



Gateways to Completion®  
**Case Study Anthology**

Volume 2

### **About the Anthology**

The peer-reviewed case studies included in this volume of the anthology series represent the collective work of faculty and staff involved in the Gateways to Completion (G2C) process in the University System of Georgia, Capital University, and the University of Central Arkansas. While some of the course redesigns documented in this volume began before the global pandemic, it is important to note that much of the work occurred between 2020-21.

### **Editors**

Stephanie M. Foote  
Senior Associate Vice President, Teaching, Learning, and Evidence-Based Practices

Donald A. Coleman, Jr.  
Doctoral Intern

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## Principles of Accounting I (ACCT 2310) Course Redesign at the University of Central Arkansas

Stephanie Watson

Laura J. Young

Prompted by Gateways to Completion, and in response to a 42.2% DFWI rate, the accounting faculty at the University of Central Arkansas along with faculty from the College of Education and the Department of Finance, redesigned the Principles of Accounting I course. There were 13 redesign elements in the following three categories: messaging to students, helping students succeed, and faculty coordination. Without reducing rigor, the DFWI rate was reduced to 32.3%. This case study outlines the redesign and outcomes.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Accounting I is a gateway course for business majors at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), but for the 2017-2018 academic year, 42.2% of students enrolled in Principles of Accounting I (Accounting I) received a course grade of D, F, Incomplete, or withdrew (i.e., DFWI rate). Students seeking a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) must meet progression requirements of a 2.0+ GPA both overall and cumulatively in five business courses including Accounting I and II. Grades of F or W in any of these courses must be repeated to pursue a BBA. A minimum grade of D in Accounting I is required for Accounting II. Students receiving a D in Accounting I typically do not score as well as other students in Accounting II. Therefore, a grade of D in Accounting I makes meeting the progression requirements less likely.

Many students, in Arkansas, qualify for the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship, which renews with completion of 30 credit hours with a minimum 2.5 GPA. UCA also offers academic scholarships requiring higher GPAs. Losing scholarship funding can negatively impact retention rates, especially with UCA's many first-generation college students from families with modest earnings.

The UCA Accounting Department faculty believe strongly in maintaining the appropriate level of rigor in Accounting I. UCA has a good reputation among employers of producing quality graduates and ranks second in Arkansas in the number of alumni passing the CPA exam. Our challenge was to redesign the course to improve the DFWI rate without reducing the course's rigor.

UCA administration funded participation in the Gardner Institute's Gateways to Completion program (G2C). Accounting was asked to participate as Accounting I had experienced the highest campus DFWI rate of 42.2%. A redesign committee was formed, which included all faculty who taught the course plus a representative from Education and Finance. Participating occasionally were the Associate Provost for Academic Success and staff from the Center for Teaching Excellence. This committee met once or twice a month during 2018-2019 and developed three areas of focus.

### METHODS

As we investigated why students in general and specific groups of students were not successful in Accounting I, the committee kept a list of ideas that could help our students. Near the end of the 2018-2019, the self-study year, the committee discovered that its ideas fell into three broad categories of purpose: 1) Messaging to the students about the importance of the early course material, 2) Course modifications that help students succeed, and 3) Ways for the faculty to coordinate that would improve overall course delivery. Each of these three categories is described below with the specific methods, 13 in total, that were implemented.

## Messages to Students

The first issue the committee identified is that students do not understand the importance of developing accounting skills early to apply later in the course, instead relying on chapter memorization. The committee developed four ways to message to students the importance of early skill development.

1. A syllabus section was added indicating the breakdown of skills in the course.

Writing Journal Entries	40%
Preparing Financial Statements	30%
Calculations	15%
Concepts	15%
Total	100%

2. An introduction video was created and shown in class in week one; it examined the importance of learning accounting rules rather than memorizing journal entries. The video begins with a game that seems to require significant memorization to play until the secret rule is revealed at the end of the video.
3. A study skills video was created using concepts from the book, *Teach Students to Learn*, by Dr. Saundra Yancy McGuire (2015). The video emphasizes the importance of the study cycle (preview, attend, daily review, intense study, and weekly review). The video recommends how to spend six to nine hours weekly outside of class and that students use a calendar to schedule their study time. The video included real-life examples of students who improved their grades using these techniques.
4. One-page chapter introductions were developed to demonstrate how chapter's concepts apply to accounting, other business majors, or daily life. This was intended to help mitigate when non-accounting majors feel that they do not need to learn accounting.

## Student Success Modifications

1. The building blocks of accounting are the journal entries. A series of practice quizzes were developed to address three elements of journal entries: account types, debits and credits, and changing account balances. Quiz retakes were unlimited, so with repetition, students could assess deficiencies, get help, and get a perfect score.
2. To prevent overreliance on homework system aids, faculty required students to complete an ongoing paper-and-pencil cycle project in four parts, taking students the entire accounting cycle (first four chapters). Students were encouraged to meet with the free tutors provided by the department for assistance and could rework each part with a tutor after grading to earn back partial credit.
3. Historically, most sections were designed with four exams and a comprehensive final. If students performed poorly on the first exam, it was often difficult for them to recover. To mitigate this problem and emphasize the accounting cycle, an additional exam was added at the beginning of the semester. This allowed the first exam to count for less of the total grade and to cover only two chapters. If a student had not learned journal entry essentials, they would receive an early warning to change their approach to the course.
4. Faculty scheduled two interventions or interactions with students during the semester. These meetings or emails were meant to encourage successful students or express concern to those scoring low on exams.
5. UCA's Office of Student Success funded Supplemental Instructors (SIs) for Accounting I. An SI was assigned to each Accounting I section to attend the class and offer supplemental learning sessions (three different times each week). Faculty required attendance at a minimum number of sessions throughout the semester. The SIs

had recently completed Accounting I with an A or B. With SI leaders closer to the learning experience, students are often more comfortable approaching the SI for questions or help. SIs were often called on in class to help explain a difficult concept in their own words.

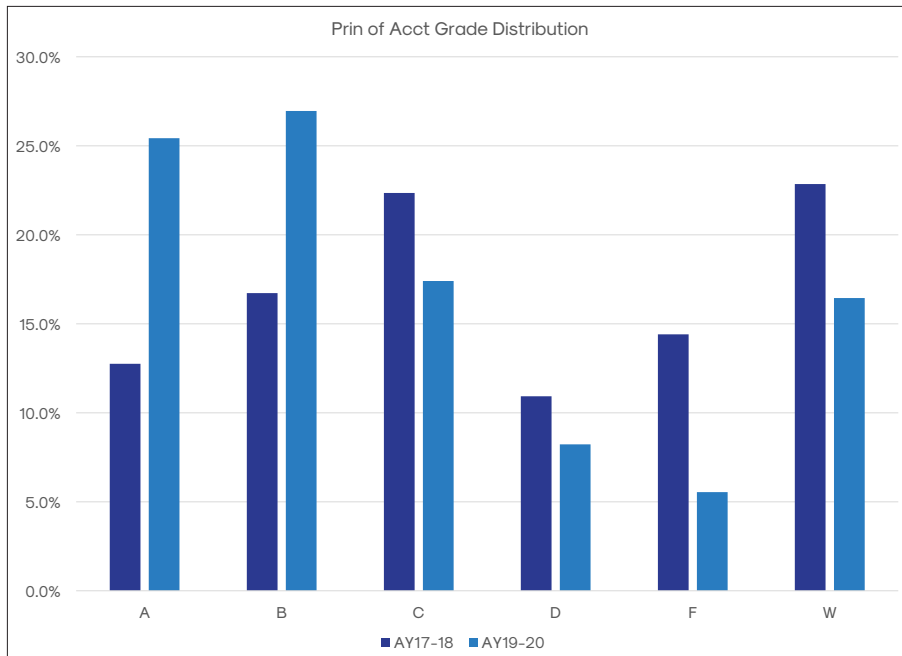
Faculty Coordination

1. Use of a common course calendar aided in tutoring and SI coordination and any needed faculty substitutions. The committee selected material in each chapter to cover. For example, only one of two methods for accounting for inventory will be covered in all sections.
2. A senior lecturer served as the course coordinator in exchange for teaching one less course per year beginning in the Fall 2019. Her duties include developing a suggested syllabus and calendar; creating a Blackboard shell with resources; creating suggested assignments in the textbook’s homework system; and orienting new faculty to the course.
3. The suggested homework assignments focused on preview, practice, and review for each chapter and emphasized open response questions rather than the use of drop-down menus.
4. Professional development opportunities were provided to faculty regarding pedagogy and understanding students.

**OUTCOMES**

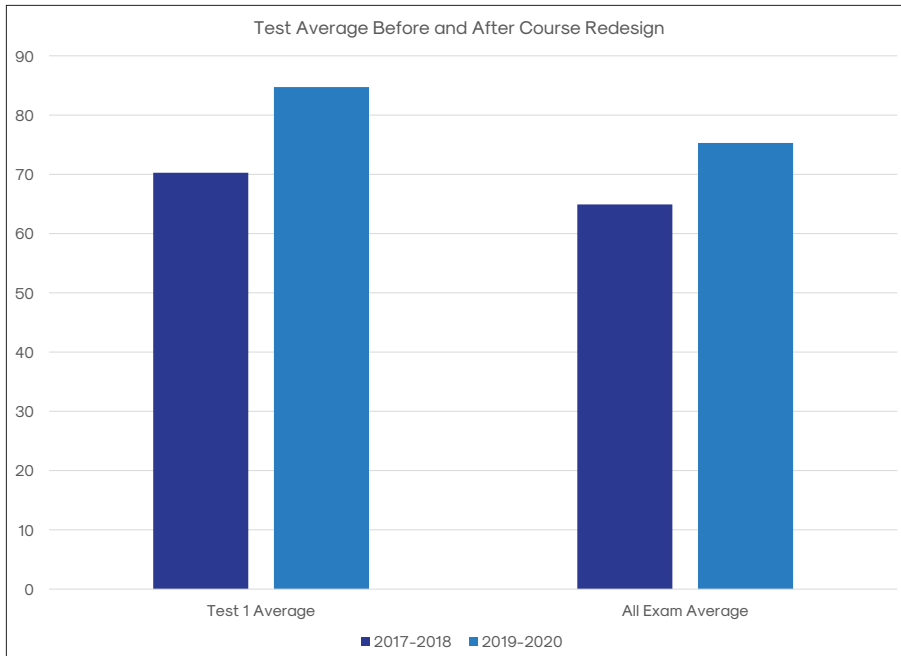
The course redesign was successful in the overall reduction in the DFWI rate, while the rigor of the program was not reduced. The DFWI rate improved 23.5% from the rate of 42.2% in 2017-2018 to 32.3% in 2019-2020. In addition, the percentage of A and B grades increased significantly.

**Figure 1**  
*Grade Distribution for ACCT 2310 for 2017-18 and 2019-20*



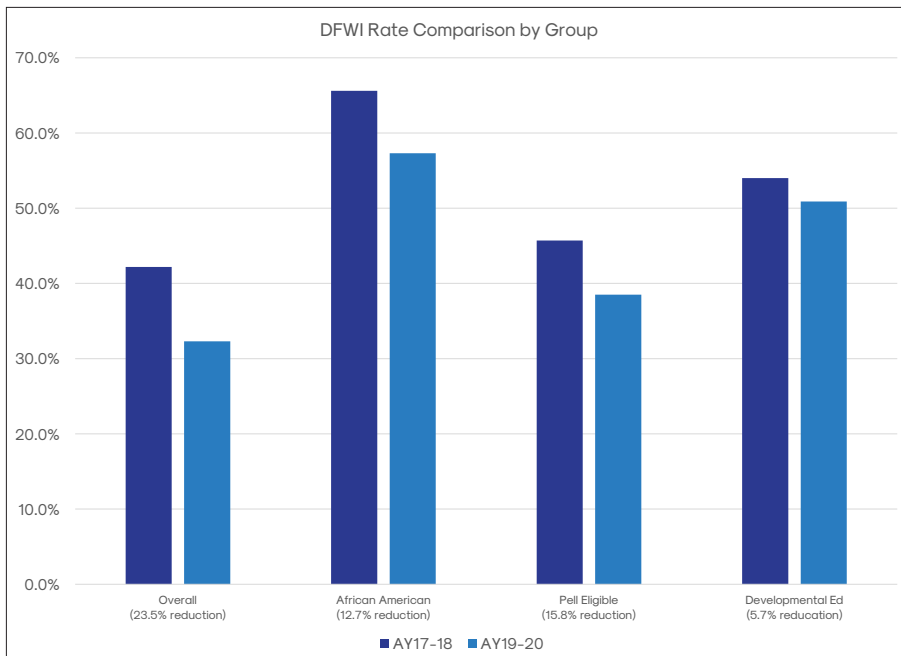
Additionally, scores on test 1 increased from 70.3% before the course redesign to 84.7% after. A similar improvement was seen in overall exam average: 64.9% to 75.3%.

**Figure 2**  
*Test Average Comparison After Course Redesign*



Since fewer students were required to repeat Accounting I, the department could offer fewer sections and allow faculty to offer more upper-division electives. Unfortunately, the reduction in the DFWI rate was less significant for African American, Pell Eligible, and Developmental Ed students.

**Figure 3**  
*DFWI Rate Comparison by Student Group*





## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The department plans to continue using the course design changes and to seek ways to provide additional assistance to minority groups to improve their success rates in the course, which continue to lag.

SIs reported that some students did not actively participate in sessions; therefore, ways to encourage, monitor, and measure participation will be explored.

Use of a course coordinator with similar design changes will be considered for Accounting II.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Requiring a manually completed cycle project was often cited by students as a key step in their learning. This perception suggests that students may overestimate their understanding of the accounting cycle when receiving aids and multiple attempts with online homework.

In Fall 2019, all students were required to meet with a tutor to turn in the cycle project for immediate feedback. This process overburdened the tutors, so in future semesters students submitted assignments in class and were directed to tutors to improve low scores.

Finally, creating a suggested syllabus and common course calendar helped guide and manage new adjuncts teaching the course.

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## Principles of Chemistry I (CHEM 1211) Course Redesign at Valdosta State University

Linda de la Garza

A. Ligia Focsan

Donna L. Gosnell

Tolulope Salami

Xiaomei Zheng

It is critical that students taking chemistry courses acquire basic skills in the introductory course. Chemistry faculty at Valdosta State University realized that students who took the Principles of Chemistry I course were not mastering the skills related to chemical reactions concepts. To address this issue, course innovations consisting of a practice assignment and review session were implemented. Findings suggest that these activities were effective in reducing the percentage of students who failed to meet course learning outcomes related to chemical reactions topics. Thus, instructors are encouraged to use similar strategies in other topics and chemistry courses.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Principles of Chemistry I (CHEM1211) lecture course taught at Valdosta State University covers material expected by the American Chemical Society for an introductory chemistry course for students in this major (Holme & Murphy, 2012). At our institution, the majority of students enrolled in the course are Biology students, followed by Chemistry, and other majors. One of the important threshold concepts in the CHEM 1211 course is the understanding of chemical reactions (Nakhleh, 1992; Talanquer, 2015). The interpretation of chemical reactions is a foundational learning outcome needed for successful progression in the chemistry course sequence. Learning objectives include skills such as classifying reaction types and predicting the products when given the reagents. These learning objectives are communicated to students in the CHEM 1211 course syllabus and lectures, and to make the objectives more transparent, they could be included in the description of specific assignments (Winkelmes et al., 2016). The topic on chemical reactions is identified as one of the highest 'fails to meet expectations' based on our course assessment data. Given the impact that knowledge and student confidence in chemical reactions can have on other areas of the course, from stoichiometry to thermochemistry, a just-in-time review is included in the class during the last two weeks of the course and before the final exam. A practice assignment with several types of questions on chemical reactions is made available for all students. Along with this interactive activity for the lecture course, the laboratory manual for the Principles of Chemistry I Laboratory (CHEM 1211L) course was revised to include more practice questions on classification of chemical reactions. All students in the lecture course are required to take the laboratory course CHEM 1211L and submit hand-written laboratory reports to practice topics covered in lecture.

### METHODS

Implementation of an assignment with a review session near the end of the course is described. The activity developed by a group of faculty who regularly teach CHEM 1211 includes practice questions for identifying types of reactions and predicting chemical products. Two lecture sections of CHEM 1211 were offered in Fall 2019; one included the review session, labeled here as the modified section, and the other section remained unmodified. Concepts in chemical reactions are covered during the first half of the course and given its importance in the course, a review was offered during one of the class sessions for the modified course. The class met for an activity in which students compared their answers and had the opportunity to ask questions to the instructor and the supplemental instructor. The instructor addressed questions during the session and later released the answers to

the assignment in the learning management system. A revised laboratory manual with new practice questions on identifying types of reactions and writing chemical reactions was available for all CHEM 1211L sections including students in modified and unmodified lecture sections. Data from the final exam analyzed by topic for each section was compared to data collected from the previous academic year with the Nomenclature topic used as reference. The overall assessment included 20 questions, the Nomenclature and the Reactions topics included three questions each. The scores used for assessment were 75% and higher as Exceeds Expectations (Exceeds), 50-74% as Meets Expectations (Meets), and below 50% as Fails to Meet Expectations (Fails).

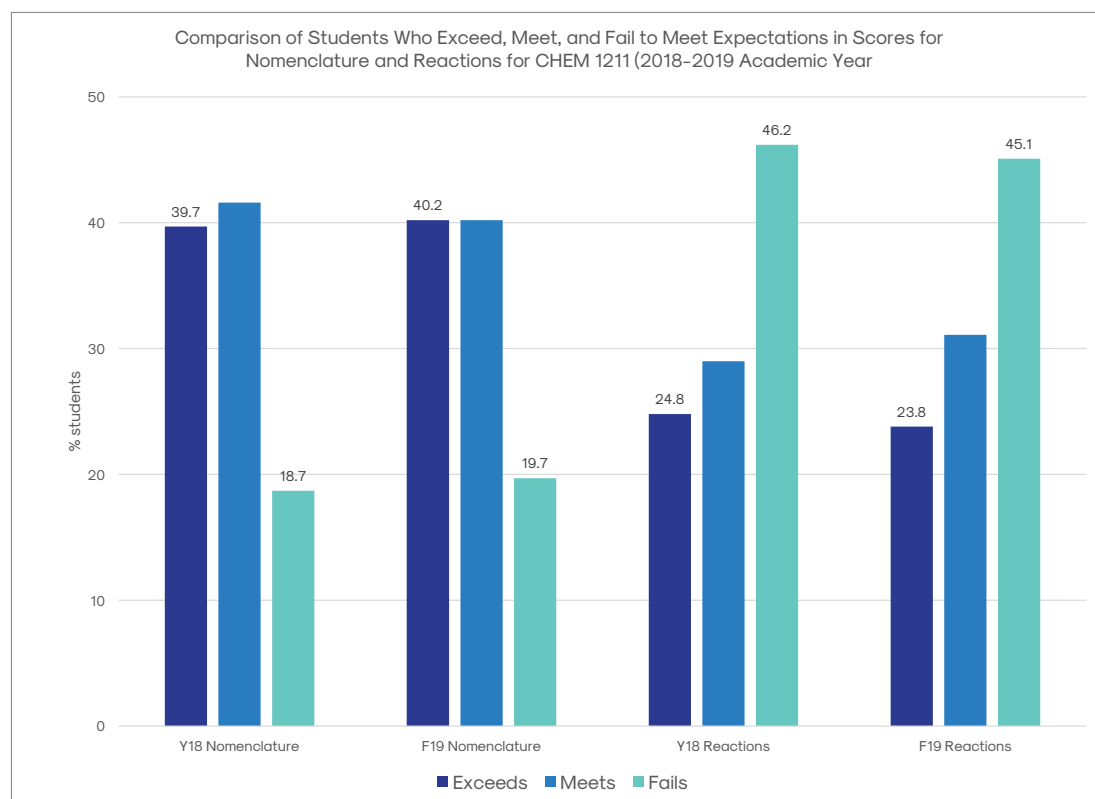
## OUTCOMES

Assessment data from academic year 2018-2019 (n=262) and combined sections Fall 2019 (n=122) for the CHEM 1211 lecture course are shown in Figure 1. Data shows 39.7% Exceeds, 41.6% Meets, and 18.7% Fails for the Nomenclature topic for data collected during the 2018-2019 academic year (fall, spring, and summer). Data shows 24.8% Exceeds, 29.0% Meets, and 46.2% Fails for the Reactions topic for data collected during the same academic year. Decreasing the large number of students in 'fails to meet expectations' scores for the topic of Reactions was the goal of the Chemistry Department faculty, which focused efforts on improving the teaching and learning of the related topics. Assessment data from combined Fall 2019 sections shows 40.2% Exceeds, 40.2% Meets, and 19.7% Fails for the Nomenclature topic. These numbers are similar to those of the previous academic year, as is the data from combined Fall 2019 sections for Reactions with 23.8% Exceeds, 31.1% Meets, and 45.1% Fails. No other data was collected for the 2019-2020 academic year (for Spring 2020 or Summer 2020) as courses moved online due to the COVID pandemic.

