Exploring Options for Students at the Boundaries of the "At-Risk" Designation

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Abstract

Many first-time college students with weak to marginal academic records are asked to take an extra writing course before advancing to the required course in composition. The study reported here was designed to test that practice by comparing the performance of students placed into an additional writing course with those placed into a course that teaches positive self-perception, life management strategies, and organizational skills. The comparison is based on multiple measures, including tests of student writing apprehension, interviews, direct assessment of student writing, their grades in the required first-year composition course, and subsequent retention rates. These data suggest that although some type of intervention may be necessary to help many academically marginal students to succeed, an additional writing class is not the only choice, and perhaps not always the best.

Is additional writing instruction always the best option for students who may face a greater risk of failing the required first-year composition course? We address the question in this article by presenting the results of a study in which we compared the experiences of two separate sets of students with marginal academic records as measured by high school rank, grades, and standardized test scores. One set of students took an extra writing course while the other took a course designed to help them learn about university life, discover their attitudes toward themselves and their learning, and develop effective ways to manage time and to study.

Readers of this journal might think that our study contributes to scholarship on tracking, the nature of basic writing, and its possible abolition. That we do not intend. We recognize that such scholarship has a relatively long

history (see, for example, Barnhard; Bartholomae, "Tidy House"; Grego and Thompson; Hampton; "Has English Zero"; Hull, Rose, Fraser, and Castellano; Soliday and Gleason; Wermuth). We do not intend to address these issues other than to note that tracking and extra writing courses seem necessary—at least where some of us work. Data at the institution where this study occurred suggest that some students do indeed benefit from taking an additional writing course. For example, as Table 1 illustrates, 42% of males and 46% of females who graduated in the 10th-19th percentile range of their high school classes passed the first-year composition course (English W131) with a C or better, but 63% of males and 69% of females from the same group passed if they took an extra course (English W130) beforehand.1 Taking W130 apparently increased these students' odds of passing W131 by over 20%.

The university at which we completed this study has undertaken numerous analyses assessing the rates of success of the writing courses in terms of skill development as well as their effect on retention and eventual graduation rates. One such study, tangential to this research, attempted to develop a probabilistic model of student success in W131 based on known student academic characteristics (e.g., SAT scores, high school GPA and percentile ranking, and placement test results). A logistic regression was performed on these scores and standard demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, and age). Using a stepwise approach, we identified high school percentile ranking and SAT math scores to be the most significant predictors of success (i.e., at least a grade of C). With these results in mind, we see benefits similar to the W130 to W131 effect if we look at the correlation between SAT math scores and performance in composition. Males who scored between 200 and 400 on the SAT math test, for instance, improved their chances of passing W131 by at least 10% if they took W130 first. The same was true for females who scored between 200 and 300.[2] Based on the institutional data we have, it makes sense to urge some students to take an additional writing course.

Table 1: Probability of Passing First-Year Composition (W131) with or without Taking Developmental Writing (W130) Beforehand, Based on High School Percentile*

High School Percentile	Probability of Passing W131	Probability of Passing W131 after taking W130
90–99	Female: 94% Male: 91%	Female: 88% Male: 89%
80–89	Female: 92% Male: 88%	Female: 87% Male: 87%
70–79	Female: 88% Male: 84%	Female: 85% Male: 85%
60–69	Female: 84% Male: 79%	Female: 83% Male: 82%
50–59	Female: 78% Male: 73%	Female: 81% Male: 79%
40–49	Female: 72% Male: 67%	Female: 78% Male: 76%
30–39	Female: 64% Male: 59%	Female: 75% Male: 72%
20–29	Female: 55% Male: 52%	Female: 73% Male: 68%
10–19	Female: 46% Male: 42%	Female: 69% Male: 63%
<10	Female: 38% Male: 36%	Female: 66% Male: 57%

* Probabilities are based on student performance from the 2002–2003 academic year through 2006–2007

Although an extra writing course seems appropriate for students with weak academic histories, the need becomes unclear when we work with students from the "murky middle" of an incoming class—murky middle being a term coined by Bill Baden to describe the records of students whose academic histories are neither strong nor weak. As scholars such as White ("Re: SAT/ACT") and Peckham have noted, the "volatility at the mid-levels" of student scores makes it difficult to know how best to place or advise them (Peckham 72; see also Stitt-Bergh). Moreover, as we discuss in the coming paragraphs, the influence of numerous factors on writing performance have

made us question whether an extra writing course is even appropriate for many students from that large, volatile, murky middle.

