A Single-Text Pathway to College Writing

To: Innovation of the Year Committee
From: Melody Gee, English Department
Date: January 10, 2017

Project Description: "A Single-Text Pathway to College Writing"

Overview
Our 2017 Innovation of the Year project is the new Developmental Writing curriculum offered in all English 030 classes at Forest Park. This curriculum was researched and created by English faculty and supported by our Leadership Team. Our innovation combines several national best practices in Developmental Writing pedagogy: integrating reading and writing; reading one full-length nonfiction text; assigning highly contextualized and rhetorically focused writing; and combining developmental students of all skill levels into one level of developmental writing. Since its creation in summer 2015, the Single-Text Pathway curriculum has been consistently offered in all English 030 sections at Forest Park.

Based on ten years of data collected by Chabot College in California, we see evidence that combining reading and writing in developmental coursework creates sustained success for students, which carries into their college-level efforts. In this model, which we have adopted into our curriculum, traditional composition textbooks are replaced with a single text that will introduce students to college-level reading expectations while simultaneously providing complex rhetorical situations in which they can practice their writing. Other benefits of the curriculum include:

- Students learn in a way that closely **mirrors the college-level reading and writing** they will soon encounter (literature, sociology, history, etc.);
- Students' writing assignments are **deeply contextual**, inspired by and pertaining to the reading's themes, discipline, vocabulary, social and historical contexts;
- Students get the psychological benefit of having read **a complete book**, which many report never having done before;
- A single text built around **interdisciplinary themes** allows instructors to talk about the writing process and standard English writing conventions in a fully contextualized way that is relevant and accessible to students;
- Texts can be simultaneously taught **interdepartmentally** (sociology, psychology, reading, writing, literature, communications), further reinforcing student learning—students using the same book in multiple classes will see books and ideas in conversation, and having multiple applications.

DevelopingWriters.net
The final component of our new curriculum is an online pedagogy resource we created to house the original teaching materials instructors have designed (all of which are specifically tailored to our new

curriculum and selected book offerings), and to offer instructors a professional space to discuss experiences, approaches, and challenges related to the curriculum. The web resource allows instructors to access and adapt others' teaching materials for their own classes; upload and share their own materials; access additional research, teaching, and writing, resources; and engage with other passionate professionals in our field.

How the Project Satisfies Evaluation Criteria

Quality
Our curriculum has been modeled off of best practices in the field of developmental education and within rhetoric and composition, as the research cited in the attached annotated bibliography demonstrates. While this research demonstrates the quality of this curriculum on a global level, the quality can also be seen on the campus level as demonstrated by the awarding of the Forest Park Soup Grant in 2015 to create a collection of student essays produced in English 030 classes. Perhaps the greatest measure of quality is seen in the responses from students themselves. Students overwhelmingly preferred a single-text approach to their curriculum (see Student Survey Results), and the impact of this curriculum in conjunction with the shortened pathway for developmental English is showing promising results in terms of successful completion and matriculation (see Student Success Statistics).

Efficiency
Our curriculum's rigor and integration of reading and writing skills has allowed the English department to eliminate the English 020 level completely, so that all students who test at the developmental English level enroll directly into English 030. Saving students an entire semester of time in developmental coursework not only shortens students' pathway in a way that increases matriculation and retention, but it also helps to remove stigma and negative associations with developmental education.

Cost Effectiveness
Our program incurs absolutely no cost to the department or college. In fact, moving away from textbooks that have often cost upwards of $80 in favor of widely available and popular books that usually cost less than $20 (with used copies much more readily available) has saved our students money every semester. Additionally, we save students the cost of tuition for one semester of non-credit coursework by eliminating the English 020 requirement.

Replication
The curriculum is highly adaptable and flexible in a way that maintains academic freedom for faculty members while simultaneously encouraging collaboration between colleagues. The single-text curriculum can fit a range of teaching styles and classroom practices, and our website's warehouse of assignments and reflections coupled with the collaborative features promote the voluntary sharing and adapting of resources.

Creativity

Designing curriculum is a creative endeavor even when it is accompanied by a textbook with pre-designed activities, assessments, and assignments. Designing a single-text curriculum is a very creative process because it involves the construction of assignments, activities, and assessments from scratch without the built-in framework of a typical textbook. The benefit of such an endeavor is that it creates a flexible, adaptable, and fully contextualized classroom experience that can match the needs of diverse learners. Further adding to the creativity of this project is the way in which it is a joint endeavor. By sharing assignments and approaches and opening an online space for discussions about them, our curriculum is shaped through an ongoing, organic process of collaboration and revision.

Timeliness

While the early stages of this project have been in the works for a few years, it has only recently been implemented as a department-wide project for all English 030 classes. This has given us the opportunity to make sure that the curriculum works in individual classrooms before using the approach as the required textbook for all courses taught by adjunct faculty. The teaching of the curriculum as a collective endeavor began in Fall 2016.

