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PREDICTING STUDENT SUCCESS IN PASSING THE EXIT EXAM FOR WRITING
PROFICIENCY

by

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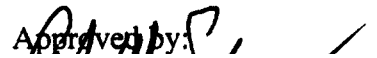
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ABSTRACT

PREDICTING STUDENT SUCCESS IN PASSING THE EXIT EXAM FOR WRITING PROFICIENCY

Cheryl Ann Latko
Old Dominion University, 2011
Director: Dr. Alan M. Schwitzer

The purpose of this study was to examine the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) and the variables that may impact the probability of a student passing the EEWP. The EEWP is one of the graduation requirements for all undergraduate students at a mid-sized four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. The purpose of the EEWP is to ensure that undergraduates demonstrate clear, concise, and professional writing skills.

The literature discusses general issues with student writing skills specific to the field of human services, as they relate to teacher educators, developmental education, and the field of human services. Student demographics, such as gender, ethnicity, age, transfer status, enrollment status, overall grade point average, English as a Second Language (ESL), and region of residence were also reviewed for their relevance to writing skills.

This study utilized a quantitative, correlational post-hoc design to determine the pass rate of 376 participants who took the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency between fall 2009 and summer 2010. Data were analyzed pertinent to student demographics and the criteria of the EEWP.

This dissertation is dedicated

To my husband, Ed, for his unending support of me
throughout this long dissertation process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The United States is tackling the challenge of doubling the amount of time students spend writing. This was one of several goals established in the April 2003 report of the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution* (April, 2003). The report declared "writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many" (p. 20). The question of what is required to improve writing and double the amount of time spent on writing was the objective of a year-long seminar for the National Commission on Writing (May, 2006) and its National Advisory Panel.

In an effort to focus national attention on the importance of teaching and learning to write, the College Board established the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges in September 2002. The decision to create the Commission grew, in part, from the College Board's plans to offer a writing assessment in 2005 as part of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), but the larger motivation lay in the growing concern within the educational institutions and business communities that the quality of writing in the United States is not what it should be (National Commission on Writing, 2006). Although the community colleges and four-year universities are taking measures to improve students' writing skills, the consensus was that writing skills need to be improved if students are to succeed in school, college, and life.

The issue of graduate preparation has been central for decades. Harvey and Immerwahr (1995) reported that community leaders were dissatisfied with the quality of

graduates of four-year institutions from all levels of postsecondary education. Elizabeth Jones (2002) substantiates this from her literature review on a changing business environment by citing that employers find graduates of two-year and four-year institutions proficient in their specialty area (accounting, nursing, etc.), but lacking in critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, and interpersonal skills. The Business-Higher Education Forum substantiates that graduates have weaknesses in the ability to communicate orally and in writing, interpersonal and leadership skills, the capacity to contribute to and participate in teams, analytical ability, and adaptability (1997).

According to a Census Bureau survey in 1995, businesses weigh candidates' work history and attitudes rather than educational credentials because of a lack of foundation skills, such as oral and written communication (McDonald, 1995). Four-year institutions that surveyed alumni found that graduates reported they were weak in written and oral communication skills, had difficulty working in teams, and were deficient in leadership and management skills (Jones, 2002). Researchers reported these weaknesses over a decade ago (Cooper, 1999; Corrallo, 1995) and continue to cite the same deficits in college graduates today (Gallavan & Bowles, 2007; Graham, 2006).

Writing skills are particularly important in human services such as social work (Falk & Ross, 2001). Professionals in the human services field must be able to write well-constructed reports, a clear description of clients, legally defensible case notes, and other client-related documentation. Alter and Adkins (2001) further stress the importance of writing skills in social work programs where the welfare of clients is frequently dependent on social workers' ability to clearly express the meaning of their professional

judgments and build convincing arguments that “persuade law enforcement personnel, policy makers... and others on a certain path of action” (p.495). The concern about writing skills of professionals in the human services field is a growing concern (Adkins, 2006; Alter & Adkins, 2001; Anderson, 2007; Dustin, Craigen, & Milliken, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Over the past three decades research showed that growing numbers of students at all levels of education are perceived as not proficient in writing (Corrallo, 1995; Falk & Ross, 2001; Lynch, 2008; McDonald, 1995). In professional areas especially, such as human services, social work, counseling, and psychology, even students who are considered good writers find it difficult to write progress notes, social histories, and other legally defensible documentation in client records required by agencies (Falk & Ross, 2010; Wallace, 1999; Waller, 2000). The need for students to be prepared for writing in these fields continues to increase as liability and accountability issues arise (Summers, 2010). A familiar phrase throughout many human services agencies is, if it isn’t documented, it didn’t happen.

Purpose of the Study

This study looked specifically at the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) and the variables that may impact the probability on a student’s passing the EEWP. Research indicates both employers and graduates feel that written communication skills are an area of weakness for graduates (Cooper, 1999; Jones, 2002; National Commission, 2003, 2004). The EEWP is one of the graduation requirements for all undergraduate students at a mid-sized four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. The purpose of

the EEWP is to ensure that undergraduates demonstrate sufficient writing skills to write in a clear, concise, and professional manner.

There are three variables that were studied:

1. Basic student demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average (GPA), region of residence, and ESL status);
2. Transfer status; and
3. Number of times a student took the EEWP before passing the exam.

Significance of the Proposed Study

Students who do not learn to write well are at a disadvantage. Weaker writers are more likely to have poorer grades than their more skilled peers, particularly when writing assignments are a part of the grading process (Graham, 2006). College instructors estimated that 50% of high school graduates are not prepared for college-level writing demands (Achieve, Inc., 2005). Additionally, American businesses spend \$3.1 billion annually for writing remediation (National Commission on Writing, 2004). It is imperative that college graduates have the necessary writing skills to be successful in their chosen professions.

This university's undergraduate human services program's pass rate on the EEWP averaged 67% over the last year. The university is striving for all programs to have a minimum 80% overall pass rate on the EEWP, although all students must pass the EEWP as part of their graduation requirements. It is clear that what is currently being done in the human services program is not sufficient to meet this university's pass rate goal. This may suggest that some students do not have the necessary writing skills they need to be successful once they graduate. In order to continue to attract students to this university, it

is imperative that undergraduate and graduate programs address this issue of student competency by working to improve the writing skills of its students.

Research Questions

This study asked three questions about factors that may impact the ability of undergraduate human services students at this university to successfully pass the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP). Successful passing of the EEWP was defined as successful demonstration of the EEWP's four criteria: purpose, which requires that the essay clearly answers and focuses on the question; content, which requires fully developed ideas to support the purpose of the essay; clarity/syntax which requires smooth and efficient flow of information and demonstrates a mature writing style; and conventions, which includes the mechanics of writing such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling (see Appendix B).

The first question focused on student demographics as they pertain to a student's successfully passing the EEWP. The second question focused on a student's transfer status as it pertains to successfully passing the EEWP. The third question focused on the number of times a student took the EEWP before successfully passing the exam.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. To what degree do the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average (GPA), region of residence, and ESL status affect pass rates on the EEWP.

Hypothesis: There is no influence of demographic variables on a student passing the EEWP.

2. Controlling for demographic characteristics, to what degree does transfer status affect

pass rates on the EEWP?

Hypothesis: A student who transfers from a community college has a lower pass rate on the EEWP than a student entering the university as a freshman.

3. Controlling for demographic characteristics and transfer status, to what degree does the number of times a student takes the EEWP affect pass rates on the EEWP?

Hypothesis: The more times a student takes the EEWP, the more likely a student will pass the EEWP.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions of terms applied:

1. Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) – One of the requirements for undergraduate students to graduate from the university. The four criteria set by the Writing Center for passing the EEWP are purpose, content, clarity/syntax, and conventions.
2. Purpose – One of the criteria for successfully passing the EEWP, it requires that an essay clearly answer and focus on the question.
3. Content – A second criteria for successfully passing the EEWP, it requires fully developed ideas to support the purpose of the essay.
4. Clarity/Syntax – A third criteria for successfully passing the EEWP, it requires smooth and efficient flow of information and demonstrates a mature writing style.
5. Conventions – A fourth criteria for successfully passing the EEWP, it requires very few to no errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation (see Appendix B).
6. Transfer status – A transfer student is one who is transferring in at least two required English composition courses in order to be eligible to take human services courses.

7. Enrollment status – A student registered for at least 12 credits each semester is considered full-time status. A student registered for 11 credits or less is considered part-time status.
8. TELETECHNET/distance education – Two-way/one-way synchronous (real-time) course where students are able to watch the instructor on a monitor and communicate with the instructor via a microphone. The instructor is able to hear the students but is unable to see them.

Setting

The study was conducted at a mid-size four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. This university began as an extended campus of another local university in 1930. Since that time, its reputation for quality teaching, research, and community involvement has become nationally known. To ensure that undergraduate students have the necessary skills to write in a clear, concise, and professional manner, the university requires that all undergraduate students pass the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) as one of five graduation requirements.

The university's human services program is one of the largest undergraduate programs of the university with 500-600 students annually. Approximately one-half of these students access their courses via distance education. In response to the university's expectations that each program attain at least an 80% pass rate on the EEWP, the human services program incorporated writing assignments in all of its courses. In addition, the program recently designated a second writing-intensive course in its curriculum.

Method

This study was a post hoc, quantitative, non-experimental, correlational design. The study was post hoc since the data was analyzed, after the study concluded, for patterns that were not specified apriori. The study was quantitative because it used numerical values and statistical analysis to determine results. The study was non-experimental because no treatment was applied. It was correlational because the study investigated relationships among variables (McMillan & Wegin, 2002).

There were three sources of data. The demographics were obtained from pre-existing data collected by the Office of the Registrar. The Writing Center provided data on the pass/fail status of students, and for those who did not pass the EEWP the Writing Center provided the criteria of the EEWP that resulted in students not passing the exam. The undergraduate human services program collected data on the transfer status of students, as well as the particular community college and/or university from which each student transferred. All data was pre-existing in databases maintained by the university and all data were reported in group format only to maintain confidentiality of student identity.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This dissertation investigated the impact of student demographics and whether a student transferred from a community college or entered a four-year university as a freshman as these factors relate to a student's professional writing skills. This literature review begins with an introduction on issues with student writing. Further discussion focuses on demographics and characteristics of underprepared students and their influence on student success. This chapter concludes with issues of writing skills as they pertain to the field of human services and related professional fields.

Issues with Student Writing Skills

Although writing is considered an essential skill for those entering colleges and universities today, a National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) study (2002) revealed that 72% of fourth graders, 69% of eighth graders, and 77% of twelfth graders were at or below the basic writing level. Twenty-six percent, 29%, and 22% respectively, were proficient, while two percent of students in each grade assessed had advanced writing skills.

Because writing is recognized as an essential skill in postsecondary education and the workplace, students must graduate from high school as competent writers (National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2005, 2006). Yet a survey revealed that only one third of students who are enrolled in postsecondary programs have the requisite writing skills (National Assessment of Education Progress, 2002). Because writing skills are so critical for success of college graduates and a significant number of students are not prepared, the National Commission on Writing (2006) set a goal to increase the visibility of writing as

a national priority. Recent reports emphasize a complete re-examination of how writing is addressed in this country.

Teacher Educators

The need to improve the effectiveness of writing teachers was addressed in a recent evaluation by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which indicated that only half the students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades in the United States are able to write adequate responses to informative, persuasive, and narrative writing tasks (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Elementary and high school teachers are the primary educational resource to improve literacy skills of K-12 students (Allington & Johnston, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002). The report stated that students generally receive little writing instruction and that practice of the writing process is not stressed in America's schools, with writing emphasized in English classes and very little writing required in other content areas (National Commission on Writing, 2004). Henk, Marinak, Moore, and Mallette (2003) posit that writing instruction and student writing skills have received more public attention given that "public accountability challenges schools to demonstrate the integrity of their writing instruction" (p. 322) as research now shows an even greater number of school children fail to become effective writers.

Teacher educators frequently express concerns associated with their teacher candidates' writing knowledge and skills (Gallavan & Bowles, 2007). Since candidates' competence to write correctly and to communicate effectively through a variety of writing formats is in question, teacher educators are concerned with candidates' proficiency to teach writing appropriately to K-12 students and to integrate writing across the K-12 curriculum.

In their review of research, Lickteig, Johnson, and Johnson (2007) report that researchers from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2006) found that teacher candidates stated that writing provides them the least satisfaction among all the language arts and that they planned to allocate the least amount of instructional time possible to writing in their own future classrooms. This study also found that teacher candidates believe that writing is the most difficult of the language arts to teach and that writing does not make a significant impact on ones' success in life.

Babbie (1990) designed a written survey to better understand teacher candidates' beliefs about writing and the writing process. From a review of the literature and conversations with teacher educators, several concerns were identified. Data showed that 85% of the respondents highly value writing and the writing process for themselves and 94% responded that they highly value writing for their K-12 students. When asked about their writing skill proficiency, many of the teacher candidates who disagreed with the survey item that they are not proficient rationalized that they had been admitted to the teacher education program and would be graduating within the next year. Babbie (1990) reported that approximately 25% of those teacher candidates who claim to be proficient misspelled one or more words in their responses.

Over a decade after Babbie's (1990) study, Street and Stang (2008) reviewed the literature on the deficits of writing skills of students at all levels of education with similar results. They determined several factors that contribute to less than satisfactory writing skills. The first factor is the issue of self-confidence. Teachers that do not feel confident in their own writing skills, lack the ability to model good writing to their students. Bratcher and Stroble (1994) stated in their study on teacher efficacy of writing, "where

confidence foundered, competence failed” (p. 83). The second factor is that many teachers have a negative attitude of writing because of their own experiences and bring their preconceived ideas about writing to their classrooms. Third, a lack of professional training regarding how to use writing in the content areas is a concern for many teachers. Most teachers are not prepared to use writing with their students (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006). Finally, a lack of time is another reason why teachers do not use writing in the classroom. Many teachers believe that they are required to teach their content and that writing is the responsibility of the English teacher (Lieberman & Wood, 2003; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006).

The National Writing Project (NWP) was developed from the reports of the National Commission on Writing (2006). The NWP developed a research-based model of professional development. This model addresses how to build teachers’ self-confidence as writers and stresses partnerships between the schools and universities. Successful professional development must be on-going and systematic and bringing teachers together regularly “to test and evaluate the best practices of other teachers” is imperative to this model of professional development (Raymond, 1994, p. 289).

Developmental Education

Today, every community college in the United States, and the majority of all higher education institutions, offers at least one developmental course (Kozeracki, 2002). The National Center for Education Progress (NCES) (Lewis & Farris, 1996) indicated that 100% of community colleges and 78% of all higher education institutions offer at least one developmental course in reading, writing, or mathematics. In 2003, more than 40% of first year college students were required to take a developmental writing course

(Ezarik, 2003). According to Ezarik, results from the ACT's National Curriculum Survey show that grammar and usage are ranked the most important writing skills by university professors. Conversely, grammar and usage are ranked the least important of six writing skills by high school teachers. The report adds that only 69% of high school English teachers even teach grammar and usage.

In May 2003, the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities hosted a roundtable concerning baccalaureate access through improved transfer and articulation practices and policies (Boswell, 2004). They found that there was a discrepancy between high school graduation standards and college entrance requirements, often resulting in many students needing developmental courses. Community colleges working in partnership with local high schools can help remedy this issue, and thereby, reduce the number of incoming students needing developmental education (Finkel, 2005).

With a majority of colleges and universities in America today recognizing the writing difficulties and inadequacies that many incoming freshmen demonstrate, a developmental approach has been adopted to facilitate their academic success (Maloney, 2003). The major difficulties and inadequacies of incoming students' writing include a lack of understanding of grammatical correctness, syntax, standard usage rules, clarity, accurate use of voice, and cohesiveness (Allen, 1980). Developmental programs vary among institutions. Some are an eclectic collection of writing workshops, individual tutoring sessions, and walk-in centers. Others are more traditional in their approach through instructor-led instruction. Many postsecondary institutions, especially larger ones, offer a variety of these developmental supports to accommodate a range of students

(Reynolds & Bruch, 2002), but there is not a consensus of opinion as to what strategies are most effective.

