



CCCC

conference on college composition and communication

In late spring of 2004, the Conference on College Composition and Communication put out a call for projects for a research initiative to support new meta-analytical research by providing to selected institutions funding of up to \$5,000 and an opportunity for researchers from all participating institutions to gather to share ideas and receive advice. This program aims to create an opportunity for researchers to bring together what the profession has already learned, through a variety of methodologies, regarding the teaching and study of composition, rhetoric, and literacy. The purposes of these synthesis projects are (1) to articulate what is known about the teaching of composition at this moment in time, and (2) to provide a foundation for public policy discussions, large grant proposals, and future research.

Twenty-five submissions were received and 10 grants were awarded. The recipients of these grants met in the fall of 2004 at the NCTE Annual Convention in Indianapolis to collaborate and discuss their research projects. They met a second time in March 2005 at the CCCC Conference in San Francisco to present some of their work in two poster sessions.

CCCC anticipates that the results of these projects will be available for dissemination by mid-August 2005.

One of the grants awarded:

TYCA Research Initiative

Jody Millward, Chair, Santa Barbara City College, California
Gregory Shafer, Co-Chair, Mott Community College, Flint, Michigan
Dianne Fallon, York Community College, Kittery Point, Maine

Questions we are investigating:

1. What are the most common practices in two-year colleges in the areas of Assessment, Teaching With Technologies, and Writing Across the Disciplines?
2. How do material and working conditions affect those practices: e.g., technology access for faculty and students, faculty support for professional and program development?
3. What two-year colleges are following best practices in these areas? How did their programs develop? How are they sustained? Are they replicable?

Methodologies:

1. To create a context for the study, Chair, Jody Millward organized a CCCC panel bringing together representatives of each of the TYCA Regions to identify major challenges and successes (best practices) of two-year colleges by region. Panelists will provide handouts documenting their findings. Participants will present at a session and provide follow-up discussion at TYCA Talks at the CCCC 2005 Convention in San Francisco. Participants are as follows: Patrick Sullivan, Northeast; Donald Andrews, Southeast; Gregory Shafer, Midwest; David Lydic, Southwest; Joanna Taroni, West; Eva Payne, Pacific Northwest; Sterling Warner, Pacific Coast. As follow-up to the TYCA CCCC panel, this committee will: identify shared and unique challenges and best practices of the regions as defined by the presenters and post the results on the TYCA national and regional websites. In addition, the committee will strongly encourage panel participants to post their presentations (papers) on the TYCA Website and the TYCA Regional Websites.
2. The committee drafted and pilot tested a survey on Assessment Practices, Technology Mediated Instruction, Writing Across the Discipline Programs and Practices, and Working Conditions. Survey was piloted with TYCA Executive Committee Members, February-March 2005.

3. The committee determined a distribution methodology for survey. This will be a three-prong effort:
 - Melissa Prentice, TYCA Assistant, will distribute the survey through the NCTE office to all TYCA members.
 - TYCA Regional Representatives will promote and track survey completion through the Regional Committees.
 - Research Initiative Committee will follow-up with emails to volunteers who signed "Survey Taker" lists at Regional TYCA Conventions and the national NCTE and CCCC conventions.

Findings:

The pilot survey is a very small sample, yet receiving even this small sampling is exciting, for it suggests several areas of research. For example, we may be able to determine if private and two-year college branch campuses of four-year institutions have more resources than public two-year colleges and how that affects assessment practices, technology access, and the creation of WAC programs. The private colleges in the pilot were not open-admissions, used a writing sample for placement and portfolios for assessment, had both computer lab classrooms, "smart classrooms," and WEB access classrooms for studentpublic lap tops, and they have instituted or begun to institute a WAC program. A majority of two-year public colleges used standardized placement tests (sometimes with a writing sample, often not) and fewer than 50% use portfolios for assessment. A few of these colleges (roughly 1/3) offer on-line courses for developmental reading, writing, and second language classes, and 80% of those colleges have no technology literacy requirement. None of these colleges offers web access in the classroom for students with lap tops. Finally, while many of these colleges offer some form of a WAC program (writing intensive courses, links, learning communities), 80% do not have an institutionally designated WAC program. In terms of support for professional development, we have discovered that travel and conference funding has been restricted, reduced or eliminated, that all faculty co-pay for sabbaticals but range differs, and that a number of two-year colleges do not offer tenure. One person commented that several colleges in her area (her own included) have taken the selection process for hiring out of the department.

While this survey is primarily a gathering of data, clearly we will be able to draw some conclusions about the factors affecting two-year college praxis in these three critical areas. In addition, it will provide a basis for future research for masters and doctoral students and composition scholars, including 1) success and retention rates for students in colleges with no placement procedures vs. standardized testing without writing samples vs. multi-criteria placement including writing samples; 2) success and retention rates for students in developmental classes without technological literacy requirements vs. those with such a requirement; and 3) the material conditions which foster innovative programs and projects such as WAC and electronic portfolios. We posit that the results of such studies will provide a strong foundation for public advocacy efforts for two-year colleges nationwide.

Project Timeline:

We expect the survey to be distributed in April, the literature survey completed by July, the analysis of the data and the protocol (and perhaps establish contacts) for interviews completed by September, and the report finished by November for NCTE in Pittsburgh.

Information Sources:

We will update the TYCA website; in addition, Chair, Jody Millward will respond to inquiries.