We specifically question whether an additional writing course would help students whose high school rank, grades, and SAT or ACT scores put them somewhere between the 40th and 60th percentiles of an entering class. We know, for example, that 78% of females and 73% of males who graduated in the 50th-59th percentile range of their high school classes passed first-year composition with a C or better at the institution where this study took place, and 81% of females and 78% of males from the same range passed if they took an extra course beforehand (see Table 1). Taking an extra writing course helped these students increase their odds of passing first-year composition by only 3–5%. Similar, but weaker, correlations exist between SAT math scores and success in first-year composition. We worry that a 3–5% increase is insufficient to warrant a student's time and expense.

Background: The Birth of Our Study

We initially questioned the value of an additional writing course for academically marginal students because we knew that many of them display poor writing abilities for reasons other than language proficiency. The literature on self-efficacy and writing suggests as much (see, for example, Daly and Miller; Maimon; McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Wacholz and Etheridge; White and Bruning). Such research suggests that students' beliefs in their abilities and their faith that their work will lead to success can affect the quality of the work they produce. Through a self-fulfilling prophecy, many students who believe that they will fail do not put forth the effort required to succeed. Why bother to struggle with something when one feels certain of failing anyway? Given these insights, it seems that more writing experience may not always be what academically marginal students need. Some may need to work, for instance, on improving their sense of self-efficacy, managing their time, or better understanding the culture of higher education (as Bartholomae has suggested in "Inventing the University"). It seems, in short, that more writing is not always the answer to an academically marginal student's writing dilemma.

As the institution where this study took place began to offer a course (IDIS G104) that focused on such issues as improving self-efficacy, understanding the culture of higher education, and managing one's time, we saw an opportunity to explore whether students from the murky middle do indeed need more writing instruction, or something else. We did this by comparing how a statistically similar group of students fared in two sets of linked courses: English P131/English W131 or IDIS G104/English W131.

(For a summary of the three courses, see Table 2. Additional description of the courses also appears below.) Based on the placement procedures we were using at the time, students were placed into one of three options.

- Most students were placed directly into the first-year course (English W131). English W131 is required of all students at our institution and is counted as part of their general education credit.
- A smaller group of students was placed into an additional writing course (English W130) before taking W131, which resulted in a two-semester sequence. Because English W130 did not count toward graduation credit, it was seen as remedial and an extra burden by many students.
- To minimize the number of students required to take W130, and to acknowledge that many marginal students did not need an extra three-hour course, a third group of students was placed into a concurrent combination of W131 plus a two-credit hour class called English P131, Composition Practicum, which resulted in a one-semester, five-hour combination.

Table 2. Description of the Four Courses Mentioned in this Study

W130	W131	P131	G104
"Basic" writing course, 3 credit hours, no general education or elective credit	First semester composition course, 3 credit hours, general education credit	2 hour practicum course to be taken concurrently with W131, no general education or elective credit	University experience course, 3 credit hours, general elective credit

The students placed into the P131/W131 combination were considered too well prepared to take W130 but not prepared enough to succeed in W131 without help. The purpose of P131 was to help students succeed in W131 by offering supplemental instruction but to do so in a one-semester experience that cost students less and kept them on track in terms of the required writing sequence. Instructors of P131 were encouraged to engage students in the kinds of activities they would be practicing in W131: critical reading, invention, audience, arrangement, research strategies, and grammatical and mechanical issues.

Although it was designed with the best of intentions, we had our doubts about the efficacy of P131. The course, though a co-requisite to W131, was not taken in conjunction with a specific section, which led to inconsistencies in content and delivery. The designers of P131 originally intended for

students to register for conjoined sections of that course and W131, but the realities of student schedules prohibited that. (The university is largely a commuter campus and must deal with every conceivable variation of student schedule.) As a result, P131 faculty found that their students were enrolled across numerous sections of W131, each with different syllabi, which made uniform support impossible. Many students and instructors were frustrated because P131 was not integrated in helpful ways with W131; thus, they questioned its relevance, as did we.