Students need developmental courses for many reasons. Less than adequate preparation in high school, students who speak English as a second language, students with learning disabilities, and adults who have been out of school and need a refresher course in English, mathematics, or writing, are just some of the reasons students enroll in developmental education. In addition, describing the problems exhibited by developmental writers is a difficult task. One problem often exhibited by those entering college as a developmental writer is inexperience:

[inexperience] is the common factor among basic writing students, and it causes difficulties that are more intractable than the struggles most students undergo as they define themselves with academic discourse...Unfamiliar and underprepared for fulfilling the university's writing expectations, basic writers are often exploring writing practices that more experienced writers may already be quite comfortable with. (Sheridan-Rabideau & Brossell, 1995, p. 22-23).

Students enrolling in developmental writing courses are usually apprehensive about their success in the course because of their past experience (Daly, 1978). Students may recognize that postsecondary education may be stringent, but often resent stipulations required of many developmental writing classes. These stipulations include mandatory attendance, completion of all assignments, weekly meetings with the instructor or other support person. In addition, developmental courses often are not assigned grades or do not provide credits for the course. Many students do not realize the need for additional help in developmental courses and often resent these restrictions (Hodges, 1998).

This problem is not confined to the United States. A study of writing skills among college students in the United Kingdom was conducted (Winch & Wells, 1995). Surveys were distributed to 336 first-year college students in 17 institutions. Student respondents were asked to construct a written argument on a subject relevant to the discipline they were studying. Their work was assessed for errors in spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and omission. If these six types of errors occurred in a student's work, remedial support was indicated. Using this criterion, the study found that about one third of all students were not proficient writers and required developmental writing courses or extra assistance.

Writing Assessment

Of primary concern are the methods for assessing a student's writing skills. With Standards of Learning (SOL) implemented in the public schools and writing assessment now included in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE), there is determination to measure and track the writing proficiency of students from kindergarten through college (Breland & Bridgeman, 1999; Chapman, 1990). However, the issue of assessment is complex. As Wolcott and Legg (1998) stated, understanding what is meant by writing assessment involves many forms of assessment, "internal or classroom assessment versus external assessment ... formative versus summative evaluation; norm-referenced assessments that compare students against each other versus criterion-referenced assessments that evaluate students against standards; and indirect versus performance assessments" (p. 1). More recently, the difficulty in attaining reliability and validity in assessment was also explored (Elliot, 2005).

Current placement tests and other assessment devices used to make recommendations concerning whether students require developmental writing prior to enrollment in more advanced courses are varied and often do not accurately reflect many of the students needing a developmental writing course (Lane, 1997). A disproportionate number of developmental writing students are African Americans (Bennett-Kastor, 2004). As a first step, colleges and universities must exam their current placement and referral process to ensure that the assessment devices are effective and that there are no ethnic or cultural biases built into the testing process.

Direct writing samples are considered “on demand” samples (Wolcott & Legg, 1998) and are used by colleges and universities as placement or graduation barrier tests. Most often these assessment measures are set up as timed writing exercises in which students are brought to a common exam area and asked to respond within a prescribed amount of time to one or more topics (Alter & Adkins, 2006). These entrance or exit exams can increase pressure on students and can cause students to be highly anxious which may impede their writing performance and these exams have not been found to be valid or reliable assessments of students’ writing skills. The Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency, which is the basis for this dissertation, is one such exit exam.

Students attending universities that emphasize good educational practices may demonstrate improved learning and personal development. One reason for this improvement is that good educational practices encourage students to be more active participants in the learning process (Kuh, 2010). Engagement behaviors are motivated by a student’s personal belief system on what it means to be an “expert” student, such as attending class, asking questions, interacting with other students, and maintaining

concentration in class (Solberg, et.al., 1997). However, based on a study by Rachal, Daigle, & Rachal (2007) that utilized the Learning Needs Questionnaire (LNQ), students reported learning problems related to poor information processing, reading, writing, motivation to study, math, and test taking skills, regardless of academic classification. Test anxiety was the only factor that demonstrated a significant difference between academic classifications (2007).

Writing has always been an integral part of the human services and social work field, yet the teaching of writing is often minimized in social work curricula (Falk & Ross, 2001; Jarman-Rohde, Waller & Williams, 1996; Waller, Carroll, & Roemer, 1996). In practical settings, almost everything social workers do involves writing and the quality of writing often determines whether a social worker's efforts to advocate for clients are successful. Historically, agency supervisors often assisted internship students and new social workers develop their writing skills. With budget cuts resulting in larger case loads and requiring more cost-effective use of work time, applicants for internships and social work positions who cannot write effectively may be passed over in favor of those who have developed professional writing skills (Waller, 2000). With the increased number of students having writing problems, some educators are advocating raising admissions standards to exclude developmental writers. However, if this practice is implemented, there will be less diversity in the student population.

Student Characteristics

Ethnicity

Since the 1980's, colleges and universities have experienced significant increases in minority student enrollment. Data from the National Center for Education Progress

(2002) shows that between 1976 and 2000 the proportion of American college students from minority groups increased from 15% to 28%. Much of that growth can be attributed to the increasing number of Hispanic students who represent almost ten percent of the student population in 2000, almost triple what it was in 1976 (Lamkin, 2004). A disproportionate number of developmental writing students are African Americans (Bennett-Kastor, 2004) which may, in part, be due to ethnic or cultural biases built into the testing process. Community colleges are often the most practical educational institutions for ethnic minorities, many of whom are first-generation, low-income students (Zamani, 2000).

Recently, there was increased attention to the way that the college environment affects male students, particularly African American males (Cuyjet, 1997; Hopkins, 1997; Polite & Davis, 1999). These studies showed that Black men are less likely than Black women to enroll and more likely to experience a hostile, negative environment on campus. Fries-Britt (1997) also found that a negative climate affects highly able and ambitious African American men.

Research addressing retention and attrition suggests that there are several factors related to low retention rates of minority college students (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989). These factors included: (1) personal characteristics, such as motivation, previous achievement, and intellectual ability; (2) institutional characteristics, such as curriculum and enrollment; (3) institutional climate, such as student-faculty interactions, student activities, and commuter versus residential campus, and; (4) previous academic achievement and intellectual ability.

Mohammadi (1994) also noted additional variables, such as low-level degree goals, lack of financial resources, poor study habits, full-time employment, and parents with low levels of educational attainment that contribute to higher drop-out rates in minority students. Researchers (McGregor, Reece, and Garner, 1997; Rendon, 1995) contend that African American, Hispanic, and Native American students often enter college with academic deficiencies and are underrepresented in four-year institutions, particularly in selective colleges and universities, in comparison to Caucasian and Asian American students.

A study conducted in a rural Kansas community college looked at whether ethnicity, age, and gender affected achievement in developmental writing courses (Philbeck, 1993). Philbeck found that Caucasians had a higher average grade in these courses than did any other ethnic group, with Hispanics having a slightly lower mean grade. Native Americans had the lowest average grade and African Americans had the next lowest mean grades. In addition, the investigator found that females had a higher mean grade than did males and that the older the student was the higher the grade was achieved in developmental writing courses.

Gender

In 1950, 32% of college students were women. In 1978, almost half were women. By 1982, women received as many four-year degrees as men. Today, women also earn at least half of all master's degrees and about 42% of doctoral and professional degrees (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2001, p. 25).

Sax (2007), who has researched gender issues through studying over eight million student responses over 40 years, has found some relevant discrepancies between males

and females. Although females earn better college grades than do men and are more likely than men to complete their degree, women experience challenges that men do not. One such challenge is what Sax terms the confidence gap. Despite the statistics that women do better in courses and have a higher persistence rate, women rate themselves lower than men relative to their academic ability. When asked to rate their intellectual self-confidence, 66% of men rated themselves “above average” to the “highest ten percent” compared to less than half of the women. Women also rated themselves significantly lower in mathematical ability.

Sax (2007) also found that women have higher perceived levels of stress and depression which persist over the duration of college. She attributes this difference to how men and women spend their time outside of class. While men tend to be involved in sports and other stress-relieving activities, women spend more time studying, taking care of family, and doing volunteer work. Sax attributes part of this stress to the income gap between men and women, since more women from lower socioeconomic classes are now attending college.

In conducting a survey of learning strategies and motivational beliefs with freshman and upper level students at a private Mid-Atlantic university, Lynch (2008) found similar results. Using the Motivational Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), Lynch found that all female groups reported higher test anxiety scores. Both freshman and senior females had lower critical thinking scores than comparable males. These findings are consistent with the findings of Sax (2007) concerning low self-esteem and higher perceived levels of stress than males.

Sax (2008) conducted research on how both genders experience college and how college influences them. Relative to leaving home, Sax found that this was especially beneficial to women in order to develop stronger confidence in their academic ability, stronger leadership skills, and a general sense of emotional well-being. With the ease of families keeping in touch through emails, cell phones, and other technology, it is sometimes difficult for women to feel this independence.

Sax (2008) also found that the presence of female faculty significantly benefits female students. This may be, in part, due to female faculty members being more concerned with students' emotional and character development. However, males also receive the benefit of female faculty through increased leadership ability, emotional well-being, and confidence in mathematics.

Age

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), 51% of undergraduate students are over 21 and about 25% are over 30 years of age. Workplace changes, as well as new opportunities, result in adults needing job retraining or changing careers and are a primary reason for the increased enrollment of older students (El-Khawas, 2003). Older students are often termed nontraditional students and are defined as over 24 years of age or returning to school after a break in their education (Hirschorn, 1988). They are often married, work, and have children, so returning to school means making a significant change in their life style (Harouff, 1996).

There is also a higher percentage of nontraditional students who are enrolled part-time. Not surprisingly, Adelman (2005) contends that “one demographic variable makes

an enormous difference in the distribution of virtually any postsecondary outcome or process—age at the time of first entry to postsecondary education’’ (p. 119).

Kinsella (1998) conducted a study on one Florida campus where a comparison of traditional and nontraditional students was made by age, gender, marital status, enrollment status, number of dependents, and type of responsibilities held outside of college. Forty-two percent of the participants in the study were nontraditional students. Findings indicated that 80% of the participants were female and, regardless of age, 87% were full-time. Fifty percent of the participants were single and were never married and 38% were married. The majority of the single participants were traditional students while the nontraditional students tended to be married and many had dependent children, consistent with previous research cited. Regarding employment, 54% of participants worked, but traditional students tended to work part-time, while nontraditional students worked full-time. Nontraditional students tended to have more responsibilities, such as housework, caregiver, and volunteer, than did traditional students. Almost a third of the traditional students indicated that they had none of the responsibilities listed and 16% indicated sports and other leisure activities were engaged in outside of class, again consistent with previous research.

Through a research grant from the Association for Institutional Research and National Postsecondary Education Cooperation, Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey and Jenkins (2007) used longitudinal transcript data on a cohort of first-time community college students in Florida to determine whether enrollment milestones have the same impact on the probability of graduating for nontraditional students as they do for younger students. They found that milestones such as completing 20 or more credit hours or completing

50% of their program are more important positive factors affecting graduation for younger students than for older students. Relevant to developmental education, although enrollment in developmental courses decreases the odds of graduating for all students, nontraditional students are less negatively affected.

Academic Readiness/Grade Point Average

Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) indicated that while an estimated 56% of high-income students who begin postsecondary education will earn their four-year degrees within six years, only about 26% of low-income students will do so. One reason for this is that low-income students are more likely to begin college academically under-prepared than students who are more affluent. Beginning college academically under-prepared makes it less likely these students will graduate (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Beginning higher education with fewer academic resources than their peers, they are less likely to complete their degree programs.

Insufficient academic skills is one of many factors that exacerbate students' difficulties while in college (Merisotis & Terenzini, 2004; Pascarella, Pierce, Wolniack, & Terenzini, 2004). Abbate-Vaughn and Paugh (2009) conducted a study examining barriers experienced by veteran school paraprofessionals attempting to complete a four-year degree leading to public school teaching credentials. One of their findings was that, although six of the ten participants were transfer students from community colleges, they had not mastered sufficient writing skills to be successful in their course work.

A study was conducted with 79 Turkish college students to determine adjustment issues with these students. The most significant variable related to adjustment level was reading and writing proficiency (Poyrazli, et. al., 2010). In addition to affecting

adjustment levels, there was a positive correlation of writing proficiency with grade point average (GPA) and overall success in academic success.

Enrollment Status

Much of the research findings on enrollment status of community college students supports that full-time students are more likely to be successful in their academic endeavors and persist in completing their degrees than part-time students (Bailey, 2004; Horn & Ethington, 2002; Cofer & Somers, 2000). Horn and Ethington (2002) also found that full-time students perceived greater gains than part-time students in personal and social development.

Bailey (2004) found that full-time students are more likely to complete their degree than are part-time students, students who delay college after graduating from high school, or students who leave college for a significant period of time. He reported that the most significant factors for student success are their background characteristics, educational preparation, and enrollment patterns while taking courses.

English as a Second Language

Between 1970 and 2000, the percentage of foreign-born doubled to 10% of the overall population of the United States. Of this population, 43% are of the age where they may seek some type of higher education. Second-generation immigrants, whose first language may not be English, comprise another 10%. Many of these individuals who enroll in a community college or four-year university are referred for developmental education (Curry, 2004). Their needs are much different from those students who need developmental writing courses because of inadequate high school preparation or adults who need refresher courses because they have been out of school for many years.

Students raised in non-English speaking homes often have difficulty with sentence structure, spelling, grammar, and understanding texts in discussions (Well, 1997). Often sentence structure reflects a combination of speaking English and students' native language. Wells (1997) asserts that acculturation should be emphasized by colleges to ensure students continue their education despite many of them having deficits in basic language, reading, and writing skills.

Due to technological advances used in colleges and universities, international students at United States four-year institutions are now challenged with more opportunities to write while taking courses (Doe-Hyung, 2009). Instructors, for example, increasingly utilize online course management systems that offer enhanced methods of participation in class discussions. International students are often required to take English as a Second Language (ESL) writing courses to improve their academic writing skills. However, these courses typically focus on content and style with less emphasis on grammatical accuracy, thus contributing little to the mechanics of ESL students' writing.

Transfer Status

An increasing number of students from community colleges transfer to four-year colleges and universities. One of the questions being raised is whether community college students are prepared to succeed at universities. Kozeracki & Gerdeman (2000) reported on a survey conducted by Southern California Community College (SCCC) with its students who transferred to a four-year university to determine whether students felt they were prepared for coursework at their transfer college. Although most students responded positively about their English composition courses taken at SCCC, the majority of students stated that they had little experience with writing across the

curriculum. Those students that had writing assignments in areas other than English stated that the professors provided feedback only on content and not in writing style or writing mechanics. Over 40% of the students stated that grading standards were more stringent at four-year institutions than at the community college, receiving at least one to two grades lower for writing assignments at the four-year university as compared to the community college.

Bagamery, Lasik, and Nixon (2005) conducted a study on predictors of student performance on the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Major Field Exam in Business, which was shown to be an externally valid measure of student learning outcomes. The authors looked at a set of variables, including Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and transfer status. The authors' findings determined that transfer status had no significant effect on the ETS scores even though they noted instances when this factor had affected performance in the classroom. This study was an extension of another study (Mirchandani, Lynch, & Hamilton, 2001) that found that the transfer grade point average (GPA) significantly influenced ETS scores for transfer students who did not take the SAT.

Liu and Liu (1999) conducted a study with 14, 476 students at a medium-size Midwestern commuter campus to determine factors contributing to departure of students. The students represented various levels of academic achievement, ethnicity, religions, gender, and transfer versus non-transfer students. Transfer students tended to have a higher retention rate than non-transfer students, with the assumption that transfer students already have some college experience and course credits.