Letters of Support

Please find letters of support for "A Single-Text Pathway to College Writing" from the following faculty and students:

- Ame Mead, Dean of Humanities & Social Science
- Jeremy Dennis, Chair of Humanities
- Daisy Alonzo, English 030 Student
- Juliana Ness, English 030 Student

Supporting Documents

Original Course Materials

Each English 030 instructor creates his/her own original course materials based on the book they choose each semester. Many choose to share their course materials for others to adapt them in their own classes.

We include here samples of many different assignments and activities—each created specifically for one book—to highlight our instructors' creativity, focus, and contextualization.

- In-class Writing Activity by Zita Casey for *Between The World and Me*
- Syllabus by Michelle Parrinello-Cason for *Everything Bad is Good for You*
- Syllabus by Michelle Parrinello-Cason for *33 Revolutions Per Minute*
- Writing Assignment by Judith Collins for *Money Changes Everything*
- Writing Assignment by Melody Gee for *The Warmth of Other Suns*
- Vocabulary Quiz by Melody Gee for *The Warmth of Other Suns*
- Creative Assignment by Adrienne Smith for *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- Biographical Research Assignment by Geraldine Young for *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- Research Activity by Geraldine Young for *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- In-class Professions and Compensations Exercise by Ronald Hughes for *Outliers*
- Vocabulary Activity by Hilary Wilson for *Outliers*

Research
This annotated bibliography prepared by Michelle Parrinello-Cason demonstrates the depth of research that has informed our curricular innovation, ranging from best practices to theory in the field of composition and developmental writing.

2016 Student Success Statistics
In spring 2016, Institutional Research collected data on every student enrolled in English 030, as well as historical data on every student enrolled in English 020 and English 030 between 2000 and 2013. Attached here is the research memorandum from Eric Chambers, our consulting data analyst. We want to be sure to highlight to the committee this extremely promising early statistic:

> From 2000 – 2013, **only 23 percent** of the students who enrolled in ENG:020 ever progressed through the developmental sequence and passed ENG:030; in spring 2016 **nearly 48 percent of students [who would have been placed in English 020] passed ENG:030**.

2016 Student Survey Results
In addition to tracking student performance data, the English department surveyed students to hear their feedback on their developmental coursework. The enclosed survey of student satisfaction shows that 80% of students surveyed liked having to read one text in English 030, and that 80% of students surveyed believe that their developmental classes have prepared them for college-level coursework. Not only is it important that our student data demonstrate success, but we also see that students *feel* prepared for success, and that they enjoyed the work to get them there.

Annotated Bibliography

Support for Integrated Reading and Writing

Ackerman, John. "Reading, Writing, and Knowing: The Role of Disciplinary Knowledge in Comprehension and Composing." *Research in the Teaching of English* **25.2 (1991): 133-178.**

Ackerman's study uses graduate student essays to explore the interrelatedness of prior and new knowledge in the construction of meaning. Ackerman's research reinforces the idea that "[r]eaders and writers construct meaning in that readers bring their intentions, prior knowledge, and prior textual experiences to bear on ideas and linguistic cues in source texts while writers compose a draft which reconciles prior knowledge and textual experience with their rhetorical and linguistic aims" (133-134). Reading and writing are interrelated rhetorical practices.

Barnett, Elisabeth. "Validation Experiences and Persistence among Community College Students." *The Review of Higher Education* **34.2 (2011): 193-230.**

Barnett finds that the top student-identified factor for persistence in the classroom is whether they feel their teachers believe in their abilities. Though not specifically discussed in these terms, engaging students in college-level reading demonstrates that belief.

Brent, Doug. "Reading as Construction; Reading as Communication." *Reading as Rhetorical Invention.* **Chapter 2. Urbana: NCTE, 1992.**

Brent demonstrates that reading is a rhetorically constructive act that requires students to use discourse-processing in order to make sense of texts. He gives examples of ambiguous texts and shows how students use their prior experiences to create categorically different (but equally plausible) interpretations. He calls reading a "consummately rhetorical act" because it requires an interplay between individually- and collectively-constructed meaning.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Students' Right to Their Own Language." *College Composition and Communication* **25 (1974): 1-32.**

This proposal was initially proposed in the 1970s but was reaffirmed by the CCCC in 2003. It attests that student discourse differences are not linguistic errors and insists composition instruction addresses language practices holistically and contextually. A pedagogy of integrated reading and writing is one way to explore discourse tensions productively.

McComiskey, Bruce. "Critical Discourse Analysis in the Composition Class." Chapter 5. *Teaching Composition as a Social Process.* **Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2000.**

Using a historical look at linguistic studies, McComiskey argues that "[w]riting assignments that require extensive preparation, provoke thoughtful critical reading, and elicit production of discursive interventions" will produce the most thoughtful, complete student work. He describes an

assignment where students analyze college view books to explore discursive cultural values and produce their own interpretations. This study demonstrates the need to connect critical, contextualized reading with writing assignments.