**Figure 1**

*Comparison of Students Who Exceed, Meet, and Fail to Meet Expectations in Scores for Nomenclature and Reactions for CHEM 1211 (2018-2019) Academic Year*

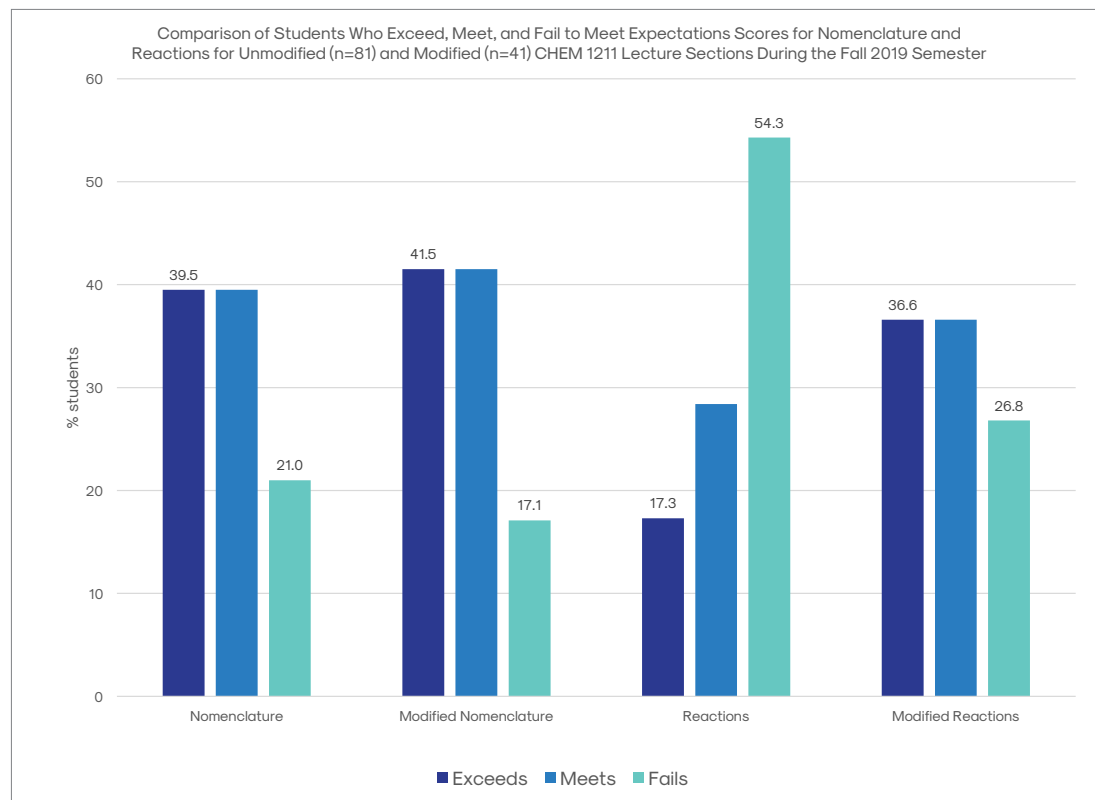
Separating the data for the two sections in Fall 2019 semester, we observed the results shown in Figure 2. There are no significant differences in the Nomenclature topic between the two Fall 2019 CHEM 1211 lecture sections. In contrast, there is a significant improvement in the Reactions topic for the modified section. The unmodified section showed 17.3% Exceeds, 28.4% Meets, and 54.3% Fails while the modified section the scores were 36.6% Exceeds,



36.6% Meets, and 26.8% Fails. The data for the unmodified section is similar to that of the 2018-2019 academic year but for the modified section, the data for Reactions has a similar distribution to that of Nomenclature topic and the percent of failing scores was significantly lower.

**Figure 2**

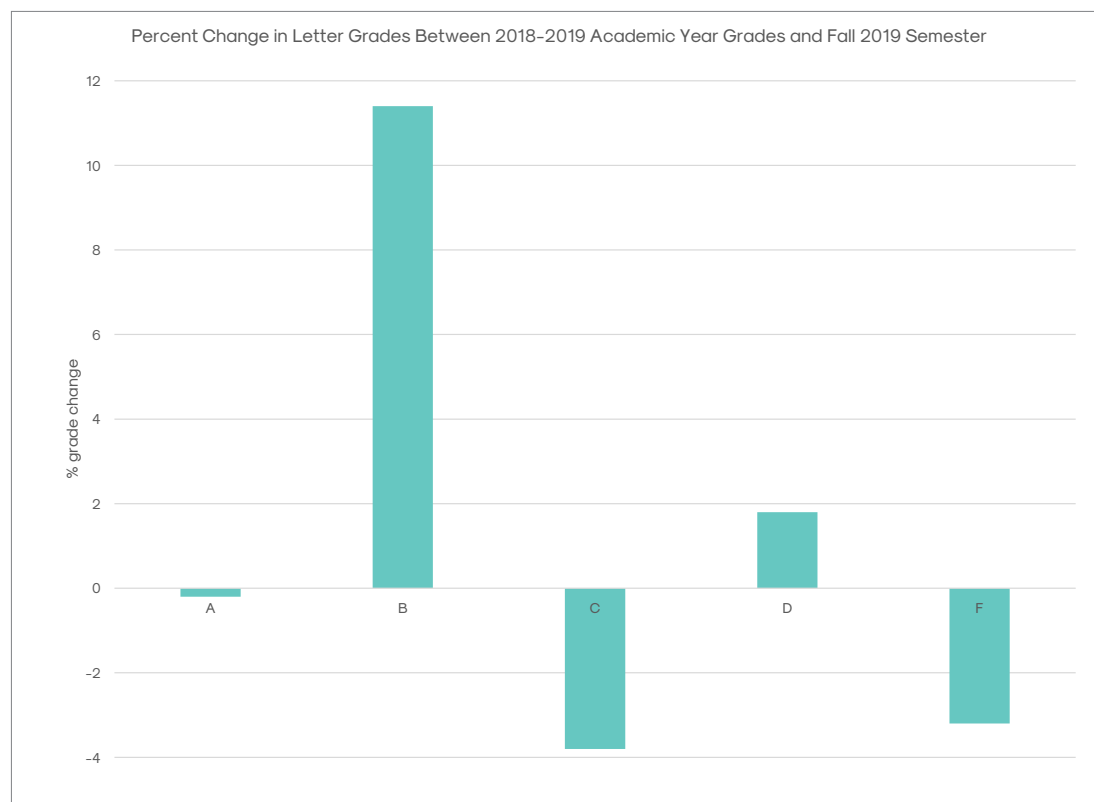
*Comparison of Students Who Exceed, Meet, and Fail to Meet Expectations Scores for Nomenclature and Reactions for Unmodified (n=81) and Modified (n=41) CHEM 1211 Lecture Sections During the Fall 2019 Semester*



Overall assessment data also showed an improvement between the modified and the unmodified section. The unmodified section had a 28.4% Fails (similar to 29.0% for the 2018-2019 academic year) and the modified section had a 19.5% Fails, a decrease of 8.9%. Overall course success as measured by letter grades showed changes from 2018-2019 to combined Fall 2019 data. The percentage of students with F grades decreased by -3.2%, the percentage of students with D grades increased by +1.8%, the percentage of students with C grades decreased by -3.8%, the percentage of students with B grades increased by +11.4%, and the percentage of students with A grades decreased by -0.4%. The largest change was the increase in B grades which might be significant and overall, a positive signal of student success in the course due to higher exam grades.

**Figure 3**

*Percent Change in Letter Grades Between 2018–2019 Academic Year Grades and Fall 2019 Semester*



## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

Transparency on assessment and learning are important to center students on the skills needed to succeed in the course. The just-in-time assignments and reviews can emphasize essential skills and threshold concepts in the learning of chemistry topics. Mastery of the skills addressed in the chemical reactions area are expected to impact overall student learning and student confidence in chemistry courses. A group of faculty teaching CHEM 1211 participated in the development of the exercise and are using it in their courses.

It is suggested for faculty teaching lecture courses to implement this and other targeted activities. For instance, at our institution, another area to focus on for this course is Molecular Structure. Also, a detailed analysis of data from the following course, Principles of Chemistry II (CHEM 1212), could identify areas to develop new activities designed to increase student practice of essential skills. It would also be critical to allow enough time during class for students to interact with classmates and instructors to clarify questions about the topics.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the large amount of material covered in the course, opportunities for review are important in order to revisit and consolidate knowledge. The interaction with classmates and instructors also provides opportunities to clarify misconceptions and plenty of practice to increase student confidence on essential skills for the course. A focused practice assignment, with a just-in-time review that was held in class, lowered the percent of students' scores that failed to meet expectations in the overall assessment by 8.9% when compared to an unmodified section. Findings suggest that these activities were effective in reducing the percentage of students who failed to meet course learning outcomes related to chemical reactions topics. These strategies could be implemented on other topics and courses.

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## English Composition I (ENGL 1101) Course Redesign at East Georgia State College

Laura Chambers

Ren Denton

Annliss Jordan

Julie Strickland

This case study describes the work of four faculty members at EGSC engaged in the G2C ENGL 1101 Redesign. The group agreed to focus on the third category in the G2C Course Redesign Framework: Course Structure Changes; however, we did not prescribe specific changes for the team. As this case study illustrates, allowing instructors to implement the structural changes that made sense to them resulted in a colorful patchwork quilt of classroom experiences and improvements in student engagement and success that we could share and build upon in following semesters.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

East Georgia State College joined the other Georgia state colleges and universities in the G2C initiative, recognizing the need to address low student success rates in gateway courses like English Composition (ENGL 1101). It is important to note here that our cohort is a bit behind in the G2C process due to administrative changes that disrupted the continuity of our work. Therefore, our decision to choose this focus happened in Summer 2020, and our first pilot courses as a full committee were run in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Also, due to this disruption, one faculty member piloted courses a year ahead of the others.

We felt that focusing on Course Structure Changes, in the G2C Course Redesign Framework, was most important given that we would be facing serious challenges in course delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our approaches to course redesign based on course structure changes became a colorful patchwork quilt because we did not prescribe a certain set of course structure changes that each professor would follow. Instead, we decided that each of us would determine what course structure changes we wanted to make on our own. The one thread running throughout our ENGL 1101 redesign patchwork is our use of Open Educational Resources (OER). This is based on the English Department's decision to use OER in order to save our students money and allow more equitable access to materials for low-income students. The rest of our course redesign patchwork consists of our individual approaches to performing the interventions listed in the third category of the G2C Course Redesign Framework: Course Structure Changes. These include interventions in modes and modalities, access, assessment, and course design as described below.

### METHODS

Our curriculum consists of OER materials that encouraged inclusivity and our methods varied as we implemented our G2C course structure changes. A summary of our methods includes:

- One instructor (Ren Denton) intentionally incorporated growth mindset messages into first-day messaging and writing feedback, defined assignments' purpose, and used assignments to promote social belonging and reflections on the correlation between effort and success. The instructor also made major curricular changes that included a focus on celebrity stories about struggling with reading and writing. Through reading or hearing the words of these celebrities, such as Malcolm Mitchell or Malcolm X, students recognized that success comes after a struggle. The online courses contained the same curriculum but lacked opportunities that encouraged students to connect with the stories on a personal level.

- One instructor (Julie Strickland) used multiple low-stakes assignments (quizzes, paragraph writing, finding examples in the real world) for practice and reinforcement of new skills before requiring these skills to be demonstrated through a major composition. Additionally, the instructor reordered the use of model documents in presenting writing assignments by using the model documents as reading assignments with specific questions to answer/items to identify before the writing assignment details were given.
- One instructor (AnnLiss Jordan) provided non-high stakes feedback all throughout the writing process in one-on-one sessions with differentiated help and guidance. The instructor also did not give grades for prewriting or drafting work leading up to the final draft of major essays. Instead, she provided feedback purely to help students improve and gave an overall grade for a unit based on the final draft grade.
- One instructor (Laura Chambers) added additional scaffolding steps to her writing assignments and counted each step as a major writing grade so that the students would fully invest in each part of the writing process. In addition, the instructor added more reading assignments about women's rights into her curriculum to add depth to the voices and perspectives covered in her course

## OUTCOMES

Outcomes from the various approaches varied, and the following section details, by instructor and approaches, the outcomes:

- Ren Denton reported that in her face-to-face course revised with Mindset Pedagogies, students connected to each other through robust in-class discussions and demonstrated greater empathy for others as well as a greater recognition of the correlation between the fixed mindset and growth mindset. The success rate for Fall 2020 was sixty-one percent, six percent above the institutional average for student success in English Composition I. However, the same revised course in the online format saw a thirty-five percent success rate, seven percent below the success rate for online sections of English Composition I. The difference in success rates highlights the importance of the social component or social belonging aspect of Growth Mindset Pedagogies, as community-building in online environments can be more challenging.
- Julie Strickland reported that reorganizing the order of teaching materials for the researched argument essay unit and adding low-stakes activities that promoted student discovery and practice of new skills proved valuable to the class. Anecdotally, during the unit, informal assessment of group and individual understanding became much easier as the students readily identified concepts and asked questions using appropriate vocabulary. This evidence inspired confidence in the class as they approached the paper deadline. In Spring 2020 prior to the pilot, the pass rate (70 or better) for those who submitted this paper was 50%. Using the same assignment parameters and grading rubric, the pass rate in the pilot term of Fall 2020 was 65%. The results in one section of mostly repeating students in Spring 2021 was 58%.
- AnnLiss Jordan reported that students who chose to participate in her intervention activities generally did very well, but her challenge seems to be in increasing student participation in these activities. She made many of the activities extra credit and is considering the possible impact of this decision.
- Laura Chambers reported that students did a much more thorough job in each step of her scaffolded writing process since each step counted as a major writing grade. This produced final products of good to high quality for a great majority of students who completed each step. Students also responded well to the addition of readings on women's rights. While Instructor Chambers has been careful to include African American voices in her curriculum for many years, she realized that her curriculum lacks in including female voices to the same extent. Therefore, she included more readings on women's rights and saw greater engagement from her students in class discussions, particularly from the females.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

All faculty involved in this project intend to continue the interventions that they have begun in their pilot courses because we have all seen improvement in student engagement and learning outcomes. However, since we have had only two semesters of pilot courses to reflect upon, we are only about halfway through the G2C process for



ENGL 1101. We still must pull statistical data for both semesters to see where each of our courses ranked in relation to the institutional average for student success. While Ren Denton does provide this information for one of her courses in Fall 2020, we do not have statistical information for any of the other pilot courses from Fall 2020 or Spring 2021. Therefore, for the most part, what we have provided here in this report is qualitative analysis, and we understand that we need to shore up our observations with the quantitative data as we continue the process. We hope to expand the use of our interventions by presenting our course structure changes and resulting observations to our colleagues in a Faculty Development Workshop setting, perhaps during our upcoming Fall Faculty Workshop. By presenting to our colleagues, we may be able to influence how they approach their course design and further disseminate G2C concepts in other courses throughout the college.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our efforts not only had successful outcomes for students, but also inspired deeper understanding and raised further research questions for the instructors. To demonstrate a more specific example of what we've learned, we will end with Ren Denton's excellent summary of her lessons learned: "In addition to realizing the importance of social belonging in the learning process, I am also seeing a correlation between growth mindset and behavioral improvement. Since my course revisions, students' disruptive behaviors (being on the phone, coming late, being belligerent) have improved significantly. At first, I thought their behaviors were signs of rudeness or immaturity. In other words, I misread bad behavior as personality defects instead of the students' inability to manage their fears of failure. T. Scott Bledsoe and Janice J. Baskin (2014) discuss student fear in their article, *Recognizing Student Fear: The Elephant in the Classroom*. Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) claim that student learning cannot take place until educators find strategies that will help students manage their fear of failure and fear of being laughed at because these fears are often so strong and overwhelming that they short-circuit the nervous system and impact memory and other brain functions. We have learned that the G2C approach to course redesign is effective. It creates a more equitable classroom with greater student engagement and success.

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## English Composition II (ENGL 1102) Course Redesign at East Georgia State College

Laura Chambers

Val Czerny

Ren Denton

Kathy Whitaker

This case study describes the work of four faculty members at EGSC engaged in the G2C ENGL 1102 Redesign. As part of a larger committee, we agreed to focus on the third category in the G2C Course Redesign Framework: Course Structure Changes; however, we did not prescribe specific changes for the team. Allowing instructors to implement the structural changes that made sense to them resulted in another colorful patchwork quilt (like our ENGL 1101 redesign) of classroom experiences and improvements in student engagement and success that we could share and build upon in following semesters.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

East Georgia State College joined the other Georgia state colleges and universities in the G2C initiative, recognizing the need to address low student success rates in gateway courses like English Composition. It is important to note here that our cohort is a bit behind in the G2C process due to administrative changes that disrupted the continuity of our work. Therefore, our decision to choose this focus happened in Summer 2020, and our first pilot courses as a full committee were run in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Also, due to this disruption, one faculty member piloted courses a year ahead of the others.

We felt that focusing on Course Structure Changes was most important given that we would be facing serious challenges in course delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our approaches to course redesign based on course structure changes became a colorful patchwork quilt because we did not prescribe a certain set of course structure changes that each professor would follow. Instead, we decided that each of us would determine what course structure changes we wanted to make on our own. Our course redesign patchwork consists of our individual approaches to performing the interventions listed in the third category of the G2C Course Redesign Framework: Course Structure Changes. These include interventions in modes and modalities, access, assessment, and course design as described below.

### METHODS

This section provides a description of the unique redesign approaches used in each of our courses.

- In Val Czerny's class, to achieve improvement regarding students measuring their own progress throughout a semester in ENGL 1102, she targeted activities and assignments providing better transitioning into awakening growth mindsets—prompting students to shelve old habits and embrace new, scholarly ones. The habits addressed were based on “fixed mindsets,” where the belief that people possess unacquired, natural talent leads to viewing effort as profitless and to operating under a pretense of appearing intelligent while shunning challenges. This mindset purposely spurns effort because having to work at learning demonstrates, in the fixed mindset, a lack of intelligence (Dweck, 2016, pp. 39-40). Ultimately, the goal was to design assignments and activities to foster, as much as possible, the belief and self-regard in students that, over time, their individual intellects can broaden and advance.
- In Ren Denton's class, Mary Ann Winkelmes' Transparency Framework was used to give students a sense of purpose and ease their anxiety about being graded on their perceived differences in ideology. A social justice

lecture that introduces the unit 'Literature and the Argument about Race' was "TILTed," meaning students were provided with a transparent framework that identified the learning objective (and the way it connects to the course's learning objectives), the purpose, the skills and knowledge they will gain, the tasks students will be asked to do, the way they will be assessed on the written argument construction (not opinion), resources available, and technology requirements.

- Kathy Whitaker provided students with opportunities to receive feedback from their peers by starting with the basic peer review normally used in the essay writing process and redesigning it through the development of a set of general to specific step-down exercises.
- Like the approach used in her ENGL 1101 course redesign, Laura Chambers broke the major research paper down into smaller steps and made each step a major writing grade so that students would be more invested in doing a good job on each part of the writing process.