Alter and Adkins (2006) conducted a study of Masters of Social Work (MSW) students to determine what variables affected the assessment scores of the 2003 incoming MSW freshmen. The authors found five variables to be significant: ethnicity, status (regular or provisional), major, cohort, and selectivity (prestige of the transfer college). After conducting a multiple regression, one of the most predictive factors of a high writing score was whether they matriculated from a most or more selective undergraduate college.

Region of Residence

Colleges and universities struggle with the challenge of providing residential life and student life on campus for students who live too far to commute to classes (Oehler, V., 2007). Academic success and retention of students depend on students feeling a part of the college environment. Often students living off campus feel disconnected to the college which often adversely affects them academically.

Many students who live too far to commute to a college or university of their choice often access undergraduate degrees through online or distance education courses. Brown, Carpenter, and Hickman (2004) conducted a four-year study on the academic performance of 256 students who self-selected an online developmental writing course rather than a face-to-face section. The study suggested that the online instruction method led to greater withdrawal rates but that it may lead to greater success rates for those students who finish the course than traditional face-to-face instruction.

Crews and Feinberg (2002) examined university students' perceptions of their Internet access based on area of residence and whether they lived in urban, suburban, or rural area. Their results showed that urban students used the Internet twice as much as

rural students, with suburban students placing second as to Internet usage. Additionally, rural students had the strongest perceptions that access to the library was not improved via the Internet, whereas, urban and suburban students used the Internet regularly to access library resources. Considering that rural students have fewer resources available to them within their area, the lack of computer access can negatively impact their success in college.

Writing Skills in the Human Services Field

Teaching essential writing skills to college students has traditionally fallen within the domain of freshman composition courses. Professors in disciplines other than English may tacitly accept poor writing because of the labor-intensive nature of teaching basic writing skills, insufficient training in writing instruction, and concerns about the need to focus on content (Holtzman, Elliot, Biber, & Sanders, 2005; Manzo, 2003; Goddard, 2002; Boice, 1990). However, that mindset is no longer sufficient, particularly in the human services and other related professional fields.

Human Services

Professional writing skills and accountability are crucial in human services. There is an increasing demand for human services professionals (Waller, 2000). Because excluding developing writers from undergraduate human services programs is neither “feasible nor in the best interests of the profession, educators are challenged to respond proactively to student writing problems” (p. 166).

Difficulties with human services professionals’ writing skills is not a new issue. Almost two decades ago Mitchell (1991) conducted workshops about accountability and communication in record keeping. He espoused that funding sources require detailed

reports and case notes to ensure that services rendered are in accordance with what is billed. Records are seen by other individuals such as supervisors, auditors, other therapists, attorneys, and clients. If professional accountability is to occur, human services professionals must view their services as an “incident of a definable activity” (p. 15).

Reimbursement of service providers is becoming more detailed when dealing with Medicare, Medicaid, and most managed care organizations. This written record may be reviewed by third party payers such as managed care’s utilization reviewers. Based on documentation, payment is authorized or denied (Kane, 2001). Human services professionals must create legally and fiscally accountable charts if they are to meet human needs. Legally and practically, if it is written, it happened; and if it isn’t written, it didn’t happen (Kapp, 1999).

Kane (2001) conducted a study of intern students. Respondents in this study were aware of agency requirements in documentation and believed that they complied with those guidelines. It seems, however, that respondents, although aware of agency guidelines (76.8%), did not understand the rationale for documentation requirements. Although documenting the client’s need for service prior to service authorization is required in most service settings, less than half of the respondents believed it was important to document client need for service (49.5%).

Respondents seemed to place little value in documenting client strengths (34.3%) or deficits (19.2%). From a managed care perspective, documenting client deficits will strongly advocate for the authorization of services. Finally, only 33.3% of students believed they had the necessary documentation knowledge and skills to protect

themselves from a lawsuit. The human services field and related disciplines must address the writing skills of its students, both in undergraduate and graduate programs if students are going to provide quality services to their clients (Dustin, Craigen, & Milliken, T. 2010).

Psychology

Writing deficits are prevalent among psychology students (Fallahi, Wood, & Austad, 2006) and English composition courses are insufficient to provide psychology students with the necessary professional writing skills required in their field. Writing proficiency is an essential element of effective communication for “future psychology clinicians or academicians that requires ongoing training and feedback” (p. 174). Many students struggle to learn to write well in psychology’s technical style (Goddard, 2003; Nordine, 1990)). Even students who regularly earn “A’s” in English classes often are shocked to receive critical feedback on their psychology papers (Nadelman, 1990). As McGovern and Hogshead (1990) observed, learning to write reflects students’ ongoing cognitive development in their psychology courses, as well as their college careers.

Psychology faculty increasingly faces pressure to improve their students’ writing skills. Since its inception in the mid 1970s, the writing-across-the-curriculum movement insisted that teaching writing is not the exclusive responsibility of English faculty (Rickabaugh, 1993). Many psychology departments, in response to this movement, as well as to their perceptions of students’ writing deficiencies, have increased the writing demands and range of writing assignments in their courses (Slotterback & Krebs, 2001; Connor-Green, 2000; Dunn, 2000; Norcross).

McCune (2003) conducted a small-scale longitudinal study involving interviewing first-year psychology students and their conceptions of essay writing. The students were given instruction on how to write essays, including using evidence to support arguments, using different viewpoints, evaluating viewpoints as to their merit, and why research evidence should be included in an essay. Although findings did suggest that students made some improvement in their essay writing, there was little evidence in the interviews that the instruction made an impact on their learning and students often described minimal engagement with advice and feedback. McCune (2003) determined that students' preconceived ideas about writing essays interfered with this new learning.

Allen (1984) conducted research on writing instruction in the psychology-content courses. Students were required to write brief reports on their position on a controversial issue pertaining to abnormal psychology based on a text for the course. Students were also allowed to investigate and write about additional controversies that were relevant to them. Reports were graded, based on three levels of complexity that included number of sources incorporated and amount of research conducted. Grades were based on the level of complexity and the number of reports written. Although those students that completed the course made substantial improvement in their writing skills, Allen (1984) reported that the turnover rate was over ten times higher than that found for enrollees over the past 18 months. This result of the study is indicative of the extent to which students will go to avoid courses that require them to exhibit their writing skills.

Social Work

As with human services and psychology, writing is an essential skill in the social work field. Social workers who can write a well-constructed report, a clear description of

a client, or a persuasive memorandum, are more effective in serving the interests of their client system (Falk & Ross, 2001). The authors' experiences as teachers in undergraduate social work programs and as social work practitioners have provided them evidence that students majoring in social work lack the writing skills necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively as social workers. Another rationale for written communication for the social work profession as presented by Gibbs and Blakely (2000) states:

Practitioners are called upon regularly to write a variety of documents and materials that are used to serve clients, fund programs and agencies, plan and develop future services, meet quality control requirements, secure third-party payments, facilitate court actions, and so on (p. 265).

The Curriculum Policy Statement in the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures (1994) contains only six pages describing the master's curriculum content, and two of those describe the field practicum and organization of concentrations. In reference to writing skills, it states that "oral and written professional communications" should be "consistent with the language of the practicum setting and of the profession" (Standard B6.16c). However, the CSWE does not address significant issues specific to social work writing. Not until the last ten years are articles focusing on ways to teach writing skills specific to social work (Dalimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2008; Anderson, 2007; Fallahi, Wood, & Austad, 2006; Alter & Adkins).

Falk and Ross (2010) identify nine purposes of social work writing. These nine purposes start with basic writing, such as reflective writing and journaling, to more in-

depth writing for proposals, journal articles and other professional documents. The authors posit that students who progress through these nine purposes of writing will be able to demonstrate competence in writing descriptions of clients, psycho-social assessments, process recordings, treatment plans, progress notes and other necessary documentation required in the social work field.

Agencies have replaced extensive narrative with a combination of brief narrative and standardized forms, with the focus on accountability (Kagle, 1995). Much of the writing that social workers now do is for the purpose of documenting the services that they provide through progress notes, treatment plans, and treatment summaries (Falk & Ross, 2010), and this documentation must be legally defensible if a client or client's family questions the appropriateness and quality of services (Summers, 2001). "If it isn't documented, it didn't happen" is a phrase used in many human services-related agencies. Not only does documentation need to be written, but it also needs to be written well (Anderson, 2007).

Not only are there deficits with undergraduate student writing, but there is the same concern with graduate students' writing skills in social work. Alter and Adkins (2001) conducted an assessment project in 2003 of 129 Masters of Social Work (MSW) students. Based on their study, 25% of the beginning MSW students did not have adequate writing skills.

Nineteen leaders and potential employers in the human services field participated in structured interviews at a large graduate school of social work regarding the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they look for in MSW graduates. These interviews were a part of the process the university was conducting to determine curriculum changes in its

MSW program. Of the top four common desired characteristics, writing and communication skills were rated the most important by the interviewees (Alter and Adkins (2001).

Summary

The literature presented discussed the research on the issues with students' writing skills, from elementary and high school through undergraduate and graduate studies. A common thread of this research is that there is a lack of confidence in teacher educators to effectively teach writing skills. In addition, current placement tests and writing assessments often do not accurately target students who need remediation in writing.

Writing skills are essential in all fields, but especially in human services and related areas where documentation is the basis for substantiating services provided and reimbursement for those services. Unfortunately, although the existing literature confirms that a lack of professional writing skills is a critical issue, research provides little empirical evidence concerning consistently effective strategies for the remediation of student writing skills.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the variables that may impact students' success in passing the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP). The EEWP is a graduation requirement at a mid-sized four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. This study looked at demographic variables, whether a student transfers from a community college or enters a four-year university as a freshman, the number of times a student took the EEWP, and the components of the EEWP that were successfully passed or failed.

The study was based on a review of the existent literature examining the issues with student writing from K-12 through graduate programs, demographics and characteristics of underprepared students and their influence on student success relative to writing, and the issues specific to writing skills in the human services field, including related fields of social work and psychology.

The research addressed three questions:

1. The first question focused on student demographics as they pertained to pass rate. The second question focused on a student's transfer status as it pertained to successfully passing the EEWP, controlling for demographic variables. The third question focused on the number of times a student took the EEWP as it pertained to pass rate, controlling for demographic variables and transfer status.

Specifically, the questions were as follows:

1. To what degree do the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average, region of residence, and ESL status affect pass rates on the EEWP?

Hypothesis: There is no influence of demographic variables on the pass rates.

2. Controlling for demographic characteristics, to what degree does transfer status affect pass rates for the EEWP?

Hypothesis: A student who transfers from a community college has a lower pass rate on the EEWP than a student entering the university as freshman.

3. Controlling for demographic characteristics and transfer status, to what degree does the number of times a student takes the EEWP affect pass rates for the EEWP?

Hypothesis: The more times a student takes the EEWP, the more likely a student will successfully pass the EEWP.

Research Design

The research design was a post hoc, quantitative, non-experimental correlational design. The study was post hoc since the data was analyzed, after the experiment concluded, for patterns that were not specified apriori. The study was quantitative because it used numerical values and statistical analysis to determine results. The study was non-experimental because no treatment was applied. It was correlational because it investigated relationships among variables (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). The research design with accompanying measures is summarized in Diagrams 1 through 3.

As seen in Diagram 1, the first research question explored how the independent variable, demographic characteristics, affected the pass rate of the EEWP. Demographic characteristics may be a positive or negative influence on this variable, or no influence.

As seen in Diagram 2, the second research question explored how a student's transfer status affected the pass rate on the EEWP, while controlling for demographic characteristics. This influence may be positive or negative, or there may be no influence, depending on whether a student transferred into the university.

As seen in Diagram 3, the third research question explored how the number of times a student takes the EEWP affected the pass rate of the EEWP, while controlling for demographic characteristics and transfer status of a student. This influence may be positive or negative, depending on the number of writing courses completed by a student or have no influence.

