

Freshmen Composition and Writing Center Usage

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Abstract

This study began with some initial questions about the interaction between the Composition Program and the Writing Lab at the University of Missouri-Columbia, with the first-year composition student's navigation of that interaction as the point of inquiry. What were the motivations that students *had* as they began their coursework? Could those motivations change throughout the course of a semester and, if so, could the Writing Lab be seen as a catalyst for those changes? An adapted version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was made available to the students who were enrolled in English 1000 during the Fall semester of 2005. The students were asked to complete this survey at the beginning and end of the semester, and the campus Writing Lab's data on student usage was then matched with the results from each survey. The study was amended though, due to a lack of matched data sets. Sixty-six students completed the MSLQ survey for the pre-test, while only 42 completed the post-test. Only ten of the respondents were found to have utilized the Writing Lab as well as having participated in both the pre-test and post-test. Because of this small sample size, a "student centered" set of questions was developed, in order to collect more data from the individuals who had completed all parts of the initial method. Three of the students further articulated their experiences in and out of class through these sets of interview questions. While there were no statistically significant correlations between Writing Lab usage and the student responses to the MSLQ, both the quantitative data and the additional qualitative responses serve

to point in particular directions for further research in Composition, such as student understanding of the services provided for them, as well as the requirements and demands for their courses in conjunction with those services.