As we considered the possibility of eliminating or modifying P131, we worried about what to do for the students who were traditionally placed in that course. We could have placed these students into the two-semester sequence (W130, then W131), but because the first course did not count for graduation credit, we hated to force students to take a course they may not need. Also, as mentioned previously, our readings on topics such as writing and self-efficacy made us wonder whether other kinds of experiences would be more appropriate for this group of students. This is why we were interested in studying student performance in IDIS G104.

IDIS G104, Critical Behaviors for Success, is relatively new at the institution. It was piloted in fall 2005 and fall 2006 as a potential freshman seminar to address acculturation and retention issues. G104 is a personal improvement course focusing on student success. It is based on many emotional intelligence skills such as intrapersonal (self-awareness, self-regard), interpersonal (empathy, relationships), adaptability (problem solving, reality testing), and stress management (stress tolerance, impulse control). Through introspection and written reflections, students gain in self-awareness, personal responsibility, and motivation. A series of guided classroom experiences lead students to new understandings of themselves, such as their locus of control and whether theirs is appropriately located internally, or in rediscovering their joy of learning. Students take a pre and post assessment of their skills and behaviors. They also take a retrospective pretest to allow them to reflect on their perception of their growth in course objectives over the semester.

Faculty for G104 and P131 are all part-time instructors who have at least a master's degree. G104 instructors come from diverse areas such as communication, business, English, or education. They have had some training in teaching techniques that allow students to make discoveries about themselves rather than have that information presented in a lecture. Although some of these faculty do have an English writing background, they do not focus on writing techniques, critique grammar or structure, or include writing tasks that P131 instructors would have tackled.

Methods

We devised multiple methods for studying whether students typically placed into the P131/W131 co-requisite would benefit from additional writing instruction (by taking P131) or from developing better self-awareness and by learning more about themselves and the culture of higher education. During fall 2006, we allowed all students who placed into P131 the option to take either a G104/W131 or a P131/W131 combination.[3] First-year students who placed into P131 received a flier on the G104 course and were told that they had the option to take either combination to fulfill the requirement. Our goal was to compare the success of students who took one combination with those who took the other. We made our comparisons using multiple studies: surveys, testing, normed rating of papers, interviews, and a review of grades and retention data.

Surveys and Testing

Because G104 was a pilot course at the time, we studied students in all five sections being offered. We also chose five sections of P131 so that we could have equal sets of student data from each course. In order to gather as many variables as possible, we administered a survey and the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension test to the students in all ten sections. (The survey and Daly-Miller test appear in appendixes A and B respectively.) The survey included questions about date of high school graduation, family income, parents' education levels, and amount and kinds of writing done in high school. To administer the survey and test, one or two of the authors visited each of the ten classrooms. (The teacher always left the room so that students did not feel coerced into completing the study.) After one of the authors distributed an IRB form and explained the purpose and the students' right to refuse to participate, the survey and test were administered. Each student returned the IRB form, the survey, and the test.

Once we eliminated ineligible participants (students not taking W131, those who did not give consent, and those who did not complete the survey or test adequately) we had 122 sets of student data. The students in the study were distributed relatively equally between the two cohorts: 64 were taking G104/W131, and 58 were taking P131/W131. The 58 students in the P131/W131 group represented 16% of all students enrolled in P131/W131 that semester. More importantly, these students' records suggested that a majority came from the murky middle of the incoming class. For example, the mean percentile for high school rank for the P131 students was 56.8, and the median was 56.5. Of the students we surveyed in the P131 and G104 classrooms, those also enrolled in W130 had lower means

for high school percentile (51.3), while those in W131 had higher (66.5). This distribution was also true for other factors such as SAT scores and high school grade point average. When we looked at means, in other words, the students eligible for the P131/W131 co-requisite were sandwiched between their counterparts in W130 and W131. If we looked beyond means, students in the P131/W131 and G104/W131 cohorts admittedly represented the full range of high school performance (see table C.1 in appendix C). Still, of the students in the P131/W131 cohort, 55% graduated somewhere between the 30th and 70th percentile; 47% of the students in the G104/W131 cohort came from the same range. These data suggest to us that we had found an appropriate group of students for our study.