Diagram 1

Research Question #1: Demographic Characteristics

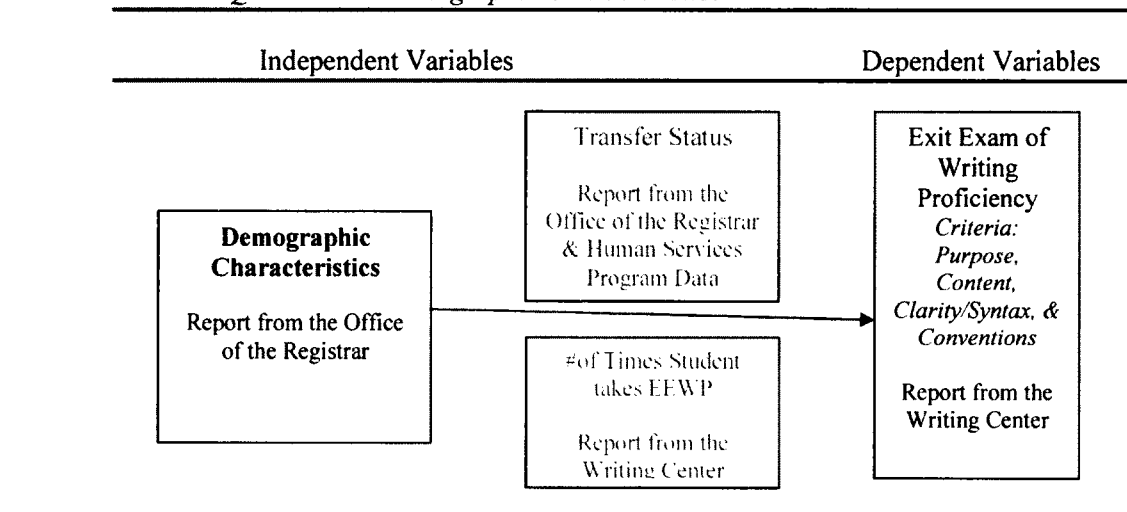


Diagram 2

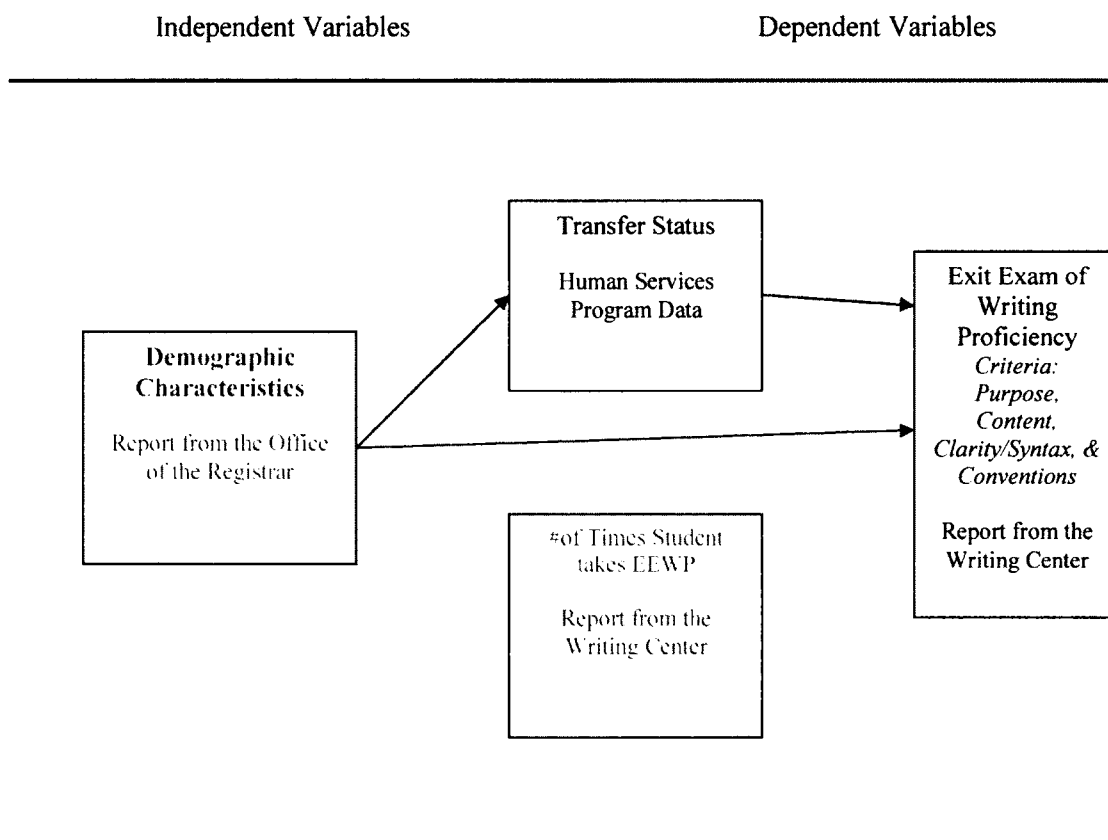
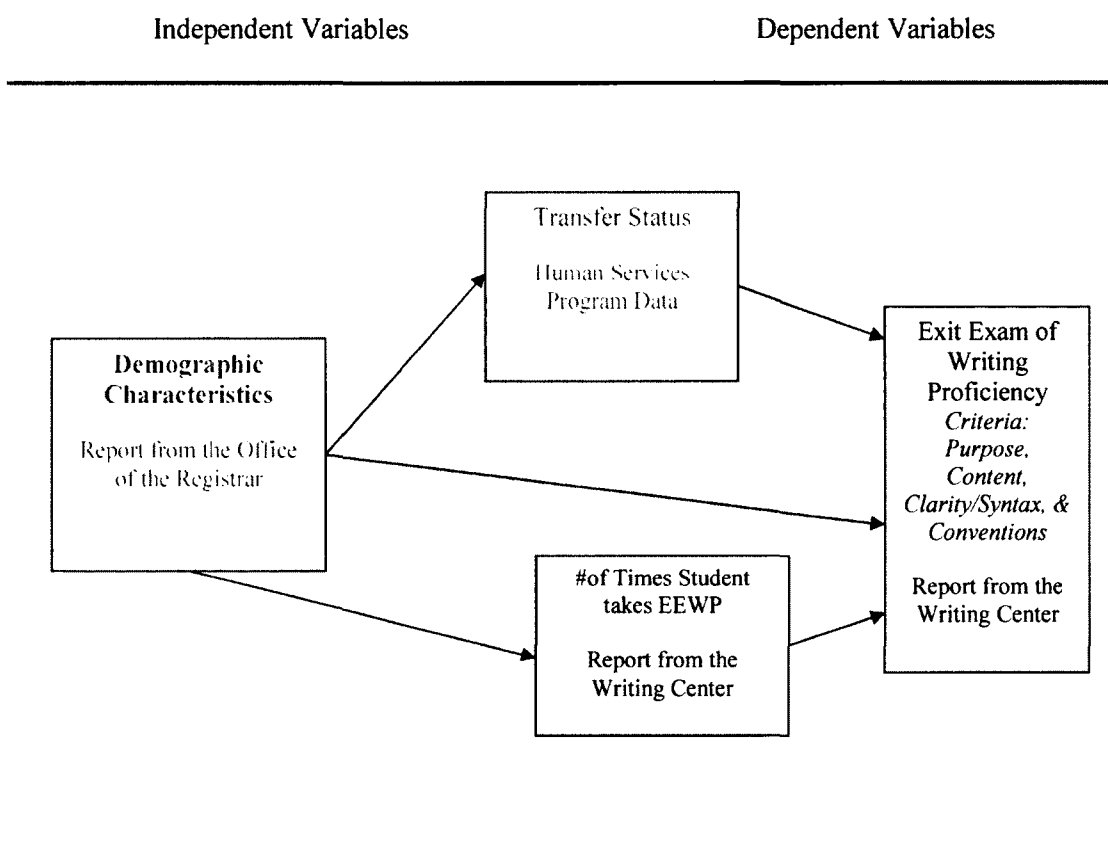
Research Question #2: Transfer Status

Diagram 3

Research Question #3: Number of Times EEWP Taken



Participants and Procedure

Participants

Students are required to take the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) as one of the graduation requirements for all undergraduate programs at this university. It is a non-standardized test that requires students to complete an essay on one of two topics provided in advance. The EEWP is scored by three university faculty and a consensus

decision determines a student's pass rate on the EEWP. The purpose of the EEWP is to ensure that undergraduates of this university are able to write professionally.

Students are required to meet four criteria to pass the EEWP: purpose, content, clarity and syntax, and conventions (see Appendix B for grading rubric). The essay must clearly answer and focus on the topic question to meet the purpose criterion. To meet the criterion for content, the student must fully develop ideas to support the purpose of the essay. Clarity and syntax focus on smooth and efficient flow of information and demonstrate a mature writing style to meet this criterion. Finally, students must have few or no errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation, namely the mechanics of writing, to meet the conventions criterion. A student may take the EEWP when he/she has completed at least 58 credit hours and is considered to have junior status. There is no maximum number of times that a student can take this exam.

Since the researcher is a faculty in the undergraduate human services program and the program made several curricular changes relative to improving student writing skills, participants in this study were students in the human services program. This undergraduate program's enrollment averages 500-600 undergraduate students each semester. Approximately one-half of these students are distance education students that take human services courses via TELETECHNET (TTN) throughout the state, as well as TTN sites in two western states. The significant number of distance education students provides adequate data for several variables in this study.

Procedures

The researcher compiled a list of student names and university identification numbers (UINs) that registered for and took the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency

(EEWP) during the fall 2009 and spring and summer 2010 semesters based on information obtained by the Writing Center and student data maintained by the undergraduate human services program. The researcher requested a report on these students from the university's Office of the Registrar that included demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average (GPA), region of residence, and ESL status as of December 2008. Using a specific date for the collection of data better ensured consistency with the timeframe of the data collection. Limiting data collection to one year also minimized the discrepancies of when students qualified to take the EEWP (junior status) and the timeframe of the data collection, as well as minimized the impact of curricular changes made by the human services program.

As stated previously, students targeted for this study registered for and took the EEWP during the fall semester of 2009 and the spring and summer semesters of 2010. This provided a total of 389 students for this study. During these semesters the human services program began implementing writing assignments in all of its courses to emphasize the importance of writing in the human services field and requiring more discipline-related writing of students. Instructors provide feedback to students both in content and writing style. Effective fall 2010, the human services program designated its introduction to human services course as a writing-intensive course. To factor out the potential impact of an additional writing-intensive course in the curriculum, all data was collected prior to fall 2010.

Response Rate

Since all students must take the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency as one of the university's graduation requirements, there was a 100% participation rate.

Approval for the Study

The data used were data that was already collected through the Office of the Registrar, the Writing Center, and the human services baccalaureate program in the course of university business. The data were reported in an aggregate format only to ensure that individuals and small subpopulations could not be identified. Although secondary student data were used and there was no need to get approval from the Human Subjects Research for Exempt Research Review Committee at the university, the researcher still obtained approval (see Appendix C).

Measures

The Office of the Registrar provided the student demographic information. Age was categorized in specific years. Ethnicity was reported in categories of Caucasian/White, African American/Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American/Eskimo, Mixed, and Other. Enrollment status was reported as either full-time (12 credits or more per semester) or part-time (11 or fewer credits per semester). Summer course load was not counted in enrollment status since summer semester is not representative of student course loads. Overall grade point average (GPA) was reported at the time of the data collection to one-tenth of a point.

At the time of the data collection, the researcher was the Program Coordinator for the undergraduate human services program and, as part of her responsibilities, was sent monthly reports from the Writing Center on all human services students who took the EEWP. The researcher requested information from the Writing Center on the components of the EEWP that students did not successfully complete for those students who did not pass the EEWP. In addition, the Writing Center provided information on the number of

times a student took the EEWP if he/she did not successfully pass it the first time. A student may take the EEWP monthly, except for December when the exam is not offered. There is no maximum number of times a student can take the EEWP.

Data that is currently collected by the human services program identified the community college or university from which a student transferred into the university or whether a student transferred into the university as a freshman and if a student completed two English composition courses. Transfer status is defined as whether a student completed the two English composition courses as part of the general education required of the university. These two English courses are prerequisites to all human services courses.

Table 1 illustrates the measures and sources of data for the study.

Table 1: Measures & Sources

Measure	Source
Demographics	Report from the Office of the Registrar
Pass/Fail the EEWP, including the Criteria passed/failed	Report from the Writing Center
Number of times a student took EEWP	Report from the Writing Center
Transfer Status	Human Services Program Data

Participant Demographics

Participant demographics of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, and ELS status were obtained through the university's Office of the Registrar. The Registrar also provided overall grade point averages (GPA), transfer status, TELETECHNET status, and region of residence for all participants. The Writing Center provided participant pass rates, the number of times participants took the EEWP, and components passed or failed on the EEWP. The mean age for all participants was 30.9 years, with ages ranging from 20-62 years. The mean overall grade point average (GPA) was 3.26 with the GPA ranging from 1.1 to 4.0.

Other demographic data revealed that 87.9% of students were female and 12.1% were male. Ethnicity statistics were 54.% of students were Caucasian/White, 34% were African American/Black, 2.6% were Asian, 2.3% were Latino/Hispanic, 1.5% were mixed, 2.1% were other, and 3.5% did not report ethnicity when admitted into the university. International students whose second language is English comprised only 1.3%. Relative to transfer status, of the 389 students, 79.1% were transfer students and 20.9% were admitted to the university as freshmen. Enrollment status was also a variable. Full-time students (12 credits or more) comprised 76.3% and 23.7% of students were part-time (less than 12 credits).

Since the human services baccalaureate program provides distance education courses throughout the university's state, as well as in two states on the west coast, course format and region of residence were two other variables considered. Main campus students comprised 39% and distance education or TELETECHNET (TTN) students comprised 61%. Statistics for region of residence were 57.5% lived in the geographic

area of the university, 8.5% lived near or in the state capitol, 8.0% lived in the central part of the state, 10.8% lived in the northern part of the state, 12.4% lived in the western part of the state, and 2.8% lived in other states. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics for gender, ethnicity, ESL, transfer status, enrollment status, course format, and region of residence.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	342	87.9
Male	47	12.1
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	21	54.0
African American/Black	132	34.0
Asian	10	2.6
Latino/Hispanic	9	2.3
Mixed	6	1.5
Other	8	2.1
Unreported	14	3.5

Table 2 continued:

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-29	225	57.84
30-39	88	22.62
40-49	53	13.62
50-59	21	5.40
60 & older	2	.52
GPA		
1.49 & below	1	.25
1.5- 1.99	5	1.28
2.0 - 2.49	21	5.41
2.5- 2.99	81	20.82
3.0- 3.49	138	35.48
3.5- 4.0	143	36.76
ELS		
Non-ESL	384	8.70
ESL	5	1.30
Transfer Status		
Transferred	308	79.10
Did not Transfer	81	20.90

Table 2 continued:

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Enrollment Status		
Full-time	297	76.3
Part-time	92	23.7
Course Format		
Main Campus	152	39.0
TTN	237	61.0
Region of Residence		
Local	223	57.5
State capitol	33	8.5
Central	31	8.0
Northern	43	10.8
Western	48	12.4
Out-of-state	11	2.8

Demographic Comparison to College Averages

These demographic findings of human services students are reflective and different from the demographics of all of the university students in the following ways:

1. Human services students are slightly older at 31 years of age than the average university student who is 26;

2. Human services students are primarily female with 87.9% compared to the university's student population of 54.3% females;
3. More human services students are minority students, 64%, as compared to 40% of the overall student population of the university;
4. There are fewer human services students categorized as ESL, 1.3%, as compared to the university's 5.7% of the student population.
5. More human services students are taking courses full-time, 76.3%, as compared to 62.4% of university students;
6. There are only 2.8% of human services students categorized as out-of-state students, as compared to 12% of the university's students (Office of Institutional Research & Assessment, fall 2009).

There were no statistics available on transfer status, overall grade point average, or number of distance education students for the student population of the university.

Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency

The Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) is a non-standardized test that the Writing Center administers 11 times each year (once each month excluding December). All prospective university undergraduate students, including distance learners, must pass the exam. The exam consists of a three-hour essay written in response to a single specific question. Students are eligible to take the EEWP once they completed a minimum of 58 credit hours which classifies them as junior status.

About a month before each exam date, the process begins when the student is given two broad topics either at a registration/orientation session conducted by the Exit Exam Coordinator or during online registration. Thirteen topics of interest, some of which are

general, and most of which are geared to the university's academic areas, are offered each month, and the selections change monthly. The topics are developed by the Exit Exam Coordinator with feedback and proofreading from other Writing Center staff (See Appendix A for example topics and EEWP essays). Students also have the opportunity to attend an orientation that provides more detailed information on the EEWP process.

Once a student selects two broad topics, he/she has approximately three weeks to consider the topics and research them if the student chooses to do so. On the day of the exam the student is presented with a specific topic on which the student writes his/her essay. As with the 13 broad topics, the 13 specific questions change from one exam to the next. Accompanying each question is an excerpt from a portion of a professional writing that relates to the question and provides context. It is optional for the student to incorporate this professional writing into his/her essay and is not factored into the scoring of the essay.

Each spring, the Exit Exam Coordinator sends emails to faculty to have additional faculty members join the pool of readers. There is a two-hour training session for each reader who joins the reader pool. The training is followed by practice grading, a 30 minute follow-up conference with the Coordinator for feedback and guidance, and close oversight on scoring the first set of actual student exit exam essays.

Additionally, there are occasional "norming" sessions. These norming sessions are to ensure that a faculty reader scores essays consistently based on the four criteria used to score student essays: content, fluency, clarity, and conventions (see Appendix B). A scorer is provided with oversight until the scorer consistently scores essays. However, the EEWP is neither a norm-referenced nor criterion-referenced test. Currently, there are

a total of 20 readers, but all of them do not grade exit exams every month. The exams are arranged alphabetically by student name and distributed randomly to the readers in sets of 25. Initially, two readers, independent of one another, evaluate each essay. However, there may still be discrepancies in inter-rater scoring. If the two readers disagree as to whether the essay is considered passing, the essay goes to a master reader for a third independent evaluation which determines whether a student passes the EEWP.

Students who fail must repeat the exam on one of the regularly scheduled dates and may retake the exam as often as necessary. The Writing Center strongly encourages students who fail the exam, including distance learners, to take part in a 30-minute conference with the Exit Exam Coordinator, who works with each student to devise an individualized strategy to improve each student's writing and probability of passing the exam.

Readers base their EEWP evaluations on four critical measures of writing: purpose, content, clarity/syntax, and conventions (See Appendix B). Each area is graded on a scale of one to four, with a score of at least three passing, and a score of one or two not passing. To pass the exam, students must show competency in all four criteria, so consistent performance in all areas is essential since a substantial weakness in any single criterion will result in failure and require a student to retake the exam.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to establish the means and standard deviations of the measures and assist with subsequent analysis of the research questions (see Table 3). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the transfer status and the region of residence for each

demographic variable. A separate test was run for each independent variable. An ANOVA also determined if there was a difference between the transfer status and passing the EEWP. An ANCOVA was used when there were variables that were continuous, such as age and overall grade point average. An ANOVA and t-test were used when there were multiple levels of an independent variable and multiple dependent variables that were not continuous, such as ethnicity.

Table 3: Independent & Dependent Variables for Research Questions

Research Question	Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable	Analysis
Question #1	Student Demographics	EEWP Pass Rate	ANCOVA/ANOVA t-test
Question #2	Transfer Status	EEWP Pass Rate	ANOVA/t-test
Question #3	# Times took EEWP	EEWP Pass Rate	t-test

The difference in the transfer status, based on each of the demographic variables to be tested was determined by an independent sample t-test when there were only two levels measured, by an ANOVA when there were more than two levels measured, or by an ANCOVA if there were continuous variables. The differences for each demographic characteristic were analyzed separately.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine student demographic variables, transfer status, and the number of times a student took the EEWP and analyze these variables to

determine if any of the variables affected a student's pass rates on the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency or if any of the variables affected a student's passing any of the four criteria of the EEWP.