## OUTCOMES

The varied approaches used in the ENGL 1102 course redesign described in this case resulted in several promising outcomes described in this section.

- In Val Czerny's class, she emphasized issues about belonging in the college classroom (Rattan et al., 2015, p. 722) by explaining what it means to be a 'scholar' and by disclosing that, for instance, students' efforts at analysis and interpretation define them as emerging critical thinkers and yet-to-be-trained critics. Instead of focusing on grading that reports performance, she highlighted progress through process and improvement over time (Rattan et al., 2015, p. 724). Specific strategies included assigning fewer papers with the addition of smaller assignments designed for cognition and possible integration into the 'higher stakes' papers. Such opportunities showing process through smaller steps have generally been untried in the past due to time constraints. This process revealed that that pre-work activities increase creativity, can accommodate new technologies, and can allow for more guided peer-brainstorming and peer-editing sessions, which increase social rapport in a learning environment and therefore assist with community-based amiability and an increased growth mindset, where students can see their efforts as a path to proficiency as well as to enhanced social bonding within an academic environment.
- In Ren Denton's classes, the fact that the majority of the students finished the unit "Arguments about Race" and the course during the pandemic shows how the TILT method provided a seamless transition, as she continued using the TILT method to promote transparency for the remainder of the semester. In fact, the conversion to remote learning provided an opportunity to TILT the writing assignment and create a writing workshop that replicated the series of in-class writing workshops that would generally be held during the time students are working on their paper. The TILTed workshops gave students a deeper understanding of the writing process, as evidenced by the well-organized writing samples of those who completed the workshop compared to those who did not complete the workshop.
- While the changes in Kathy Whitaker's class did not result in students completing all of the assignments in the course, overall, student essays were better following the course changes that were implemented. Specifically, there was a better overall focus and a more clearly defined thesis statement. The changes did not appear to help with grammar or mechanical issues, but the organization of the essays were better. The thesis and rough draft were submitted through an assignment dropbox, so they were scanned for plagiarism, which provided the opportunity to work on any issues with students privately before they submitted their final paper.
- For Laura Chambers, Spring 2021 proved to be the best semester yet for her ENGL 1102 classes, and in fact, it was one of the best outcomes ever in her career. She was thrilled to find that in one class 16 out of 17 research paper final drafts earned a 70 or higher. In another section of her course, 12 out of 12 research paper final drafts earned a 70 or higher. Overall, success rates were unprecedented!

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

For each instructor involved in the ENGL 1102 course redesign at EGSC, the plans for continuation and potential expansion of their course redesign are unique. The following section details each individual plan.

- Val Czerny plans to increase students' adeptness in monitoring their opportunities for success by continuing to interweave growth mindset strategies in class activities and assignments so students discover, for themselves, the benefits of succeeding. For example, whereas a growth mindset views criticism as a springboard for further learning, students who have settled into fixed mindsets evade confronting constructive criticism in order to appear intelligent. Weaving in 'nuts and bolts' steps and worksheets in assignments that highlight progress in student work assists us in providing constructive criticism that opens up opportunities for praise that is based not specifically on talent and performance (Dweck, 2007, p. 41), but on appropriate, consistent work, effort, and process, where students can embrace their writing as works-in-progress."
- For Ren Denton, with purpose, skills, knowledge, and grading criteria identified for them [students], they had more confidence that their own voices and opinions mattered and that they were not going to be graded on any inclination to agree with their professor. As a result, she will continue to TILT and expand the TILT method to courses, assignments, and activities.
- Professor Whitaker intends to continue this process in future classes while tweaking it a bit. Specifically, she plans to add a Flipgrid peer review video project to her ENGL 1102 and ENGL 1101 classes. For her literature classes, she believes the process will be helpful but will not require as many levels in the structure. Finally, she plans to put an emphasis on the plagiarism checking aspect of the assignment to help students with avoiding this mistake.
- Given the initial outcomes from her course redesign efforts, Laura Chambers intends to continue her existing approaches across the sections of her course.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

This section details the reflections from each instructor on the lessons learned and potential implications for their ENGL 1102 course redesign work.

- For Val Czerny, while she has incorporated assignments providing transitioning and balance for student mindsets and constructively prompted students to shelve old habits and adopt new, scholarly ones, she has learned to be mindful that old habits, like procrastination, do persist. Whereas many students welcome smaller, "less costly" assignments as enlivening opportunities to recognize promising potential in their thinking and writing, other students, miscomprehending the full instructional strategy, even when it is communicated to them, think smaller assignments are easy and produce eleventh-hour work that demonstrates major shortcomings. Without grasping the preliminary work, procrastinating students can run aground for the 'higher stakes' assignments. Overall, however, the course redesign strategies have productively enlivened the "choreography" of the courses, yielding fresh, innovative steps that invite students to embrace success.
- Professor Whitaker indicated that overall, this process works to help students better organize and structure their writing, although finding ways to encourage more and better participation continues to be a struggle. For the future, she plans to make it a lesson in and of itself and go over each element instead of just laying it out as an element of the essay. Hopefully, making this a normal part of the essay process will help students to improve their work overall.
- Finally, from Laura Chambers: "This G2C stuff works!"

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## English Composition (ENGL 1102) Course Redesign at East Georgia State College

### Doorway Composition: An Individual, Illustrative Case Study

Val Czerny

A student's ability to transition into collegiate thinking and writing improves the likelihood of future student success. At East Georgia State College, although English 1101 is a prerequisite to English 1102, Composition II students nonetheless tend to stop short at the threshold of higher education, where it becomes difficult for many of them to embrace new concepts required for college-level thinking and writing. This illustrative case study examines a particular ENGL 1102 course redesign to assist educators in understanding how to develop their own course redesigns in a metaphorical way—and to adapt the “doorway” metaphor for individual pedagogical use.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

English 1102 (ENGL 1102) emphasizes interpretation and evaluation and focuses on skills required for effective writing in a variety of contexts, including direction that familiarizes students with research methods. A student's ability to recognize and transition into a different mode of thinking that is expected in collegiate level writing—and college instruction in general—improves the likelihood of future student success. This illustrative case study examines a particular ENGL 1102 course redesign to assist educators in developing their own course redesigns in a metaphorical way—where the metaphor can be adapted for individual pedagogical use. East Georgia State College students must pass ENGL 1101 with a grade of “C” or higher before enrolling in ENGL 1102, but ENGL 1102 students nonetheless tend to stop short at the threshold of higher education, where it becomes difficult for many of them to embrace new concepts required for college-level thinking and writing as evidenced by students freely acknowledging their interests as elsewhere than in college academics, believing that achieving success in college does not require more than bare minimal effort, and challenging notions that greater investments of time and effort are necessary—even when they attest to significant deficiencies in basic writing skills. Asked to be on the G2C course redesign committee for ENGL 1102, I focused on developing a fresh, individual, purposeful course design for EGSC students in order to address deficiencies in basic grammar and writing skills and by transitioning student thinking from secondary to a post-secondary (higher) educational mindset involving skills in critical thinking and analysis, a perceived ability to apply acquired knowledge from one context to another, and a receptiveness to learning as a recognized source of agency and motivation. I decided to utilize the “learning cycle” model of instruction, but I implemented a metaphor to make the application of the cycle phases more apprehensible and therefore more readily fixed in the mind.

In the next section, I “chart” out the metaphorical adaptations I made to the “Learning Cycle Instruction” format (Hanuscin & Lee, 2008; Marek, 2008)—where the first phase of instruction, “engagement,” becomes, in the mind's eye, the hinged side of a door, where “exploration” is the top of the doorway frame, where “explanation” is the opening side of the doorway, where “elaboration” is the threshold, and where “evaluation” is the new space on the other side of the threshold. Mentally turning each phase into a facet of a doorway allowed me to make my course changes more imaginably purposeful.

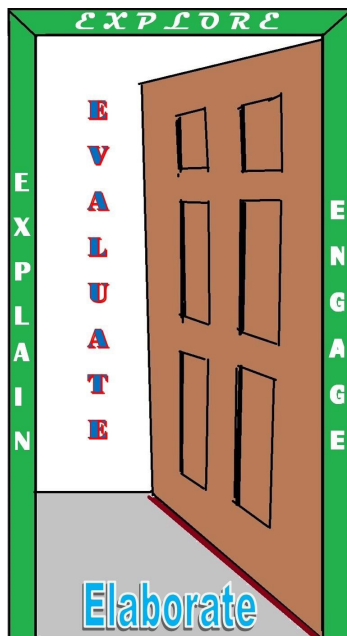
### METHODS

What follows is a chart and an illustration demonstrating my adaptation of the five steps of the “Learning Cycle” model of instruction (Hanuscin & Lee, 2008; Marek, 2008), where the conceptual storyline for course redesign incorporates the metaphorical facets of a doorway:

Facet of Instruction	“Doorway” Cycle of Instruction
Hinge Side	Engage students by having them connect past and present learning experiences.
Top of Doorway	Explore and provide a common set of experiences for students.
Open Side	Explain formal language and content information, determining what students can use when transferring their knowledge in the future.
Threshold	Elaborate on the students’ developing ideas through new activities.

After students begin to step through:

New Space on the Other Side	Evaluate what students understand and can do. Encourage students to be metacognitive.
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So, a conjunctural interpretation of “engagement” translates into considering the mental image of “engagement” as a series of “hinges”—that is, ways to make connections between students’ possible past learning insights to the present concepts they are invited to acquire. The hinges represent “dovetail” methods, where segments of past learning match up with segments of new learning—joined with the “pin,” which is the instructor’s “groove” or the determinant reinforcing the juncture. Thus, in my redesign of my ENGL 1102 class, I devised learning activities and assignments that relied upon possible familiar past writing experiences (from high school or ENGL 1101), such as my use of a descriptive narrative. However, I modified the traditional descriptive narrative by adding steps requiring students to use critical thinking by establishing a rhetorical stance.

## OUTCOMES

My redesign venture began with a consideration of the top of the “doorway,” where students should have enough room for an open clearing so they will not “bump their heads.” I learned from recently taking the three-part set of the USG (University System of Georgia’s) Online Development Series courses that typically students—whether a course is provided online, hybrid, or face-to-face—find learning about any particular subject matter as more engaging when writing short responses instead of long papers (Austin et al., 2020). I gradually introduced the skill of taking a rhetorical stance by constructing short response assignments. One common set of experiences that students discovered as recurrent in my new course design was their practice of using observational skills to provide writing that delivered details. When tasked with writing lengthy pieces, students’ clarity of expression often suffers, and because the task seems too large, students tend to write with general, unspecified ideas, using inexplicit, disconnected words such as “thing,” “this,” “it,” and other undefined terms. Guiding students to focus on an object they could observe, I limited their responses to just a few sentences to impel them to eliminate nonessential, vague wording. The outcome was that the short writing responses engaged students in imparting identifiable details. Thus, having practiced with several short, explanatory writing assignments, students could write more specifically and distinctly when conveying ideas in their longer writing assignments.



The open side of the “doorway” represents redesign techniques that provide opening awareness for future implementation. In my course redesign, I focused on explanations of the formal grammar of some specified sentence structures more so than in the past to attempt to open students’ understanding of other basic errors they tend to repeat simply because, customarily, they tend not to comprehend how to apply particular grammatical rules to their own writing. Also, I taught research strategies in a less complex manner than previously. I introduced the formal “language” and conventions of the MLA by teaching as I have formerly but with reduced research and citing requirements. If students learn how to provide basic citations in my class, then, in future classes, they can build upon the basics. Students do need to have the formal aspects of academic work explained to them, but not everything needs to be taught all at once or even in a semester since learning is a building process. Students still erred with basic citing, but they improved as the course progressed after I demonstrated, many times, how and when to use parenthetical citing with paraphrasing, for instance, and how to perform basic formatting—such as indenting second and subsequent lines in citations in a page of works cited. Familiarity assists with applying acquired knowledge from one context to another. Indeed, both novice and veteran scholars habitually have to search for the correct ways to cite individual sources. It’s an ongoing scholarly process, especially since the MLA periodically refashions its preferred practices.

The course of action that motivates students over the doorway’s “threshold” involves an underlying or sub-liminal elaboration of language and assignments. My threshold strategies relied upon Benjamin Franklin’s portrayal of his successes in requesting support for any endeavor by first “prepar[ing] the minds of the people” (Franklin, 1989, p. 113). To extend students’ developing ideas and to compel them to write persuasively, I used a strategy to acquaint students with adopting a position. Deliberately not focusing on directing students to devise a thesis with supporting evidence, I did not use the word, “thesis,” at all. In the past, my endeavors in instructing students regarding how to place their thesis in each of their compositions and how to develop their paragraphs around each thesis have not been highly constructive. So, exercising Franklin’s approach, I created “summary” and “narrative” assignments, while also providing required checklists and worksheets so that, by following them, students would be guided into taking and defending rhetorical stances. This is the part of the course redesign I spent the most time on, for even Franklin knew the difficulty involved and the careful, extensive time required in creating effectual plans that “prepare the minds of the people” for change.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The “new space” on the other side of the threshold opens to view extendable advances after students’ attainments have been evaluated. For instance, when students demonstrate adopting a position, I reveal they have argued for a “thesis” or contended with a particular “theme.” Using those terms, we then expand further. When students’ writing improves as they apply acquired rules, the purpose of those rules related to content often reveals a synthesis of more complex interpretations and relationships and “other side” metacognition. When students discover that they can understand more complex interpretations and still heed the rules of structure and organization, they begin to perceive their expanding competence and grow in confidence. For example, after creating a class workshop essay, where each day we wrote a paper as a group—where I typed it so that it was visible on a screen—students began to recognize the purpose and importance of topic sentences. Nearing the end of the semester, students have approached me to tell me that they always had difficulty with knowing what to do with too many ideas, and they have recognized that their past papers have been nonsensical, disorderly, and ineffective. To be effective, William Strunk and E.B. White (1979) tell us, writing must have a plan, even if it’s a “secret plan” that organizes the sort of writing that is “essentially adventurous and impetuous” (p. 71). Learning how to write short, detailed sentences followed by learning through example by participating in group-writing workshops about how to compose a topic sentence, how to provide a specific detail as evidence, and then how to voice a viewpoint about that evidence has been a source of agency and motivation for several students who have said as much. Even though they say they have known what topic sentences are, they now recognize their structural power in helping them, first, to understand the ideas they wish to convey and, second, to give them confidence knowing they have a tool to use to express their voices. What had seemed like a bland, boring rule in the past is now recognized as a practical means of tying together nomadic, meandering ideas—not only for my course but for their other writing assignments. This higher educational mindset appeared, as well, after I encouraged several students to submit their essays to EGSC’s literary journal. I provided suggestions and advised a student to use synonyms for two of several occurrences of the word, “often,” in his introduction. “Hey Dr. Czerny,” he wrote, “I was



trying to use the repetition of 'often' to emphasize the theme of [the lack of] diversity. If it is necessary to replace it, I can, but I feel like if I use a different word, it will lose some of its meaning and stress. I was picturing it as playing the same note over and over on the piano or another instrument, like the repetition just builds up this wave of energy that gets louder and is stressed more and more. It feels like it is going to crash down to another note at any moment." In this one response, I can recognize my course redesign as having a positive effect on this student's development as a writer and thinker with a voice who has stepped through the "doorway" into a new space of acquired metacognitive, academic achievement.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

While a member of the G2C course redesign committee for ENGL 1102 at East Georgia State College, I met and worked with other members of the committee to generate and implement course redesign strategies. While the committee gained a productive learning experience from the course redesign project, an individual, illustrative case study such as this one can spotlight specific, distinctive methods implemented in course redesign in order to contribute to the "brainstorming" momentum that is an integral part of all educators' imaginative constructions and endeavors. Whereas the "Learning Cycle" model aided my course redesign project for ENGL 1102, I had to keep reviewing each individual phase of instruction in order to implement the steps. By adapting the model through the use of my "doorway" metaphor, I was able to apprehend more readily and more clearly how to apply the phases as "facets" of a doorway's frame, where the "cycle" is driven by engagement "hinges," which employ "dovetail" methods that connect past with present learning. Even though the doorway metaphor works as a mental visual for planning future assignments and challenges for my students, I have not shared it with students since many of them reach the metacognition stage and begin to analyze ways of knowing in learning situations only at the very end of a semester. Unfortunately, there are also some students who still do not overcome their self-imposed restrictions of not being interested in that which is unfamiliar to them. Instead, to encourage all my students to apply their acquired knowledge in a new context, I have them take a survey, which is a journey back to the beginning of the term and which asks them to provide their honest responses to questions about what they have learned and how they have learned it. The doorway metaphor has worked as my own visual—assisting me in creating assignments that implement past-present-future connective designs. Thus, pivotal to my individual course redesign was a three-part concept of connection, augmentation, and transition (for most doors have three hinges), and the other facets of instruction were swayed by that central "axis." Now, having a mental image of the model of instruction, I can more easily continue to develop teaching strategies that are driven by approaches that clear the way for movement over the threshold into new learning spaces, where students can recognize their potential and success on the other side.

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## American History to 1877 (HIST 2111) Course Redesign at Georgia Highlands College

Jayme Akers Feagin

Steven Blankenship

Bronson Long

Karen Huggin

For many instructors, the idea of using course redesign to improve student success may sound both appealing and intimidating. In many cases, it is difficult to know where to start or what to expect. This article explores how a team of historians at Georgia Highlands College (GHC) used a multifaceted approach to course redesign that included the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and a variety of course activities to noticeably reduce DFWI rates in American History survey courses. This article suggests that instructors who take an all-around student-centered approach to course redesign can make a real difference.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Prior to the implementation of the course redesign at Georgia Highlands College (GHC) for HIST 2111 in the Fall semester of 2017, the course had DFWI rates that ranged between 27%-33%. State law in Georgia mandates that students who attend a public institution successfully complete one American History survey course in order to graduate.

Typically, students take either HIST 2111 [American History to 1877] or HIST 2112 [American History since 1877] to fulfill this requirement. During the 2015-2016 academic year alone, a total of 2,040 students across 68 sections of classes took one of these American History courses at GHC, with slightly more students taking HIST 2111 over HIST 2112. However, the high DFWI rates for HIST 2111 effectively made it a drag on efforts to improve retention and graduation rates. Since GHC is an access institution that predominantly serves more vulnerable populations such as students who are the first in their family to attend college, non-traditional students, lower income students, and minoritized students, retention and graduation is crucial to the college's mission to provide a low-cost, quality college education to as many people as possible in the northwest Georgia region.

Moreover, because of budget constraints, GHC relies heavily on adjunct instructors. As adjunct instructors are often hired shortly before the beginning of each semester, they are forced to scramble to secure a copy of the textbook and put together materials for the class. Finally, the textbook that was assigned to adjunct faculty for American History surveys (Eric Foner's *Give Me Liberty!*) was priced at \$65.00. While Foner's textbook is cheaper than many comparable history textbooks, it was even too expensive for many GHC students. As a result, many instructors reported that students in HIST 2111 frequently went without a textbook for some or even all of the semester. These challenges combined to make HIST 2111 a "bottleneck course" that inhibited student success. In Spring 2017, a team of four historians at GHC began a 2.5-year process to redesign the course to mitigate these problems.

### METHODS

The HIST 2111 course redesign team decided to focus on five main areas for improvement. First, we identified a high-quality, free online textbook called *The American Yawp* to replace the Foner textbook. We supplemented this with a host of new teaching materials, such as quizzes, essay questions, review questions, primary source documents, and a video glossary.

Second, we created and implemented a variety of activities in our courses, including:

- Note-taking pairs - A structured activity in which students take notes on a brief discussion, reading, or lecture and then compare those notes--and their note-taking strategies--with a neighbor and then share helpful strategies with the class.
- Exam wrappers - A metacognitive activity in which students answer guided questions that help them analyze their preparation for and performance on a summative assessment. The goal is to get them to identify connections between the content, learning activities, and assessment, so that they can better prepare for future exams.
- Quote-integration exercises - These are structured activities designed to help students use the “ICE Method” quote integration, in which use of a direct quotation begins with an introduction (who said it and in what context), then cites the quote (using the required citation format), and finally explains the significance of the quote for their argument.

