phasing out both Associate degree programs and remediation in 2006 (see McBeth). We found ourselves most intrigued by Rigolino and Freel's description of their Seamless Support Program, for the basic writing permutation developed by Fairleigh Dickinson's PLCPA mirrors aspects of their design and intent. However, our model differs in notable ways while at the same time sharing aspects of the "distributed resources model" articulated by Ryuko Kubota and Kimberly Abels; our model, like theirs, requires students to seek academic and non-academic support campus-wide, which we find integral for building learning communities and promoting sustainable success for the international students at our institution. Before we examine our new model more fully, however, we must first describe the permutations, some planned and some fortuitous, that occurred in the delivery of our basic writing instruction.

Developed over the 2005-2006 academic year, the Programs in Language, Culture, and Professional Advancement unit accepted its first class in the fall of 2006. The new unit replaced our more traditional ESL program, which had placed undergraduate international students only, based upon error analysis of their written diagnostic essays, into one of four different levels of non-discipline specific classes (i.e., English for General Purposes); these classes were accompanied by a non-credit, grammar-oriented lab taught by a staff member from the academic resource center. Graduate students could be urged to take these courses but ultimately were not required to do so (and so, in most cases, did not). Undergraduates with the lowest level of proficiency would typically have to complete three to four semesters, or up to two years, of ESL course work before they could take most of the general education courses required of them (however, they could take courses in their major while enrolled in ESL). While some programs allowed students to apply the two upper-level ESL courses towards general elective credit, even so, upon exiting the ESL program, students could still be deemed as having insufficient skills for entering freshman composition courses and could be placed in additional, non-credit developmental courses with native English speakers. The end result for many ESL students was a long delay as they worked to complete their degree programs, which frustrated students and resulted in high attrition rates.

These factors drove the administration to revisit the delivery of ESL instruction as part of the Writing Initiative, and as a result the PLCPA was born to replace the previously existing ESL courses with English for Specific Purposes courses for both undergraduate and graduate international students. English for Specific Purposes first gained some popularity in American universities among ESL practitioners in the 1980s at about the same time the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement was achieving eminence (see Spack), although it has always tended to be more prominent abroad than in the United States. The philosophy behind English for Specific Purposes is to provide non-native speakers of English with language instruction relevant to a specific discipline or occupation. ESP courses at the university level typically place a greater emphasis on writing with the goal of familiarizing students with the discourse of the academic discipline they intend to study. Specific content is not taught so much as it is used to teach English, with the pragmatic advantage of providing the rudiments necessary for basic writers to hit the academic ground running, so to speak. While some critics of English for Specific Purposes voice concern that this form of instruction could result in undue pressure on ESL instructors, who teach English for General Purposes, to teach as if they were specialists and beyond their abilities (see Spack), and others fear such instruction could work more to produce technocrats (see Coffey), we have found at our institution that the English for Specific Purposes class provides distinctive benefits for international basic writers—when coupled with an English for Academic Purposes lab and support services.

Each year, Fairleigh Dickinson's two New Jersey campuses enroll between 500 and 550 new international students, with a total enrollment of about 1,200 international students. They typically come from between twenty to twenty-five countries but are predominantly from India, followed by China, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. Most of the undergraduates and all of the graduate students are attending an American institution for the first time. The graduate students form the majority, the most popular majors being Engineering, Computer Science, Business Management, Pharmaceutical Management, and Pharmaceutical Chemistry. According to the statistics published by the Institute of International Education in the Open Doors report of 2009, the trend of international student enrollment at Fairleigh Dickinson aligns with the national trend in terms of countries of student origin, popular majors, and first-time attendees at American institutions. Furthermore, Jessica Williams observes that "most graduate L2 writers are international students at any institution whereas undergraduate populations

vary more widely from one institution to another" (112) in terms of their L2 breakdown, an observation that is also true of our population.