The findings will be used to determine any course content changes in the human services curriculum to better ensure student success on the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency and more professional writing skills of students. The findings will be useful in revising the two writing-intensive courses in the human services curriculum. The findings may also be useful in revising writing assignments included in all human services courses. The findings will be shared with the TTN sites to assist them in determining how to better prepare students to be successful with junior and senior writing requirements, thus potentially increasing the student pass rate on the EEWP.

The findings will be provided to the Dean, the Department Chair, and the faculty of the human services baccalaureate program. The previous Dean was working with other undergraduate programs under his purview concerning increasing the EEWP pass rate. The current Dean is also interested in working with the undergraduate programs to develop ways to assist students with developing more professional writing skills. The findings may provide insight into additional curricular and/or instructional changes that other undergraduate programs can implement. The findings will be disseminated locally and in professional venues such as conference presentations and journal articles.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the variables that may impact a student's pass rate on the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP). The EEWP is a graduation requirement at a mid-sized four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. This study looked at demographic variables, whether a student transfers from a community college or entered a four-year university as a freshman, and the components of the EEWP that were passed.

This chapter summarizes the demographic characteristics and transfer status of the participants, the number of times each participant took the EEWP, and the components of the EEWP that participants failed. This chapter also discusses the statistical analysis of data in response to the research questions for the study.

Participants

Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency Student Success

Of the 389 students who took the EEWP between fall 2009 and summer 2010, 97% of the students, or 377 students passed the EEWP. Twelve students, or 2.8%, did not yet pass the EEWP during this data collection period. The majority of students (11 of 12 students) who did not pass the EEWP were international students whose native language is not English. However, since there were only 11 international students in the sample, the sample was too small to conduct a statistical analysis.

In addition, there was one student who took the EEWP nine times before passing the exam, while all other students took the EEWP a maximum of five times. It is unusual

for a student to take the exam that often before passing the EEWP and is not indicative of the performance of the majority of students. Therefore, the sample analysis included only those students who passed the EEWP five or fewer times, eliminating the outlier and those students who had not yet pass the EEWP, for a total of 376 students.

The demographics of the students who passed the EEWP five or fewer times were based on percentages. The average overall GPA for this sample was 3.28. The average age was 30.9 years, with a range of 20-62 years of age and a mode of 23 years of age (12%). The demographic information for the 376 students in Table 4 is consistent with the percentages of the demographic information for the data collected on the 389 total students.

Table 4:

Demographic Characteristics of the Students Who Passed the EEWP

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	331	88.0
Male	45	12.0
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	26	54.7
African American/Black	126	33.6
Asian	10	2.7

Table 4 continued:

Demographic Characteristics of the Students Who Passed the EEWP

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Latino/Hispanic	9	2.4
Mixed	5	1.3
Other	8	2.1
Unreported	12	3.2
Age		
18-29	217	57.71
30-39	85	22.61
40-49	53	14.10
50-59	19	5.05
60 & older	2	.53
GPA		
1.49 & below	1	.27
1.5- 1.99	4	1.06
2.0 - 2.49	20	5.32
2.5- 2.99	75	19.95
3.0- 3.49	133	35.37
3.5- 4.0	143	38.03

Table 4 continued:

Demographic Characteristics of the Students Who Passed the EEWP

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
ELS		
Non-ESL	374	99.6
ESL	2	.5
Transfer Status		
Transferred	227	78.9
Did not Transfer	149	20.9
Full-time	287	76.3
Part-time	89	23.7
Course Format		
Main Campus	149	39.6
TTN	227	60.4
Region of Residence		
Local	218	57.9
State capitol	31	8.3
Central	29	7.7
Northern	41	10.9
Western	47	12.5
Out-of-state	10	2.7

On average, there was an 81% pass rate. The majority of the students (89.3%) passed the EEWP on the first or second attempt, as compared to students passing the EEWP on the third to fifth attempt (10.7%). Below are the statistics for the number of times students took the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency before passing the exam.

Table 5:

Pass Rate of the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency

Number Times Took EEWP	Frequency	Percentage
One Time	247	65.6
Two Times	89	23.7
Three Times	24	6.4
Four Times	10	2.7
Five Times	6	1.6

There was a statistically significant difference between age and pass rate. Age and pass rate were significant at $p=.017$ ($<.05$), $r = -.12$. The older a student, the more times it took for a student to pass the EEWP. The predictability = $r^2 .014$. Although the relationship between age and pass rate is significant, the impact of age on pass rate could only be predicted 1.4% of the time which is negligible.

Grade point average (GPA) and pass rate were statistically significant, $p=.0001$ ($<.05$), with $r=.24$. The higher the GPA, the fewer times a student took the exam to pass.

The predictability = r^2 .06, which means that, although GPA and pass rate were statistically significant, GPA could only predict the impact of pass rate 6% of the time, which is negligible.

Of particular interest is the analysis of sections of the EEWP that students failed most often. Section one is Purpose which determines whether a student's essay clearly answers and focuses on the question and uses an effective sequence of arguments to make the point. Section two is Content where the writer fully develops the ideas presented in support of the purpose of the essay. Section three is Clarity/Syntax which focuses on a mature writing style with consistent and appropriate language. Section four is Conventions which focuses on the mechanics of writing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation (See Appendix B).

In descending order, students failed section four, Conventions, most frequently ($x=.48$), with a range of 0-4. Students failed section three, Clarity/Syntax, with $x=.17$ and a range of 0-4. Students failed section two, Content, with $x=.12$ and a range of 0-4. Finally, students failed section 1, Purpose, fewer times, with $x=.05$ and a range of 0-3.

Research Question 1

To what degree do the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average, region of residence, and ESL status affect pass rates on the EEWP?

T-tests were conducted between gender, transfer status, and enrollment status on pass rate. There was no significant difference between gender and pass rate $t(373) =$

-1.66), $p > .05$. There was no significant difference between transfer status and pass rate $t(373) = -1.73$, $p > .05$. There was no significant difference between enrollment status and pass rate $t(373) = -.047$, $p > .05$.

ANOVAs were conducted on region of residence and ethnicity. There was no significant difference between region of residence and pass rate, $F(5,369) = 1.54$, $p > .05$. There was no significant difference between ethnicity and pass rate, $F(2,372) = 1.20$, $p > .05$. There was no statistical analysis completed on ESL and pass rate since the number of international students was too small ($n=11$).

There was a significant difference, when using a t-test, between enrollment status and GPA $t(373) = 2.463$, $p > .05$, so no ANCOVA was needed. Distance education students had a lower GPA than did main campus students.

Research Question 2

Controlling for demographic characteristics, to what degree does transfer status affect pass rates on the EEWP?

There was no significant difference between average pass rates based on transfer status when conducting t-tests. However, when using an ANCOVA to control for the effect of a student's GPA, there was a significant effect, $F(1,372) = 4.48$, $p > .05$. Transfer status had an effect on pass rate when controlling for the effect of GPA. A student with a high GPA was more likely to pass the EEWP whether or not a student had transferred to the university. However, if GPA is neutralized, then transfer status did have an effect on passing the EEWP, with non-transfer students passing at a higher rate than transfer students.

Although region of residence is not a continuous variable, each of the six areas of residence was assigned a number to conduct an ANCOVA. There was no significant effect of transfer status on the EEWP after controlling for region of residence, $F(1,372) = 1.37, p > .05$. When controlling for age, there was no significant effect of transfer status on the EEWP, $F(1,372) = 0.91, p > .5$.

Research Question 3

Controlling for demographic characters and transfer status, to what degree does the number of times a student takes the EEWP affect pass rates on the EEWP?

There was a significant relationship between the number of times a student takes the EEWP and pass rate, almost a perfect correlation of $-.995$. The more times a student took the exam the lower the pass rate, which is logical. The majority of students who had yet to pass the EEWP were international students. However, since there were only 11 international students in the sample, this could not be substantiated with a statistical analysis with such a small sample size.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study looked specifically at the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) and the variables that may impact students passing the EEWP, since research indicates both employers and graduates feel that written communication skills are an area of weakness for graduates (National Commission, 2003, 2004; Jones, 2002; Cooper, 1999). The Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency is one of the graduation requirements for all undergraduate students at a mid-sized four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region. The purpose of the EEWP is to ensure that undergraduates demonstrate sufficient writing skills, writing in a clear, concise, and professional manner.

Variables examined were:

1. Student demographics, specifically age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, overall grade point average (GPA), region of residence, and ESL status,
2. Transfer status, and
3. The number of times a student took the EEWP and whether any of these variables had a significant impact on student pass rates.

Summary of the Findings

Data was collected on 377 students that took the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency between fall semester 2009 and summer 2010. On average there was an 81% pass rate, with most students (89.3%) passing the EEWP the first or second testing. The demographics of the human services students represented in this study are consistent with the overall demographics of the student population enrolled at the university. Concerning

student demographics, there were no significant differences of ethnicity, gender, transfer status, enrollment status, or region of residence with pass rate. Although ESL students were primarily the ones who had not passed the EEWP at time of data collection, the sample was too small for statistical analysis. Age was significant when determining pass rate. The older a student, the more times a student took the EEWP before passing the exam. However, the predictor was negligible.

There was a significant difference between overall grade point average (GPA) and pass rate. There was a significant difference between GPA and enrollment status, with distance education students having a lower overall GPA than main campus students. When controlling for GPA, non-transfer students had a higher pass rate than did transfer students.

Of particular note is the analysis of sections of the EEWP that students failed most often. In descending order, Conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) was the section failed most often. Next, students failed Clarity/Syntax (mature writing style), then Content (develops ideas), with students failing Purpose (provides support for viewpoint) fewer times than the other criteria.

Findings in Relationship to Existing Literature

Demographics

The findings of this study are both supportive and contradictory to the literature. This is not surprising since many of the studies were conducted in community college settings rather than in four-year colleges and universities and much of the literature was written over a decade ago. This study showed no statistical significance between the

demographics of gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, transfer status, or region of residence relative to passing the EEWP.

Ethnicity. Data from the National Center for Education Progress (2002) show an increase in minority students at four-year colleges and universities. However, research (Bennett-Kastor, 2004; Zamani, 2000; McGregor, Reece, & Garner, 1997) found that African American and Hispanic students often enter college with academic deficiencies and are underrepresented in four-year institutions in comparison to Caucasian and Asian American students.

Despite the literature indicating that African Americans and Hispanics score significantly lower on standardized tests of reading and writing (Cuyjet, 1997; Lamkin, 2004; Polite & Davis, 1999), the results of the current study showed no difference in pass rates on the EEWP between those of different ethnicities. This may be due to the fact that although African American and Hispanic students often enter college with academic deficiencies and are underrepresented in four-year institutions, particularly in selective colleges and universities, in comparison to Caucasian and Asian American students (McGregor, Reece, and Garner, 1997; Rendon, 1995), 40% of the university's student population are minority students and 64% of the students in the human services program are minority students.

Gender. Sax (2008) found that females were more likely to perceive higher levels of stress in their academics than did males because of the additional roles of women as caregivers. Lynch (2008) also found that female students had more test anxiety than did males. This study found no significant differences in gender. However, females comprise almost 88% of the human services program's student population, a much higher

percentage than that of the university which has 54% female students. Because society views females in the caregiver role, the high percentage of females in the human services program tends to confirm that females seek caregiver careers which may contribute to lower stress in their academic areas.

Age. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2000) determined that 51% of college students were over the age of 21 years and termed non-traditional students. Research (Adelman, 2005; El-Khawas, 2003) determined that, compared to traditional students, nontraditional students tended to be married, work full-time, have dependent children and have more responsibilities, such as housework, caregiver, and volunteer, than traditional students.

Consistent with the research on nontraditional students, this study found that age was significant when determining pass rate. The older a student, the more times a student took the EEWP before passing the exam. However, the predictor was negligible. One possible explanation is that of the 377 students in the study, only 15 (3.9%) of those students were 21 years old or younger. Of those students over 21 years, 77 students (20%) were age 40 or above. Individuals in this age range tend to have grown rather than dependent children and are more adept at their job responsibilities because of longevity than are students ages 22-39. The outside influences normally associated with nontraditional students may not be a factor with students 40 and older.

Academic Readiness/Grade Point Average. Students with a higher GPA are more likely to pass the EEWP whether or not students transferred to the university. Although this study's findings showed that full-time students had a higher overall grade point average (GPA) than part-time students, the predictive factor was negligible. One possible

explanation is that 297 of students in this study (76.3%) are full-time students, a larger percentage of the student population than most other four-year colleges and universities.

Enrollment Status. Much of the research findings on enrollment status supports that full-time students are more likely to be successful in their academic endeavors than part-time students (Bailey, 2004; Cofer & Somers, 2000; Horn & Ethington, 2002). Research suggests that part-time students often have full-time jobs, family obligations, and other responsibilities that often negatively impact their academic performance. However, there was no significant difference between enrollment status and pass rate for this study. One possible explanation is that 297 of students in this study (76.3%) were full-time students. A higher percentage of part-time students may affect the results.

English as a Second Language. Although the number of ESL students was too small to conduct a statistical analysis, 58% of students who had not yet passed the EEWP were international students. These students are often required to take English as a Second Language courses to improve their writing skills (Doe-Hyung, 2009). However, these courses often focus less on the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, and punctuation), than on content and style. The criterion that was most missed by students in this study was Conventions (mechanics of writing).

Transfer Status. Students, who live too far to commute to a college or university of their choice, often pursue their education through online or distance education courses (Oehler, 2007). The sample population of the human services program has 60.4% of the students attending classes through distance education or TELETECHNET. This study determined a significant difference between GPA and enrollment status, with distance education students having a lower overall GPA than main campus students. Oehler

(2007) supports this finding, citing that often distance education students feel disconnected from the college which often adversely affects them academically.

Kozeracki & Gerdeman (2000) conducted a study on the transfer status of students from a community college to a four year college or university. Community college students reported that grading standards were more stringent at four-year institutions than at the community college, receiving at least one or two grades lower for writing assignments at four-year universities as compared to the community college. This study supports the findings of Kozeracki & Gerdeman that non-transfer students had a higher pass rate than did transfer students, after controlling for GPA, with 78.9% of the student sample having transferred to the university. This is supported by Vaughn and Paugh (2009) who found that transfer students from community colleges often had not mastered sufficient writing skills to be successful in their course work.

Region of Residence. Research supports that four-year institutions struggle with the challenge of providing student life on campus for students who live too far to commute to classes (Oehler, 2007). Academic success and retention of students depends on their feeling a part of the college environment (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Many students who live too far to commute to a college or university of their choice often access undergraduate degrees through online or distance education courses. Brown, Carpenter, and Hickman (2004) conducted a four-year study of students who chose online rather than face-to-face instruction of a developmental writing course. Although there was a higher withdrawal rate from the online method, students who persisted learned more from the online courses than traditional face-to-face instruction.

Although the human services program is only in the initial stages of developing online courses, the program has a significant student population who take courses via distance education, or TELETECHNET, almost 40% of its students. The study did not support the research of Brown, Carpenter, and Hickman (2004), finding that distance education students had a lower overall GPA than did main campus students. However, this finding may be attributed to students feeling disconnected from the university as supported by Engstrom and Tinto (2008).

Crews and Feinberg (2002) examined university students' perceptions based on area of residence, urban, suburban, and rural, of their access to the Internet. Rural students were less likely to access the library through the Internet than were urban or suburban students. The perceptions of availability of resources, such as the library, may also have an impact on distance education students' overall academic performance, particularly since many of the program's distance education students live in the Midwest or western part of the state, with a significant commuting distance from an urban area and many of the rural areas have only dial-up internet connections.

Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency

The Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) is a criterion-referenced test. Students are provided with three hours in which to complete a 500 word essay. The EEWP is scored by two faculty members who are provided training in scoring the EEWP. If these two individuals disagree with whether a student passed all four scoring areas, a third scorer is added for a final determination if a student passed the exam.