All of the approaches above were used to provide underprepared students with more tools for success.

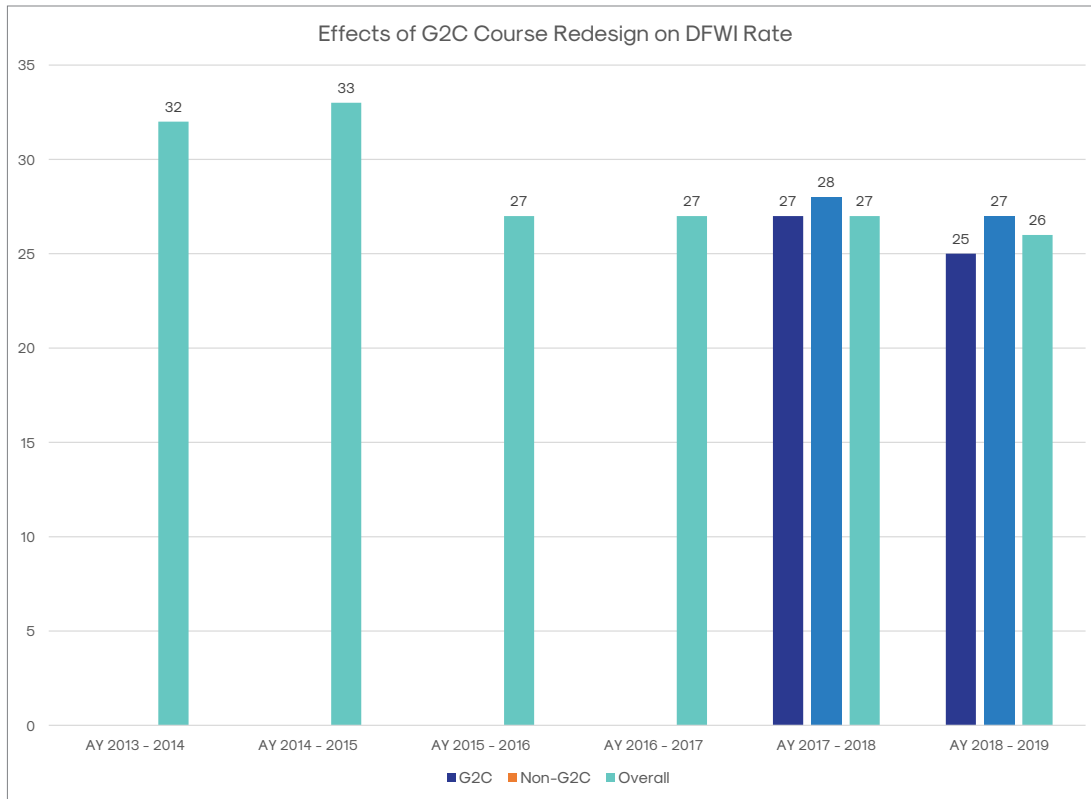
Third, we instituted an early warning policy that included multiple reporting points and meaningful emails to help students identify steps they could take to improve their performance. Next, we created an Adjunct Liaison position, which served to connect our part-time faculty to our textbook OER resources and classroom activities. We also provided course at-a- glance worksheets detailing the basics of each course. This is an especially useful resource for new instructors and academic advisors. Finally, we implemented a new curriculum based on historical thinking skills and centered around active learning techniques such as think-pair-share activities and primary source-based analysis assignments. We further redesigned our assessment mechanism to better reflect this focus on historical thinking, rather than content memorization. Finally, to disseminate the new material and gain “buy-in” from other faculty members, we facilitated annual history adjunct faculty training sessions.

## OUTCOMES

Even allowing for differences in pedagogical strategies and the variety of assignments given in history classrooms at GHC, the interventions implemented in HIST 2111 for the Gateways to Completion project at GHC yielded positive results on student success. History courses at GHC share common student learning outcomes and a common assessment mechanism to measure those outcomes, but the techniques used by individual instructors differ from section to section. However, by the end of the second year of implementation, the DFWI rate in G2C-redesigned sections improved by 2% from the beginning of the project, moving from 27% to 25%. Further, this new 25% DFWI rate reflected an improvement of 8% from its high of 33% in 2014-2015.

**Figure 1**

*Effects of G2C Course Design on DFWI Rates in HIST 2111*



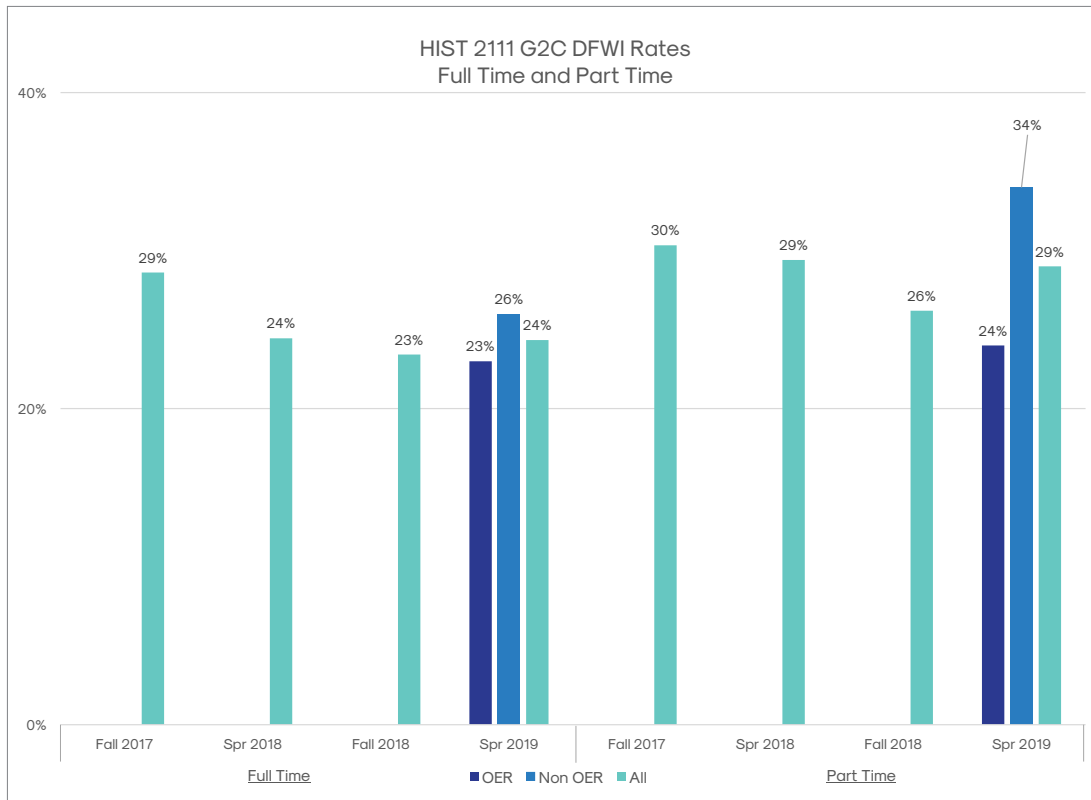
While the overall results were thus encouraging, the revision team identified three specific interventions that seemed to have an outsized impact on student learning outcomes:

1. The most effective intervention in our course redesign was the replacement of a relatively expensive textbook, which many students opted not to purchase, with OERs. By Spring 2019, sections of HIST 2111 using *The American Yawp* (OER) demonstrated considerably lower DFWI rates than those using the traditional textbook. For full-time students, the difference was 3%, with a 23% DFWI rate for those courses using OERs and a 26% DFWI rate for those using a traditional textbook.

For part-time students, the difference was even greater. While the DFWI for part-time students in sections using OERs (24%), was consistent with that of full-time students (23%), there was a much larger difference within the part-time-student cohort, since part-time students in sections using a traditional textbook had a DFWI rate of 34%. This suggests that use of affordable learning materials can play an invaluable role in part-time student success, particularly in institutions with a significant number of low-income students.

**Figure 2**

*Comparison of HIST 2111 DFWI Rates for Full- and Part-Time Students*



2. The second effective intervention noted in this revision process was the use of exam wrappers. Students in the redesigned sections were asked to complete exam wrappers after reviewing their first exam. These assignments required students to evaluate both their preparation for and their performance on the aforementioned exam, with the aim of helping them identify which of their learning strategies were helpful and which were not. They were further provided with suggestions for improvement in preparing for exam 2. Students who completed the exam wrapper showed a 10.2% improvement on their second exam, compared to a 2.2% decrease for those who did not complete the exam wrapper (see the table below). This suggests that taking the time to help students reflect on their learning can improve student outcomes.

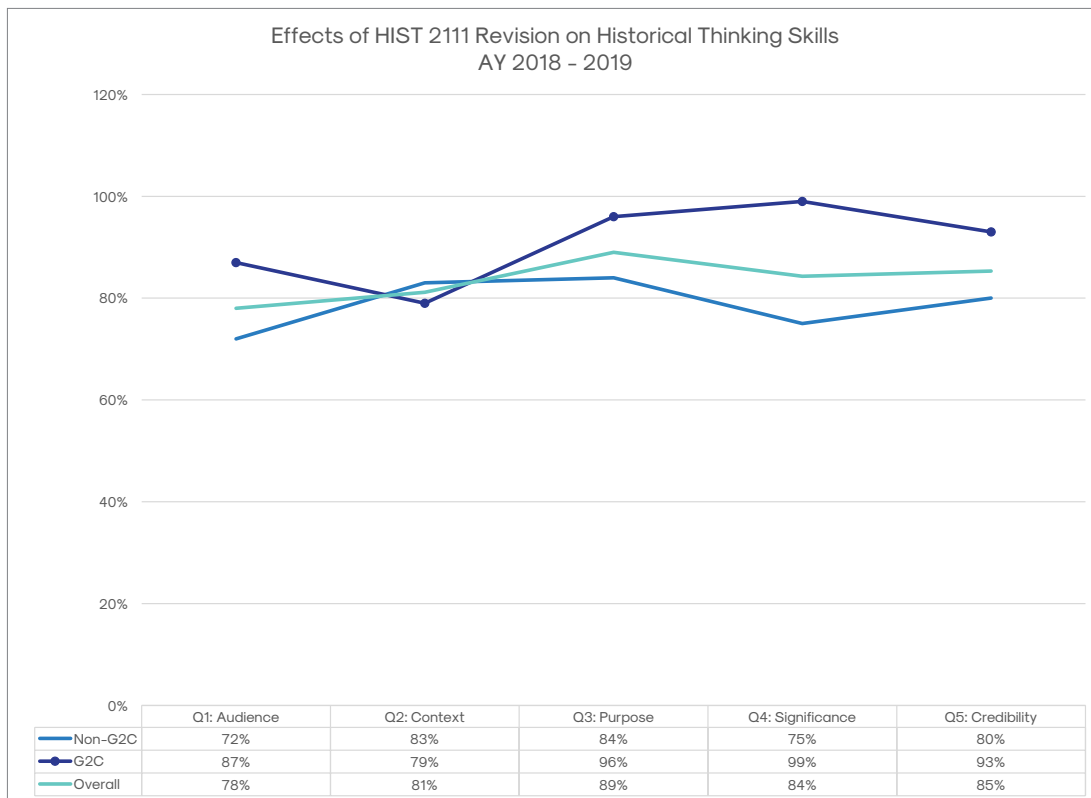
**Table 1**

*Comparison of Average Test Scores*

AY 2018 - 2019	Average Grade on Test 1	Average Grade on Test 2	Average Percent Improvement
Students who completed exam wrapper (n=48)	66.7	73.5	10.2%
Students who did not complete exam wrapper (n=31)	76.3	74.06	-2.2%
All students who took both exams 1 & 2 (n=79)	70.5	73.72	4.5%

3. Finally, redesigned sections showed significant improvement in students' historical thinking skills as measured by a newly designed assessment. In this universal assessment, students were provided an excerpt from a primary source and then asked to identify the audience, context, purpose, significance, and credibility of the source via multiple-choice questions. As a result of targeted active learning strategies spread across the semester, HIST 2111 was the only one of six survey-level courses to meet **both** the primary goal (student average of 70% on the 5-question quiz) **and** the secondary goal (70% of students answering each of the 5 questions correctly). Students in G2C-redesigned courses also outperformed students in non-revised sections in all but one category of analysis, indicating that the multiple targeted interventions (think-pair-share, quick quizzes, I do/we do/you do practice activities) were successful in improving students' historical thinking skills.

**Figure 3**  
Effects of HIST 2111 Revision on Historical Thinking Skills (2018-19)



## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

Based on the success that we experienced in this course redesign, the history team at Georgia Highlands College has opted to focus on two areas for sustainability and growth. First, we have continued to increase the number of sections of HIST 2111 using the OER. As of Spring 2021, 79% of HIST 2111 sections (15/19) were using The American Yawp and accompanying learning material. To facilitate this transition, the history team created a master course in GHC's learning management system that can be copied over to individual courses and then modified to suit a particular teaching style. The master course includes not only the textbook links but also a text bank, videos, sample graded assignments, and pedagogical material that emphasizes active learning techniques, historical thinking skills, and metacognition.

To expand this work, the team also created a similar master course for HIST 2112 (American History since 1877), including the OER, graded assessments, and pedagogical resources. Supporting videos are in development now. As of Spring 2021, 76% of HIST 2112 sections (13/17) were using the OER material. Having these resources available to all faculty (including part-time instructors hired at the last minute) makes the most successful interventions more readily available to students.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our successful redesign of HIST 2111 demonstrates three central themes for student success in history gateway courses: flexibility, guided reflection, and repeated opportunities for mastery. We are using these lessons to guide our current revision of the world history courses. Because we could not find an existing OER that suited our methodological approach, we opted instead to create a video textbook, which allowed us to include even more flexibility, reflection, and opportunity in the course design. The video textbook includes more than 150 video lectures, spanning human history, organized into a website using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Each video was closed-captioned, transcribed, and structured with key terms and review questions to help guide students' viewing. The transcripts were then edited for clarity, illustrated using open-access images, and combined into a PDF mini-textbook; thus, whether students watch the videos or read the mini-textbook, their access to the information is the same. By making what are traditionally seen as accommodations available to all students, we can remove both cost and stigma as obstacles to student success. The video textbook and mini textbook have been inserted into a master course on the college's learning management system, complete with a test bank, practice quizzes, and possible assessments. The next step is to create pedagogical materials that help instructors use active-learning techniques to engage students in historical thinking. This redesign of the world history sequence is funded by an Affordable Learning Georgia grant, and as such, materials will be shared under a CC-BY license, thereby making them available to a broad public

## Closing the Racial Achievement Gap for Pre-Nursing Freshmen at the College of Coastal Georgia

Laura Lynch

In response to the racial disparity in DFWI rates in gateway courses for nursing students, the College of Coastal Georgia is customizing their first-year experience program to promote greater engagement and support. This program is a collaboration between the Office of Academic Affairs, School of Nursing & Health Sciences, School of Arts & Sciences, Career and Academic Advising, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Academic Support (tutoring), Office of eLearning, the Library, and Residence Life.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In analyzing student success data as part of the Gateways to Completion process, disaggregation by race indicated that first-year courses typically taken by students wishing to pursue a nursing program had large racial disparities in DFWI rates. This prompted analyzing the DFWI rates for typical first-year courses disaggregated by both race and student major. The results were striking. Across all departments and general education areas, the racial achievement gap in first-year courses was significantly larger for pre-nursing students compared to students of other majors.

An immediate consequence of higher DFWI rates for students of color is a lower admission rate into a nursing program after completion of the general education requirements. Looking at admission rates into the College's associate or baccalaureate degree programs in Nursing, we noted a statistically significant difference by race, where new first-year classified as White, Hispanic, Asian, or Unknown who wanted to pursue nursing were admitted at comparable rates (35% overall) whereas the same population of students classified as Black or African American, Two or More Races, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native had significantly lower rates (15% overall). It is noteworthy that these trends do not persist in graduation rates for students who are admitted into a nursing program. For example, for the Associate of Science in Nursing, the graduation rates are identical for white students and students of color; indicating that the problem occurs before the students get into nursing.

In an effort to close the racial achievement gap for pre-nursing students, we are revamping the first-year experience for a pilot group of 48 students that will include:

- Two and a half days of pre-semester activities (in addition to the one day of pre-semester activities all first-year complete)
- Living-Learning Community for 24 students, with a Residence Assistant who is a nursing major, and a Learning Community for 24 non-residential students.
- Supplemental Instruction
- Diversity Programming
- Greater Career Programming
- Mentoring and Interactions with upper-class nursing students and nursing faculty

### METHODS

Student participation in the pilot program is based on the probability of admittance into a nursing program (Probability of Success - POS). The POS for each student is calculated based on statistically significant logistic regression models corresponding to their admission group and dependent on High School Grade Point Average (HSGPA). To have a 50% chance as a new first-year student of eventually being admitted into a nursing program,



students in the

- higher historical admission rates group (White, Hispanic, Asian, Unknown race) must have at least a 3.46 high school GPA
- lower historical admission rates group (Black or African American, Two or More Races, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native) must have at least a 3.82 high school GPA

To ensure equity of outcomes, students were eligible for the Fall 2021 learning communities based on having a POS below 50% (students with HSGPAs below the thresholds would be eligible), their willingness to participate (based on a question on a required orientation survey), as well as not having already completed any of the courses that are part of the learning community: MATH 1001 Quantitative Reasoning (3 credits), CHEM 1151 Survey of Chemistry I (3 credits), CHEM 1151L Survey of Chemistry I Lab (1 credit), GLOB 1001 Global Issues – Health focus (1 credit), ENGL 1101 English Composition I (3 credits) and, for a subset of students, ENGL 0999 Support for English Composition (1 credit).

Students in each learning community were enrolled in the same sections of the courses listed above. Faculty are collaborating to ensure due dates are spaced out and nursing faculty/students are also guest appearing in ENGL (to discuss the importance of clear oral and written communication in nursing) and in CHEM (a course designed specifically for nursing students). The nursing student organization (typically geared toward in-program students) has intentionally invited students from the learning community to their events. It should be noted these are the only learning communities occurring at the institution, so this is a unique treatment.

## OUTCOMES

While the program has not yet concluded its first semester, the institution has implemented programming for the fall learning communities.

- The nursing academic advisor created an event for pre-nursing students that brought upperclassmen and instructors not only from Nursing, but also Health Science and Radiology, to discuss potential careers. There is significantly higher demand for our nursing programs than what we can accept each year given resources and accreditation standards, so it is a given that not all of the students will be accepted in the nursing program. It is crucial to have sufficient off-ramps for students to continue their education and ensure students are aware of their options.
- A pre-semester learning community orientation was scheduled that included: LMS tutorials, tours of the nursing and health science labs, financial aid workshop, library workshop, introduction to the tutoring center, various team building activities among the students but also with nursing faculty, with the learning community faculty, with students from the Office of Diversity Initiatives Leadership Academy, with nursing students from the nursing student organization, and with the supplemental instructors and residence life staff who will be part of the learning communities.
- Communications to improve student mindset have been woven throughout the interventions and activities: visits from nursing faculty/students to the learning community courses help students keep their eye on goal setting and continue to establish a purpose and relevance for the general education courses they take; invitations to nursing student events help promote a social belonging.
- More broad practices have also been discussed, including methods for gaining broader diversity among the student tutors.

In addition to these new initiatives, which are in themselves outcomes of the data analysis, the following are expected outcomes at the end of Fall 2021:

- Higher student success rates in all learning community courses
- Reduced racial achievement gap in all learning community courses

- Improved student mindset, as measured through a pre-/post-mindset survey administered to all new first-year over age 18 each fall semester

Long-term, we expect these initiatives will lead to a smaller racial achievement gap in admittance rates for the nursing program and an increase in the number of students of color graduating with a degree in Nursing.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

While the Fall 2021 learning communities only serve 48 students, the institution typically admits over 200 new first-year students who want to pursue nursing. The institution plans to take the lessons learned from the Fall 2021 programming and scale-up to serve all nursing students. Successful strategies and programming will also be brought to scale to serve students in other majors. We are excited to see how developing a sense of community and focusing on mindsets related to social belonging amongst nursing students will impact their success and such strategies could easily be applied to other majors or meta- majors.

