READY TO WRITE?

Spring 2006 Evaluation of HCC Writing Intensive Classes

David Cleveland - HCC Assessment Researcher
Marcia Roberts-Deutsch - HCC WI Board Chair
BACKGROUND

The majority of students transferring from HCC to four year colleges/universities, transfer to the University of Hawaii - Manoa. To facilitate effective transfer/articulation, for the past three decades HCC has, consequently, attempted to mirror UH-Manoa’s General Education requirements.

To ensure adequate development of writing/reasoning skills, two decades ago UH-Manoa began requiring baccalaureate students to complete at least five Writing Intensive (WI) classes - two of which must be taken at the 300/400 level.

HCC launched a successful collaborative effort with UH-Manoa and other colleges in the UH System to create a Systemwide WI Board and WI Hallmarks so that HCC students could take WI certified/transferrable classes.

HCC then modified its A.A. Degree requirements to include two WI designated classes.

Every campus in the UH System has its own WI Board/Committee that reviews WI course proposals, designates courses as meeting the WI Hallmarks (criteria), and conducts evaluations (each semester) of WI certified classes to ensure that Hallmarks are met. WI certifications are instructor and course specific. Students who complete a HCC certified WI class may transfer the WI credit to all other UH campuses.

The HCC WI Board is chaired by Professor Marcia Roberts-Deutsch. Professor Roberts-Deutsch ensures that WI classes are evaluated each semester and also coordinates periodic, in-depth imbedded writing assessment of samples of work in all classes.

The Spring 2006 HCC WI Class Evaluation Instrument was developed by Professors Roberts-Deutsch and David Cleveland (researcher). It is loosely modeled after the UH-Manoa WI evaluation form - containing a few demographic items, thirteen scaled evaluative items, and two items soliciting written comment about types of assignments and faculty/student assistance.

The instrument was available in two versions:

- On the HCC Website for online completion
- Hard copy version for in-class completion

The evaluations were processed by Professor Cleveland and his student research assistant (David Fink).

A Summary Report (combined data for all WI classes/faculty) was created along with individual class/faculty report for all WI classes.

A copy of the WI Summary Report was provided to WI-Chair Professor Roberts-Deutsch. Individual class/faculty reports were provided to Professor Roberts-Deutsch and to each participating faculty (for each WI class).
EVALUATION DESIGN

Professor Roberts-Deutsch informed WI faculty of the end of the semester evaluation requirement and of the availability of hard copy and online versions of the evaluation instrument (a copy of the instrument is attached to this report).

About half of the evaluations were collected online while the other half were submitted in the hard copy format and manually input by the student research assistant into Survey Pro 2.0 for analysis.

FINDINGS

Respondent Demographics

The four demographic items included:

- # of WI Classes Taken
- Transfer level credits completed by end of Spring ‘06 Semester
- HCC Program/Major
- Ultimate Academic Goal

Almost half (47%) of respondents were taking their first WI class; a third (32.9%) were taking their second WI class; 11% were in their third WI class; fewer than 10% had taken four or more WI classes.

Most WI Students Have Advanced Standing

Almost half (47%) of respondents were nearing A.A. completion; a quarter were in “sophomore” status; only 11% were just beginning their A.A.
Half Seek Bachelor’s Degrees - Over a Third Seek Advanced Degrees

Relatively few WI students (15%) report that their ultimate academic goals will end with an Associate’s Degree. The vast majority seek Bachelor’s or advanced degrees.

**Ultimate Academic Goal (N = 151)**

- Bachelor’s: 43.6%
- Associate’s/Cert.: 12.6%
- Early Childhood: 24.3%
- CENT Program: 4.5%
- Human Services: 3.5%
- Master’s: 1.5%

MOST WI STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED IN LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM

Most (77%) WI students are enrolled in the HCC Liberal Arts (A.A.) Program; 13% are Early Childhood students; 3% are in the CENT Program; and 3% are in Human Services.

VAST MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS REPORT WI HALLMARKS ACHIEVED

The evaluation contained 13 scaled items that addressed aspects of the WI Hallmarks.

The vast majority of student responses suggest that HCC’s WI courses/faculty are adhering to all major WI expectations.