All of the international students accepted to Fairleigh Dickinson (except native English speakers) take the PLCPA placement test prior to registering for classes; those who take the PLCPA course also take a similar post-test at the end of the semester. The placement test and the post-test consist of an essay question that solicits an opinion based on a brief reading passage taken from a major newspaper; care is taken to avoid articles that presume familiarity with American culture. The essays are then read by two scorers, who use a rubric with a maximum possible score of eighteen points. Students who score fourteen or lower are deemed in need of PLCPA support, while those who score fifteen or higher are exempt, though students who place out occasionally opt to take the course as an elective. The test is not a "gatekeeper exam" in that it does not prevent students from attending the university or pursuing their major, and it does not sort the students into various levels of instruction, which would mean more course work for some than for others. The PLCPA course post-test, which is also the final exam, is not the sole determiner of a student's final course grade or of his or her ability to exit the course; all told, the post-test/final exam constitutes one-ninth of the final grade.

Those undergraduate and graduate students who place into the PLCPA are considered to be international basic writers. Paul Matsuda argues that "defining basic writers has always been a tricky business" but now "the distinction between basic and second language writers is becoming increasingly untenable because of the increasing diversity among second language writers and basic writers" ("Basic Writing" 67, 83). According to the most recent data, the attendance of international students at American universities is currently at an all-time high (Institute of International Education).[2] In line with Matsuda's inclusive definition, we have observed that international graduate students for whom English is not a first language and who enter programs of study in the United States for the first time share many of the basic writing needs as their undergraduate counterparts in terms of English proficiency and need for acculturation into the academic community. Nonetheless, as Paul Matsuda gleans from the arguments of Angela Dadak and of Kubota and Abels, institutions court international students in greater numbers "because they bring foreign capital . . . , increase visible ethnic diversity . . . , and enhance the international reputation of the institutions even as they reduce or eliminate instructional support programs designed to help them succeed" ("Myth" 641).

At Fairleigh Dickinson University both undergraduate and graduate PLCPA basic writers work towards proficiency in English in their first semester by taking a class specific to the discipline they have enrolled to study along with a co-requisite lab taught by the same instructor (for a total of sixty contact hours); while different sections are created for undergraduate and graduate students, the course curriculum and objectives remain the same in terms of number of papers and exams with one exception: undergraduates ultimately produce a three-page research paper and graduates a five-page research paper. To meet the curricular learning objectives and exit the program, students must average a "B" or higher in the variously weighted requirements or repeat the course. These factors constitute a student's final grade: the final exam, which is the post-test mentioned earlier, and two oral presentations count for one third; class participation, class work, in-class quizzes, and online discussions count for another third; and four major written assignments, including the research paper, count for the last third.

The curriculum of the English for Specific Purposes class focuses on teaching English for Occupational Purposes, with an emphasis on writing and speaking. Course work is designed to familiarize students with the discourse of their future occupations; for example, engineering students learn how to read and write technical reports as a means to improving their overall English proficiency. The lab component is designed to teach English for Academic Purposes and thus prepare students for their academic pursuits. As Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack have pointed out, international students "may struggle as they try to negotiate unfamiliar literacy practices and new classroom expectations in a language they are still in the process of acquiring" (127). Accordingly, the lab places its focus on academic writing, information literacy, proper citation, and avoiding plagiarism. This is where students tackle the brief research paper on a general point of interest in their field.

Based on the majors most popular among the international students, the PLCPA developed five different class/lab tracks: (1) Business and Hotel and Restaurant Management and related majors; (2) Engineering and Computer Sciences; (3) Nursing and Allied Health, Natural Sciences, Psychology, and related majors; (4) Criminal Justice, Pre-Law, Political Science, and History; and (5) Still Exploring, which also includes declared majors in communications, education, and art. Undergraduates receive three institutional credit hours for the class and none for the lab, and they can either apply the course as a free elective or in partial fulfillment of a language and culture requirement. As Mark McBeth tells us of the literacy-themed basic writing courses once offered at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, "the addition

of a content-rich topic justifies giving the students three credits" (83). The content-rich PLCPA courses bear credits for the same reason. Our graduate students, however, receive three developmental credit hours (towards their enrollment status only) for the class and none for the lab; thus, undergraduates pay regular tuition while graduate students pay a nominal fee to take the course.