The institution has discussed extending the learning community to the second semester first-year courses to keep the momentum going for these groups of students. Sustaining a positive academic mindset and sense of belonging will be key to helping these students succeed, whether it is in a nursing cohort or a different major such as Health Sciences. The institution is also beginning to work toward creating a first- year college success course and some of the programming content planned in this pilot would be a great fit for such a course.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

While this work is focusing on pre-nursing students where the racial achievement gap is largest, the gap exists more broadly. Students of color are not succeeding at comparable rates in most gateway courses, which has significant implications for their retention, persistence, and graduation. It is standard to look at the course success data and disaggregate by major or by race. However, this was the first time the institution had disaggregated by both of these at once and that was the largest lesson learned: the need to continue to monitor the data broken down by both student major and by race to find trends and create programming as needed. This monitoring can also be extended: looking not just at individual courses but conducting “pressure tests” for majors (i.e., how many students are reaching various milestones toward graduation in appropriate time frames) by race. There is also the specific question here as to why Nursing? What is specific about the mindsets of students wanting to pursue nursing so that the racial achievement gap is doubled that of other majors? Future efforts could be placed on qualitative research into the mindsets of these students and how those mindsets may differ by race.

## Quantitative Skills and Reasoning (MATH 1001) Course Redesign at Georgia Highlands College

Sandra Anderson

Quantitative Skills and Reasoning (Math 1001) is a designated gateway course at Georgia Highlands College (GHC). In an effort to increase student success in this course, GHC partnered with the Gardner Institute in the Gateways to Completion (G2C) initiative. Two outcomes resulted from this effort. The first created a method for more frequent personal contact with students concerning their progress throughout a semester. Secondly, an active learning strategy was devised and termed class wrappers. Following classroom instruction, students utilize class wrappers in groups to solve problems and apply concepts over newly covered material in order to better self-identify perceived strengths and weaknesses.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Gateways to Completion (G2C) process was initiated during the spring of 2016, to help Georgia Highlands College create and implement an evidence-based plan for improvement. Fundamental areas for improvement included not only teaching, but also student learning and success in high-enrollment courses that have historically experienced high DFWI rates. A course-specific committee was created and began collecting and analyzing evidence to create a plan of improvement for the Quantitative Skills and Reasoning (MATH 1001) course as part of the first year of the G2C process. The plan continued to be implemented and refined for improvement of MATH 1001 courses throughout the next two years.

The G2C journey began with an institutional self-study process that was set up to identify the opportunities and conditions necessary for change. Course-specific reports and actions plans, as well as a comprehensive college report and action plan were developed. Six principles and related indicators were studied to help determine strengths, challenges, and ideas for improvement at the course and college levels. These principals were learning, faculty/instructors, improvement, academic practice and policy, students, and support. Also examined was a Gateway Course Success Inventory and a Student Learning Gains Survey. A MATH 1001 course-specific analysis self-study process was completed on the G2C principles and indicators in order to initiate recommendations and suggestions for improvement of the course. The first recommendation for action was to put in place two additional progress reports for students. The second recommendation was to incorporate class wrappers into MATH 1001 courses. The use of class wrappers is an active learning strategy formatted to allow students the opportunity to self-reflect on individual class sessions. Following classroom instruction, students utilize class wrappers in groups to solve thought provoking problems and apply concepts over newly covered material. This strategy provides students an immediate chance to self-identify strengths and weaknesses. Class wrappers were also designed to promote student attendance and enhance necessary support outside of the classroom. Other intended benefits are to help students more effectively communicate, organize, self-reflect, and self-evaluate.

### METHODS

Two additional progress reports for students were put into place in MATH 1001 occurring during week four and week eight of a fifteen-week course. These new progress reports fell in between GHC-wide regularly required reporting currently in place during week two (attending/non-attending) and week six (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) of each semester.

All instructors of MATH 1001 were provided class wrappers for their course. Consistent use of these class wrappers aids students outside of the classroom by emphasizing the life skills of attendance, organization, studying, and self-reflection leading to self-evaluation. Students utilize class wrappers in groups during the last ten minutes of class. This creates opportunity for the instructor to give proactive and immediate feedback in order to help prevent students from developing misconceptions or incorrect practices over new material. Some instructors use class wrappers as a “ticket” out of the classroom for attendance purposes, while others utilize them to determine if

students need additional assistance from either the instructor or college tutorial center. By using class wrappers, instructors are creating time during class to clarify student misunderstanding and determine if any concepts need revisiting. Another benefit of their utilization is that the instructor is provided the opportunity for the best practices of closure and scaffolding.

## OUTCOMES

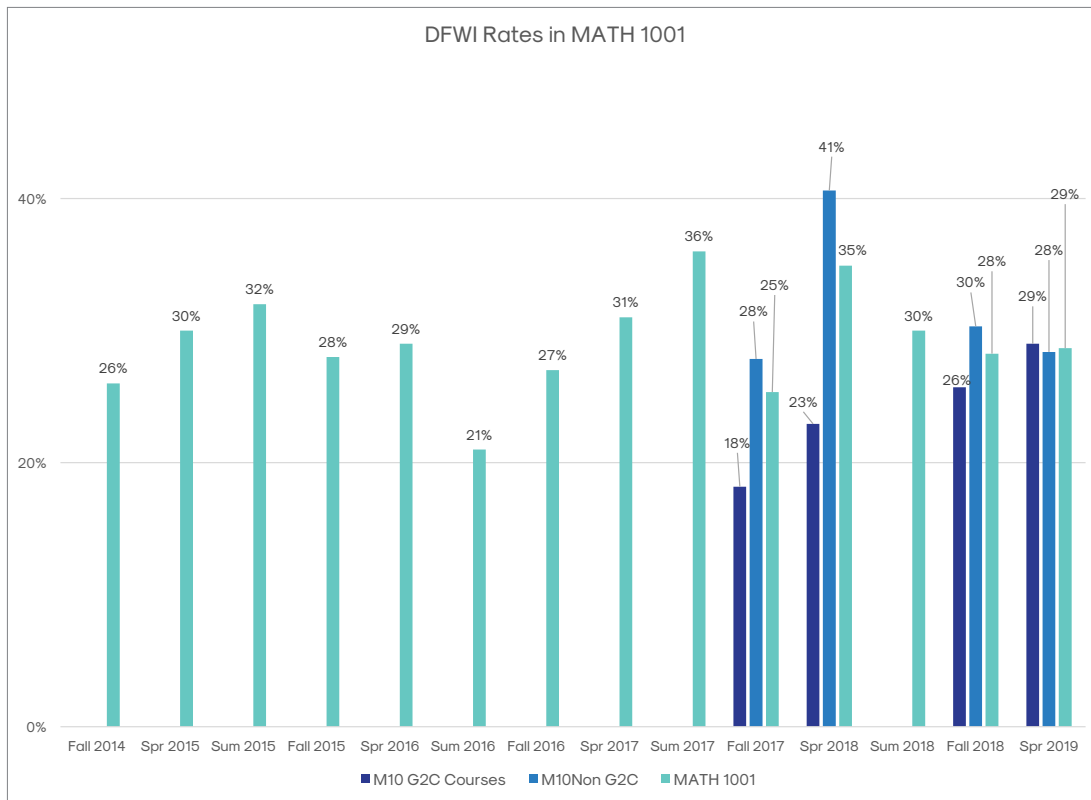
Throughout the G2C process, the dates and number of progress reporting to students changed several times. It was determined to only be necessary to provide one new progress reporting date positioned at the beginning of the eighth week of each semester, immediately before the GHC drop date (the last day to drop a course without academic penalty). Student progress reporting was also made more convenient and consistent by some instructors with the implementation of Intelligent Agents in Desire2Learn (D2L/Brightspace), GHC's learning management system.

The implications of the use of class wrappers have been evident in and out of the classroom as detailed above. One of the greatest benefits has been the authentic student engagement promoted by this strategy. Because of the generality and simplicity of the use of class wrappers, they can be easily applicable to other disciplines. They can be utilized by any classroom instructor, especially one looking for ways to foster engagement, use of metacognition, and self-directed learning.

Areas of improvement and growth over the three-year time period was evident by the revision of the class wrappers due to the reorganization of the course and the utilization of class wrappers in the online setting. The G2C effort concluded during the fall of 2019, with the use of the class wrappers and three total student reports implemented division-wide in all MATH 1001 courses. A second version of class wrappers was created so there could be rotation in the use of them. Feedback from students and instructors, as well as statistics gathered, indicate this strategy has been beneficial.

Course sections that piloted class wrappers had considerably lower DFWI rates (see Table 1). Fall 2017 DFWI rates were 18% for courses using this strategy, as compared to 28% for courses not utilizing the strategy. Spring 2017 DFWI rates were 23% for courses using this strategy, as compared to 41% for courses not utilizing the strategy. Fall 2018 DFWI rates were 26% for courses using this strategy, as compared to 30% for courses not utilizing the strategy. Spring 2019 DFWI rates were 29% for courses using this strategy, as compared to 28% for courses not utilizing the strategy. The gap in DFWI rate between G2C and non-G2C sections lessened as more sections, teachers, and delivery types were involved. But importantly, that gap was mostly still there. Statistical outcomes also suggested that the use of this teaching strategy may be particularly helpful for female and part-time students, which leads to the retention of students from historically underrepresented groups. Something that is not seen in this set of data is the spread of G2C techniques over the years to an increased number of course sections, and therefore, an increased number of students affected.

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of DFWI Rates in MATH 1001*



## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The use of three student progress reports and class wrappers continues to be an integral part of the MATH 1001 gateway course at GHC. Currently, all the college’s instructors of the course are encouraged to utilize both the progress reporting and class wrappers consistently in their courses. As part of an ongoing process, we will continue to quantitatively review DFWI rates in this course to analyze the future effectiveness of these two methods. In addition, opportunities to generate qualitative information will be provided through discussions at faculty meetings. This will be a way to determine not only how things are currently going, but also to ascertain if adjustments need to be made.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, Georgia Highlands College used this initiative to foster improvement for teaching and learning. The process helped increase student success in high-enrollment courses as measured by grades and retention rates. The experience also fostered an understanding of the importance of improved learning and success in gateway courses. Energy and effort centered around engaging students and self-directed learning is always time well spent. Student engagement with their peers and instructors will always tend to point to positive results. A possible implication is the transfer of this method to a variety of other instructional settings that could benefit from this student focused, engaging concept. It is exciting to see how others will get creative and transfer these concepts to fit their own uses in the classroom.

## Mathematical Modeling (MATH 1101) Course Redesign at Fort Valley State University

Samuel Cartwright

Bhavana Burell

This case study presents the case of two piloted courses created as no-cost student resources, functioning as an intervention to improve the declining performance in the Mathematics Modeling class. The approach adopted in this process was to create free effective resources that remained available to the students from the very beginning of the semester to elevate motivation and engagement with the course. It was determined through the case study and pilot studies that offering free resource material early in the semester achieved the desired goal of improving student performance in MATH 1101. The same approach can theoretically be adopted in other courses as an intervention.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

During the spring semester of 2019, the Mathematical Modeling (MATH 1101) Project was funded by the Alternative Learning USG Grant. The faculty members who were interested in the grant had to explore and create no-cost student resources for students during the spring and summer semester for use during the Fall 2019. The two piloted courses that were created for this project, had students enrolled in these courses, who were given access to the free resources from the very beginning of the semester. Students were surveyed for their experiences to determine the perception of the quantity of the free resources made available to them. The impact of the materials was also determined by students' performance for the course. All students enrolled in these courses took the same midterm and final exams irrespective of their course section. Final grades in the courses were used to measure if there was a difference in students' performance between the piloted sections versus the non-piloted sections.

In recent years, students' course performance in MATH 1101 has not produced good percentages in passing the course with a grade of C or higher, therefore it was selected as a Gateway to Completion course to allow for restructuring and designing the courses. The main focus was to improve every aspect of teaching and to make sure that all students could access the materials from the beginning of the semester to help them with their motivation and performance. One of the greatest challenges undertaken by the MATH 1101 Project team was to make the course materials available free to all students enrolled on the first day of class. Many of the students throughout the campus have been known to not have access to course materials due to financial hardships, which can disrupt their study schedule from the very start. It has also been shown from data that more than 78% of Fort Valley State University's students' population rely on financial aid. Providing students with access to course materials from the beginning of the semester should allow for an overall improvement in student performance in these courses.

### METHODS

The goal of the project was to determine the effectiveness of the free materials used in the two piloted sections vs. students purchasing materials normally without an intervention in the six non-piloted courses. While working on this project two questions of focus, relating to the quality and effectiveness of the materials, were used to help with this project.

1. Is there a difference in students' perception between the free resources versus the traditional resources that students had to purchase at the beginning of each semester?
2. Is there a difference in students' performance and final grades between the students in the piloted sections versus the students in the non-piloted sections?

To help answer the first question, a survey was carefully designed. Students in the piloted group were surveyed for their perception and experience of the Open Educational Resources (OER). The survey results of the students also provided valuable feedback on the quality of the materials used.

To address the second question, data was collected based on student performance using the final grades that students earned at the end of the semester. A comparison was made between the participants in the experimental group ( $n=661$ ) versus the participants in the control group ( $n=85$ ). To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the proportions at a significant level of 5% we ran a two-tailed test using the proportions of students passing the MATH 1101 with a final grade of: A, B, C. The grades were compared in both groups to see if there was a difference between the two proportions.

## OUTCOMES

The survey results did show that the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course were positive. When students were asked to respond to the statement, “The materials adequately supported my work done outside of class”, the results show that 53 students or 86% of the students agreed or strongly agreed. On the question, “How certain are you that you can enter correct answers in D2L in a way that it will be accepted on the first try?”, there were only 31 students or 51% of the students agreed or strongly agreed.

There were 8 sections of the MATH 1101 course that were offered during Fall 2019. There were two piloted sections’ grades combined as well as the 7 non-piloted sections’ grades. There were 3 As, 17 Bs, 21Cs, 5Ds, 9Fs and 6Ws with a total of 61 students in the piloted sections. There were 4As, 14Bs, 25Cs, 9Ds, 24Fs, 4Ws and 5WFs. The grade data was provided by the Fort Valley State University’s Office of Institutional Research.

In the two piloted sections, there were 41 students passing with A, B, and C. There were 20 students who were not successful. That is earning grades of D, F, WF, and W. In the six non-piloted sections, there were 43 students passing with A, B, and C. There were 42 students who were not successful earning grades of D, F, WF, and W.

We performed a Chi-squared test for the comparison of two proportions (from independent samples), expressed as a percentage. That is and using the  $N-1$  Chi-squared test as recommended by Campbell (2007) and Richardson (2011).

Our calculations were aligned with the recommended method illustrated by Altman et al. (2000). We found that there was a difference between the two proportions and a 95% confidence interval (CI). That is, we used the Chi-squared test and P-value: we saw that the P-value was less than 0.05 and conclude that the two proportions differ significantly.

We used a two-tailed test at a significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$ . We hypothesized that there is no difference between the proportions:  $P(\text{piloted})=41/61$  and  $P(\text{non-piloted})=43/85$ .

There is a difference between the sample proportions as extreme as 0.16 4.83% of the time under the null hypothesis. Since 4.83% is less than 5.00%, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference at all.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

At the end of Spring 2021, the MATH 1101 Project Team decided to encourage departmental-wide adoption of free resources with the hope of improving student performance and student readiness for our students who were financially struggling across all courses. We plan to first meet with all of the mathematics faculty who regularly instruct mathematical modeling courses to explore the possibility of moving to department-wide adoption with the use of free resources for all the students who would be enrolling in mathematical modeling courses in the future.

The purpose of these meetings would be to encourage faculty members to consider using the Open Educational Resources (OER) and exploring the kinds of resource materials that would make the transition to the OER resources seamless. At the meetings in the future, we intend to share our experiences and update faculty members on what ideas worked and what did not work as well as to showcase all the free resource materials we were able to use. To

get faculty on board with this project, we plan on using a summary of what faculty members may be comfortable using the free resource materials and use that information to create ideas and write a proposal for a Continuation Grant. A grant that can be used to not only further improve the quality of the materials but also to create a partial or complete renovation of the course to attain the goal of department wide OER adoption for the teaching and learning of mathematical modeling.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our course redesign is an ongoing process. The results also showed that there was a difference in the way students perceived free resources with those students who purchased materials for their classes. The belief that students who have access to class materials from the first day of class tend to do better appears to be true. This is because more students tend to complete the assignments on or before their due dates thereby avoiding late submission penalties.

Based on the research on finding and using free resources, in many cases, it was discovered that when a suitable textbook was found, it did not have any supplemental materials that were free. The author would usually point towards a website that would provide homework with a cost.

It was also discovered that several free resources could be modified to meet the textbook needs, but this only occurred with sections in the textbook. The need to have only one textbook to use for a course may not be the best option if the free resources can be merged into one document to have access to more free materials for students and faculty to organize for course supplements.

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## College Algebra (MATH 1111) Course Redesign at South Georgia State College

Margaret Adams

Mathematics, an important, beautiful subject in which one learns how to think logically, needs purpose and relevance. Increasing DWFI trends in College Algebra warranted a course redesign to foster an appreciation of mathematics, improve motivation, and encourage more student engagement. Bi-weekly discussion boards about math, watching math movies and “creating and/or finding the mistake” critical thinking tasks were assigned in addition to MathLab. The course became purposeful and appealing, and accommodating to students with diverse learning styles. Positive feedback revealed purpose and enjoyment from the new tasks. Student engagement improved and more successful learning outcomes occurred than with MathLab assignments alone.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

DWFI rates in College Algebra (MATH 1111) are consistently concerning every semester. Whether face-to-face or online, students report challenges to success including work hours, family commitments, health, time-management, learning disabilities, and motivational factors including the lack of purpose behind taking math in college.

Over the last several semesters, one common theme that has emerged from informal conversations with students in my MATH 1111 classes is that although MathLab, the homework platform in the class, is user-friendly, it is perceived as purposeless busy work lacking relevance to their lives at this point in time. Because many students in my classes admit that math is often neither liked nor perceived to have relevance to their life or career, the course falls to the bottom of their list of priorities. As a result, assignments do not get completed on time and in some cases, get put off indefinitely until the end of the semester with the intent to start working on them all at once, setting up the unsuccessful outcome scenario. Many also feel math is not their strong point and do not persevere because they just do not see the purpose of spending endless hours working on problems that cause stress and endless struggles. This case study documents the approaches taken to help students see the beauty and relevance in mathematics through the redesign of my MATH 1111 courses, focusing on fostering an appreciation of mathematics, improving motivation, and encouraging more student engagement in the course.

### METHODS

As a first step in the course redesign process, I implemented tasks in Desire2Learn (D2L) that invoked communication between peers and imparted knowledge about math in the world. Tasks included bi-weekly discussion boards, critical thinking tasks, movies to watch about math, guided movie notes to submit as homework, and corresponding movie quizzes.

Discussion post topics included: introductions with a short self-made video; find the mistake simplifying rational exponents; sharing movies about math; how math is used in their everyday lives; prove that  $2+2=5$ ; describe prominent mathematicians, create, and share the mistake(s) such as with order of operations or use of the quadratic formula. Each student had to complete at least 2 others.

A variety of contemporary movies and videos with specific math references were also incorporated into the course, including the following: Teletubbies Animal Parade; Pixar Movie; Love Yourself, Justin Bieber; Quadratic Formula Cup Song; Abbott & Costello, 7 into 28; Ma & Pa Kettle, 5 into 25; and Sonic Geometry.

Finally, I created critical thinking tasks using an iPad with video to concoct math problems that contained mistakes, with solutions later written out and explained. Students watched the videos, found the mistake(s) then wrote up their perceived correct version of the problem. Tasks associated included simplify fractional exponents, prove

that  $0=1$ , and solve a radical equation. These tasks culminated in a more challenging assignment that required the students to create their own math problem which contained a mistake. Specifically, for this assignment, students recorded themselves solving the problem and then they uploaded both the video and .jpg or pdf file into a discussion post. This assignment, in particular, generated meaningful and interesting discussions in the class and helped students feel more connected to the course content and to each other.