This concern for the methods used to assess students' writing skills is consistent with the literature (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Breland & Bridgeman, 1999; Chapman, 1990;

Elliot, 2005; Kuh, 2010), particularly as it relates to direct writing samples, or “on demand” writing samples that are frequently used by colleges and universities as admission and/or graduation barrier tests. The authors feel that when this type of assessment of students’ writing skills is timed, the assessments can increase pressure on students, increasing their anxiety which may impede their writing performance. Alter & Adkins (2006) have not found these exams to be valid or reliable measures of students’ writing skills. Rachal, Daigle, & Rachal (2007) also found that test anxiety was the only factor that demonstrated a significant difference between academic classifications.

Major difficulties and inadequacies of incoming students’ writing include a lack of understanding of grammatical correctness, syntax, standard usage rules, clarity, accurate use of voice, and cohesiveness (Allen, 1980; Maloney, 2003). Students failed Conventions, the mechanics of writing, most frequently of the four scoring criteria for the EEWP. Second most frequently failed criterion was Clarity/Syntax which focuses on a mature writing style. These findings are consistent with the research cited.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications for practice within the human services program, specifically, and in the university, in general, can be made. The study implies: (1) that demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, and region of residence had no significant effect on a student’s pass rate which is contrary to research in these areas; (2) that distance education students need additional assistance and support in their academics to be academically successful based on the study findings that distance education students had a lower overall GPA than did main campus students; (3) that transfer students have more difficulty with their professional

writing skills than do non-transfer students, based on the study findings when GPA is factored out; (4) that this university and community colleges need to have increased communication and cooperative efforts to better prepare transfer students for the disparity in grading and increased academic demands required at four-year colleges and universities; (5) that faculty need to be actively involved in the learning process of their students and include instruction of writing skills in courses to teach writing across curriculums; and (6) that this university needs to re-examine its methods for assessing professional writing skills of students through multiple options.

Distance Education Instruction

The human services baccalaureate program at this university provides distance education throughout the state, as well as to two other states on the west coast. Approximately 40% of its students are distance education, or TELETECHNET (TTN), students. With the exception of writing-intensive courses, there is no enrollment restriction on TTN courses. It is not unusual for enrollment to reach 100-200 students. Several of the TTN courses are hybrid courses, meeting either for a half semester or every other week throughout the semester to ensure that distance education students can complete the human services curriculum within six semesters.

Instructors need to be aware of educational practices that encourage students to be more active participants in the learning process (Kuh, 2010), to help students to be “expert” students, such as attending class, asking questions, interacting with other students, and maintaining concentration in class (Solberg, et.al., 1997). Particularly with the potential for students to be disconnected from the university and learning process, distance education instructors must be particularly diligent in fostering these skills in

students through course projects, discussion forums, group discussions, and other engaged participation.

Increased Communication with Community Colleges

Many of the university's students transfer from community colleges. Within the geographical location of the university are three community colleges with a total of seven campuses. The results of the study conducted by Kozeracki & Gerdeman (2000) were cited previously relative to over 40% of students stating that grading standards were more stringent at four-year universities than at community colleges. The university, as a whole, as well as the individual programs, needs to convey this issue with the community colleges to ensure that students are better prepared for four-year universities. When faculty in undergraduate programs attend career fairs, are guest speakers in classes, and/or participate in other related activities, faculty need to emphasize the standards expected of students and help them understand the additional demands that may be placed on them at four-year institutions.

Academic advisors and counseling staff, both at the community colleges and this university, can be instrumental in assisting students with the transition to a four-year institution by discussing with students the difference in coursework, the increased requirements and study time, and the adjustment to a larger campus and population. The different standards between community colleges and four-year institutions can also be stressed during preview presentations that the university holds each semester.

Increased Instructor Awareness and Intervention

Instruction. As with distance education students, students attending a traditional face-to-face class need to be encouraged to be more active participants in the learning

process (Kuh, 2010). Many freshmen often have little knowledge of expectations of four-year institutions. Their academic experience is only of high school and these students often have difficulty adjusting to the new environment (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Transfer students' knowledge of four-year colleges and universities is primarily of community college requirements, although their previous experience with a two-year institution facilitates their adjustment more (Liu & Liu, 1999). Instructors need to be aware of the various backgrounds, experience, and outside responsibilities students bring to the classroom. Instructors need to develop their courses to encourage active participation of students through thought-provoking questions, independent research, group discussions, role play, and other proven methods for increasing student involvement.

Writing Across Curriculum. The field of human services encompasses mental health, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse, social services, career and vocational counseling, aging or gerontology, corrections or criminal justice, health care, vocational rehabilitation, domestic violence, and youth services. Not until the last ten years are articles focusing on how to write in human services, social work, and counseling (Alter & Adkins, 2001; Anderson, 2007; Dalimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2008; Dustin, Craigen, & Milliken, 2010; Fallahi, Wood, & Austad, 2006). There is an increasing demand for human services workers (Waller, 2000).

Case notes and detailed reports are essential to ensure that services rendered are in accordance with services billed. Reimbursement of services is becoming more detailed when dealing with Medicare, Medicaid, and most managed care organization. (Kane, 2010). It is essential for instructors to relate student writing assignments to the "real

world” to ensure that graduates of the program are able to write concise, legally defensible documents that are in accordance with second party payer regulations. Essential in this instruction is teaching students the rationale for documentation requirements to ensure that they understand the importance of this documentation so that graduates will provide quality services to their clients.

McCune (2003) conducted a longitudinal study involving first-year psychology students and their conceptions of essay writing, using different viewpoints, evaluating those viewpoints, and using evidence to support arguments. The findings suggested that students’ preconceived ideas about writing essays interfered with this new learning. This substantiates that students must understand the importance of writing concise, detailed, legally defensible documents.

As a part of the human services program’s actions to improve students’ writing skills, all human services courses require writing assignments and two of the courses are designated writing-intensive courses. Instructors need to relate writing assignments to real-world scenarios so that students understand the importance of these assignments. Providing meaningful feedback on students’ writing requires more time than does grading other assignments. Instructors must be aware of this additional time in grading writing assignments and structure courses accordingly to ensure that sufficient feedback is provided to positively impact students’ writing skills.

Since the human services program employs adjuncts to teach courses and use graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) from the Ph.D. counseling program, these individuals need to be made aware of positive educational practices including encouraging thought-provoking questions and relating writing assignments to real world

activities. Yearly adjunct breakfasts are held where this type of information can be disseminated and full-time and adjunct faculty, as well as GTAs, can share strategies that work for them. Counseling faculty who supervise the GTAs' quality of teaching can provide suggestions for improving their teaching strategies and increasing active student participation.

University Awareness and Action

The university prides itself in emphasizing research, scholarly activities, and grants awarded. Because of the accomplishments of its faculty, the university is known as one of the top 100 research universities in the country. The current admission requirements include high school transcripts or transcripts from other colleges/universities for transfer students, SAT/ACT scores, and a 500 word essay, which is optional and used for scholarship purposes only. There is currently no minimum level of writing that prospective students must have prior to admission into the university. The only assessment of prospective students' writing skills is the Writing Sample Placement Test.

The university requires all newly admitted students to take the Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT) within the first two months of admission to the university. The WSPT, which is timed and can be taken online, focuses on the mechanics of writing (grammar, punctuation, and spelling) and is primarily designed to determine whether students need to take a developmental writing course prior to registering for the two English composition courses that are required as part of the general education requirements. However, since transfer students may have already taken English composition elsewhere, the WSPT does not serve the same purpose as it does for freshmen. If a student does not pass the WSPT within the first two months of admission,

a block is placed on a student's account by the Writing Center which prohibits the student from registering for courses until he/she passes the WSPT. There is no limit on the number of times a student can take the WSPT. There is a discrepancy between the emphasis of student writing skills required for admission into the university and the conveyed importance of writing skills as determined by the EEWP as a graduation requirement.

The Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) is required of all undergraduate students at this university. All undergraduate programs are tasked with their students passing the EEWP with at least an 80% pass rate. Research consistently discusses that test anxiety can adversely affect a student's academic performance (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Kuh, 2010; Rachal, Daigle, & Rachel, 2007). The inter-rater reliability was previously discussed, with a third scorer often needed when the two assigned scorers are not in agreement as to whether a student passed the EEWP. Although 89.1% of students passed the EEWP on the first or second attempt, the remaining 10.9% of students may have experienced anxiety that adversely affected their essay.

Revising Admission Criteria. The university may want to review its current admission criteria to include a writing sample that is considered when determining admission of new students. An additional consideration is to monitor the results of the WSPT for transfer students since transfer students do not have to take developmental writing courses and can take the WSPT as many times as they wish during the first two semesters of their admission to the university. Since the study found that non-transfer students had a higher pass rate than did transfer students when controlling for GPA, mandating transfer students to take a developmental writing course after two attempts at

passing the WSPT may assist transfer students in improving their basic writing skills. Research supports that transfer students from community colleges had not mastered sufficient writing skills to be successful in their course work at a four-year college or university (Abbate-Vaughn & Paugh, 2009; Merisotis & Terenzini, 2004; Pascarella, Pierce, Wolniack & Terenzini, 2004).

Student Success/Orientation Course. A student success or orientation course serves the purpose of orienting students to the college environment and providing them with basic study skills and academic management techniques to have a successful experience in college. The currently available orientation course, University Orientation (UNIV100), explores the relationship between a student's personal development goals, university life, and academic programs. It provides orientation of learning skills necessary to succeed in college, and also presents the benefits of using various university services.

The content of the currently existing university orientation course could be expanded to include content such as the expectations of instructors at a four-year institution as compared to instructors in high school or the community college; the reading and study demands of coursework at a four-year college or university; and the importance that students demonstrate professional writing skills as a part of the graduation requirements.

For underprepared students, such a course can also serve as a place to provide them with the necessary skills to be successful such as, appropriate communication skills, relationship-building skills, stress-reduction skills, time- and financial-management skills, decision-making skills, and goal-setting skills. It can also provide students with an opportunity to form some relationship bonds that may be useful to them later. It is

essential that students take this course during the first semester at the university to provide them with a connection to the university and the skills to persist throughout their academic years.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following threats to internal and external validity: the ability to generalize the study to other four-year colleges and universities, potential selection bias, data being limited to what is collected by the university, and the influence of researcher bias. Since a particular university was used, it is difficult to generalize the results of this study to other four-year colleges or universities. Because this study was conducted on students from one undergraduate program, the ability to generalize the results to students in other undergraduate programs is difficult since each program has different academic requirements and may structure their courses differently.

Selection bias was created since the sample population used was students who took the EEWP from fall 2009 to summer 2010 to control for curriculum changes. Mandatory writing assignments in all human services courses, effective fall 2009, were implemented and the addition of a second writing-intensive course was first introduced in spring 2010. This time period was selected to minimize curricular changes that may impact the pass rate of the EEWP. However, the results of this study are difficult to generalize to students in the human services program prior to fall 2009 or after spring 2010 because of those curricular changes.

The design model in this study was not fully specified. In any study there will always be additional variables that were not measured which may influence the results of the study. There was potential data that may have had an effect on the pass rate of the

EEWP that was not available through the Registrar's Office. Employment data of students was unavailable. Recent research (Farrell, 2005; Cohon & Brawer, 2003; Bradburn & Carroll, 2002) supports Astin's (1984) involvement theory, that full-time employment during college has a significant negative impact on students' grades because their work takes time and energy away from course work. On-campus work appears to be one way students increase interactions that positively affect persistence. Employment data for participants in the study may have impacted the study results. The number of dependents a student has was also not available. Family obligations, as with employment, can impact a student's academic performance since time spent with children cannot be spent on coursework.

Financial status was not available for participants. Although the Financial Aid Office has a list of students receiving financial aid, as well as the type and amount of aid, this information is not cross-referenced with the data base of the Registrar's Office, and therefore, was not easily accessible. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) indicated that while an estimated 56% of high-income students who begin postsecondary education will earn their four-year degrees within six years, only about 26% of low-income students will do so. One reason for this is that low-income students are more likely to begin college academically under-prepared than students who are more affluent. Beginning college academically under-prepared makes it less likely these students will graduate (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Financial status is another potentially relevant data source that may have impacted the results of this study.

Students have an option of writing their essay for the EEW P either manually or on the computer. Students who opted to compose their essay on the computer with spell

check and grammar check disabled may have made typographical errors that would count as spelling errors, thus impacting their score on Conventions. Since the format chosen by a student is not kept in the data system of the Writing Center, this data may have been a determining factor of students who did not pass the Conventions part of the EEWP.

Because this is a correlational design, it established relations between variables. Causality cannot be inferred from these relationships. This study is not intended to demonstrate causal conclusions between the variables, but rather to establish relationships between variables so that effective treatments for future practice can be developed based on those relationships.

Research bias does exist in this study. The researcher has been an instructor in the human services program for the past five years and collected data on the EEWP as one of her responsibilities in reporting semester data on WEAVE, which is the software used for programs to track progress on their program objectives. One of the objectives for the human services program is to increase human services students' pass rate on the EEWP to at least 80%. Data is collected separately on distance education students and main campus students for the purpose of WEAVE. The researcher has a vested interest in human services students increasing their pass rate on the EEWP. However, given her own understanding that a bias exists, she has worked to respond to the results of the study, not influence them, and not intentionally skewing them based on her own potential bias.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations were made for future research:

1. Increase the generalization by replicating the study with other undergraduate programs at the university.

2. Replicate the study using student pass rates prior to and after making curriculum changes to see if the curriculum changes have an impact on students' writing skills.
3. Replicate the study by either cross-referencing data banks or surveying the participants to ascertain employment status, number of dependents, and financial aid status to determine if these variables have an impact on pass rate.
4. Increase the accuracy of the study by increasing the sample size to include students who took the EEWP after summer 2010.
5. Conduct a correlational study to determine if the number of times students take the Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT) has an effect on student pass rates on the EEWP.
6. One of the undergraduate programs recently developed a one-credit mandatory course that "teaches to" the EEWP. Conduct a study to determine pass rates of students who did not take this one-credit course with the pass rates of students who took the course to see if this course has a positive impact on pass rate of the EEWP.

Conclusions

This study examined how demographic variables, ethnicity, gender, age, grade point average, transfer status, enrollment status, English as a Second Language, and region of residence of students affected their pass rate on the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) at a mid-size four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region.

The study concluded that students enrolled as distance education students had a lower overall grade point average (GPA) than did main campus students. The higher a student's GPA, the more likely a student was to pass the EEWP. However, transfer status

was significant, when controlling for GPA. Transfer students had a lower pass rate than non-transfer students.

From these findings it can be implied that instructors should be aware of enrollment status and transfer status. Instructors who teach TELETECHNET (TTN) courses need to be cognizant that distance education students may be negatively affected by not having a strong affiliation to the university because of their distance from campus. Furthermore, TTN students may have difficulty with maintaining focus on the class because of this disconnect if the instructor does not ensure on-going student engagement through active participation during class discussions, discussion forums, and other similar activities that increase student involvement.

Of particular note is the frequency of pass rate on the four criteria of the EEWP. Conventions, the mechanics of writing, was failed most frequently. Second highest criterion failed was Clarity/Syntax, sentence structure and conciseness of writing. Content, sufficient detail to support viewpoint, was third, and the least missed was Purpose, logical sequence of ideas.

From these findings, it can be implied that instructors can determine that the grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other mechanics of students' writing is the area in which students need the most instruction. A concerted effort by instructors to provide feedback on mechanical errors in student writing assignments, making a referral to Writing Tutorial Services if a student has a deficit in basic writing skills, and/or advising a student to get a personal tutor when a student has a serious deficit in this area of writing, may be instrumental in improving a student's basic writing skills.

Because this study was conducted with one undergraduate program at the university, the ability to generalize to other undergraduate programs is limited by the specific demographics of the human services program. The curriculum changes in the human services program that determined the time frame for selecting participants for this study, further limits generalizing the findings to other human services students because of the possibility that the curriculum changes may affect student pass rate.

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Appendix A

Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency Sample Essays

TOPIC: BULLIES AT SCHOOL**EDUCATION
Question Code 08**

WRITE A WELL-DEVELOPED ESSAY WHICH ANSWERS THE QUESTION BELOW.