A number of factors may have affected whether students chose one co-requisite option or another. First, there was the credit-hour difference. Students could earn 3 credits for G104 versus 2 for P131, which meant they paid higher tuition for G104. On the other hand, G104 can fulfill a general elective requirement while P131 could not count as credit toward any degree at our institution.[4] Despite these factors, the two cohorts were statistically similar in terms of age, gender, reported family income, and ethnicity, as is illustrated in the tables presented in Appendix C. Where appropriate, statistical tests showed no significant differences between students in regard to students' high school percentiles ($t=-0.72$, $p=0.4763$), or SAT scores (verbal: $t=-1.33$, $p=0.1876$; math: $t=-0.63$, $p=0.5321$)..

One disappointing, but unsurprising, characteristic of our sample was its lack of racial and ethnic diversity—the university in question is not a highly diverse campus. Of the 124 participants, only 2 (1.6) identified themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander; 4 (3.2%) identified themselves as Black, and 4 (3.2%) as Hispanic. One hundred and twelve identified themselves as Caucasian. These numbers were similar to the percentages for the campus as a whole in the fall of 2006. At that time, 2.1% identified themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander, 4.9% as Black, and 2.7% as Hispanic.

In summary, the surveys showed us that our two cohorts (P131/W131 and G104/W131) were distributed evenly, which meant we could rule out the influences of variables such as gender, race, and parental income on one group or another when making our comparisons.

Rating of W131 Papers

In addition to looking at student surveys, we tested our hypothesis by analyzing a randomly selected set of papers written for English W131 by students from both cohorts (P131/W131 and G104/W131). The set of student papers was chosen at random using the randomized sequence generator at

www.random.org. We asked teachers in the sections of English W131 to gather three papers from each of the students chosen for the study. (These were students who had signed the IRB consent form.) We gathered 48 papers to rate and developed a rubric for evaluating them. (The rubric is available in Appendix C.) Fifteen of the papers came from students in the G104/W131 cohort, and 30 came from students in the P131/W131 cohort. Because the rubric was based on six criteria and could be scored from one to four in each category, each paper could be rated on a scale from 6 to 24. We used three of the papers for a norming session, and two others proved ineligible, which left us with 43 separate papers to rate.

To rate the papers, we recruited seven instructors—experienced graduate teaching assistants, part-time instructors, and tenure-track faculty. Our assessment methods shared the same aim as Soliday and Gleason's: "to establish consensus among readers, which is usually achieved through norming sessions with a rubric" (69). During the norming session, we explained how to use the rubric and then rated one paper. Everyone compared results and discussed the rationale behind their ratings. We then rated two more papers, stopping to compare results and discuss rationales each time. After the norming session, the raters were given a week to read approximately 19 papers each. This way, we were able to ensure that each paper was rated three times. To determine a final rating for each paper, we took the two closest scores and averaged them. For example, the first paper in the set was given scores of 15, 13, and 10. We gave it a final score of 14 because the scores of 15 and 13 were closest together and 14 was the average of those two scores. If the three raters assigned scores that were evenly distributed (say, 16, 14, and 12) then we took the middle number.

Averaging the scores of the closest two of the three raters for each paper resulted in a range of 8 to 22. (Again, the fullest possible range was 6 to 24.) We also saw significant inter-rater reliability between the two closest raters in each case. As Table 2 shows, at least two raters agreed within 2 points in 35 of the 43 cases.

Table 3. Range of Agreement between the Two Closest Raters of Each Paper

Range between Two Closest Raters	Number of Raters
0	9
1	16
2	10
3	7
4	2

In all cases, at least two raters agreed within 10% of the possible upper range of 24 points. Or, put another way, generally the overall distance between readers ran between 2.0 and 2.5.

Interviews

Realizing that most of the data we were collecting was quantitative, we also conducted interviews to help gather types of narrative data that surveys and tests cannot reveal. We recruited three sets of interview subjects from those who took the Daly-Miller test: those who scored as highly apprehensive, moderately apprehensive, and inapprehensive. Because the first and last groups were relatively small (about 10% and 23% of the response respectively), we decided to select these interviewees according to certain criteria such as age, ethnicity, and parental income. Because about 70% of the students who took the test scored in the mid-range, we chose interview subjects from this section at random, using the same site and method that we used to generate a random sample of papers for evaluation. We generated a random list between 36–131. Since students' names had been entered in an Excel spreadsheet, we used the row number to determine whom we would interview. Ultimately, we conducted seven interviews. Of the seven students who were interviewed, two reported being highly apprehensive, three moderately, and two low. Five of the students were enrolled in P131 while two were in G104.

