Large Course Redesign Project Report
Course Title: UWRT 1104
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1. Project Abstract/Description
Project Description
This project responded to the preparedness of a changing population of first-year and transfer students who are required to take first-year writing at UNC Charlotte. Over the last few years, more students have met the cut-off criteria for entrance to an advanced FYW 1103, but were not prepared for the 3-credit accelerated course. Similarly, less students seemed in need of the two-sequence first-year writing course, needing less than two semesters to prepare them to apply writing within other contexts outside of UWP. During the first year (2014-2015), this course design grant allowed the UWP to investigate current writing research on millennial populations such as ours, interview researchers of other university writing programs that had moved to a one course model (to which research pointed), use all the collected data to determine whether we should move to a one-course model, and begin designing the single-semester model of first-year writing.

UWRT 1104: Writing and Inquiry in Academic Contexts I and II/with Online Studio is a 4-credit hybrid writing course has been designed to provide student-writers with an accelerated writing experience on the one hand, but also provide additional support and writing practice through its online series of writing studios. During the second year (2015-2016), faculty refined the design, piloted the course and collected student and faculty data to determine the efficacy of this 4-credit first-year writing course.

Data Collection and Analysis
The first iteration of this piloted course was delivered in 11 sections during fall 2015. Four UWP instructors piloted 11 sections of UWRT 1104 in Fall 2015. In addition to teaching these pilot sections, all four instructors composed a weekly blog post on Moodle to share their observations and experiences in a hybrid writing course environment.

During Fall 2015, student data was also collected to understand participant experiences. In an IRB-approved study, students across all 11 sections were surveyed at the beginning (N=207 initial surveys) and end of the course (N=189) to understand their expectations and experiences. Four volunteer student-participants and all pilot instructors were also interviewed toward the end of the semester. Data from instructor blogs were analyzed for emerging themes and patterns. In addition to the above-mentioned surveys and interviews, examples of student portfolios were collected and analyzed for evidence of the UWP’s student learning outcomes.
2. Representative Images of the Project
In addition to regular classroom instruction, the UWRT 1104 had an online component (described as the Moodle Online Studio). Work completed in the Moodle Studio was equivalent to 1-credit hour in this 3+1 credit-hour model. This Moodle Online Studio provides practice space where students work with new digital tools and technologies to compose a variety of multimodal and multimedia texts in response to course readings and activities. Studio projects also help students prepare for their major course projects (including the capstone ePortfolio assignment).

This Online Studio draws on threshold concepts in writing studies and is designed to facilitate transfer of writing knowledge from one writing situation to another, from their first-year writing course to other academic and non-academic contexts in which students routinely compose in various genres, using a wide variety of composing tools and technologies. The Studio extends contact time between all course participants and enables students to see, understand, and practice writing as a highly social, dynamic, and situated practice that takes shapes in particular rhetorical situations.

![UWRT 1104-Development Courses](image)

**Figure 1**: Screenshot from UWRT 1104 development course accessible to all teaching faculty. Faculty can choose and adapt from any of the 21 projects developed by UWRT pilot group.

**Figure 1** is a screenshot of the Moodle development site designed for first-year writing instructors. This development site functions as a resource for FYW faculty who use this page to (1) view and adopt/adapt studio projects from the database of projects developed by the 1104 design team, (2) explore sample syllabi designed by the 4 pilot instructors, adopt/adapt 21 studio projects, and (3) communicate with each other using the forum function on the site.
What Writing is and What Writing Does

The goal of this project is to consider the definition of writing and how writing operates in the world.

You will:
- Develop a complex definition of writing
- Consider multiple purposes for writing

Please view the Prezi linked below with your daybook in hand. Work through the prompts on the Prezi and create the final assignment on the Prezi. Post that assignment to the forum below. Finally, reflect on what you learned in the blog post.

![Screeshot from a sample UWRT 1104 project ("What Writing Is, What Writing Does")](image)

**Figure 2**: Screenshot from a sample UWRT 1104 project ("What Writing Is, What Writing Does")

**Figure 2** represents one of the 21 studio projects designed by the UWRT 1104 design team. In this project, student-writers explore their current conceptions of writing by watching a Prezi, composing in their private daybook, and then writing/reflecting on their current conceptions of writing. Projects like this enable writers to explore the various kinds of writing that they do in school, at home, and in their communities. It creates a space for them to see writing not just as composing essayistic prose but as something that takes place using multiple semiotic resources that include verbal and non-verbal elements, text and image, multimodal and multimedia enhancements.
In the above-featured project (Figure 3), students explore music genres as a way of thinking about how genres exist in relationship with other genres within specific contexts. This online studio project leads to class discussions on conventions, the various genres of academic writing, and how genres are fluid and tend to exist within specific writing situations and disciplinary contexts.