QUESTION: The excerpt below points out, "One in seven children is a bully or the target of a bully." In your view, are schools doing enough to address the problem of bullies at school? Be certain to include specific examples and details in your discussion.

The killings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, have focused new attention on the age-old problem of bullying. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were apparently taunted and tormented, which has led some observers to attribute their subsequent violent acts at least in part to the cruelty they suffered. Of course, typical bullying doesn't usually lead to carnage. It does, experts increasingly recognize, cause more harm than is readily apparent though.

How prevalent is bullying? One in seven children is a bully or the target of a bully, according to the National Association of School Psychologists. Targets of teasing and bullying often remain silent, but they may suffer the effects of bullying, such as a lack of self-confidence, underachievement in school, and withdrawal.

"While the school crime rate is decreasing," says the first Annual Report on School Safety, published in 1998, "students feel less safe at school. [This] climate of fear erodes the quality of any school."

There are ways to stop bullying, however, and those are what educators now explore, rather than accepting bullying as part of school life.

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<http://www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues053.shtml> 3/8/2008.

TOPIC: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**EDUCATION****Question Code 09**

WRITE A WELL-DEVELOPED ESSAY WHICH ANSWERS THE QUESTION BELOW.

QUESTION: The excerpt below briefly describes "unschooling," a type of alternative education currently gaining some support in the United States. As a future educator, would

you consider unschooling a viable educational alternative? If so, why? If not, why not? Be certain to support your position with specific details and examples.

It's a child's dream. Wake up whenever you want, with nobody telling you what to do and when to do it. And here's the kicker: No school to rush off to.

Welcome to the world of "unschooling" -- an educational movement where kids, not parents, not teachers, decide what they will learn that day.

"I don't want to sound pompous, but I think I am learning a little bit more, because I can just do everything at my own pace," said Nailah Ellis, a 10-year-old from Marietta, Georgia, who has been unschooled for most of her life.

Nailah's day starts about 11 a.m., her typical wake-up time. She studies Chinese, reading, writing, piano and martial arts. But there's no set schedule. She works on what she wants, when she wants. She'll even watch some TV -- science documentaries are a favorite -- until her day comes to an end about 2 a.m.

An extension of home-schooling, "unschooling" is when parents give their children total freedom to learn and explore whatever they choose.

According to Holt Associates, an "unschooling" advocacy group, in 2005, about 150,000 children were unschooled, about 10 percent of the estimated 1.5 million home-schooled children in the United States.

The term "unschooling" was first coined in 1977 by John Holt, an education reformer, the founder of Holt Associates and author of the book, "Teach Your Own."

...

<<http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/01/27/gutierrez.unschooling/index.html>>

TOPIC: CAMPUS SHOOTINGS

GENERAL

Question Code 01

WRITE A WELL-DEVELOPED ESSAY WHICH ANSWERS THE QUESTION BELOW.

QUESTION: The recent campus shooting at Northern Illinois is one in a long line of such violent and deadly attacks. What steps can colleges and universities take to prevent these tragic events? In your discussion, be certain to include specific details and examples.

Under a hard, gray sleet, students at Northern Illinois University trudged back to class on Monday for the first time since a gunman burst into a lecture hall on Feb. 14 and killed five students and himself.

Some students said they felt relieved to return to their routine of classes, calculus homework and television soap operas at the student center. Others said they felt newly shaken, on edge as they sat in big lecture halls and newly watchful of everyone around them, especially anyone who arrived in class after it had begun.

In the array of reactions to the reopening of this public university, home to 25,000 students in a rural county 65 miles west of Chicago, nearly everyone, even university officials, was left wondering what the lasting scars will be.

“It feels like part of our campus has been taken away from us,” Olivia Gabrys, 21, said as she wandered, shivering and teary, through a set of murals where students had left their remembrances of the dead and of the gunman, a graduate of this university.

“Hopefully, our school won’t just be remembered for this, but I think it is going to be a long time,” Ms. Gabrys said. “I had never really heard of Virginia Tech before it happened there. We’re part of history, sadly.”

...

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/26/us/26campus.html>>

Appendix B

Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency Grading Rubric

ODU Exit Exam of Proficiency Rubric

Errors are recorded by the line location number of each problem in the essay. One number will be circled (4, 3, 2, or 1) to rate each of the four criteria: Purpose, Content, Clarity/Syntax, Conventions. [Students must demonstrate ratings of 3 or 4 in all four criteria in order to pass the ODU Written Exit Exam.]

TOTAL

PURPOSE: 4 (very good) 3 (satisfactory) 2 (needs improvement) 1 (unsatisfactory)

Total D.1

Introduction -No Introduction _____
 Lacks Clear Thesis _____
 Contains Extraneous Material _____
 Body - Lacks Coherence -- Within Paragraph _____ Within Essay _____
 Lacks Effective Paragraphing _____
 Lacks Unity -- Within Paragraph _____ Within Essay _____
 Fails to Present Ideas Logically _____
 Fails to Address Thesis/Write on Topic _____
 Conclusion - No Conclusion _____
 Fails to Restate Thesis _____
 Fails to Conclude _____
 Contains Extraneous Material _____

CONTENT: 4 (very good) 3 (satisfactory) 2 (needs improvement) 1 (unsatisfactory)

Total D2

Fails to Explain Ideas Presented _____
 Lacks Specific Details and Examples _____
 Lacks Substance _____
 Essay is Too Short _____

CLARITYSYNTAX: 4 (very good) 3 (satisfactory) 2 (needs improvement) 1 (unsatisfactory)

Total D3

Audience - Style Shift _____
 Awareness Point of View Shift _____
 Word ----- Wordiness/Redundancy _____
 Choice Vagueness _____
 Omitted Words _____
 Wrong Word _____
 Structures ----Sentence Sense _____
 Misplaced/Dangling Modifiers _____
 Excessive Short Sentences _____

CONVENTIONS: 4 (very good) 3 (satisfactory) 2 (needs improvement) 1 (unsatisfactory)

Total D4

Sentences ----Misused Fragments _____
 Run-together _____
 Comma Splices _____
 Usage ----- Verb Forms _____
 Noun Forms _____
 Subject-Verb Agreement _____
 Pronoun Usage _____
 Punctuation --End Marks _____
 Commas _____
 Other Punctuation/Caps _____
 Spelling _____

PURPOSE

Introduction:

Is there an effective introduction (introductory paragraph) to the essay? — An introductory paragraph serves several functions. It prepares the readers for what lies ahead by giving background information and setting the stage. It also tries to arouse interest in readers so that they will want to continue to read. Strategies for developing interesting introductory paragraphs include:

- Providing relevant background information about your topic.
- Relating a brief, interesting anecdote that applies to your topic.
- Giving pertinent, perhaps surprising statistics about your topic.
- Asking a provocative question or questions to lead into your topic.
- Using a quotation that relates closely to your topic.
- Drawing an analogy to clarify or illustrate your topic.
- Defining a key term you use throughout your essay.
- Briefly introducing main points that will be expounded on later in the essay.

Strategies to avoid include:

- Making statements about the writing process, that is, the essay's topic or purpose: Do not say, "I am going to discuss why women can learn to lift weights."
- Apologizing, as in "I am not sure I'm right, but this is my opinion."
- Avoid overworked expressions, such as "Haste really does make waste, as I recently discovered."

Is there a clear thesis statement included in the introductory paragraph? A thesis statement states the central message of an essay. In an academic essay, you may include a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. Usually, the thesis statement appears in the last sentence or two of the introductory paragraph.

Does the introductory paragraph include extraneous material? Extraneous material is information that is irrelevant to your topic. It leads to a lack of clarity and serves to confuse the reader.

Body:

Is the body of the essay coherent? Coherence is connectedness.

- *Within a paragraph?* Coherence within a paragraph refers to the flow between the sentences in the paragraph. Sentences should be connected in content and relate to each other in form and language in order to create a smooth flow of thoughts within a paragraph.
- *Within an essay?* Coherence within an essay refers to the smooth flow between paragraphs. A coherent essay results when you use transitional words and expressions, deliberate repetition, and parallelism.
- *Transitional words and expressions* help connect ideas within and between paragraphs. They do this by showing relationships, such as addition or contrast or result.
- Addition - in addition, also, too, besides, equally important, furthermore, moreover
- Comparison — in the same way, similarly
- Concession — granted, naturally, of course
- Contrast — in contrast, however, instead, on the contrary, on the other hand, at the same time, despite the fact that, otherwise, nevertheless, still
- Emphasis — for example, for instance, as an illustration, a case in point, namely, accordingly
- Result — as a result, consequently, hence, then, therefore, thus, accordingly
- Summary — finally, in conclusion, in short, in summary

- Time sequence — today, tomorrow, yesterday, once, now, next, then, eventually, meanwhile, subsequently, finally, first, second, third
- [NOTE: Within a sentence, a transitional expression is usually set off with two commas. However, between independent clauses, a period or a semicolon must come before the transitional expression.]

Deliberate repetition — You can achieve coherence through deliberate repetition of key words. Key words can be introduced in the topic sentence then repeated later in the paragraph, e.g., *It was work* under the blazing sun. *It was work* that made me tired. *Parallelism* is achieved when a grammatical structure is repeated for each item in a list, e.g., to walk, to swing, and to tighten.

Is effective paragraphing used throughout the body of the essay? Effective paragraphing refers to fully developing a single idea within a paragraph, before moving on to develop subsequent ideas in subsequent paragraphs. A topic sentence contains the main idea of a body paragraph and controls what can be included in the paragraph. Topic sentences most often come at the beginning of a paragraph; however, they can also appear at the end or be implied. Regarding placement of topic sentence:

- *When a topic sentence starts a paragraph*, readers immediately know what topic will be addressed in the paragraph.
- *When a topic sentence ends a body paragraph*, readers sometimes feel more eager to read on to the next paragraph.
- *When a paragraph conveys a main idea without a specific topic sentence*, the writer has carefully constructed that paragraph so that details add up in such a way that the main idea is clear.

Within each paragraph, be certain to use specific, concrete details to develop the body of paragraphs that support the generalization of the topic sentence. Good writers move back and forth between generalizations and specific details. To check that you have enough detail ask yourself whether you've provided enough

- Reasons
- Examples
- Names
- Numbers
- Senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch).

[Note: You do not have to use details in the above order, nor do you have to use all the different types of detail in the same paragraph.]

Are the sentences/statements related, providing a sense of unity? Unity refers to there being a clear and logical relationship among the ideas presented.

- *Within a paragraph* — unity refers to the degree to which a clear and logical relationship is maintained between the main idea of a paragraph and the evidence supporting the main idea.
- *Within an essay* - unity refers to the degree to which a clear and logical relationship is maintained between the thesis statement (the main idea of the essay) and the supporting paragraphs.

Are the ideas logically presented? A logical presentation of ideas refers to the use of rhetorical strategies—patterns and techniques for presenting ideas clearly and effectively. The specific rhetorical strategy you use depends on what you want to accomplish. Strategies/techniques include

- *Narrative writing* — *tells* what is happening or what has happened — it is storytelling. Narration is usually organized chronologically — first this, then that, and so on.

- *Description writing* — paints a picture in words. It usually calls on the five senses and can be organized spatially (e.g., from top to bottom or from left to right), from general to specific, or from least to the most important. The point is to build to a climax.
- *Example writing* — provides concrete, specific representations of the main idea. A single extended example is often called an illustration. If several examples are being used, they may be arranged from least to most important or the other way around, depending on the impact you desire.
- *Definition* — gives the meaning of a word or concept in more detail than does a dictionary definition. You might explain what something is, as well as what it is not.
- *Comparison and contrast* — comparisons deal with similarities whereas contrast details differences. Comparison and contrast writing is usually organized one of two ways: point-by-point — moving back and forth between the subjects being compared- or block discussion — discussing one subject completely before discussing the next.
- *Analysis* — examines and discusses separate parts of a whole. For example, within the same paragraph, a concept might be introduced followed by an analysis or an explanation as to why it is important.
- *Classification* — groups items according to a shared characteristic. Then, each category is discussed or clarified.
- *Analogy* — also a kind of comparison — identifies similarities between objects or ideas that are not usually associated with each other.
- *Cause and effect* — presents causes which lead to an event or effect or effects which result from causes. Writings who demonstrate cause and effect examine outcomes and reasons for the outcomes.

Is the essay on topic? *Before* you begin to write, be aware that your essay must address only ONE of the QUESTIONS, which appear near the top of each question sheet. Then, be certain that your preliminary thesis statement and any rough outlining that you do relate to the question you have selected for your essay. There will also appear on each question sheet an excerpt from a piece of professional writing, but you should NOT use that material in your original essay; it is included to provide context and give you a sense of the question. When you have finished your essay, make sure that you have written about the question throughout your essay.

Conclusion:

Is there a conclusion? The concluding paragraph of an essay brings the writing to a smooth end. Your conclusion needs to follow logically from your thesis statement and body paragraphs. It provides a sense of completion, a finishing touch that adds something to the essay.

Consider these strategies to conclude:

- Use one of the strategies suggested for developing an introductory paragraph (see above under writing an introductory paragraph), but not the same strategy for both the introductory and concluding paragraphs.
- Ask the reader for awareness, action, or a similar outcome.
- Project ahead to the future.
- Avoid these strategies:
- Introducing new ideas or facts that belong in the body of the essay.
- Merely rewording the introduction.
- Announcing what you have done, as in "In this paper, I have...."
- Making absolute claims, as in "In this essay, I have proven..."
- Apologizing, as in "Even though I am not an expert...."

Has the main thesis been reiterated in the conclusion? Be sure to draw the reader's attention back to the main thesis of the essay. Often the concluding paragraph opens with a restatement of the thesis statement in other words.

Does the essay end smoothly? Be sure to ask yourself whether you have ended the essay by drawing your essay to a smooth end.

Does the conclusion include extraneous material? Ask yourself whether you've avoided introducing new facts that would be better addressed in the body of the essay. If you have, consider developing new paragraphs within the body of your essay

CONTENT

Have the ideas been presented adequately? Ask yourself whether you have conveyed the meaning of your ideas such that readers understand them.

Have enough facts, details, examples been provided? Ask yourself whether you have provided readers enough supporting information (e.g., facts, details, examples) to have helped the reader gain a better understanding of your ideas.

Has enough substance been provided? Ask yourself whether you have provided readers with enough information to understand the level of importance of your ideas within the context of the larger picture, e.g., impact on society, impact on government, etc.

Is the essay long enough, too short? Ask yourself whether you have simply listed facts or made statements without adequate supporting information. Have readers simply been asked to "accept" a simple idea or dictum without adequate evidence.

CLARITY/SYNTAX

Audience Awareness:

Who is the audience and why does it matter? Before beginning the writing process, you must decide whether your essay is intended for a general audience or an expert audience whose members will share specialized knowledge. You therefore need to keep in mind the reader's background, e.g., age, gender, level of education, roles in life, beliefs, extent of knowledge about the subject, and attitudes he or she is likely to hold about the subject. In the case of the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency, you should view your audience as peers who belong to the same academic community you do. Be consistent in your style, shifting only when you are introducing humor, sarcasm, or emphasizing the "obvious."

Is the point of view consistent? Check whether you are being consistent relative to the person and number, e.g., "I", "He", "She", "Them", "according to X" (X representing a group of people or field you are referencing, e.g., doctors, medical field). NO EEWP question calls for the use of the second person, that is, you, your, yourselves, etc. Likewise, do not give commands in your essay, for example, "Wait for the symptom to occur" or "Take the proper actions immediately." Instead, maintain third person, for example, "The health care provider should wait for the symptom to occur." You should use 1st person—"I"—if appropriate to relate personal experience. However, do NOT use first person unnecessarily, for example, using qualifying phrases such as "I feel," "I think," or "I believe."