## OUTCOMES

An end of course survey created in D2L, completed in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, captured feedback about the new discussion boards, videos/movies, guided movie notes, quizzes, and critical thinking tasks. Over 90% of students responded favorably to the variety of tasks, vs. MathLab assignments alone. Specifically, students reported that the tasks were appealing and easy, they felt more engaged in the course with the discussion boards, they learned more about math without working out math problems, and they appreciated how these activities and assignments contributed to their overall grade in the course.

The discussion posts were designed to facilitate communication while fostering a sense of connection and engagement. Though they were open for two weeks at a time, some students did struggle to manage discussion participation, and some forgot to post altogether. Moreover, there were several instances in which posts were made only 2 hours before the discussion board closed on Saturday evenings, which did not leave ample time for discussion. Overall, though, students in the class liked getting to know their classmates and finding out many interests they shared in common.

Students also reported having learned more about math by watching the movies or videos and thought the guided movie notes helped them keep engaged, alert and focused on the task, helped them to organize the content and key points, and helped them remember what they watched in order to successfully pass the quizzes and discuss the content in some discussion posts. Some indicated they liked seeing how math is used in real world scenarios, and how math is even used to make movies. Many stated they appreciated the movie study guides as homework assignments because these were easy to complete, provided connections to the real world, and opportunities for long-term learning.

The critical thinking tasks that involved creating and finding the mistake(s) were challenging yet engaging. Students sometimes reported no mistakes, even in instances where there were several visible mistakes. With this exercise, there were times students sometimes felt intimidated, lacked confidence, and were afraid of thinking they found a false error. Interestingly, when they created a problem containing a mistake, then provided the correct version, sometimes the correct version had new mistakes. This suggested that their basic algebra and critical thinking skills were still being developed, which evoked further rationale for such important critical thinking exercises. The “find the mistake” tasks were reported as difficult at times but enlightening to discuss the potential mistakes in the forums as ideas could be exchanged with peers.

While students completed the required MathLab assignments, they thought the D2L tasks made the course more interesting, promoting more meaningful, long-term learning about math than with MathLab alone. They also felt hopeful about still passing the course even without scoring well on some MathLab assignments. For some, this was their second attempt at taking MATH 1111, which made it even more important to find opportunities to convey enthusiasm for and engagement in the course and the subject overall.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

A continued exploration into the underlying causes of DWF1 rates could reveal opportunities for embellishing the curriculum and updating the course objectives in order to address the needs of students learning math in this current decade.

Given the favorable student feedback from informal conversations and online course evaluations, the current redesign approaches will be continued in MATH 1111 and piloted in math modeling, pre-calculus, calculus, and statistics. While MathLab will still be used for skill and mastery, discussion posts will be used to promote dialogue and critical thinking, and movies will impart more interesting applications of math.

A hybrid flipped-classroom model for discussion posts could be implemented in the future, whereby students select movies about math and then compose their own movie study guides and quizzes to use. The collaborative group component and leadership opportunities could potentially constitute a high impact practice for the course and momentum initiative.

The critical thinking tasks, find the mistake(s), will be developed, and implemented into all bi-weekly assignments. The best impact would be for students to design the problems with mistakes and have their peers analyze them. Problems could range from such as solving for a variable to rational exponents or more complex log or exponential equations. Students could either present the mistake and a correct solution at the whiteboard whereas online, they record a problem-solving video with their phone to record themselves and upload the clip into D2L. Rubric-guided instructor and peer feedback could be provided.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Enhancing the course with some enjoyable tasks improved engagement, dialogue and motivation. Discussions and movies were perceived to be relevant to the real world and fostered an interest to connect virtually with peers. The two-week open discussion intervals were often completed in the last 10 minutes of class. Hence, future discussion posts will be assigned so the post occurs the first week and replies during the second along with detailed expectations of the quality regarding the replies.

The critical thinking tasks involving peer analysis of mistakes made by others, while perceived as more challenging, fostered original thought, creativity, and the ability to elicit judgements. Along with improved course grades, student feedback on this course redesign was important with considering future course envisions. Students like to partake in opportunities to voice what they find meaningful, purposeful, and useful in a modern world math course to keep them interested and motivated enough to want to engage in more in the course.

An important implication is that updating the course objectives for college algebra could be on the horizon. For example, objectives could include the following: develop an appreciation of the quantitative tools used to present, understand, and explain issues arising in the media and in students' daily lives; heighten oral and written communication skills of mathematical ideas to foster expressing quantitative evidence in support of an argument or purpose; and strengthen the ability to judge and draw informed conclusions. Finally, these objectives added to current course objectives could provide the motivation and perceived purpose for more meaningful, successful learning outcomes.

# Institution-Wide Change at Capital University: Examination of Gateway Courses Uncovers University-Level Needs

Deanna N. Wagner

Jody S. Fournier

Capital University made several transformative changes working with the Gardner Institute through the Foundations of Excellence - First Year Focus project in 2012. Elusive, however, were substantive changes in instruction. We reengaged with the Gardner Institute in 2017 to take a sustained look at classroom experiences and their relationship to student success. We anticipated making changes focused on in class teaching and learning but underestimated making major high impact institutional and structural changes as well. As a result, these changes positively impacted retention, persistence, and graduation rates, even eliminating first generation status as a negative predictor of retention.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From 2012-2016, Capital University worked to implement nearly 150 action items identified through Foundations of Excellence - First Year Focus to support first year students on campus. In the fall of 2017, a 19 year high in first to second year retention, 78.1%, was achieved and repeated in the fall of 2018. However, one identified area of change remained elusive to significant improvement - changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and teaching. The University was successful in making many changes to create a university-wide support system for students but changes to improve pedagogy and practice in the classroom proved to be more difficult. To address student success, retention, and graduation, much more needed to be done to improve instruction and learning.

In 2017, the university reengaged with the Gardner Institute to examine and improve student performance and success in Gateway Courses. These high enrollment, prerequisite courses typically occur in the first two years of a student's studies and regularly prevent students from progressing and completing their degree. The goal of the project was to identify these courses and help at-risk students persist to complete their four-year degrees. We knew from our previous work that by making changes to improve student learning and completion for these students, the performance of all students would be positively influenced.

## METHODS

The Gateways to Completion (G2C) project led Capital University faculty, staff, and administrators through a comprehensive, three-year, self-study. In addition to focusing on the factors inside and outside the classroom that impede student progress, the self-study allowed for the identification of courses that present the most challenge to students. The G2C steering committee consisted of cross-campus representation with each of the teams examining specific courses intentionally included both faculty from the discipline and staff from student development areas. The Steering Committee spent hours auditing potentially problematic policies and procedures. The Steering Committee also identified three courses from different areas of the university for participation in the study.

Faculty leaders in the disciplines were approached about the process and expressed excitement to be involved. With the G2C liaisons, the faculty leaders for each discipline selected committee members from across the institution, ranging from faculty in the department to staff in athletics and academic support areas. Through focused discussions, each committee member contributed their perspective on student success on given topics, resulting in action items specifically to enhance student success in that course.

Our hope was that these action items would not only affect change in the singular course but would be scaled and applied to other courses as well. What we did not expect was the large number of similar action items identified by each course group that were university-wide opportunities for change to better serve students.

## OUTCOMES

Over 70 high priority action items were generated that were university-wide changes - focused on systems inside and outside the classroom. Many of these action items were suggested in some form by each of the course level groups. Three of the highest impact university wide changes are highlighted below:

### Academic Advising

Capital University employs a faculty advising model where students connect with a faculty member in their discipline from their summer orientation day throughout their entire collegiate experience. The G2C work outlined the need for additional advising support. We created an Advising Office, staffed by Master Advisors (faculty advisor with reassigned time), to provide just-in-time advice on course registration, major change options, and other questions that arise for students when a faculty advisor may not be available. The Advising Office also provides professional development opportunities for advisors and provides mentoring support for new faculty advisors.

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) was also identified by the groups as a way to improve pedagogy across the curriculum. We realized putting a greater emphasis on SOTL by expanding the University's Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). In the past, CELT had focused solely on supporting faculty teaching, but the new CELT was reorganized to place ownership of student learning, development, and achievement on all University employees, regardless of role. The new Center is team-led by faculty and staff with specialties in pedagogy, technology, and community engagement with a variety of opportunities for engagement, including professional development workshops throughout the academic year as well as focused multi-session workshops on specific courses and co-curricular experiences.

### Enhanced Communication to Support Student Success

Somewhat generically, each of the groups identified needs for enhanced communication to better support the system of student success on our campus, but also individual students in their individual needs. We implemented a new early alert system, Beacon, a more robust tool than what we had used in prior years. With the new platform, faculty and staff can share information easily, with our Office of Student Success and each other to alert necessary individuals to allow us to better support individual students and remove barriers to their success. We also began an outreach campaign to help students get information on registering for courses for the next semester. Each semester, this outreach campaign assists students in the removal of barriers to registration including addressing financial holds, academic holds, and other non-academic barriers.

As we followed the implementation plan of these and other action items, Capital has realized vast improvements in student success. We maintained our record first-to-second year retention rates and our graduation rates are approaching an all-time University high. Most notably, Capital has neutralized first generation and commuter statuses as negative predictors of retention and persistence.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The success of our implementation allowed us to also focus on larger, more long-term practices. We will take academic advising to a new level at Capital by implementing a hybrid advising model. All students will maintain a faculty mentor to assist and will also have a success advisor who will not only assist with scheduling courses but also address non-academic barriers to success. The student's success advisor will remain consistent throughout their time at Capital, regardless of major changes or additions, and will focus on the combined curricular and co-curricular success of the student. This new model enhances instead of replaces our former model and allows for more dedicated support to each individual student. We have also launched our digital initiative, which focuses on promoting technology access and affordability, enhancing student success services, and transforming instruction and learning. Because of the work already underway from the G2C project, Capital is poised for greater success in all three goal areas. All undergraduate students, as well as faculty and staff will have the same device, access to the same apps for collective use both inside and outside the classroom, and the freedom to think big when developing projects, assignments, co-curricular experiences, and more.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

We learned the importance of engaging a wide variety of campus voices in our early Foundations of Excellence work nearly a decade ago. This led to passionate conversations, substantive changes, and a culture shift toward emphasizing student success at our institution. Participation in the G2C process allowed us to continue this strong culture of cross-campus collaboration to support student learning, engagement, development, and success. In fact, we were able to engage an even more diverse set of individuals, offices, and departments to collaborate to improve the lives of students and our university. The continued growth of this interconnected network is at the forefront of the University's work and is vital to continued growth in student retention, persistence, and graduation.

In our continued work to support students, we have begun to build networks across our community college partners, to break down silos between our campuses to better support students in their transfer experience.

## The Relationship Between Linked Courses, a High-Impact Practice, and Student Success Rates at East Georgia State College

Ron Denton

This case study examines the impact of a student learning community (SLC) that linked sections of two courses, English Composition II (ENGL 1102) and U.S. History II (HIST 2112), on student success rates in the course. Ultimately, students in the sections of the courses in the SLC successfully completed the courses (earned a “C” or higher) at greater rates than those in non-SLC sections. Moreover, students reported additional gains associated with historical thinking.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Between 2018 and 2020, the average success rate for students completing English Composition I (ENGL 1101) was 51.99% and English Composition II (ENGL 1102) was 62.51%. As an open-access institution offering gateway courses, East Georgia State College’s (EGSC) greatest responsibility is guiding underprepared students to a college-ready level with equitable methods that engage them in deep learning while also removing unnecessary obstacles. During EGSC’s recent reaffirmation of accreditation, the institution identified a need to use institutional resources to support the G2C initiative in ways that target specific gateway courses and the implementation of high-impact practices. Thus, EGSC’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), now underway, was designed to support first-year generation, underrepresented, and underprepared students through student learning communities (SLCs). These learning communities link a pair of required first-year courses across the curriculum, especially targeting the gateway courses with the highest DFWI rates.

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education (n.d.) defines learning communities as “classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term, often around an interdisciplinary theme and enroll a common cohort of students” (para 1). As a high-impact practice, SLCs have been “widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds,” according to Kuh, (2008) because they have proven to “engage participants at levels that elevate their performance across multiple engagements and desired-outcomes measures such as persistence” (p. 14). The National Resource Center for Learning Communities claims SLCs should include, “at a minimum,” the following three characteristics: “1) strategically-defined cohorts of students taking two or more courses together, 2) robust collaborative partnerships between student and academic affairs, and 3) explicitly designed opportunities to practice integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning” (Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education, n.d., n.p.). By providing first-year students the social support needed to feel that they belong to a campus community and by building a collaborative academic community, SLCs are opportunities for student transformation from remedial or developmental learners to college students with a sense of purpose and belonging.

### METHODS

A section of English Composition II (ENGL 1102) was paired with a section of U.S. History II (HIST 2112). The two courses were linked so that when students registered for one of the courses, they had to register for the other course because linked courses must share the same cohort of students. Both professors teaching the courses drew from pedagogies pertaining to diversity and inclusion, social justice, and mindset, in that the course materials reflected diverse voices and perspectives, group work provided opportunities to build a sense of social belonging, and students had opportunities to respond to feedback. The professors also used the backward design method in that they first identified what they wanted students to gain from the interdisciplinary experience. Specifically, both professors wanted students to recognize how interconnected literature and history are so that students could use literature to bring history to life or use history to find deeper meaning in the literature. Ideally, the recognition will promote a love for life-long learning while giving students different access points to history or literature. The ENGL 1102 course is a literature-based writing course that is organized by themes that focus students on the



certain arguments about society or humanity that may be found in the stories. For the SLC, the professor shifted focus on certain themes like “Arguments about War” and reorganized the course so that the assigned stories were illustrating the historical events or era covered in HIST 2112 class to allow students to learn the history and then use the history to understand and analyze the literature.

## OUTCOMES

There were three shared writing assignments in the SLC that encouraged students to make interdisciplinary connections between the two courses as well as to their own society or lives. These assignments were designed to meet the learning objectives “to explore the “big questions” and critically examine the details that make up the “big picture” for history and society. The shared assignment that encouraged students to use a fictional text to make a point in an historical argument especially helped students connect the two disciplines, even as they explored the bigger picture. When students read William Faulkner’s short story, “A Rose For Emily,” they were to write an essay that examined the character of Miss Emily as a symbol for the Old South and the Lost Cause and how these ideas kept the South anchored in a mythical past and prevented the region from moving into a more enlightened future, even as they made an argument about keeping or removing Southern Confederate Monuments in public spaces. In the history class, students read several primary and secondary documents concerning the use of the Confederate flag and the building of monuments in the Jim Crow era. They wrote a discussion where they addressed the motivation behind these symbols that, as many argue, glorify a mythical past to justify Jim Crow racism and promote white supremacy. The students were expected to use the history explored in my discussion to better help them to understand Faulkner’s symbolism. By combining these assignments through an interdisciplinary approach, the students came to a better understanding how this perpetuation of Confederate imagery in public spaces in the twenty first century helps promote racial division and distorts the true history of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

At the basic level of analysis, the success rate for all gateway course sections taught as part of a SLC is compared to those for gateway courses not taught in a SLC. The goal was for the SLC courses to increase its successful completion rate by fifteen (15) points. The quantitative success outcomes for ENGL 1102 met the goal for linked courses. A total of 75% percent of students successfully completed English Composition II with a “C” or higher, exceeding the 59.6 % of students in non SLCs who successfully completed ENGL 1102 in Spring 2021. The fifteen-point increase in success rates also increased the course GPA by .44 percent, as the course GPA average for students in the SLC was 2.33 compared to the 1.89 course GPA average for students not in the SLC. The DFWI trends for students representing groups that have been marginalized were significantly lower in the redesigned ENGL 1102 course, even reduced by almost half for those identifying as African American. Moreover, though HIST 2112 is not part of the G2C efforts at EGSC yet, the linked History course also saw similar rates, with a 66.7 % successful completion rate and a course GPA average of 2.17 compared to a 2.07 GPA course average for students not enrolled in an SLC.

In addition to the quantitative gains, students also reported an increased sense of empathy, belonging, and deeper interdisciplinary learning. In comments from evaluations of the ENGL 1102 course, students stated that “historical thinking was a big new skill” but they enjoyed learning how to read literature through history, or they developed a greater understanding of history through literature’s dramatization of it. Students claimed they were taught to critically think through issues that impact their lives, even as they have a better understanding of how the past influences the present and shapes the human condition. Students said their experience was “pretty rigorous,” but they enjoyed the experience.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

Given the successful completion and the students’ reaction to the experience, we project a continued increase in course completion and retention. Therefore, we plan to expand the SLCs into other G2C redesigned courses or support faculty who are interested in teaching a linked course and designing/revising their gateway course in such a way that combines the G2C recommendations and pedagogies used in effective SLCs.



## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

By identifying gateway courses with high DFWI rates and creating SLCs to support the students enrolled in those courses, EGSC addresses issues of equity and access in accordance with G2C recommendations. By setting clear and high expectations, combining collaborative integrated teaching, co-curricular support, and collaborative group learning in the SLCs, EGSC students' experience the academic and social integration that leads to a greater sense of belonging in college, deeper learning, and greater academic engagement.

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## Designing the Course Transformation Academy at Kennesaw State University

Kristina DuRocher

Scott Reese

Based on experiences in Gateways to Completion (G2C) and institutional priorities, Kennesaw State University (KSU) created the Course Transformation Academy (CTA). This case study explores KSU's process in developing the CTA. Our model focuses on milestones to measure progress, as well as developing an adaptable model of three stages that is open to courses of any level. In addition, our model integrates mandatory administrative support, the participation of all department faculty, and the involvement of students.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At Kennesaw State University (KSU), the creation of the Course Transformation Academy (CTA) was an opportunity to institutionalize a model shaped by the Gateways to Completion (G2C) process during a time of increased institutional interest in student retention and progression. Our below-peer-institutions-graduation- rates spawned a presidential task force which found that high-failure-rate classes were one component that affected student progression and degree completion.

Between 2015 and 2021, nine courses were involved in the G2C process (ACCT 2100, ACCT 2200, CHEM 1211, HIST 2112, POLS 1101, MATH 1111, MATH 1190, POLS 1101, and SCI 1101), allowing us to explore the multiple iterations used in implementing the G2C model and see which interpretations could be successful given our institutional context. Given our many examinations, KSU found similar strategies positively impacted students and reduced DFWI rates, particularly with our Accounting and Chemistry cohorts, while also identifying strategies that failed to achieve significant outcomes. This unevenness allowed us to focus our developing model in important ways.

### METHODS

Our approach to developing the CTA began by treating each instance of the G2C model as a separate pilot. The CTA development group, (consisting of the authors plus the Executive Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and representatives from the Office for Academic Affairs), determined whether a given pilot course was considered a success (reduced DFWI rates meaningfully) or not and then deconstructed their processes to identify commonalities. This deconstructive engineering model allowed us to engage in an honest and comprehensive understanding necessary to build on our successes, while also investigating past failures. This allowed us to identify and structure our CTA model with new, preventive aspects in order to set the stage for success.

### OUTCOMES

The Course Transformation Academy exists to provide the institution a way to intensely focus on courses. In an effort to be responsive to the students in their classrooms, it allows faculty the time, resources, and expertise necessary to effect meaningful course redesign with support from a committed administrative structure. Many aspects of our model will not look novel to anyone who has worked in a G2C environment with the "Self-Study" as the first stage of development followed by a second phase focused on "Preparing for Change," and a third phase on "Making Improvements." One key innovation in our CTA model is that each stage of the process is goal based, and timelines are set in collaboration with participating departments rather than imposed by external factors. While this change could result in lengthy times for some aspects, we found it necessary for authentic engagement, as well as creating an opportunity for all participants to develop the necessary mindset. Indeed, programs are allowed to step in and out of the process as they need and we work with departments to determine their best entry stage,

recognizing that it is important for programs to complete every part of the process. These stages reflect the specific outcomes we hoped to achieve for each part of the process.