Results

Overall, our study found no significant differences between the performance of students in either cohort. For example, the rating of the W131 papers revealed no significant difference between the performance of the G104/W131 or P131/W131 students. In fact, the mean score of the two closest raters for the G104/W131 students was slightly higher (17.4) than for the P131/W131 students (16). A t-test did not indicate a significant difference in these averages ($t=1.25$, $p=0.2189$). We also found no significant difference when we compared the mean scores of all three raters (G104/W131: 17.2 vs. P131/W131: 15.8), rather than just the two closest ($t=1.49$, $p=0.1427$). By this measure, at least, an extra writing course had as much (or little) influence on student writing as a course focused on helping students develop effective attitudes and study habits.

We also found no significant differences between the P131/W131 and G104/W131 cohorts when we examined retention (Fall to Spring for P131/W131: $\chi^2=2.0099$, $p=0.1563$; Fall to Spring for G104/W131: $\chi^2=0.0001$, $p=0.9937$) and performance in a subsequent course. The mean English

W131 grades earned by students in the G104/W131 and P131/W131 groups were identical at 2.6, and the students also demonstrated similar success rates in subsequent writing classes. Of the students from the P131/W131 group who took a subsequent (200-level) writing course, 90% passed with a C or better. Of the students from the G104/W131 group, 89% passed with a C or better. The difference is not statistically significant given the sample size (χ^2=0.011, p=0.9159). Essentially both groups passed subsequent courses at the same rates.

We also saw similarities in retention rates—i.e., the percentage of students who registered for subsequent semesters. The retention rate from fall 2006 to spring 2007 for students in both groups was approximately 83%, and the rates from fall 2006 to fall 2007 were approximately 47% for students in G104/W131 and 59% for students in P131/W131. The differences from fall 2006 to fall 2007 were not statistically significant, based on the Chi Square test (noted above). Admittedly, the fall-to-fall retention rates for both groups were lower than the overall fall-to-fall rates for all first-year students on our campus, which was 62% from 2006 to 2007. Given that we were examining academically marginal students, the lower retention rate is unsurprising.

One interesting difference we found was the correlation between gender and responses to the Daly-Miller test. (See Appendix B). The likert-scale ratings for each question were analyzed using a Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation. This approach removes redundancies in the answers by correlating all the questions into new, linearly defined, uncorrelated "components." Because of suspected gender differences, a component pattern was generated for males and females, separately. In both situations the results produced six components that explained 73% of their respective variances. In a similar manner as discussed above, a stepwise logistic analysis was applied to their component scores to determine which, if any, were associated with predicting W131 success (i.e., at least a C). In each case only one component could be used as a predictor. We found that the best predictors of success, as defined by the significant loadings on the predictor component, for females who took the test were questions about their writing anxiety, questions such as

1. I avoid writing.

11. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing.

13. I'm nervous about writing.

16. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly.

18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them.

21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course.

22. When I hand in a composition, I know I'm going to do poorly.

23. It's easy for me to write good compositions.

24. I don't think I write as well as most other people.

26. I'm not good at writing.

Females who indicated that they felt little anxiety were associated with higher probabilities of success in W131 than were females who indicated higher levels of anxiety. For males, however, anxiety was not the major issue. The questions most likely to correlate with success in W131 for males were those that asked them about whether they liked to share their writing:

9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.

12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.

19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.

20. Discussing my writing with others is enjoyable.

Males who expressed a greater willingness to share their writing were associated with higher probabilities of success in W131 than were those who indicated they were unwilling to share.

Given the similarities in writing performance, grades, and retention between the two cohorts, and given the way that males' willingness to share their work and females' anxiety correlated with success, we must assume that an additional writing class is not the only choice, and perhaps not always the best, for students from the murky middle of an academic class. Our doubts about the value of an additional writing course were reinforced by the responses of the students we interviewed. We noticed distinct differences in students' attitudes toward P131 or G104. For example, students in P131 expressed more frustration with the course than did students in G104. Of the students who were taking P131, all but one said it was a waste of time. The one exception was a returning adult who felt that P131 had

a "general" value. Even so, she was highly critical of the sequencing of the course. She said, "When I registered for classes, I was under the impression that P131 was going to work with W131 . . . I think that a lot of people don't understand that they don't really work together." Of the two students who took G104, one student praised the course. She claimed that G104 helped her a lot, in particular with her study skills, time management, note-taking, and self motivation. She said, "That class [G104] did help a lot . . . the study skills part. I never really knew how to study that well." In addition, she felt G104 made her a better student overall. The other G104 student felt much of the course material was common sense, although he cited one concept from the class as highly effective: responsibility for one's own accomplishments, including grades.