While some American institutions create distinct levels of instruction based on student-proficiency within their English for Specific Purpose courses, Fairleigh Dickinson does not. Pedagogically, the single-level system benefits students because they get instruction that not only improves their written and spoken English at an accelerated rate but also reinforces and supplements what they learn in their major courses, which they take concurrently with the PLCPA course. Undergraduates can also take those general education courses required of them that do not have English composition as a pre-requisite. Psychologically, the major-specific track system benefits students because it lessens the stigma of being placed in a strictly ESL course that traditionally is viewed as remedial instead of developmental (see Kubota and Abels 85), especially the lowest level courses that bear no credit. Additionally, when undergraduates complete the PLCPA course they are placed into the three-credit, first-year composition courses required of all freshmen, not the remedial, non-credit composition course. Because the PLCPA is an entirely separate entity from the first-year Writing Program, this sequencing was achieved through the coordination of the learning outcomes objectives of the Writing Program's non-credit composition course and the PLCPA courses.

One of the drawbacks of the PLCPA single-level system, however, is that there can be large discrepancies in student proficiency in any given class that must be accommodated. In order to deal with this problem, Mohamad looked to resources outside of the classroom by at first recommending and later mandating that students utilize the academic support services already available to them on campus; as a result, students would have more contact hours with the various support services designed to insure sustainable student success. This solution, it turns out, is also the premise of the "distributed resources model" of basic writing as proposed by Kubota and Abels, who, as part of a small faculty committee at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, assessed the services the University provided to its international students in order to make recommendations to its administration for change. While they proposed three different models for consideration, they believed the "distributed resources model" to be the most economical and

advantageous because it took advantage of "existing intellectual resources, particularly the expertise in the writing center, ensuring academic quality of tutorial services" (89); in other words, it would tap into the various support services already in existence at the University with respect to writing. Because these resources are distributed, the committee also called for the hiring of an ESL coordinator, which would be an added expense, to facilitate cooperation and prevent fragmentation among services. The article closes with the authors wondering which, if any, of the models they proposed would be adopted by the University. In August 2009 we e-mailed Kubota to learn the outcome of the proposal. She replied that UNC-Chapel Hill did in fact adopt the distributed resources model and that two coordinators were hired to design workshops for international students.

In essence, the first steps in the collaboration between the PLCPA and the Metro Writing Studio can be understood as an unintended but fortuitous realization of the "distributed resources model." While Mohamad also included from the outset our Center for Academic Student Services as a resource where students could receive tutoring in writing by appointment, the PLCPA students overwhelmingly visited the newly created Writing Studio for various kinds of writing support. The implementation of the campus Writing Initiative ensured that some of the various resources were in place, but it did not call for any kind of coordination of services. Nonetheless, the PLCPA and the Writing Studio, in their desire to improve support to international students, forged an alliance that put into practice from the bottom up the type of extended collaboration the faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill conceived of and asked for from the top down. We take you now to the origins of the Writing Studio so that we can trace how its collaboration with the PLCPA formed the template that would generate future collaborations by design with other resources on our campus.

The Metro Writing Studio

During the spring semester of 2006, a long narrow room once used for processing new books in our campus library was transformed into what is now known as the Metro Writing Studio. Janet Boyd was charged with designing and implementing the comprehensive writing support services the Writing Studio would provide to students, faculty, and staff. She designated the space a "studio," rather than the more traditional "center" or "lab," to articulate the emerging ethos of a flexible learning environment (see Ferruci and DeRosa) and to reflect that writing is both creative and a process. This

is not to be confused with the actual "studio" model of writing instruction as articulated by Grego and Thompson that pairs workshops with composition classes. That said, the Writing Studio is very much a decentralized "thirdspace," as Grego and Thompson define it, where students can choose to work on their written and spoken English, whether through tutoring or workshops, outside of the typically hegemonic teacher/student script (18-23). The primary service provided at the Writing Studio is individualized, face-to-face tutoring whereby tutors review papers with students and discuss higher and lower order writing concerns. Tutors do not edit or proofread student papers; in fact, they do not even hold a pen to help them resist the temptation to make corrections for students. Most of our tutors hold Master's degrees in a writing-related field, and all have experience as adjunct instructors of college writing and/or as writing tutors.

