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COURSE DEVELOPMENT GRANT REPORT

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Title of Grant Award: Course Development Grant: Developing New Approaches to Undergraduate Tutor Education, Summer 2012

Project Goal

The goal of this course development grant was to develop a new course, ENG 330: Tutoring Writing: Theory and Practice, which introduces undergraduate students from all majors to writing center theory and practice, writing across/in the disciplines, and tutoring in academic and community contexts. The project goal was to develop assignments using several high-impact practices to better help students both understand the different elements of the course and integrate each of those elements together in the practice of tutoring.

When Implemented (Quarter the course was taught): Spring 2013

Brief Description of the Project (as described in the proposal)

I developed a new course, ENG 330: Tutoring Writing: Theory and Practice, which was created in part to make tutor education more accessible to undergraduates at an earlier stage in their university careers and to develop a course that supports both English and non-English majors. Like other tutor education courses, Eng 330 introduces students to writing center theory and practice. However, this project was undertaken to explore ways of extensively revising approaches to tutor education to incorporate several high-impact practices:

- 1) Collaborative research and writing on academic writing/writing in the disciplines: Expand students' explicit knowledge of academic writing across the disciplines while providing them with sustained experience of and critical reflection on collaborative research and writing.
- 2) Community writing tutoring: Introduce students to community-based tutoring to provide hands-on learning opportunities and to explore the similarities and differences between tutoring in university and community contexts.
- 3) Undergraduate research on writing tutoring: Support students' active engagement writing tutoring theory and practice by developing an assignment that asks them to pursue original research projects with the potential to contribute to writing center studies.

How the Project was Implemented (including how it differed from original plan)

During course development, it became clear that I would not be able to incorporate all of the high-impact practices described above in the first version of the course. This was in part due to the constraints of a 10-week course and due to mitigating circumstances that made developing a service-learning component unfeasible. That said, the final version did include a collaborative research project which merged two of the above goals (collaborative research and undergraduate research). See full description of the collaborative research assignment below.

Results of the Project:

The collaborative research assignment served as one of two culminating projects of the course (the other being individual philosophy of tutoring writing essays). As such, it was designed to serve as a vehicle for students to a) explore the relationships between writing center theory and practice with respect to specific issues; b) begin to develop independent lines of inquiry (undergraduate research); and c) engage in sustained collaborative learning with peers. The collaborative research assignment asked students to work in teams to first develop a specific focus within the field of writing center studies and collaboratively write a blog post defining the scope of their research; to next consult the relevant scholarship and prepare a collaboratively written annotated bibliography; and to finally prepare and present a series of panel presentations (modeled after academic conference presentations), during which each student presented his/her findings. During this process, students also drew on data from field observations conducted throughout the quarter in the writing center. During the course, six groups of students (3-5 students per group) researched a range of topics including the impact of non-verbal communication on writing center consultations; tutoring multilingual writers; and remediation and racism in the writing center. While teams consulted and collaborated with each other as they prepared their presentations, they were not asked to present unified projects as groups. In this way, students were able to benefit from collaborative learning while still developing their individual lines of inquiry.

Additional Comments (Lessons Learned, Insights, Future Plans, etc.)

Overall, the project results were both encouraging and uneven. In terms of supporting collaborative learning and inquiry, the project was largely successful. There emerged a surprising degree of consistency in students' interests and questions across groups, a consistency that became clearer as each subsequent panel of students presented their papers. Though each group identified different topics at the outset, most groups and students gravitated towards issues related to multilingual writers and the relationships between language, learning, and power. During the presentations and subsequent discussions, this shared interest spotlighted and reinforced many of the central themes of the course and seemed to help students recognize shared commitments, commonalities that they had not previously recognized beyond their collaborative groups. Further, many students commented (both to me personally and in SOTEs) that they valued the opportunity to learn with and from their peers. They noted that the class as a whole and this project in particular challenged them to learn through their active engagement with each other while still providing adequate support from both professor and peers.

As a vehicle for supporting and developing undergraduate research, this project was less successful, at least to the extent that students were able to produce fully developed research/scholarly projects. Here, both the novelty of the field and time constraints worked against the project. Most students in tutor education classes have not previously encountered writing center studies, and thus it is unrealistic to expect students to orient themselves to the field and scholarly conversations and to develop fully realized research/scholarly projects within the span of 10 weeks. In future iterations, then, I will revise the expectations of the project to a) emphasize exploratory research (a more reasonable goal) and b) inculcate an orientation towards research and scholarship. Thus, students will not be expected to produce fully developed and executed research/scholarship as a result, but they will develop a clear understanding of the importance of integrating research, theory, and practice in the writing center context and a strong

foundation for future research/scholarship projects should they continue to work in writing center studies.