The “Self-Study” stage is not dissimilar from that found in the G2C model. Our analysis found this process was vital for developing the mindsets necessary for participants to support the work of the redesign. The only differences in the outcome for the “Self-Study” from the G2C model was a slight shift in the desire for guidance in the data analysis to help faculty see where to explore the data in ways that mattered to them.

In the “Preparing for Change” stage, we explicitly filled in many of the gaps we saw from our less successful pilot programs in order to achieve our outcome of creating a deeper connection between curriculum and student achievement. In this stage, the faculty develop common learning outcomes for every instance of the course, build a common assessment tool that measures the learning the faculty care about, engage in curriculum mapping to ensure alignment across sequences, and go through professional development on evidence-based pedagogies, active learning, and inclusion.

In the “Making Improvements” stage, our outcome focuses on application. In this phase, faculty engage in course mapping to ensure alignment among assessments and pedagogies, pilot implementation of specific pedagogies, analyze and adjust based on those pilots, and ultimately build a plan for sustainability.

In addition to outcomes for each part of the process, we also sought to shift away from a cohort model. Our most successful G2C redesign programs were Accounting, which showed a 21% decrease in DFWI rates, and Chemistry, which showed a 14% decrease in DFWI rates. Our analysis found two key characteristics in both of these successful G2C programs: mandatory administrative involvement and the required participation of the entire department’s faculty.

It was clear from our deconstruction analysis that mindset transformations needed to happen in administrators as much as in faculty. Requiring participation among leadership secures a commitment of time and attention, and such engagement is vital for achieving faculty buy-in and establishing sustainability. Necessitating an entire department’s participation safeguards that the important work, often completed by a small committee of instructors, is inclusive of and supported by all faculty. In addition, this requirement assists with all stages as it ensures that all stakeholders are having the same conversation.

The newest addition to our model, the requirement for student voices, was an outgrowth of our institutional commitment to inclusion. As the overall goal of the CTA is to improve student learning through collective action, the most important voice in that process was that of the students.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The CTA is just one part of our many university conversations about student success, but it is one of the only spaces where faculty, administrators, and students collaborate to have conversations centered around student success, pedagogy, and curriculum. It is currently the only model presented that has had demonstrated impact. While we continue to implement the current model with our inaugural courses, we are also expanding and improving the model as new departments are recruited. The campus discussion around student success has seen increased interest among disparate parts of campus.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

As the CTA is in its early stages, we do not have any data yet from our early participants, but we anticipate a similar success to those course cohorts that experience achievement in G2C. Our Course Transformation Academy wraps important change elements, learning science, institutional support, and inclusion around the G2C process to positively impact our students and ensure they achieve academic success.

Key takeaways that shaped how our G2C program became the Course Transformation Academy:

1. We recognized the need for more of an organizational change to our process to have meaningful and lasting impact.

2. Data of success is important, but not sufficient and we need an institutional focus for sustained improvement.
3. Faculty are content experts, but not usually learning or curriculum experts and need considerable support to transform what they know into meaningful learning environments that support students from all backgrounds.
4. The student voice is routinely overlooked in the curriculum process. We strongly believe that including students in this process adds a missing dynamic and is a central tenet of our ongoing work. The faculty work of teaching and curriculum is not something that we do to students, but with students.

It is clear that our CTA follows the G2C process at its heart. Our analysis of the last six years of work demonstrates that the G2C approach can be successful, but for KSU to expand upon that success requires the process be placed inside of a change model and supported at all levels.

# Student Success United: Extending Successes in Gateway Course Transformations throughout the University-Wide Curriculum at Savannah State University

Lisa Yount

Jonathan Elmore

Isadora Mosch

Historically, DFWI rates are disproportionately attributed to students in underrepresented populations. Thus, the efforts of redesigning “gateway” courses to promote an inclusive environment where all students can learn and perform at their highest potential is especially important for HBCUs like Savannah State University (SSU). Student Success United, Savannah State University’s newly approved Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), builds on the successes achieved through the Gateways to Completion (G2C) methodology and replicates the process to impact course redesigns extending to all areas of the core curriculum and lower- and upper-division courses in all degree-granting academic programs.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As an access institution, Savannah State University is committed to providing enrollment and educational opportunities for populations that have traditionally been underserved in higher education. Equitable academic outcomes are central to our mission.

SSU joined Cohort II in the collaboration between the Gardner Institute and the University System of Georgia. This allowed the work of formalized course redesign to begin in 2017 through SSU’s ongoing participation in the Gardner Institute’s Gateways to Completion (G2C) program. The G2C process offers guidance for first researching and discovering reasons for decreased student success, then guides institutions in applying a plan to tackle those factors, and finally, assists in evaluating the effect of the methods applied in the implementation stage. In all, the G2C interventions offered us a powerful set of tools for our specific institutional context.

Some of the strategies and methods used by faculty during the planning phase proved to be impactful and were extended into the next phases of the redesign work. For example, in MATH 1111: College Algebra, the new course redesign curriculum encouraged instructors to vigorously implement and enforce prerequisite requirements related to the three high-stakes semester assessments. All students were required to successfully complete every online homework assignment via myopenmath.com as well as successfully submitting every in-class assignment prior to taking the course examinations. Math faculty attribute these interventions as being the most impactful for increasing course completion rates.

The Department of English, Languages, and Cultures substantially revised the curriculum in ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102 (English Composition I and English Composition II) to increase the vertical alignment of ENGL 1101 into ENGL 1102, which included a revised comprehensive set of learning goals, assignments that were designed using a backwards design approach, and more often and earlier substantive assessments in both courses. The faculty also added three metacognitive reflective assignments into each course.

For HUMN 1201: Critical Thinking and Communication, the Planning phase was a good opportunity for faculty to standardize elements of the curriculum delivery (e.g., using a syllabus template and shared rubrics; establishing common standards on assignments, exams, grading scales and weights; and providing early and frequent feedback on a variety of assignment types). As reflected in the Student Learning Gains Surveys, these improvements were received favorably by students.

With three years of the G2C process completed, all the redesigned gateway courses have seen reductions in the

rates at which students earn D, F, W, and I grades. The reduction in MATH 1111: College Algebra is striking, coming close to halving the rate at which students fail to complete the class. The rate in ENGL 1101: English Composition I has also fallen significantly (14% less in G2C year 2 than in year 0) and, though the reductions in ENGL 1102: English Composition II and HUMN 1201: Critical Thinking and Communication are smaller, they are measurable and trending in the right direction. These promising results indicate an opportunity to dramatically increase student success and improve students' educational outcomes in all our institution's programs.

From this strong foundation, SSU decided to fully commit to gateway course redesign across campus. Through SSU's newly approved Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Student Success United, the institution will implement the G2C redesign principles, coupled with some additional augmentations of proven best practices in pedagogy, to improve all areas of the curriculum, university wide.

## METHODS

Student Success United builds on the successes gained through the G2C methodology to impact course redesigns extending to all areas of the core curriculum and lower- and upper-division courses in all degree-granting academic programs.

The selection of courses to be redesigned will be accomplished in three phases:

Phase 1: Expansion into additional areas of the core

Phase 2: Expansion into all degree programs (lower level)

Phase 3: Expansion into all degree programs (upper level)

SSU has already identified the courses for Phase 1 by employing G2C metrics for identifying gateway courses (i.e., courses with high student contact, courses with predictive markers for future success, and especially courses with high DFWI rates). They are:

COURSES	DFWI RATES
ARTS 1101	35.67%
CISM 1130	29.81%
MATH 1001	36.65%
PSYC 1101	43.75%
SOCI 1101	37.29%

Expanding redesign to these five courses not only moves the G2C effort beyond Core Curriculum Area A (ENGL 1101, ENGL 1102, and MATH 1111) and Area B (HUMN 1201) into Area C (ARTS 1101), Area D (CISM 1130), and Area E (PSYC 1101 and SOCI 1101) but also extends the redesign's coverage of Area A by addressing a second course in mathematics (MATH 1001).

Course selection for Phase 2 and 3 will be completed by the faculty of all 30 baccalaureate programs at SSU, beginning first with at least one lower division course, and then adding at least one upper division course.

## OUTCOMES

Once a course is identified as a good candidate for Student Success United's course redesign initiative, a team of 2-3 faculty members will be selected to complete the redesign efforts in their respective department or area. The faculty selection process will vary from program to program to include peer-based nominations, chair-based appointments, and/or self-selected volunteers. Faculty members on the redesign teams will be expected to attend training and professional development sessions on all principles of course redesign adopted by Student Success

United. This training will be conducted through the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development and will cover topics such as innovative approaches to teaching gateway courses, selecting courses for redesign to achieve maximum student success, backward course design, the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT) framework, High Impact Practices (HIPs) and incorporating Library resources into research projects and assignments. Participating faculty will receive course-redesign stipends for their efforts.

These evidence-based pedagogical approaches were selected to best serve our institutional mission and learners. For instance, HIPs are notably beneficial for underserved students who may not have equal access to education, and results show students' improvement in deep learning, in addition to general, personal, and practical gains (Association of American Colleges & Universities, n.d.)

TiLT is also an important pedagogical practice, especially for traditionally underserved students, as it helps the students know why and how they are to do certain assignments, which in turn creates stronger connection with the material and more confidence in the student's ability to be successful (Winkelmes, Bowles-Terry, Gianoutsos, & Katie Humphreys, 2016).

In building its G2C-based reform efforts around the work of course-specific faculty committees, Student Success United capitalizes on the ability to customize needed changes in pedagogy and course design in ways that work best for their particular gateway and barrier courses, being situated in the disciplines. This localized approach allows faculty teams to "guide the course redesign process, identify practices to foster student engagement, and build active learning environments that promote higher levels of achievement" (Hearne, Henkin, & Dee, 2011, p. 57).

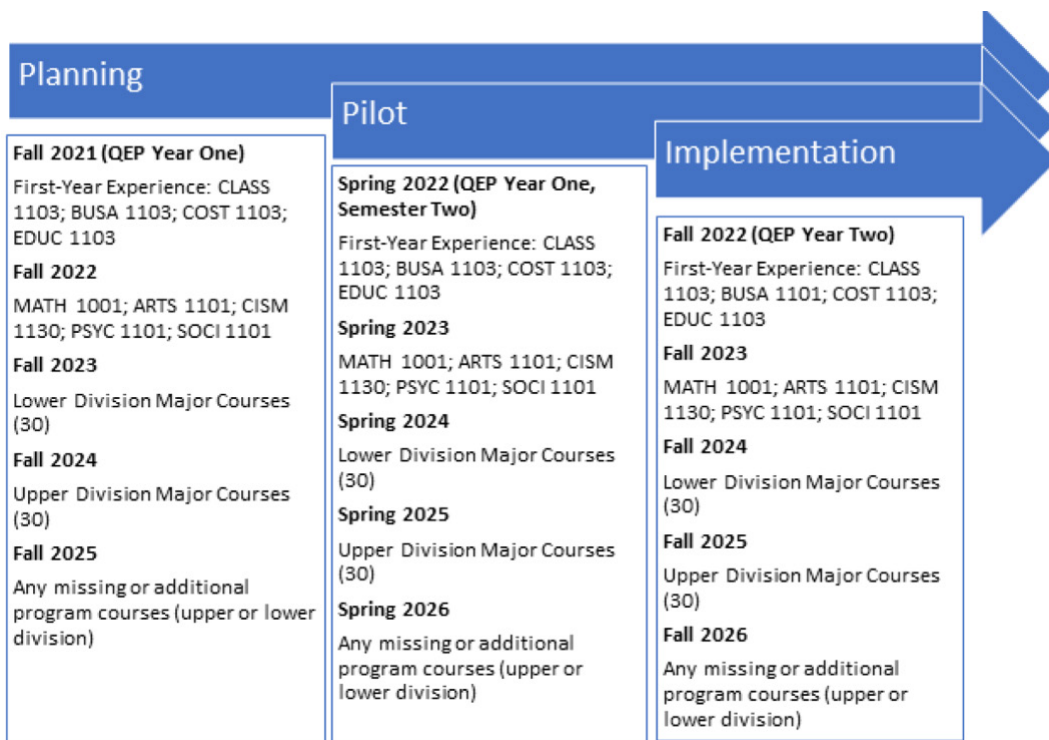
The selection of individual courses in the majors will follow the same principles of selection used in the identification of additional core courses: courses with high student contact in specific majors, foundational and capstone courses in major programs, and courses with comparatively high DWFI rates will be targeted.

Given that all four original gateway courses we have already redesigned saw an increase in student success, measured by the percentage of students receiving a passing grade in the course and that Student Learning Gains Surveys feedback gathered during these courses was very positive, we are quite optimistic that we can achieve similar results for students in the rest of the core and in the chosen programs of study.

We are hopeful that the outcomes from our expansion of the G2C course redesign efforts will mean that more students (potentially many more) will pass courses more consistently, proceed through their degrees more quickly, graduate earlier and with less debt, all while enjoying a more rewarding and a more academically and intellectually fulfilling experience during their studies at SSU. Given the scope of our redesign expansion, if successful, these efforts will touch every student at SSU and thus represent a transformative change for the institution that could continue to positively impact students for literally generations to come.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The implementation of the Student Success United's curricula redesign will roll out in cyclical stages as the QEP progresses with the goal of reaching at least 73 courses, including all undergraduate degrees, transformed over the span of the QEP. Our plan expands the kinds of high impact practices that have already proven to be successful in the first courses our students take at SSU and grows with them as they move through their degree. Their own familiarity and comfort with these kinds of pedagogical approaches and methods will only increase and will, we are confident, amplify the successes students achieve.



Our multi-tiered approach to administering the full curricular redesign incorporates ongoing, planning, piloting, and implementation that is faculty-driven, self-recursive, and equitable, giving each program the autonomy to identify courses, design curricula and test improvements, and refine their own practices in order to maximize the impact of these curricular revisions on student success. The process is incremental in nature, spanning over three semesters for each course’s redesign cycle. Involving teams of faculty from each program to work exclusively within their own areas of expertise ensures a customized set of course revisions that are embedded in best practices within specific fields, as well as encouraging maximum faculty buy-in within departments due to a reasonably scheduled timeline.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

G2C focuses on student success but also on faculty success. This stems from the philosophy that learning and teaching work in tandem, and faculty must be adequately informed and provide professional development opportunities for students to succeed academically. This includes training sessions on “instructional and curricular guidance, and analytics tools to redesign teaching, learning and success in gateway courses” (University System of Georgia, 2016, para 4). Future efforts to expand will have to commit to the growth and nurturance of the faculty as teachers.

Any course revision geared toward increasing student success is admirable and encouraged; however, singular course revisions or improvements may not be as far-reaching or have an impact on a large population of students, as it may only benefit the students enrolled in that particular section. That is why we are taking a holistic approach to gateway course redesign with Student Success United, as well as providing co-curricular support for students taking the various gateway courses. Combining the resources offered by G2C and the Gardner Institute with our own faculty development initiatives and student support infrastructure will benefit many students, as many enroll in these gateway courses; this benefit only adds up over time exponentially as more and more students are positively affected by these implemented changes.



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## Assessment Redesign and Programmatic Identity at Valdosta State University

Julianna Edmonds

In this case study, I outline a redesigned assessment plan for the first-year writing program at Valdosta State University. Previous program assessments focused on single criterion writing issues, such as comma placement, MLA formatting, or source integration. As a newly hired first-year writing program coordinator, I designed a holistic assessment that would allow the Composition Committee to assess broader categories, such as rhetorical knowledge, as defined by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0). This case study outlines the redesign process and considers assessment as a method for establishing programmatic identity within writing programs.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A fundamental course within VSU's core curriculum, ENGL 1101 is assessed every academic year by the Composition Committee, under the guidance of the General Education Council. One challenge in designing an assessment plan for a program is negotiating faculty attitudes and assumptions about the role of assessment. For those uninvolved in the assessment process, it can be easy to dismiss assessment as a metaphorical box to be checked or as unnecessary oversight of instructors' teaching. However, my main objective in redesigning our ENGL 1101 assessment was to reimagine assessment as a way to establish a stronger identity as a writing program. Moreover, moving away from a single criterion assessment method allowed us to learn more about what was being taught in the program and how to better establish a recognizable curriculum across all sections of ENGL 1101.

In previous semesters, there were no required assignments or standardized curricula in place within the writing program. Instructors benefit from the academic freedom this curricular flexibility allows, but as a program, it was clear some standardization was necessary in order to complete a holistic assessment. As a writing program coordinator, I was wary of mandating a standardized curriculum within a program that has traditionally allowed instructors to have complete freedom in designing and selecting which assignments they teach in their courses. To negotiate these competing needs of the program and the instructors who teach within it, I designed a common assignment (a rhetorical analysis essay) and supporting materials to accompany the assignment, including a glossary of terms, scaffolding activities, rubric, and reflective assignments. The rhetorical analysis essay was chosen because most instructors were already teaching some variation of rhetorical analysis in their classes. In this way, our newly designed assessment plan fulfilled the needs of core curriculum assessment and Gateways to Completion initiatives, but through collaboration with these programs, it also allowed us to establish our own autonomous identity as a program with specified outcomes and assignment parameters.

### METHODS

As stated previously, in Summer 2020 a common assignment was designed for the purpose of program assessment. Prior to this assessment redesign, there were no standard assignments or standard curricula mandated within all sections of ENGL 1101. This common assignment, a rhetorical analysis essay, was chosen because most faculty in the department were already teaching some variation of rhetorical analysis in their courses. During Summer 2020, I introduced the common assignment to instructors. Sample assignment sheets were provided, along with the rubric used for the assessment, a glossary of the key terms that should appear in the analysis, and an outline for the assignment. Instructors also received access to a digital repository of scaffolding materials and supporting readings. Instructors were not required to use the sample assignment sheets provided. Instead, we opted to let them alter the assignment as they desired, as long as the assignment employed the rhetorical terms in the provided glossary. The common assignment was designed as an effort to begin establishing curricular coherence in ENGL 1101 without encroaching upon the academic freedom of individual instructors. All instructors were free to sequence the assignment within their course as they saw fit.

Data was collected at the end of Fall 2020. All faculty teaching one or more sections of ENGL 1101 were asked to select three rhetorical analysis samples at random from each section of ENGL 1101. A Graduate Assistant removed all identifying information from samples and organized samples by section letter. From these submitted samples, 94 samples were randomly selected for a 90% confidence rating. I ensured at least one section from each instructor was represented in the total 94 samples. Immediately following the Fall 2020 semester, the essays were scored by four members of the Composition Committee. Each essay received blind scores from two separate raters, after which essays with a discrepancy between summative scores were assigned to and rated by a third reader/committee member. All essays were read in their entirety and scored using the Rhetorical Analysis rubric developed in consultation with the Composition Committee.

## OUTCOMES

The outcomes of our assessment were useful in understanding our varying levels of student proficiency, as I explain below. But the outcomes were also useful in identifying ways the writing program can better establish programmatic identity through curricular redesign and continued holistic assessment of that curriculum. Table 1 provides an analysis of assessment data for a total of 50 sections of ENGL 1101, taught by 25 instructors, and including 94 student essays. Tables 2 and 3 provide analysis based on course modality (face-to-face and online).

**Table 1**

*Analysis of Assessment Data from 94 Student Essays Across 50 sections of ENGL 1101*

Category	Number	Percentage
Exceeds Expectations	16	17%
Meets Expectations	30	31.9%
Approaches Expectations	38	40.4%
Fails to Meet Expectations	10	10.6%

†90% confidence level

**Table 2**  
*Analysis by Modality (Face-to Face) Based on 56 Submissions*

Category	Number	Percentage
Exceeds Expectations	6	10.7%
Meets Expectations	21	37.5%
Approaches Expectations	24	42.9%
Fails to Meet Expectations	5	8.9%

**Table 3**  
*Analysis by Modality (Online) Based on 38 Submissions*

Category	Number	Percentage
Exceeds Expectations	10	26.3%
Meets Expectations	9	23.7%
Approaches Expectations	14	36.8%
Fails to Meet Expectations	5	13.2%

As evidenced in the analysis of data by modality (Tables 2 and 3), there was little variation in proficiency between face-to-face instruction and online. Regardless of modality, most essays ranged between B-level (Meets Expectations) and C-level (Approaches Expectations), with the majority of essays falling into the C-level category. There are several factors to consider in the analysis of these results, however.