One tutor, out of a staff that averages between nine and eleven tutors in any given semester, specializes in English instruction for non-native speakers. However, we urge PLCPA students to choose the tutors they prefer and to work with a variety of tutors. By so doing, the students benefit not only from a range of expertise but also from learning to interact with different individuals. We do provide the tutoring staff with paid professional development workshops that offer practical strategies for working with non-native speakers of English (such as how to recognize the difficulties particular to writing in English as a second language and how to recognize the various patterns of errors in English typical of different language groups). Ultimately, PLCPA students can opt to work with the specialist or with the tutors who have general ESL training, but they do not have to work exclusively with one or the other.

Boyd decided that tutoring would be on a drop-in basis so that all students could see tutors on demand at their convenience; no referrals are needed and no appointments were taken until fall 2009, when demand dictated that we supplement the drop-in hours. All tutoring sessions are limited to forty-five minutes to encourage students to enact for themselves the advice they receive before returning for further guidance. Boyd also planned for free, drop-in, writing-related workshops to commence in the Writing Studio just after its grand opening, and she gradually expanded and varied the offerings as she became more cognizant of the campus culture and the needs of students in specific programs across the University. The majority of these ninety-minute workshops focus on academic writing and professional communications, such as APA and MLA citation formats, how to write business memos and technical reports, and strategies for writing a

Master's thesis. They are typically taught by adjunct faculty who have expertise in these particular areas. In addition, and somewhat of a departure for a writing center, Boyd also initiated a series of six "casual conversations in English" workshops per semester for the non-native speakers on campus so that they could practice their speaking skills in a welcoming, thirdspace environment. In the case of the conversational workshops, the facilitator develops thematic activities to generate informal group discussion during which she assists participants with usage and pronunciation as well as answers questions about colloquial and idiomatic English. Not surprisingly, these workshops, though not intended specifically to do so, primarily attracted the international students from the campus's new PLCPA.

Fortunately and coincidentally, the types of services that Boyd was independently developing could accommodate the numbers and needs of the PLCPA students, and their attendance in turn helped foster and shape the growth of the new Studio even before Mohamad began requiring students to seek academic support. Our relationship grew more symbiotic when Mohamad began developing stand-alone PLCPA workshops that complemented those of the Writing Studio but whose emphasis prepared students for academic success in a broader context than writing. While our collaboration at first began as a coincidence, it gradually evolved into a collaboration by design and formed the template for the basic writing model now in place at Fairleigh Dickinson for international students. For while Mohamad only recommended during the PLCPA's first year that students utilize the services available at the Writing Studio in her desire to narrow the discrepancies among students placed in the various PLCPA tracks, in the following fall she began to require that the least proficient students in each track seek fifteen hours of tutoring in writing each semester. The result was a dramatic jump in these students' PLCPA test scores from the initial placement test to the post-test, which led her to suspect that all of the PLCPA students would benefit to some degree from such support.

Compelling students to seek academic support might seem a counterproductive proposition, for the prevailing notion is that students view the requirement as punitive and so do not invest much in such sessions; the preference is, of course, that students seek support of their own volition. However, we subscribe to Irene Clark's observation that "with the right encouragement, even the most recalcitrant horse, aware of his thirst and standing at the water's edge, might bend his stubborn neck and take a drink" (34). Likewise, we came to agree with Rigolino and Freel, who "felt strongly that if [they] were to offer individual tutoring" as part of their basic

