

2016 Professional Development Grant Report

College English Association

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B. Restatement of Creative Work / Professional Enhancement Activity

In April 2016, I attended the College English Association (CEA) Conference in Denver, Colorado. The Association's website is as follows:

<http://www.cea-web.org/>

C. Brief Review of Creative Work / Professional Enhancement Activity

The CEA is an important national conference in the discipline of English. I presented a paper on the Academic Administration Leadership panel. My paper was entitled "Creating a State-Wide Composition Program: Multiple Campuses, Concurrent Programs, Online Courses, and Managing Instructors Everywhere." The abstract is below:

I serve as the Director of Composition for Arkansas Tech University, which is an REB-II status institution of 12,000 students. For one course release per semester, I oversee more than 200 sections of Composition I and Composition II taught by over 60 instructors each year throughout the state of Arkansas. When I began this position, I immediately saw a need for greater communication among the instructors and the department in order to ensure consistency among the course sections, to facilitate agreed-upon common goals, and to provide better access for instructor feedback and support. My talk discusses the strategies I developed and the technologies I employed to guarantee this communication could exist, and the methods I used to assess both the instructors and the program.

Since our composition instructors are across the state—some teach at the Russellville campus, some at the Ozark campus, some online, and some in high schools via our concurrent program—I developed an online course management system as a central location for our composition instructors to access our guidelines, to post their syllabi, and to access professional development materials. Using this resource, I can

make certain that every section of ENGL 1013 and ENGL 1023 is consistent with our general education and program goals. As well, our instructors can easily access me via this resource so I can address questions they have about course management, appropriate assignments, texts, plagiarism cases, and available resources for their students. (For example, I designed and implemented an online writing lab for the online and concurrent students to receive tutoring on their composition papers.) The evaluation data since this change indicates that students are consistently finding our composition courses to be useful and well taught, despite the large number of different instructors teaching the courses, and that the students are significantly improving in upper-level courses and pathways toward graduation.

At colleges and universities across the country, writing program administrators are trying to tackle a similar challenge to my own: how do I make sure dozens of people are teaching the same course effectively when they are teaching it in different formats all across the state? This is an issue that is only going to grow in size and scope as we continue to create a new university out of our new technologies. My talk gives some ideas to begin to address but just a few of the issues that will arise.

D. Summary of Outcomes / Experiences

My panel was comprised of academic administrators in the fields of English and Writing at campuses across the country. We had a long and fruitful discussion about how to most effectively run writing programs on the bare-bones budget that has become the norm at institutions everywhere. Rather than learning techniques to enhance our composition program, however, I learned that our program is seen as a model for other institutions; as such, the bulk of the discussion was comprised of me advising other administrators in how to coordinate multi-section, multi-format composition courses. This reaffirmed that Arkansas Tech University is

indeed doing an excellent job running a composition program that is effective in meeting the diverse demands of the modern student. I was grateful to have the opportunity to increase ATU's reputation on the national level while helping other institutions enhance their composition programs.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conference paper I presented at CEA in April 2016 then transformed into a professional development talk and the university-wide Teaching Innovation Conference sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Learning at ATU in May 2016. This talk, entitled "Out of Many Sections, One Course: Effectively Managing Multi-Section Courses," explained the successful model of our composition program and recommend strategies to utilize that model in other multi-section courses at ATU. The talk was well received. I recommend further university discussions of managing multi-section courses effectively, as many such courses have not yet gone through the processes of assessing and determining commonality across sections.

I am extremely grateful for the Professional Development Grant to allow me the opportunity to continue my research in the field of composition program management.

Copies to: Dr. Carl Brucker, Department Head, English & World Languages
 Dr. Jeffrey Woods, Dean, Arts and Humanities
 Dr. Mohamed Abdelrahman, Vice President, Academic Affairs

F. Appendix

Copies of my paper are available upon request.