Due to the pandemic, there were not as many opportunities for faculty training sessions as there might have been in a normal semester. Additional training would have better helped faculty understand the common assignment in ways that reading the instructional materials did not. Without the added stress of a pandemic, more and better compliance with assessment procedures might have occurred. It should also be mentioned that “face-to-face” instruction varies greatly in the context of the Fall 2020 semester. These face-to-face classes ranged from flex, hybrid, and socially distanced classrooms where the normal collaborative pedagogy characteristic of first-year writing courses could not take place. For example, these classes typically rely on grouped, active learning strategies and discussions rather than lectures. Social distancing and mask-wearing made this kind of active learning challenging within face-to-face classes. Therefore, designating these courses as “face-to-face” does not capture the complexity of instructional practice or the constraints faced by both students and instructors. In addition, there was an enrollment surge among first-year students in Fall 2020.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

To ensure that there is alignment between the objectives of ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102, the composition committee will also implement and assess a common assignment for ENGL 1102 this coming academic year. This assignment will encompass the major outcomes of the ENGL 1102 course: research and citation. The lessons learned from our ENGL 1101 assessment will be essential in introducing this new assessment plan to faculty. More training and early implementation will be necessary in order to avoid some of the limitations of our previous ENGL 1101 assessment. Now that the pandemic restrictions have been lifted, there are more faculty teaching and working on campus. This will make training sessions easier to conduct, and it will also help us better establish community among our first-year composition faculty. These efforts are made in an attempt to help our faculty see the role assessment plays in establishing a programmatic identity that is recognizable to the university and to our incoming and current students.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

The assessment revealed great variation in how faculty understand and teach rhetorical analysis in first-year writing. For example, some samples revealed that literary texts were assigned as a part of this project; this is not aligned with the goals of a rhetorical analysis project. Although scaffolding materials and instructional materials were provided for instructors to use, more instruction could be provided for the implementation of these resources within courses. More work could be done to help instructors and students understand rhetorical knowledge in the context of the composition class. Foregrounding rhetorical knowledge as a major outcome of the composition course ensures that students view these courses as more than an introduction to grammar and style. While mechanics and basic writing practices are central to writing courses, these courses also provide foundational knowledge that can be transferred to a range of writing contexts, both inside and outside of the classroom. By teaching students that instances of everyday writing and speaking are in fact public rhetoric, we also help connect the classroom to the world beyond it.

The collected data suggest there is a need to move gradually toward curricular coherence as a writing program. A more standard curriculum could in turn help us create a stronger and more visible programmatic identity. The various essays submitted for assessment ranged in length, development, topic, scope, and demonstration of rhetorical knowledge. Such variation is representative of the variation of instruction students are receiving in first-year writing. Students may struggle to transfer knowledge from ENGL 1101 to ENGL 1102 (and to other courses) if we do not ensure that they are receiving a coherent curriculum across all sections of each course.

Instructors have a right to academic freedom, but students should also receive a similar (though not identical) experience in all sections of ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102. Suggestions for mitigating this variation might include a universal textbook required of all sections; currently, instructors are free to select their own textbooks. A universal textbook could also further the goal of better establishing programmatic identity.

Additionally, the parameters of all common assignments developed moving forward should be more well-defined (word count, supporting materials, rubrics, assignment sheets). Instructors were given flexibility with this common assignment, and this resulted in a lot of discrepant scoring among raters. For example, it was difficult to score a shorter essay high in terms of analytical engagement, because engagement usually involves sustained development that cannot be reached in two pages. As a long-term goal, we should plan to develop a range of syllabi from which instructors can choose. These syllabi could vary in theme but would move through the same three basic skills: personal/literacy narrative, rhetorical analysis, argument, for example. Standardizing the curriculum on a small scale like this would make training incoming instructors easier as well. Providing a range of syllabi from which to choose would allow instructors some freedom in their curricular choices, but it would also better ensure curricular coherence across sections.

# Supporting Faculty Leaders in Core Course Redesign: Overcoming Challenges and Increasing Buy-In through Faculty Development Retreats at Valdosta State University

Theresa J. Grove

Shani P. Wilfred

Jamie Landau

Institutional course redesign is a challenging endeavor. In addition to navigating the logistics associated with improving course content and assessment, strategies to reward faculty who engage in this complex process need to be developed. This case study describes a collaborative summer retreat that was designed at Valdosta State University (VSU) to address the aforementioned challenges. The retreat incorporated development of a course redesign and assessment action plan, critical reflection, and practicing implementation, including a persuasive pitch to increase departmental buy-in. Seven faculty from four departments, who were part of the Gateways to Completion (G2C) initiative at VSU, participated in these summer retreats. Retreat participants reported feeling reinvigorated and better equipped to engage their departments in the course redesign process. All plans developed during the summer retreat were successfully implemented and achieved varying levels of buy-in within each department. The retreats and the implementation of course redesign demonstrated the importance of facilitating buy-in at the department level, the importance of rewarding faculty engagement, and the value of collaborative efforts that incorporate administrative guidance and support. The development of these summer retreats laid the groundwork for expansion of course redesign efforts at VSU, which are only one aspect of our student success initiatives.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Redesigning foundational core or gateway courses at the institutional level can be challenging. In some cases, departments may have committees who oversee the design of these classes, but committee members may have different viewpoints that make it difficult to reach a consensus on course design and assessment. Alternatively, individual faculty who teach these courses may informally discuss content, but there may be little organized collaboration; faculty may feel they do not have time to devote to these interactions due to job responsibilities (e.g., teaching load and scholarship expectations) that may lead to time strain and increased stress, and some faculty may also feel that they do not have the expertise in the area of course redesign and assessment. In addition, getting buy-in from the various faculty stakeholders associated with a course can be difficult if faculty perceive that their academic freedom is threatened, there is departmental inertia, or there are conflicting ideas about the pedagogy of gateway courses or disagreement about the content and skills that students should master by the end of the term. Therefore, it is not only course content and assessment that need to be considered when redesigning core or gateway classes, but methods to increase buy-in and strategies to reward faculty who engage in course innovation need to be developed. At Valdosta State University (VSU), the Gateways to Completion (G2C) coordinators and the director of the Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching (CELT) collaborated to create and facilitate G2C Faculty Development Summer Retreats to overcome the aforementioned hurdles. Objectives of the retreat included describing and identifying strategies for faculty to engage in course redesign and innovation, finalizing a G2C core curriculum and assessment plan, and critically reflecting on and practicing implementation of a pitch to persuade stakeholders to increase buy-in. This case study shows how the retreat addressed obstacles and met its objectives, resulting in G2C faculty from four different departments (Math, History, Chemistry, English) making significant progress in redesign of gateway courses.

## METHODS

The G2C coordinators and the director of CELT collaborated to create and facilitate three separate G2C Faculty Development Summer Retreats during May and June of 2019. Participation of faculty was voluntary, and to reward faculty for their time and effort, funding from CELT provided a stipend of \$600 to each faculty participant, and one G2C coordinator who was also a retreat facilitator on a 10-month faculty contract received a \$2,000 stipend. Because faculty have additional job and personal responsibilities in the summer such as summer teaching, childcare, and other family responsibilities, the retreats were planned around faculty schedules, which resulted in the development of two versions of the retreat (a two-full day retreat and a four-half-day retreat, both of which totaled 12 hours). Objectives of the retreat included describing and identifying strategies for faculty to engage in course redesign and innovation, finalizing a G2C core curriculum and assessment plan, and critically reflecting on and practicing implementation with a pitch to persuade stakeholders to increase buy-in. An active-learning approach was utilized throughout the retreat and included brainstorming activities, individual written reflections, think-pair-share activities, goal setting, resource mapping, persuasive speech writing and role playing to enable faculty to develop and practice an action plan to achieve buy-in within their departments, and time with fellow faculty to develop course innovations and assessment plans and consult with retreat facilitators (Table A). At the end of the retreat, participant feedback was requested using an anonymous online survey to solicit qualitative feedback from faculty who participated in CELT programming.

Table A: Two-day Retreat Detailed Schedule. The four-day retreat is not shown, but the same activities were conducted over four days from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with lunch provided each day.

Day 1	
Welcome and overview	
9:00-9:15am	Overview of schedule and learning outcomes for the retreat (coffee and breakfast are served)
Strategies for faculty engagement with course innovation and assessment	
9:15-9:30am	Facilitator asks participants: "What motivates faculty to engage in course design and innovation?"; faculty brainstorm and share their ideas. Facilitator asks participants to categorize their ideas as either a) skills needed for faculty to engage in course innovation or b) strategies to influence their peers to engage in course innovation.
9:30-10:10am	Facilitator shares research about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, competence, risk-taking, collaboration, autonomy of choice, and ownership (20 min) followed by reflection and guided discussion when participants compare what they predicted to what is in peer-reviewed literature <sup>1</sup> . Included in this discussion is asking participants which factors or characteristics pertain to their departmental faculty (20 minutes).
Identifying Internal and External Resources within and outside the department, respectively	
10:10-10:50am	Participants are given an organizational chart of the institution and a blank resource 'map' (Figure 1) and asked "Who (internal to the department and external to the department) do you need help from in order to engage your departmental faculty in course innovation?". The faculty discuss and complete the map by identifying the individuals they will need access to, a brief description of expectations of how they can help, and the need that is expected to be fulfilled.
Reflection	
10:50-11:15am	Discussion: What was a light bulb moment for you this morning? If there wasn't an 'ah-ha' moment, were there certain aspects of this morning that were particularly useful or any that were not? Why?
Lunch (11:15-12:00)	

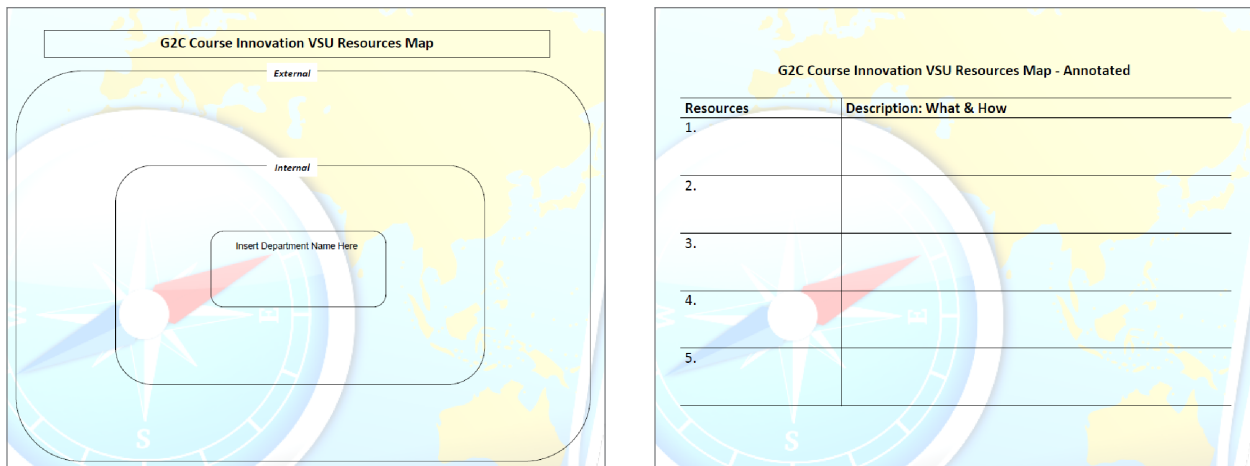
<sup>1</sup>Stupnisky, R.H., BrckaLorenz, A., Yuhas, B., & Guay, F. (2018). Faculty members' motivation for teaching and best practices: Testing a model based on self-determination theory across institution types. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 53, 15-26.

G2C–Core Curriculum Course Innovation and Assessment Plan	
12:00-12:20pm	Question and Answer Session: Participants explain their current sketch of their course innovation and assessment plan, and facilitators ask questions as appropriate.
12:20-12:30pm	Decision time: Participants decide whether they want to continue to work on their plan, develop a new idea, or migrate to or merge with other departmental initiatives.
12:30-2:30pm	Work Time: Faculty work on plans with facilitators providing assistance as needed.
Strategies for faculty engagement with course innovation and assessment	
Break (2:30-2:45pm)	
Goal Setting	
2:45-3:00pm	Faculty are asked to set focused goals for Day 2, specifically to define the part(s) of the plan that will be finalized tomorrow and include specifics (e.g., whether it is a specific amount of the plan that will be written, or a specific activity that will be designed. These goals are shared with the facilitators who support and affirm what participants say.
Day 2	
Welcome and Questions	
9:00-9:15am	Introduction to the goals for the day and clarify topics or answer questions from Day 1 as necessary (coffee and breakfast are served)
G2C–Core Curriculum Course Innovation and Assessment Plan	
9:15-9:45am	Facilitator asks faculty to link the areas of influence and support from resources on campus to the proposed course innovations. The specific questions are asked: “How will other faculty within the department be engaged?” and “What resources may be useful to use?”.
9:45-11am	Faculty work on the assessment of their course innovations, including Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG).
Reflection	
11:00-11:15am	Discussion: What was a light bulb moment for you this morning? If there wasn't an ‘a-ha’ moment, were there certain aspects of this morning that were particularly not useful? Why?
Lunch (11:15am-12:00pm)	
Persuasion and Implementation of Plan	
12:00-12:15pm	Facilitator introduces persuasion and implementation activity. Specifically, faculty determine a plan to explain their plan and achieve buy-in of a target audience. They will also identify the occasion (where and when) and two counter arguments in anticipation of non-supportive or non-affirmative reactions.
12:15-12:45pm	Faculty work on persuasive speaking script.
12:45-1:15pm	Faculty deliver their persuasive speaking script to the facilitators who role play as their colleagues. A Q&A session follows with the facilitators providing faculty feedback on their persuasive script.
Break (1:15-1:20pm)	
Critical Reflection	
1:30-2:00pm	Facilitator starts the final reflection by reminding faculty of retreat learning outcomes, and faculty are asked to think about what they have accomplished during this retreat and are given the questions of “What are two main takeaways from this retreat that will help you successfully implement the plan?”, “What campus resources will help you overcome hurdles in implementing this plan?”, and “What are your next action steps following this retreat?”. Discussion follows.
2:00-3:00pm	This time is set aside for additional work on course innovation plan or any questions that may have arisen during the final critical reflection.



**Figure 1**

*Resource Map to Identify Resources Internal and External to the Department*



## OUTCOMES

Three separate retreats were held with seven G2C faculty participants from four different departments (Chemistry, Math, English, and History). This level of participation already demonstrates a positive outcome and is likely due in large part to providing faculty with stipends and strategically planning the timing of the retreats around faculty summer schedules. Feedback collected via CELT’s feedback form reveals additional benefits of the G2C Faculty Development Summer Retreat, ranging from a better understanding of G2C goals and having time to focus on completing G2C assessment plans, to feeling motivated to continue to innovate and improve teaching. By the start of the Fall 2019 semester, all retreat participants developed teaching and assessment strategies for their gateway courses, discussed the plan to achieve departmental buy-in, and the course redesign plans were put into action with the following results.

### English

The G2C English faculty first discussed with the department head the benefits of implementing course redesigns that were identified by a department-focused learning community that occurred the preceding spring semester. The redesign recommendations were then discussed by the entire English department at which time it was decided to implement portions of the redesign on a staggered timeline. The redesign, for both the writing composition and literature courses, focused on instructor-level elements that included a syllabus statement describing the purpose and relevance of the course, assignment justifications for each major assignment, and the expectation of faculty to provide feedback to students on a major assignment within the first six weeks of the course (writing composition) or to incorporate a metacognitive activity into the course (literature).

### Math

The G2C mathematics faculty discussed the redesign and assessment plans with the relevant departmental committees. As a result, the committees developed plans to implement elements of the course redesign in stages. During the staggered implementation plan, the mathematics department worked on several related initiatives that gave faculty the opportunity to align G2C strategies with system-level initiatives and apply the strategies enhanced and/or developed during the summer retreat, such as the development of a non- science major core curriculum mathematics course.

## History

The G2C history faculty member presented the course redesign findings during a departmental faculty meeting. After discussion, the department decided that the results from the initial course redesign did not appear to be significant and that the passing rate for history courses was satisfactory. Therefore, the history department did not adopt the course redesign for all sections of the redesigned course. However, there were some aspects of the course redesign, including the incorporation of additional low stakes review opportunities, that were explored for use by the entire department because these elements appeared to help students successfully complete history courses. The department also discussed strategies for streamlining the reporting of course innovations implemented by faculty and the related outcomes.

## Chemistry

The G2C chemistry faculty also presented their redesign results during a departmental faculty meeting and the department discussed how the strategies that were implemented in the redesigned course could be implemented in additional courses. Based on this discussion, the department agreed to continue to monitor the impact of the revisions to the lab manual and lecture content that were designed to help students improve their comprehension of specific concepts that students historically had not reached the level of expected level of mastery as indicated by assessment data. In addition, the department began discussion on how to apply similar redesign strategies to the next course in the sequence.

## Overall

Although levels of buy-in varied across the departments that were associated with the G2C initiative, generally each department showed a commitment to continue to explore the implementation of course innovations in their gateway and foundational courses. However, each department was unique with respect to the level of commitment to implement course redesign strategies across all or multiple sections of the same course. Despite these varying outcomes there is at least anecdotal support that attending the summer retreat provided G2C faculty with the tools they needed to be able to increase departmental buy-in and to engage their department in the redesign process.

## PLANS FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

The planning and implementation of this retreat purposely focused on continued expansion of course innovation practices at VSU. First, in preparation for the retreat, the course assessment plan and report form was standardized, so that it could be used for multiple purposes including: i) core course assessment that is required by Valdosta State University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, ii) assessment initiatives that departments choose to undertake for gateway courses, and iii) assessment of upper level courses in the curriculum of any major at VSU when new learning goals are developed or new activities and assignments are designed. While a form to use for planning and reporting assessment data was developed and used during this retreat, the University went through SACSCOC accreditation in 2020-2021, and to maintain consistency in assessment data included in the accreditation self-study, this new assessment procedure was not adopted. In addition, the University System of Georgia is in the process of revising its core curriculum, and once this revision is complete, this form will be aligned with the new core curriculum. Moving forward, the expectation is that a single form for multiple assessment purposes will reduce confusion, increase efficiency, and serve as a learning tool for faculty who are involved with course redesign and assessment. Secondly, while a second retreat was planned for Summer 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted priorities for the University, and the retreat was not held. However, resources that were created during the retreat, such as creating a collection of literature on faculty motivations for course redesign and innovation, have been (and will continue to be) shared by the CELT director during CELT programming and university-wide meetings and future retreats.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

The G2C Faculty Development Summer Retreats that are described in this case study were developed to address often overlooked obstacles of why faculty do not engage in course redesign and innovation. Without first addressing these challenges, course redesign at the course, department, or institutional level may not be successful because of insufficient buy-in, lack of a clear understanding of initiative purpose, or inexperience of assessment design and reporting of the faculty. Offering different versions of a faculty development program to meet faculty where they are in terms of scheduling, experience, and individualized needs is important for success. Furthermore, the planning and implementation of the retreat revealed the need for guidance, support, and expertise of academic affairs administrators and teaching center staff. This case study is a testimony to what can be achieved as a result of the grit and perseverance of a few faculty who are committed to finding ways to enhance student success at their institution. These faculty retreats are one of many elements of our G2C journey that have laid a firm foundation for the continued design, implementation, assessment, and continued improvement of strategies that assist students in successfully achieving their curricular and co-curricular goals at VSU and beyond. Ultimately, the G2C Faculty Development Summer Retreats held at Valdosta State University are promising models for other institutions to consider implementing on their campus.



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[info@gardnerinstitute.org](mailto:info@gardnerinstitute.org) | 828-233-5874 | [gardnerinstitute.org/gateway-course-experience-redesign/](https://gardnerinstitute.org/gateway-course-experience-redesign/)