Conclusion

Our study suggests that, for marginal students at least, instruction in self awareness, time management, and the culture of higher education can be as effective for success in first-year writing as additional writing instruction. As we have reported in this article, students who enrolled in G104/W131 succeeded at rates comparable to students who enrolled in P131/W131, and they did so according to several measures. It may be, of course, that P131 was poorly implemented and that what marginal students really needed was a better additional writing course. But the success of the G104/W131 students in subsequent writing courses reinforces our belief that marginal students do not necessarily need additional writing instruction. A full year after our study, counting the subsequent spring and fall semesters, we saw no significant difference between the two groups in terms of success rates in higher-level writing courses. Nineteen of the G104 students we studied took one of several 200-level classes, and 89.5% passed; twenty-one of the P131 students we studied took one of the 200-level classes, and 90.5% passed. If students needed a better additional writing course, then we believe the G104/W131 students would have had more trouble in a subsequent writing course than their P131/W131 counterparts. The P131/W131 students would at least have had additional writing practice to ready them for the subsequent course. Our results do not support that scenario.

Notes

1. By presenting such numbers as high school rank and SAT math score, we are not arguing that placement should be based exclusively on such data. Rather, we use these numbers to illustrate the difficulty of knowing what students with academically marginal histories may need most.

2. Having followed frequent discussions on the WPA listserv regarding the lack of correlation between SAT scores and success in first-year writing courses (e.g., Inoue, Stitt-Bergh, White "Re: SAT/ACT") we did not expect to see a statistically significant correlation between SAT verbal scores and success in first-year composition. But we were surprised to find the correlation between SAT math scores and success in composition at the institution in question. That correlation is weaker than the one between high school percentile and success in composition. Still, the SAT math correlation was statistically significant.

3. At the time, students were placed in W130, W131, or the P131/W131 corequisite based on their performance on a multiple choice test. The university has since abandoned that practice in favor of guided self-placement.

4. For the purposes of the study, we requested that students taking G104 be charged for 2 credit hours, which would have eliminated cost as a factor; however, our request was denied.

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Appendix A - Survey of First-Year College Writers

The purpose of this survey is to gather a profile of first-year college writers.

Name: _____ Age: _____

Gender: _____Male _____Female

High School GPA/Scale (for example, 3.4/4.0): _____

Ethnicity:

_____White, non-Hispanic _____ Asian/Pacific Islander

_____ American Indian/Alaskan Native _____ Hispanic

_____ African American, non-Hispanic _____ Other

Mother's level of education			
	Some high school		Associate's degree
	High school graduate		Bachelor's degree
	Some college		Advanced degree

Father's level of education			
	Some high school		Associate's degree
	High school graduate		Bachelor's degree
	Some college		Advanced degree

Family Income:

_____0-$20,000 _____$20,000-$40,000 _____$40,000-$60,000

_____$60,000 and above

Please answer the questions below as thoroughly as possible. You may use the back of this sheet:

1. How many papers did you write in all of your high school courses?
2. What was the longest paper you wrote? What class was it for?
3. What other kinds of classes did you write papers for?
4. What types of papers have you written (for example, research, stories, persuasive)
5. When was the last time you wrote an academic paper, and what type was it?
6. When was the last time you wrote for yourself? What type of writing was it?

Appendix B–The Daly-Miller Test

Circle the response from 1 to 5 that best suits your feelings about the following statements. Remember that there are no correct answers. Only give your honest response to each item.