The Hallmarks are listed below - along with tables that display the percentage of respondents who Strongly Agreed/Agreed with each item.
Course uses writing to promote the learning of course materials
(Formal/Informal writing in and out of class to increase student understanding and improve writing skills)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATIVE ITEM</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree or Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments helped me learn more about the content of this course</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned how to make my thinking clearer through the writing process</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned how to apply the vocabulary relevant to this course through writing</td>
<td>83%</td>
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Course provides interaction between teacher and students while students do assigned writing.
(Instructor acts as expert and student as apprentice in a community of writers - types of interaction will vary)

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<th>EVALUATIVE ITEM</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree or Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received helpful feedback from my instructor and/or my fellow students</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised my writing based on feedback from my instructor and/or students</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to proofread, edit, and revise my writing</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned to create different kinds of writing in relation to purpose, subject, audience</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned techniques of good research/appropriate use of sources to support my ideas/writing</td>
<td>71%</td>
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Writing contributes significantly to each student’s course grade.
(Writing assignments must make up at least 40% of each student’s course grade)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATIVE ITEM</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree or Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments counted for significant portion of my grade - at least 60%</td>
<td>87%</td>
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Course requires students to do a substantial amount of writing - a minimum of 4,000 words or about 16 pages - this may include informal writing; however, in-class exams and drafts are not counted toward the 4,000 word minimum.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATIVE ITEM</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree or Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed at least 16 pages of writing through a process of drafts/revisions</td>
<td>87%</td>
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BAR GRAPH - RANK ORDERS EVALUATIVE RESPONSES

The Bar Graph below rank orders by mean value all scaled items. The mean was computed by assigning a score 1.0 to Strongly Disagree responses and 5.0 to Strongly Agree responses.

The overall mean of means (mean of all items) was 4.0 (Agree).

The highest mean value was 4.30 - writing assignments helped me learn more about the content of this course. The lowest mean value was 3.12 - I received helpful feedback on my writing from other students in my class.

Figure 2: SCALED WI ITEMS - ALL RESPONDENTS - RANK ORDERED BY MEAN VALUE

1.0 = Strongly Disagree .... 5.0 = Strongly Agree

Scaled WI Evaluation Items

Writing assignments helped me learn more about the content of this course
I completed at least sixteen pages of writing that went through a process of drafts/revisions
Writing assignment counted for a significant portion of my grade (at least 50%)
I received helpful feedback on my writing from my instructor
Overall, I think that my writing has improved as a result of this course
I learned how to make my thinking clearer through the writing process
I learned how to apply the vocabulary relevant this course through the writing process
I revised my writing based on feedback from my instructor and/or my fellow students
I learned to proofread, edit, and revise my writing
I learned to create different kinds of writing in relation to my purpose, subject, audience
I learned techniques of good research/appropriate use of sources to support my ideas/writing
I improved my computer skills in composing and revising my writing
I received helpful feedback on my writing from other students in my class

COMMENTS

WI students provided pages of comments about:

♦ Kinds of writing assignments they completed for their classes
♦ Kinds of feedback about their writing they received from their instructors and fellow students.
Sample Comments:

Kinds of Assignments

Assignments: Five page paper on Gore reflection, advocacy paper, parent education workshop, movie reflection papers.

The compare and contrast of art work. The research of art work.

I completed argumentative, comparison and contrast, and a research paper for this course.

Lots of reaction/journal papers.

Formal, informal, descriptive, and opinion essays.

Kinds of Feedback from Instructors and Fellow Students

We received all of our writing assignments with feedback and comments.

She would allow us to make corrections and turn it in for more points. She always had something positive to say...she actually took the time to really correct my work.

Using correct and formal grammar.

Verbal and written corrections.

She proofread all that I did and both students and teacher corrected my mistakes.

Verbally

Peer editing and

We worked in groups reading our papers and our classmates commented on the material we presented. The teacher wrote comments and suggestions in margins to help guide our writing.

Internet, e-mail, snail mail, and telephone.

CONCLUSION - WI CLASSES MEET EXPECTATIONS, BUT CAN BE IMPROVED

The format (use of a common, linked, more detailed evaluation instrument) of the Spring 2006 HCC WI Evaluation process has provided the WI Board and University College with comprehensive, insightful findings.

The reports provide the HCC WI Board and WI faculty with benchmark assessments that should lead to improved student learning outcomes in WI classes.
The program and individual faculty reports demonstrate that HCC WI classes meet UH System WI Hallmarks.

A separate study of HCC Associate of Arts Program graduates (conducted at the Spring 2006 Commencement) provides validation that the HCC A.A. Program effort to develop writing skills is succeeding: 64% of responding graduates rated the development of their effective writing skills at HCC as Excellent; virtually all of the rest of the respondents (32%) rated the writing development effort as Good.

While these findings verify that the program is effectively addressing the development of writing abilities, the findings are best used to identify areas that need further refinement/improvement.

Faculty can use the WI Program Level findings as a norm group to which their own class evaluations can be compared. Individual class evaluations can used by faculty as baseline data from which faculty can plot progress over the next few semesters in specific WI areas.

Reviewing and using these assessment findings should lead to continuous improvement of HCC transfer-bound student writing/reasoning skills.