3. Impact on Student Learning

Our concerns were whether SLOs were met and whether the course moved too fast for students who would have taken 1101/02 instead, or too slowly for those who may have qualified, but were not really prepared for the accelerated 1103.
A. Improved Learning and B. Improved Retention

We compared DFW rates of 1101/1102 with 1104 during the pilot year. In fall (11 sections of 1104), the “D” rates were comparable across all courses (2%); 1% fewer students failed 1104; and the withdrawal rates for 1104 were comparable to 1101, but 2% less than 1102.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2015 DFW Rates</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1101</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1102</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1104</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring FYW populations are different than fall populations: they are first semester students, having entered in January. Comparing 4 sections of 1104 that were taught with all sections of 1101/02: “D” rates of 1104 were comparable to 1101, both of which were 2% higher than 1102—which is taken by second semester first-year students. 1104 had 4% fewer F rates than 1101 and 1% more than 1102 (with the second semester students). The W rate for 1104 was 5% higher than second semester students (who were taking 1101 for the first time) and 3% higher than 1102 students (who were second semester students). It’s a little like comparing apples to oranges, but for us, the important numbers are the D and F.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring 2016 DFW Rates</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1101</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1102</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1104</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We believe that some of the reasons lay in the composition of the Spring students, but we need to look more deeply at the W rates in Spring to determine the differences noted.

C. Other Impacts on Students

Students who registered for the 1104 pilot participated in a pre-course and post-course survey. There were 189 total responses to the post-course survey. The post-course questions were as follows:

Q1: How useful did you find teacher feedback in the online components of this course?
Q2: How useful did you find student feedback in the online components of this course?
Q3: How useful did you find teacher feedback in the face-to-face components of this course?
Q4: How useful did you find student feedback in the face-to-face components of this course?
Q5: To what extent do you see a connection between your face-to-face class and the online studio?
Q6: How connected did you feel to your peers in the online studio?
Q7: How much did you enjoy this course?
Q8: How much did you learn about writing in this course?
Q9: How much effort did it take for you to complete the online studio?

In the above visualization, the **X axis** represents the Likert Scale by question number. On this axis, 1= strongly disagree/low score, 5= strongly agree/high score). The **Y axis** represents the total number of completed responses (N=189).

Generally, students reported a high level of satisfaction with the course, with the answer of 5 occurring most often (Figure 4). With the exception of Q9 responses (effort), scores average in the 4 range (Figure B). This is the desired response since one concern of the designers was whether the the 3+1 style course would overwork students with its demanding end-of-course portfolio. Since the portfolio should be composed throughout the course, and the studios can encourage that, students should not experience stress over this last project. This is a positive outcome that needs further exploration.
In the above visualization, the X axis represents the Likert Scale by question number. The Y axis represents the Likert Scale range (1= strongly disagree/low score, 5= strongly agree/high score).

In addition to the nine questions in the post-course survey, students also responded to an open ended question: “How has the studio affected the way you see writing?” Since the researchers found a variety of responses, patterns were coded for frequency. Students most often mentioned seeing a favorable change in their composing processes (58 of 189 responses), followed by gains in writing confidence (32 of 189) and an awareness of style/genre (32 of 189). We interpret this as evidence that the goals of 1104 and how we designed the studio model are in line with our curricular goals, and that students are recognizing those goals and outcomes through this pilot course.