Word Choice:

Are the sentences and paragraphs concise? Concise writing is direct and to the point. Check whether you are being too wordy and too redundant (saying the same thing over and over); if so, eliminate the unnecessary words. Wordy writing means that words are being used that add to the word count but do

nothing to add to meaning. Examples of empty words include as a matter of fact, at the present time, because of the fact that, in light of the fact, due to the fact that, etc.

Do the words clearly convey what you mean? Check whether you have chosen the correct word, used strong words, omitted words, or used words incorrectly. When possible, use action verbs. Be and have are weak verbs that lead to wordy sentences. Example of a weak sentence: The city council *has gone* to the public that *has to get approval* for the tax increase. Example of a strong sentence: The city council *proposed* a tax increase that *requires* public approval.

Sentence Structure:

Are the sentences structured correctly? Sentence structure refers to several elements of a sentence, each described below:

Coordination and subordination - helps to communicate relationships between ideas. A coordinated (or compound) sentence has independent clauses joined together by a semicolon or by a coordinating word (conjunction), e.g., for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. [NOTE: Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses.] Example:

- Two main ideas: The sky turned brighter. The wind calmed down.
- Coordinated version: The sky turned brighter, and the wind calmed down. This coordinated sentence structure shows that the ideas are of equal importance.
- Subordinated versions: As the sky turned brighter, the wind calmed down. [Here, wind is subject and main focus of the sentence.] As the wind calmed down, the sky turned brighter. [Here, sky is the subject and main focus of the sentence.]

Subordinated sentence structure shows that one idea is more important than another. The more important idea goes into the independent clause, the less important (subordinate) into the dependent clause.

Misplaced modifier— a modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes or limits other words, phrases, or clauses. Placement of the modifier affects clarity of meaning. Adverbs such as only, just, almost, hardly, scarcely, and simply limit the word they immediately precede. Example: *Misplaced*: Mike built a go-cart, determined to travel without fossil fuel. [The modifying phrase *determined to travel without fossil fuel* is misplaced as it is next to go- cart in the sentence. It is intended to describe *Mike*, not the go-cart.). *Correct*: Determined to travel without fossil fuel, Mike built a go-cart.

- *Dangling modifier*— a *dangling modifier* is an introductory phrase that hangs (dangles) because the noun it modifies is not the intended subject. Introductory phrases attach their meaning to the first noun after the phrase. Example:
- Dangling: *When courting Emily*, the townspeople gossiped about Homer.
- Correct: *When Homer was courting Emily*, the townspeople gossiped.
- *Excessive Short Sentences* - Check to see if there is an excessive use of short sentences. If so, consider joining sentences with a coordinating conjunction, e.g., for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. [NOTE: Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses.]

CONVENTIONS

Sentences:

Are sentences complete or are there misused fragments? A sentence fragment looks like a sentence because, like a sentence, it starts with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark or exclamation point. Fragments, however, are not complete sentences. They do not contain subjects and

verbs and/or they do not express complete thoughts. You should correct fragments by joining dependent phrases/clauses to sentences or by rewriting to create complete thoughts that include subjects and verbs. *(Editing Tip: To better hear fragments when editing, read your essay one sentence at a time at normal speed, from the bottom to the top of each paragraph, listening for incompleteness. Then, revise to eliminate any fragments.)*

Do sentences run-together? A run-together sentence is created when no punctuation at all separates independent clauses. Correct by adding end punctuation (period, question mark, semicolon, or exclamation point), using a coordinating conjunction, or revising an independent clause into a dependent clause.

(Editing Tip: To better hear run-together sentences when editing, again, read your essay one sentence at a time at normal speed, from the bottom to the top of each paragraph, listening for strong, halting pauses, an indication that end punctuation rather than nothing is needed between two independent clauses. Revise to eliminate all run-together sentences.)

Are independent sentences separated by a comma (comma splice) instead of a period? A comma splice is created when only a comma separates independent clauses. Correct by adding end punctuation (period, question mark, semicolon, or exclamation point), using a coordinating conjunction, or revising an independent clause into a dependent clause.

(Editing Tip: To better hear comma splices when editing, again, read your essay one sentence at a time at normal speed, from the bottom to the top of each paragraph, listening for strong, halting pauses at commas, an indication that end punctuation rather than a comma is needed between two independent clauses. Revise to eliminate comma splices.)

Usage:

Is the correct form of the verb being used? Check that the proper form of the verb is being used to convey the meaning of the sentence, e.g., past, present, active, passive. Be certain that verbs that need to end in "s" or "ed" do so. Forms of irregular verbs can be found in your hard-copy dictionary.

Is the correct form of the noun being used? Check that the proper form of the noun is being used to convey the meaning of the sentence. Plural nouns usually end in "s," so make sure plurals are correctly written. Likewise, nouns showing possession end in "s" and take an apostrophe.

Do the subject and verb agree? Check that a singular subject takes a singular verb, that a plural subject takes a plural verb.

(Editing Tip: Remember that the subject and the verb are often opposites with respect to an "s" ending in the present tense: A subject not ending in "s" takes a verb ending in "s."

For example, "The brother who owns eight companies has a lot of pressure on him."

And a subject ending in "s" takes a verb not ending in "s." For example, "His four biggest companies appear_ on a recent list of the top ten in the state."

Is the correct pronoun being used? Check case, agreement, and proper reference. In particular, make certain that they, them, their, and themselves replace plural nouns only.

Incorrect: Once a consumer tries organic blueberries, there is no way they will return to nonorganic ones. Correct: Once consumers try organic blueberries, there is no way they will return to nonorganic ones.

Punctuation:

Is the correct end mark being used? Check that a

- Period is used at the end of a statement, a mild command, or an indirect question..
- Question mark is used at the end of a direct question, a series of questions, or a polite request.
- Exclamation point is used to at the end of a sentence to denote a command, surprise, or emotion.

Are commas used correctly? Check the use of commas. Do not guess at commas. When reading a sentence aloud, a pause in a sentence does not mean add a comma automatically! Use a comma in the following instances:

- Using coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so – FANBOYS) to link independent clauses. Example: The sky turned black, and the wind howled.

[Note: Do not use a comma *after* a coordinating conjunction that joins independent clauses; rather, use a comma before the coordinating conjunction that joins independent clauses.

Incorrect example: A house is renovated in three weeks but, an apartment takes one week.

Correct example: A house is renovated in three weeks, but an apartment takes one week.]

[Note: Do not use a comma when a coordinating conjunction links only two words, phrases, or dependent clauses.

Incorrect example: The church depends on volunteer help, and donations for its nursery.

Correct example: The church depends on volunteer help and donations for its nursery.]

[Note: Do not use a comma between independent clauses unless they are linked by a coordinating conjunction (avoid the error of a comma splice).

Incorrect example: Four inches of rain fell in one hour, driving was difficult. *Correct example:* Four inches of rain fell in one hour, and driving was difficult.]

- Setting off introductory phrases or words before an independent clause. Example: When the snow falls, some people start to plan ski trips. Example: For example, skiing on iced snow is difficult, but it is possible.
- Listing three or more phrases or words of equal importance in a series. Do not use a comma before the first item or after the last.

Example: The ski pants were made of nylon, cotton flannel, and wool.

Example: The ski suit was made from natural fibers, from synthetic fibers, and from a blend.

[Note: use commas to separate numbered or letter items.] Example: 1) cotton, 2) rayon, 3) acrylic

Example: a) cotton, b) rayon, c) acrylic]

- Using two or more coordinate adjectives that modify a noun equally. Example: Some mountain postcards feature snowy, dramatic scenes.

[Note: Do not use a comma between two or more coordinate adjectives when the cumulative adjectives build up meaning from word to word as they move toward the noun.

Incorrect example: The postcard featured several, popular, snowy trails. *Correct example:* The postcard featured several popular snowy trails.

- Setting off nonrestrictive elements that add information but do not change the general meaning of the words to which they apply.

Example: Skiers, who are known to battle with snowboarders, sometimes seek out isolated stretches of pristine powder..

(In this example, no specific group of skiers is described. Rather, the phrase describes all skiers in general who, in fact, are known to battle with snowboarders.)

[Note: When using restrictive elements that add information and change the general meaning of the words to which they apply, do not use commas. Example: Skiers who do not follow the rules create a dangerous situation. (In this example, a specific group of skiers who do not follow rules is described.)

- Using quotes to separate the acknowledgement phrase from quoted words in a sentence.

Incorrect example: "The snow is falling", said Mary.

Correct example: "The snow is falling," said Mary.

(In this example, the comma precedes the end quote mark.)

[Note: When using the word *that* before or after a quotation, do not use a comma before or after the word *that*.

Incorrect example: Mary said, that "it is snowing."

Correct example: Mary said that "it is snowing."

Are semicolons used correctly? Check the use of semicolons. Use a semicolon with

- Two sentences that are closely related in meaning (use a semicolon instead of a period). Example: Death Valley was named a National Park in 1994; it used to be a National Monument.
- Conjunctive adverbs. Example: The mountain receives fifty inches of snow every year; however, there is not enough snow in the spring to open the slope.
- Transitional expressions. The mountain receives fifty inches of snow every year; in addition, it receives fifty inches of rain.

Are colons used correctly? Check the use of colons. Use a colon when

- Introducing a list with an independent clause. Example: The students demanded the following: clean classrooms, open enrollment, free parking.
- One sentence introduces another. Example: I will never forget the first time we met: You were so shy.

Are apostrophes used correctly? Check the use of apostrophes. Use an apostrophe when

- Communicating ownership. Example: Seeing her *parents'* joy is worth the effort required to make good grades.
- Showing possession with a singular noun ending in s. Example: Lee Mims' car is ready for shipping.
- Adding s to each noun in individual possession. Example: Lee's and Susan's cars are ready for shipping.
- [Note: Do not use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns hers, his, its, ours, theirs.]
- Omitting one or more letters. Example: It's, don't, rock 'n' roll [Note: do not confuse "its" with the contraction for it is, which is it's].

Should contractions be used? Avoid contractions; it is better to write them out. Example: *do not* instead of *don't*

Is capitalization and use of other punctuation used correctly? Check capitalization, e.g., first letter of first word in a sentence, proper names, cities, countries, etc.

Are words spelled correctly? Check spelling, especially suspicious words like receive, occurring, separation, success, etc.

Appendix C
Human Subjects Exemption

APPENDIX F
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CONSENT

Instructions: If you are requesting a waiver of informed consent or a waiver of the consent procedure requirement to include all or alter some or all of the elements of informed consent [45CFR46.116(d)], you must document the responses to each of the statements, citing supporting sections of the study protocol.

Responsible Project Investigator (RPI)	
1) RPI First Name Alan	RPI Last Name Schwitzer
2) Project Title Predicting Student Success in Successfully Passing the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency	
3) The research in its entirety involves no greater than minimal risk. xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4) The waiver of informed consent will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects. xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
5) It is not practicable to conduct the research without the waiver/alteration. xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6) Whenever appropriate, subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after their participation. xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

7) If you have selected the "yes" response to each of the four statements above, in order to receive the waiver, you must:

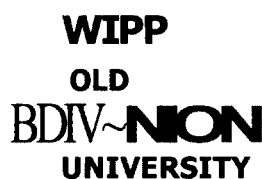
- ☐ **Describe the reason(s) why the waiver is necessary, and**
- ☐ **Explain whether the entire informed consent is being waived or only certain required elements are being waived. (If so, list which ones)**

The study is to determine whether any student demographics, enrollment status, transfer status, region of residence, and other similar factors affect passing the EEWP. Since writing skills of students of ODU are currently being discussed, i.e. QEP, this dissertation is also focusing on students and passing the EEWP to see if certain variables are related to pass rate of the EEWP.

Students enrolled in the human services program from fall 2009 through summer 2010 will be the subjects. The human services program has the names of students who took the EEWP during the specified time period. Data will be provided by the Office of the Registrar from this list of students.

I am requesting that the entire informed consent be waived since data will be reported in group format only to ensure that no student identity will be revealed. There were 389 human services students who took the EEWP during this time period. Many of these students have graduated from ODU since students tend to wait to take the EEWP until their last semester. It may be difficult to contact students for consent since their ODU email accounts are no longer active. In addition, the human services program has 500-600 students, with about half of its students being TELETECHNET students. Therefore, the students targeted for this study live in a large geographical location, throughout Virginia, as well as Arizona, the state of Washington, and those students who have relocated.

Note: If a waiver is granted under the above conditions, documentation of informed consent (i.e., signed consent form) is also waived. Even if the waiver is granted, the IRB may require other conditions. The IRB may require the researcher to provide subjects with an informed consent sheet (written summary/notification document) about the research.



DARDEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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September 21, 2011**Proposal Number _201101001_****Professor Schwitzer:**

Your proposal submission titled, "Predicting Student Success in Successfully Passing the Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency" has been deemed EXEMPT from IRB review by the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Darden College of Education. If any changes occur, especially methodological, notify the Chair of the DCOE HSRC, and supply any required addenda requested of you by the Chair. You may begin your research.

We have approved your request to pursue this proposal indefinitely, provided no modifications occur. Also note that if you are funded externally for this project in the future, you will likely have to submit to the University IRB for their approval as well.

If you have not done so, PRIOR TO THE START OF YOUR STUDY, you must send a signed and dated hardcopy of your exemption application submission to the address below. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edwin Gomez".

Edwin GOMEZ, Ph.D.**Associate Professor****Human Subjects Review Committee,****DCOE Human Movement Studies**

**Department Old Dominion
University
2021 Student Recreation Center
Norfolk, VA 23529-0196
757-683-6309 (ph)
757-683-4270 (fx)**

Appendix D

VITA

Cheryl A. Latko
821 Crescent Trace
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Education	Degree	Year	Major
College of William & Mary Williamsburg, Virginia	Ed.S.	1989	Administration & Supervision in Special Education
College of William & Mary Williamsburg, Virginia	C.A.S.	1988	Administration & Supervision in Special Education
Old Dominion University Norfolk, Virginia	M.S. Ed.	1981	Special Education
Old Dominion University Norfolk, Virginia	Va. Cert.	1980	LD/ED Special Education
Alderson-Broaddus College Philippi, West Virginia	B.A.	1976	Psychology w/ Sociology minor

Professional Experience

6/07-present	Internship Coordinator for Human Services Program, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va. Responsible for internship program, program evaluation, hiring adjunct faculty, course scheduling, and oversight of Ph.D. graduate teaching assistants in the Counseling Program relative to teaching in the Human Services Program. Serve on articulation committee for the Human Services Program. Travel to TELETECHNET sites.
7/05- 6/07	Lecturer in Human Services Program, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA. Taught courses; conducted program evaluation; course scheduling and hiring of adjunct instructors. Chair, search committee for two faculty positions.
6/91-6/05	Supervisor, Day Support Programs for adults with mental retardation, Western Tidewater Community Services Board. Supervised 32 staff and 87 clients in supported employment, day health, sheltered employment, community-based program, printing/mailing services and transportation services. Opened satellite center in Isle of Wight County. Procured contracts; conducted quality assurance of client records; wrote grants; developed budgets; hired, evaluated, and terminated staff. Conducted staff training in first aid, CPR, human rights, OSHA, data collection, and client

abuse. Served on leadership team.

- 6/90-5/91 Teacher at Tidewater Detention Center, Chesapeake, Va. Taught academically-delayed students. Developed assessment system for the facility.
- 6/83 – 6/89 Work Experience Coordinator, Tidewater Community College, Chesapeake, Va. Responsible for teaching courses in and placement/supervision of practicum and intern students in the Developmental Disabilities Program. Expanded placement sites; organized student stipend financial aid program; coordinated College For Living Program for adults with mental retardation; part-time consultant for professionals in the field of mental retardation; Wrote grants.
- Adjunct instructor, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va.
- 6/81-6/83 Field Experience Supervisor, Tidewater Community College, Chesapeake, Va. Responsible for placement and supervision of on-site experiences for student interns in Developmental Disabilities Program, teaching courses, designing and updating independent study modules for courses, and coordinating College for Living program. Also assisted in developing articulation agreement with ODU and Norfolk State Universities.