

# **NMSU QUALITY INITIATIVE**

## **IMPROVING STUDENT DISCIPLINARY WRITING**

Fall Update Report  
2016

**STUDENTS DON'T WRITE  
AS WELL AS WE THINK  
THEY SHOULD**

***WHY* DON'T STUDENTS  
WRITE AS WELL AS WE  
THINK THEY SHOULD?**

# WHAT DO WE NEED KNOW?

- How *frequently* do students write?
- How *much* do students write?
- What *types* of writing do students do?
- How much *instruction* do we give?
- What *resources* do we provide?
- How *clearly* do we communicate *expectations*?
- How much *feedback* do we give?
- How *important* is writing?
- How *well* do students write?
- How do *faculty* think about and approach writing?

# **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- 1. Evaluation and assessment of actual student writing – generally and in the disciplines**
- 2. Syllabi Analysis**
- 3. Student-reported experiences with writing at NMSU**
- 4. Student perceptions about writing**
- 5. Faculty attitudes and beliefs about writing**
- 6. Institutional policies and practices that impact writing**
- 7. Resources available to students that support writing**

# ***FREQUENCY & QUANTITY***

**Similar to our peers**

**Varies widely by college and discipline**

# ***WHERE***

- **Across campus, in multiple places – primarily in courses**
  - Required writing courses
  - Discipline courses
- **Most likely to have writing in Education**
- **Least likely to have writing in Engineering**

# ***TYPES***

- **Most common:**
  - Personal Reaction
  - Other
  - Paper
- **Least common:**
  - Creative
  - Take Home Exam



# ***TYPES***

- **Freshman report *above* our peers that in their writing they have had to:**
  - Describe methods/findings related to data
  - Explain numerical/statistical data
  - Address a specified audience (real/imagined)
- **Seniors report *below* our peers that in their writing they have had to:**
  - Evaluate or analyze something they read, researched or observed
  - Argue a position w/ evidence & reason\*
  - Write in the style/format of a specific field

# ***TYPES***

**Lowest performing item score for Seniors was a statement about how often they *summarized what they learned in class or from course materials***

- **–5% point difference from our peer/ comparison group**

# ***INSTRUCTION***

- **ENGL111G – 4 credits (1 semester)**
  - English ACT of 16+
  - Cap enrollment is 27
  - 1 of the 4 ENGL111G credits requires online completion
  - 22% of students are ELLs
- **“Second writing course” – 3 credits**
- **VWW – 3-6 credits**
  - require writing that demonstrates the integration of knowledge

# ***RESOURCES***

- **Writing Center**
- **Career Center Resume Building Workshops**
- **Syllabi**
  - 82% do ***not*** suggest writing resources
  - 98% do ***not*** suggest research resources
  - 99% do ***not*** reference an exemplar/prototype
- **Very limited resources for domestic ELL**

# ***EXPECTATIONS***

**Students identify *clarity* of instruction and expectations as having significant impact on their writing experiences and success – 2<sup>nd</sup> only to feedback.**

# ***EXPECTATIONS***

## **Freshman report *above* our peers:**

- instructors provide clear instructions and explain in advance learning outcomes and grading criteria

## **Seniors report *below* our peers (same) and specifically on the frequency that instructors:**

- “provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do.”

## **Syllabi**

- 86% - do not mention criteria
- 91% - format of the rubric is unknown
- 86% - no explicit link to a learning goal/objective
- 91% - do not include writing specifications

# ***FEEDBACK***

**Students identify *feedback* (formative) with the most frequency, as having significant impact on their writing experiences and success.**

- 97% of writing assignments do not require formative feedback**

# ***IMPORTANCE***

- **Students say that NMSU does or does not think writing is important based on**
  - curricular requirements (writing courses)
  - course requirements (writing assignments)
- **Students associate more writing with greater importance of writing in the discipline**
- **Students believe their success in writing is of more concern to them than it is to NMSU**



# ***QUALITY***

- **NMSU students are “average”**
- **Satisfaction with discipline writing varies across departments**

# ***QUALITY***

- **CLA**
  - Strength (Seniors): writing mechanics
  - Weakness (Seniors): problem solving
  
- **NMSU GE Assessment**
  - 57% of Juniors and Seniors rated competent/exemplary
    - 85% in “mechanics and grammar”
    - 55% in “organization”
    - 56% in “rhetorical strategies”

**FACULTY**

**WHAT DOES THE  
RESEARCH SAY?**

**WHAT DO FACULTY  
SAY ABOUT THEIR  
OWN WRITING?**

**DOES SOMETHING  
CHANGE WHEN FACULTY  
THINK ABOUT ASSIGNING  
WRITING IN THEIR OWN  
COURSES?**

# ***FACULTY INTENTIONS***

## **Study 1: Influences on faculty intention to assign writing**

- Attitudes
- Perceived Difficulty

## **Time and difficulty involved in grading is**

- A disadvantage
- Makes assigning writing beyond their control
- Makes it difficult to assign writing

# ***FACULTY INTENTIONS***

## **Study 2: Predicting faculty intentions**

- **#1 - belief that “it is good for the student”**
  - *Accounts for 41% of variance*
- **And...** (account for additional 18% of variance)
  - Increase student learning
  - Increase critical thinking
  - Increase ability to communicate
  - Increase ability to apply what is learned in class
  - Increase reflection on course material
  - Aids in assessment of student learning



# **FACULTY INTENTIONS**

## **PRODUCT**

**Writing to demonstrate writing ability**

**Writing to communicate**

**Longer, formal, summative assignments**

**Grade for “writing” over content**

**End in itself**

## **PROCESS**

**Writing to learn**

**Writing to process information**

**Iterative**

**Shorter, informal, formative assignments**

**Writing often**

**Grade for content over “writing”; or not graded**

**Means to an end**

# **EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION**

## **Sharing information**

- **What does it mean?**
- **What about in the context of your department?**
- **What about in the context of your courses?**

## **What, if anything, should we do?**

- **As an institution?**
- **In your department?**
- **In your courses?**

# **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**11 College Teams to NMHEAA Summer Retreat**

**3 Cohorts of Writing to Learn Mini-grants (21 individuals)**

**1 Cohort of TA Writing to Learn participants (8 individuals)**

**Video interviews; documentary**

**Teaching Academy workshops by English Department**

**Brown Bag events in the Teaching Academy**

**Dr. John Bean, Writing in the Disciplines (WID) expert**

**Drs. Roger and Heather Graves, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and WID experts – NMSU Conference on Assessment**

**Student writing competition – co-sponsored with ASNMSU and the New York Times in Education**

**NMSU WAC summer workshops**