4. Impact on Cost Savings
The change will reduce our reliance on adjunct instructors and ensure that full-time faculty and a smaller cadre of adjuncts who have trained with us and are familiar with our curriculum will be primary instructors. Monetarily, full implementation of 1104 will reduce our part-time budget. Row three of the budget chart below considers this year’s student population (numbers and test scores) and estimates what the budget would be if we did not have 1101/1102 and only have 1103 (22%) and 1104 (78%):
### 1104 Implementation Year - AY17 Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjunct Budget/Yr</th>
<th># of Students in 1104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$254,000 (hypothetical FY17)</td>
<td>0 (no 1104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$241,500 (actual FY 17)</td>
<td>53% (implementation year; 20% of students still in 1102/03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$188,500 (projected FY18, but with no increase in enrolment)</td>
<td>All qualified students in 1104 (no 1101/02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tangible/Intangibles: Every year our first-year student population increases. Instead of continually hiring a lot of new and adjunct faculty every year—and training them—we'll be able to deliver instruction with less labor assigned to their training, supervision and observation. In addition, this model will streamline our scheduling process and less labor will be assigned to that process. We can also reduce the administrative roles of faculty: we can reduce the number of course reassignments to training, observation, scheduling, assessing and reporting.

### 5. Lessons Learned

#### A. Pedagogical Improvement Techniques

Over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year, the 1104 team worked on collecting data from 1104 pilot courses and presented preliminary findings to our faculty on two different dates: 12/4/15 and 1/15/16. We facilitated discussions with our faculty about 1104 course design, teacher feedback practices with studio work, and assessment of studio work in relationship to the course as a whole. To help our faculty prepare to teach 1104, we've maintained our 1104 Development Course on Moodle which houses all of the studio options, as well as added to our instructor’s guide and provided other resources such as sample 1104 syllabi. We also assisted our Associate Directors in our program-wide assessment day (5/6/16) in which we discussed results from data analysis of student work as related to our capstone projects, e-portfolios.

Another initiative related to our redesign project was the development of our Blended Learning Team, comprised of Cat Mahaffey and Justin Cary (UWRT summer hybrid teachers), Debarati Dutta and Meaghan Rand (from the 1104 Development Team). The Blended Learning Group, started in Fall 2015, met periodically to discuss faculty development opportunities for the full UWRT faculty. This led to the development of a Moodle Project course as a resource for our faculty, as well as faculty development meetings in conjunction with our regular faculty meetings to discuss various aspects of preparation to teach 1104 and summer hybrid UWRT courses. This Moodle Project course covered topics such as “What is Blended Learning?” and “Assignment Redesign” and also provided opportunities for faculty to pose questions, interact
with each other via forums, and provide feedback for the Blended Learning Team about concerns and questions that were addressed in subsequent faculty meetings in Spring 2016. This Moodle site is available to all of our faculty and will serve as a continual training site (in Canvas).

**B. Cost Reduction Techniques**

The seeming reduction in actual faculty course load from four to three had to be explained to administration: it was not a reduction in credits hours taught. In fact, students would be taking two less credits; 1104 also reduces the number of sections the UWP needs to staff per year since students will take one course instead of two. Students can take an elective or course in their major instead.

The project involved a lot of labor (which the grant made possible): research; course design, testing and revision; development of an assessment plan; development and delivery of faculty training website and course.

**C. Implementation Issues**

We had to involve a lot of stakeholders because we were changing a general education requirement. We worked across colleges, with advising teams, those in charge of transfers: we were glad we had spent all the time we did on researching this issue, looking at other models and using Institutional Research to help with generating our own models.

This four-credit course had a potential impact on students’ schedules: we had to check every course of study to determine whether this would affect time to degree. That also had an effect on which semester students could take the course without exceeding limits on credits/semester; we had to determine which Colleges would have students take 1104 in fall and spring. We needed to keep advisors informed of changes by talking with every group in Colleges, creating guidelines and sending registration updates.

Finally, the move to one course is a pedagogical improvement. We had to shift campus paradigms about writing, convince stakeholders that it was better to reduce the writing that students do first year, give them the strategies and skills to use thereafter, and then create opportunities throughout their four years to practice writing in a number of genres and contexts. We needed to communicate and work with faculty broadly and specifically with UCFC to require a three credit general education “capstone” course. In this new Critical Thinking and Communication course students will, prior to getting into their communication-rich courses in their majors be taking their sophomore year, have practice applying what they learned in FYW to another disciplinary context.

**6. Sustainability**

We already have the faculty development piece in place (see, for example, Part 5 A) and faculty development and mentoring is already a core part of the culture of the program. Sustaining the
quality will not be an issue for us. In addition, we will continue to collect data on the success of the courses in order to measure our pedagogy, faculty development and student success.