writing model, "it should be mandatory" for those students who need tutoring often do not seek it (56). A survey recently conducted by Barbara Lynn Gordon of students at her institution who were required to visit the writing center suggests that both our presumption about student attitudes and the efficacy of requiring tutoring are correct. Gordon discovered that while 69% of composition students initially felt either "annoyed or indifferent" when faced with the requirement to visit the writing center (even though a full 59% held a positive opinion of the center before their visit), as a result of their experience, 91% of the students indicated that they would "definitely or maybe" return voluntarily (155-56). In the surveys given to our students when they exited the PLCPA course in the fall 2009, they overwhelmingly expressed similar sentiments; all of the students surveyed indicated that they would return to the Writing Studio for tutoring and half would attend future workshops. The many e-mails and comments our students have communicated to us and to their instructors also confirm anecdotally that students do recognize the benefits of our comprehensive approach to academic support. While Mohamad's impulse to mandate tutoring was originally focused more on enabling student success in the PLCPA course, given the span of proficiency levels, the residual and now cultivated effect is that students, in coming to recognize the benefits of this support (in being brought to water and made to drink, to echo Clark), are now cognizant of the resources available to them for sustainable academic success beyond the PLCPA classroom and are likely to continue to use them.

The Fortuitous Beginning of the Collaboration

While we did initially meet just before we opened our respective doors to students, at the suggestion of the dean, to inform each other about what services we would be providing, our first meeting was not about collaboration; each of us was then most focused on successfully launching our own program. It was only after the first academic year, when both of us could reflect on what goals we had and had not achieved, that we began to fathom that we had unwittingly already begun to shape the delivery of our services to fulfill each other's needs—Mohamad was recommending that PLCPA students seek tutoring and Boyd was monitoring their attendance. However, in the fall of 2007, when Mohamad decided to mandate fifteen hours of academic support for the least proficient PLCPA students, she neglected to inform Boyd of this significant change in part because she thought the impact on the Studio would be inconsequential. The steady stream of PLCPA

students at the Studio puzzled Boyd, and when they started asking her to report their attendance at workshops in addition to tutoring to Mohamad, she picked up the phone. What resulted was our acknowledgment of the inevitability of our evolving, collaborative relationship, one that would benefit from some element of design. Accordingly, we agreed that (1) the least proficient PLCPA students could fulfill the majority of their academic support at the Studio; (2) we would work together to track the hours of support that all of the PLCPA students received, and (3) the Writing Studio would provide workshops responsive to international students' needs while the PLCPA would create its own complementary workshops.

With regard to the reporting of student attendance at the Studio, within a month of its opening, Boyd developed a simple intake form for every student who sought tutoring to complete upon arriving at the Studio, which served her immediate and long-term planning purposes. In addition to collecting the student's name and identification number, as well as his/her major and class for which the paper was being written, the form also includes a record of the date, the arrival time of the student, and the start and stop time of the tutoring session; at the bottom of the form, students communicate their expectations for the session to the tutor, and when the session is complete the tutor records what was accomplished. When Boyd learned that Mohamad was mandating the least proficient students in the PLCPA courses to attend the Writing Studio regularly, Boyd developed a second, similar form for all PLCPA students who came to the Studio to complete, whether for workshops or for tutoring. This new form became instrumental in tracking the students' learning outcomes—and in fostering our collaboration. The form was printed on orange paper to distinguish it from the other form, and included, at Mohamad's request, an "ID checked" box for tutors to initial, as well as a student signature line and a list of the five English for Specific Purposes tracks for students to check. Copies of these reports are forwarded to Mohamad weekly so that she can record the attendance of PLCPA students at the Studio, whether they are mandated to go or not, in the individual student files she keeps.

While initially we independently collected and analyzed our data for purposes of improving our own services, in bringing our information together we took the first step from stand-alone programmatic assessment to a more collaborative assessment. Boyd's reporting of the hours and types of support PLCPA students fulfilled at the Studio, when brought in tandem with Mohamad's placement and post-test data, began to reveal that use of the Writing Studio contributes to successful student learning outcomes in

the PLCPA program—a significant finding for writing center research and the topic of a future article. For as Jessica Williams writes: "in spite of their visibility at WCs [writing centers], L2 writers have received very little attention in WC research" (109) despite the fact that "it has been suggested that the WC is an ideal place to address the problems and challenges of L2 writing" (110).