Nelson, Nancy and Robert C. Calfee. **"The Reading-Writing Connection Viewed Historically."** *The Reading-Writing Connection*. **Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.**

This introductory chapter weaves through the academic history of reading and writing and ably demonstrates that, until relatively recently, reading and writing shared the academic sphere of rhetoric instruction. It was not until the height of modernist practices and a cultural privileging of positivistic data delinked reading and writing that the two became seen as separate disciplines. Recently, as modernist thought has been replaced with postmodernist perspective, efforts have been made to rejoin reading and writing into an academic whole.

Sweeney, Meghan A. and Maureen McBride. "*Difficulty Paper* **(Dis)Connections: Understanding the Threads Students Weave between Their Reading and Writing."** *CCC* **66.4 (2015): 591-614.**

This study examines developmental writers' experience with Mariolina Salvatori's "difficulty paper" (an assignment that has students explore their own challenges with reading). Their research finds that engaging remedial students with identifying and addressing their difficulties with "the textual mismatch" that occurs because "students expect assigned readings in college to follow the same pattern of their writing assignments." Ultimately, this study illustrates the need to engage students in reading and writing simultaneously to address these differences productively.

Support for Developmental Education Structural Changes

Adams, Peter, et al. "The Accelerated Learning Program: Throwing Open the Gates." *Journal of Basic Writing* **28.2 (2009): 50-69.**

This study starts with exploring the historically entrenched dual purpose of basic writing. Some supported it as a path to success for underprepared students while others supported it as a gatekeeping mechanism to protect academia from unqualified students. This study turns to the idea of the "leaky pipeline" of developmental education and explores how the highly cited ALP program in Baltimore was originally designed.

Bailey, Thomas. "Challenge and Opportunity: Rethinking the Role and Function of Developmental Education in Community College." CCRC Working Paper No. 14. 2008.

This paper examines the ineffectiveness of developmental education programs nationwide and provides an optimistic look at the future by turning to innovative acceleration approaches and calling for a blurring of the line between developmental and mainstream college students using data-driven results.

Bartholomae, David. The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum." *Journal of Basic Writing* **12.1 (1993): 4-21.** *ERIC.* **Web. 15 March 2015.**
This oft-cited essay from Bartholomae explores the socioeconomic pressures wrapped up in developmental education and explores the historical moves that influenced their presence. Ultimately, Bartholomae questions the goals of developmental education and suggests that many are designed to reinforce students as the "other" rather than address cultural disparities to improve educational equity.

Bernstein, Susan. "Basic Writing: In Search of a New Map." *Teaching Developmental Writing: Background Readings.* **4th ed. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2013. Print.**

Bernstein looks at previous research in basic writing. Most notably, she examines Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde's use of complex sociological texts in basic writing classes. Exploring the way that these educators "believed that students enrolled in these courses were capable of engaging with the complexity of these texts" (88). She uses this and other research to demonstrate that developmental education in its current iteration is in need of revision.

Bustillos, Leticia. "Seeking Remediation for the Debate on Remedial Education." *Huffington* **Post. HPMG News, 5 June 2013. Web. 7 May 2015.**

This article from the *Huffington Post* demonstrates how the need for developmental education reform has become a mainstream topic of conversation.

Complete College America. *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere.* **Washington, DC: Complete College America, 2012. PDF file.**

This report uses data-driven analysis to argue that developmental education does not meet its goal of improving educational attainment for underprepared students. It recommends structural redesign to address this disparity.

Hern, Katie. "Acceleration across California: Shorter Pathways in Developmental English and Math." *Change* **May/June 2012: 60-68.**

In this article, Hern outlines the acceleration pathway at Chabot college, an integration of developmental reading and writing classes that uses the single-text framework as its key curriculum piece.

Hern, Katie. "Window into an Accelerated Classroom." California Acceleration Project. 2011.

This website provides a detailed overview of the Chabot model including sample texts, a philosophical discussion of the curricular framework, and instructional models. It also has videos of students participating in the class that demonstrate their ability to engage meaningfully with complex texts.

Otte, George and Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk. "The Future of Basic Writing." WAC Clearninghouse. 2010.

In this work, the authors explore the history of basic writing, including the cyclical debate over its very existence. They look to a future with alternative structures for developmental writing classes that include integrating writing within a more contextual community and bringing in academic support services to scaffold learning practices.

Sullivan, Patrick. "'Just-in-Time' Curriculum for the Basic Writing Classroom." *TETYC* 41.2 (2013): 118-133.

Sullivan explores a developmental writing redesign that addressed Connecticut's legislative mandate to improve developmental education. Students were given the ability to take remedial writing but perform as a high enough level to receive credit for the first-year composition class if they performed well enough on the final exit assignment. Sullivan uses his experience with student success to say that "[r]ather than thinking of basic writing classes as fixed and monolithic entities, perhaps we would be better served to theorize them, instead, as places that are more fluid and designed to be responsive to many different kinds of students and many different kinds of needs" (127).

TYCA Executive Committee. "TYCA White Paper on Developmental Education Reforms." *TETYC* 42.3 (2015): 227-243.

This report serves as a summary of current reform efforts. It includes acceleration and integration as two key factors in successful reform measures.