1=Strongly Agree | 2=Agree | 3=Uncertain | 4=Disagree | 5=Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. I avoid writing. (+) .	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have no fear of my writing's being evaluated. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
10. I like to write down my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
13. I'm nervous about writing. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
14. People seem to enjoy what I write. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
15. I enjoy writing. (-)	1	2	3	4	5

	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
17. Writing is a lot of fun.(-)	1	2	3	4	5
18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
20. Discussing my writing with others is enjoyable. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
22. When I hand in a composition, I know I'm going to do poorly. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
23. It's easy for me to write good compositions. (-)	1	2	3	4	5
24. I don't think I write as well as most other people. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated. (+)	1	2	3	4	5
26. I'm not good at writing. (+)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C–Data on the P131/W131 and G104/W131 Cohorts

As the following tables show, the students in the two cohorts were statistically similar in terms of age, gender, reported family income, and ethnicity.

Table C1. High School Percentile of students from the P131 and G104 Cohorts

H.S. %	G104	P131
0–10	0	2
10–20	6	1
20–30	5	4
30–40	3	10
40–50	5	4
50–60	7	10

H.S. %	G104	P131
60–70	6	7
70–80	11	4
80–90	3	6
90–100	0	8
Total reporting	46	56

Table C2. Gender and Age of P131 and G104 Cohorts

Group	Male	Female	Average Age
P131	25	33	19.52
G104	25	39	18.84

$\chi^2 = 0.2054$, $p=0.6504$

Table C3. Reported Family Income Levels

Income Range	P131	G104
0-$20,000	7	1
$20,000-$40,000	11	10
$40,000-$60,000	21	21
$60,000+	16	16
Non-reporting	9	10

Table C4. Groups by Reported Ethnicity

Reported Ethnicity	P131	G104
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1
African American	2	2
Hispanic	3	1
White, non-Hispanic	58	53
Refused to Answer	0	1

Appendix D–Rubric for the P131/G104 Study

Criterion	4	3	2	1
Purpose	The paper meets a clearly defined purpose that is compelling for the readers because it goes beyond simply completing the assignment.	The paper meets a clearly defined purpose but is less compelling because it seems geared primarily toward completing the assignment.	The paper has a vaguely defined and uncompelling purpose, or it may switch purposes unexpectedly at one point.	The paper has no clearly defined purpose, or it may switch purposes unexpectedly at several points.
Readers	The paper clearly and consistently invokes an appropriate kind of reader, and a consistent relationship to that reader.	The paper invokes a clearly defined and appropriate kind of reader, and relationship. In one or two places, the paper seems to invoke a different kind of reader or relationship.	Mostly, the paper invokes a clearly defined reader and relationship. In three or four places, the paper seems to invoke a different kind of reader or relationship.	The paper does not invoke a reader or relationship consistently. Multiple shifts in kind of reader or relationship are evident.
Development	The paper is strengthened by a judicious selection of details appropriate to purpose and readers.	For the most part, the paper is strengthened by appropriate details. But an important detail is missing, or an inappropriate detail is included.	Although the paper includes many appropriate details, it also lacks a few important details or includes a few inappropriate ones.	The paper generally lacks details appropriate to purpose and readers. Or the paper contains too many inappropriate details.
Shape	The paper is organized in a manner appropriate to purpose, readers & content. The shape of the paper effectively raises and fulfills a reader's expectations.	The paper is organized appropriately, but one or two things seem out of place. The shape usually raises and fulfills a reader's expectations.	Although the paper is usually organized appropriately, three or four things seem out of place. The shape raises, but doesn't always fulfill, a reader's expectations.	The paper is organized in a manner generally inappropriate to purpose, readers & content. It fails to raise initial expectations, and/or it fails to fulfill them.
Style	The prose is engaging and clear. Paragraphs are cohesive. Word choice is felicitous & sentences generally flow from one to another.	The prose is clear and cohesive but not as engaging as a 4 paper. Word choice is generally felicitous, but a couple problems (poor word choice, choppy sentences, lack of sentence variety) weaken the prose.	The prose is generally clear and usually cohesive. Several significant problems weaken the prose.	The prose is unclear in more than a few places. Problems with word choice, choppy sentences, and lack of sentence variety occur often.
Correctness	The prose is free of major, distracting errors in grammar, mechanics & spelling.	Although the prose is free of major (sentence-level) errors, it may contain a couple obvious mechanical or spelling errors.	The prose contains a couple major, sentence-level errors and more than a couple obvious mechanical or spelling errors.	The prose contains more than a couple major grammar errors. It may also contain more than several obvious mechanical or spelling errors.