And while the tutoring and workshop reports Boyd forwarded to Mohamad were originally not of specific interest to Boyd, it was this small step that formally changed the nature of her collaboration with Mohamad from casual to purposeful. Further still, she set about from that semester forward to offer more workshops specifically conceived to suit the needs of PLCPA students. For example, while the Writing Studio regularly offers a "Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism" workshop (originally implemented at the request of campus faculty and open to all students), receptive to the concerns she heard both faculty and international students express, Boyd added a different version of this workshop called "Is It Common Knowledge, or Should I Cite It?," which is a question that might confuse native-born students but often completely baffles international students who are not yet acculturated. This workshop is an example of the new services developed to support international students' needs while remaining open to and appropriate for all students.

As for the PLCPA workshops, they are created to supplement the content covered in either the English for Occupational Purposes class and/or the English for Academic Purposes lab. Although these workshops are specifically designed for PLCPA students, all students are welcome to attend, and some non-PLCPA students do. Each semester, Mohamad and the class instructors jointly decide what workshops to offer, and they project which should be retained, deleted, and/or added the next semester based, in part, on information collected via questionnaires given to PLCPA students the semester before. For instance, in the spring 2009 semester, the top five topics (in order of preference) suggested by the students for the fall 2009 were: (1) developing a cohesive essay; (2) developing business and personal conversation skills; (3) developing American English pronunciation skills; (4) building vocabulary and reading comprehension skills; and (5) understanding U.S. culture in the classroom. Through further collaboration by design that still promotes programmatic autonomy, Mohamad finalizes the PLCPA workshop topics only after Boyd determines what the Studio will offer in order to provide as broad and complete an array of workshops as possible without redundancy.

New Collaborations

When Mohamad saw the positive effect that academic support had on the ability of the least proficient students to pass the PLCPA class in fall 2007, beginning in the spring 2008 semester she mandated that students seek at their convenience either five, ten, or fifteen hours of academic support respectively based on their performance on the placement test. This time she called Boyd first so that they could put some thought into the design. Concurrently, student enrollment in the PLCPA program climbed steeply that spring when the business school, coming to recognize the many benefits the PLCPA provides international students, began to require that students in their program who placed into PLCPA take the course. These developments led Mohamad to reexamine the relevant types of support already available at the institution in order to determine what else might benefit PLCPA students, in part so as not to overwhelm the Writing Studio, which became her next step in the direction of institutional collaboration. Boyd concurred with Mohamad's decision for, as Muriel Harris points out, the risk of writing centers in institutions such as ours that do not have a Writing Across the Curriculum program can be over-extension. Harris calls attention to Stephen North's caution that a "Writing Center's mission should match its resources and should not 'be seen as taking upon its shoulders the whole institution's (real or imagined) sins of illiteracy'" (qtd. in Harris 91).

In the fall of 2008, Mohamad brought two additional departments on board to offer support: the Frank Giovatto Library Reference Desk to offer research and information literacy tutorials, and the Career Development Center to prepare students for entering the professional workforce through resume and cover letter writing and business etiquette workshops. In fall 2009, the Student Counseling and Psychological Services commenced participating as well to provide personal development workshops that promote academic success such as handling time management, coping with test anxiety, and dealing with negative feedback. While the Career Development Center was the first non-academic support unit to collaborate with the PLCPA, its services reinforce the English for Occupational Purposes content of the PLCPA just as the non-academic Student Counseling Services helps to acculturate students to academia.

It is noteworthy that even with the increasing number of options, and the changing distribution of support each unit provides, students still self-select to utilize the Writing Studio's services in significant numbers;

additionally, the impact of this distribution was not detrimental to the Writing Studio, which has seen a steady increase each semester in the number of domestic students (who are not mandated to attend).

While the Center for Academic Student Services, the Library, the Career Development Center, and the Student Counseling and Psychological Services all record and send to the PLCPA the number of hours students complete, to date additional sharing of data has not been pursued, as it has been with the Writing Studio, in part due to the smaller proportion of PLCPA students who seek those services. While the PLCPA and the Writing Studio were initially maintaining separate records and sharing paper reports in our respective collection of data, we desired a means to coordinate our information so as to avoid redundancy and increase efficiency. Fortunately, we now benefit from the recent creation of a shared database application housed on the same dedicated, web-based server so that we can access, with limits, each other's information; this development reflects the University's recognition of our collaboration and the campus's growing commitment to student learning outcomes assessment.

Ultimately, it was both practical and pedagogical factors that contributed to the decision to provide PLCPA students with more support options. Towards the practical end, as enrollment in the PLCPA increased so did the need for support. Fortunately, apart from the workshops developed by the PLCPA, other support services already existed for the PLCPA to call upon, which is not to say that cooperation was guaranteed or imposed. Collaboration between the PLCPA and the support services grew organically out of a shared commitment to sustainable student success. The pedagogy driving the decision to provide PLCPA students with more support options is that students will receive the maximum benefit from the services if they are empowered to choose those which best suit their needs, interests, and schedules. This flexibility further ameliorates the negative perceptions sometimes associated with compulsory supplemental support because, although students are required to complete certain hours, their ability to self-select the services they find most relevant remains.

And while we did not, as Rigolino and Freel did, "from the outset" fully conceive of our model as one that would not only "provide students with extra time but also . . . weave together specific resources into a cohesive course design," that is, in retrospect, what we have accomplished. The basic writing model at SUNY New Paltz (described by Rigolino and Freel), much like ours, provides undergraduate basic writers (including ESL writers), with a three-credit composition course accompanied by a co-requisite,

non-credit workshop taught by the same instructor for continuity, and an extracurricular tutoring requirement of one hour (two for ESL students) per week to be completed in a writing center. They aimed to "incorporate both individual tutoring as well as workshop sessions into [their] program," workshops that are akin to our PLCPA labs, "in such a way that these elements, while distinct from time spent in the classroom, were part of a holistic pedagogical approach" (51). This desire for a coherent pedagogical approach is the principle that informed the organic permutation of the PLCPA basic writing model.

Although we did not intend to create a program of seamless support, as did Rigolino and Freel, notably many of our students do not recognize that our support services are provided by distinct units; rather, they see the separate support services as a cohesive extension of the PLCPA. However, because our students receive instruction in English for Occupational Purposes as well as English for Academic Purposes, our model easily lent itself to the principles of a distributed resources model, one that draws upon existing support services, both academic and otherwise, while remaining part of a holistic pedagogical approach.

Concluding Remarks

Because English proficiency cannot and does not occur all at once nor solely as a result of a class devoted to English instruction for non-native speakers, it must be perpetually reinforced beyond the classroom. Zamel and Spack point to the emerging body of scholarship that "testifies to the growing acknowledgement across the curriculum that finding productive ways to teach linguistically diverse learners is necessarily a shared responsibility" (136). They quote from the comments of students who are non-native speakers of English "who make clear that they do not expect to be given less work—or less demanding work. But they do ask for assistance in finding effective ways to manage the workload and to gain access to the knowledge and strategies that will ensure success in their courses" (130). Zamel and Spack's article urges faculty not to be like those found in Ilona Leki's studies ("Coping," "Narrow") who often leave students who are non-native English speakers to fend for themselves, which suggests that not all faculty members are willing or able to assume the added responsibility; they add that "all faculty—not just those who teach courses devoted to speakers of other languages—are responsible for contributing to multilingual students' acquisition of language and literacy" (126).

Calling upon faculty across the curriculum to heed the concerns of students who are non-native English speakers is one way to address the needs of this population; another way is to call upon, in a parallel and perhaps more feasible fashion, the range of existing support services at the university, as we do at our institution, to help provide the support and strategies students need to succeed. At Fairleigh Dickinson, offering students who are non-native English speakers instruction in English for Occupational Purposes in the class they take specifically for English language acquisition lays a solid foundation for pursuing their major course of study, and the English for Academic Purposes lab prepares them for the academic demands expected of them more generally. Our PLCPA students become accustomed in their first semester to grappling with discipline content while they continue to increase their proficiency in English, which is a transferable skill they can apply throughout their academic and future careers. The requirement that these students also concurrently seek existing support beyond the classroom, thirdspace support that is decentralized, is a crucial step for their sustainable success. PLCPA students are given the freedom to self-select which support works best for them from a group of academic and non-academic support services, which facilitates their integration into the larger academic community and primes them to continue to utilize varieties of support after they have exited the PLCPA course. Support services are uniquely poised to share in the responsibility of providing students access to effective ways for sustaining their academic success.

It is not only the students who benefit from such collaboration, of course; the tangible benefits ripple throughout the institution. The benefit to Fairleigh Dickinson is not only that the faculty encounter better prepared students, both in terms of their English proficiency and preparedness to succeed academically, but also that the institution realizes the effectiveness of maximizing existing services without added cost. In fact, the University gets a better return on the funds it does invest in support services when these services are more fully utilized. Collaboration by design eliminates the potential for redundancy in our offerings. Furthermore, the University earns a reputation of being sensitive to rather than neglectful of the needs of the international students it admits.

We, ourselves, have become more effective administrators because we now focus on more than just the immediate concerns of our own programs, and through our reciprocity we have found ways to deliver more consistent and complementary services while still maintaining our autonomy. A related but less tangible benefit is that we do not feel isolated; we feel situated in a

network and can rely on each other for collegial support. From this experience, we have also learned that administrators need not wait for directives from the top down but can take the initiative to effect gradual institutional change. Because the changes we make to our individual programs play out on a larger scale as a result of our collaboration, we have found it prudent to keep our adjustments small but regular in response to the data we collect and share. We also acknowledge, however, that for such collaborations to work the administrators involved must be dedicated and cooperative. In the absence of a central coordinator, such collaborations run the risk of being discontinued should an individual support services administrator cease participating or should there be personnel turnover.

While the collaboration between the PLCPA and the Writing Studio at first emerged fortuitously and organically through the desire to support our international basic writers, it evolved into a collaboration by design through the process of collecting and combining naturally occurring data and through making small adjustments in our programs based on our action research. Our initial collaboration also formed the template for PLCPA's collaboration with other units. While the model we have adopted is still only four years young, we are happy to report that on average 85% of PLCPA students do successfully complete the course in their first semester, and the majority of the students progress appropriately through their degree requirements. To date, the retention data is not yet robust enough for us to report the impact of this curriculum change upon retention, but we can report that undergraduate students are now progressing more rapidly through their programs than those under the previous configuration. Furthermore, in the exit surveys we give, PLCPA students say that they feel better prepared to meet academic demands, and they overwhelmingly convey their intent to continue to utilize university-wide support services, particularly those of the Writing Studio. And we observe that they certainly do continue to use these services. In sharing the developmental history of our collaboration, we aim to contribute to the conversation about more effective basic writing models and to offer a permutation that may prove useful for others who wish to tap into the support resources and expertise at their institutions.

Notes

1. Founded in 1942, Fairleigh Dickinson University is New Jersey's largest private, independent university with two New Jersey campuses, one in

Teaneck/Hackensack (known as the Metropolitan campus) and one in Florham, as well as a campus in Wroxton, England, and one in Vancouver, British Columbia. It offers Associate's, Baccalaureate, Master's, and Doctoral degrees and typically enrolls 8,000-9,000 undergraduate and 3,500 graduate students; roughly 1,200 are international students.

2. As reported on the Institute of International Education's website: "The number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by 8% to an all-time high of 671,616 in the 2008/09 academic year, according to the Open Doors report, which is published annually by the Institute of International Education (IIE_ with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This is the largest percentage increase in international student enrollments since 1980/81, and marks the third consecutive year of significant growth (with increases of 7% in 2007/08 and 3% in 2006/07). The total international student count exceeds by 14.5% the prior peak enrollment year (2002/02). Open Doors 2009 data also show the number of "new" international students—those enrolled for the first time at a U.S. college or university in fall 2008—increasing by 16%, following two years of 10% increases. The largest growth was seen in undergraduate enrollments, which increased by 11%, compared to a 2% increase in graduate enrollments."

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