

METHODOLOGY MEETS CONTEXT: AN EVALUATION OF THE ACCELERATED LEARNING
PROGRAM (ALP) AT A MIDWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By

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ENGAGING MULTIPLE CONTEXTS: AN EVALUATION OF THE ACCELERATED LEARNING
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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, increasingly public scrutiny of higher education has led to intensified discussions of effectiveness and accountability. During this time, an internal interrogation has taken place in composition about the nature and pedagogy of the basic writing field. The result of both discussions is pressure to reform basic writing to ensure more students success. Developed at Baltimore Community College, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) meets challenges from both external and internal discourses to improve student success in developing writers.

This dissertation will engage the multiple overlapping audiences who have a vested stake in changes in developmental education through an evaluation of the ALP program at a Midwest Community College (MWCC). Multilayered audiences have shaped a mixed method approach to this evaluation. Raw data from all students involved in the program was compared to raw data of students who participated in the more traditional two-class sequence of developmental English. A statistical analysis was applied to determine if the differences in frequency revealed by the raw data were statistically significant. Finally, the qualitative portion of the evaluation employed student interviews to explore how students developed as writers and thinkers beyond the information provided by the quantitative analysis.

Findings indicate that ALP students generally pass their courses, including three social science courses, at a higher frequency than their peers who moved through the more traditional developmental English pathway. However, only the difference in frequency in

passing the developmental section was statistically significant. This result may be due to the small numbers included in the study because the ALP program during this period was a pilot. The qualitative section revealed that ALP students felt confident about their writing following the program and demonstrated persistence as they moved into later English courses and other classes at the college level. Overall, despite the statistical analysis, the study supports the expansion of ALP at MWCC because it provides benefits to students beyond what the previous model offered.

Key Words: Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), developmental English, remedial English

DEDICATION

To Raymond Ernst, my husband and partner.

You never stopped believing in the importance of changing the
world or my ability to do it.

To college teachers who are brave enough to take risks in the
quest to make their students' lives better.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Developmental Education, Basic Writing, and Access

In post-secondary education, basic writing, also known as remedial or developmental writing (Shaughnessy, 1977, p. 4), has historically represented the margins of coursework, the place where students are deemed not quite ready for college-level learning, and a “borderlands of academe” (McNenny, 2001, p. 11). This area of composition arose in response to increased numbers of students who did not conform to “elite” educational standards but accessed higher education through the GI Bill and increased federal student aid (Grubb & Garbriner, 2013; Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; McNenny, 2001; Shaughnessy, 1977). Since its inception, developmental education has been imagined within the institution as a place for students who do not fit the nostalgic idea of the fully-prepared students; one that may never have existed (Grego & Thompson, 1996).

As “less than ideal” pupils, basic writing students are predominantly marked by the errors they make (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; Shaughnessy, 1977). Basic writing further stigmatizes these writers as separate from their peers and less than fully admitted students. Mina Shaughnessy (1977) notes, “Much about the ‘remedial’ situation encourages this obsession with error. First, there is the reality of academia, the fact that most college teachers have little tolerance for the kinds of errors BW students make, that they perceive certain types of errors as indicators of ineducability” (Shaughnessy, 1977, p. 8). Basic writing allows universities to “shield faculty from the rawness and inexperience

of a new wave of open admissions students as it was to support those students in their quest for access to college instruction” (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010, p. 55). However, Shaughnessy (1977) points out that students are not lazy or incapable but rather inexperienced writers who must commit errors in order to learn (p. 5).

If the primary purpose of basic writing is to provide access to higher education for students previously deemed unworthy, then “teaching them at all was obviously a step toward social justice. Just how to teach them was less clear” (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010, p. 49). The result of focusing on inadequacy and error was a curriculum built on problematic pedagogy, relying on skill and drill grammar exercises to repair what was “wrong” with these students (Lau, 2014; Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; Adams, 1993; Greenburg, 1993). Additionally, at least in its early stages, basic writing conceptualized the project of educating students as a sort of simplified scaffolding, beginning with assignments that did not require a great deal of critical thinking or sophisticated writing and building from there (Greenberg, 1993). However, as practitioners began to develop basic writing fully into a subfield of composition, this notion of simplified skill and drill met challenge within the discipline itself. Research demonstrated that the curriculum did not fully prepare students for the more challenging thinking and writing demanded by other parts of the academy (Bernstein, 2013; Rose, 2013; Rodby & Fox, 2000; Mutnick, 1996; Bartholomae, 1993). Scholars have reimagined the curriculum as a place of growth and power rather than a place of remediation, a project that requires considerable more time and effort than simply correcting errors (Adams, 1993; Bartholomae, 1993).

Public Scrutiny of Developmental Education

In 2009, Barack Obama's administration ushered in not only an era of increased access but also one of intensified scrutiny of completion for all of higher education (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Kelly & Schneider, 2012). Despite the good intentions of colleges to provide increased access to higher education, the completion agenda and the accompanying public scrutiny has intensified criticism of developmental programs (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Some of that criticism is fair. Any number of critics have pointed to the high failure and dropout rates, citing developmental courses as dead ends for students, particularly minority students and those who are economically disadvantaged (Cohen, et al, 2014, p. 263). Complete College America (2012) takes up this charge in its report entitled *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere*. The authors claim that fewer than 22.3 percent of students who are referred to developmental classes graduate within two years (p. 8). Indeed, as challenges to basic writing have shown, developmental classes in general tend to incorporate "remedial pedagogy: drill and practice on small subskills, in decontextualized courses devoid of any connection to further study, more advanced coursework, or the world outside the classroom" (Grubb & Gabriner, 2013, p. 210). As a result, students tend to lack engagement and demonstrate less success than in college classes featuring concept-driven and student-centered curriculum (Grubb & Gabriner, 2013, p. 210). The presumption that these students are unprepared and unlikely to be successful in college becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy, denying students the learning they seek and undermining any mission of access (Cohen, et al, 2014; Lau, 2014; Grubb & Gabriner, 2013).

In addition to providing too few results according to public policymakers, developmental education is expensive, both for the student who has to pay for additional classes and for the institution that must supply instructors for smaller classes (Lau, 2012). Moreover, remediation delays students' paths to graduation, furthering expense for students in terms of opportunity cost. In fact, simply increasing the number of semesters a student must spend in college decreases the chance that he or she will complete a degree (Cohen, et al, 2014, p. 252; Long, 2012, p. 184). Additionally, "[t]o the extent that remediation restricts students' class schedules and affects the classes they can take, it may also discourage them from focus in on certain majors and have major effects on the length of time a degree takes" (Long, 2012, p. 178). Focusing only on certain majors becomes one more expense for students because this decision may restrict potential income after college.

Responses to this criticism by higher education and politicians ranged from eliminating programs altogether to reforming them. By 2014, the Florida legislature removed the ability of colleges and universities to mandate developmental coursework in all areas, including basic writing (Fain, 2013). As public criticism has built, basic writing continued to move almost exclusively into the community college curriculum as universities like CUNY — the very place where Mina Shaughnessy began her research on basic writing — withdrew support for it (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010, p. 119). CUNY, the California State University system, and public universities in Florida have moved basic writing to the community colleges (McNenny, 2001, p. 3). Because the community college mantra has historically been access for all, even the academically underprepared, developmental education, and basic writing in particular has been a consistent feature of

the two-year environment. Estimates of how many students need remediation after high school range from nearly 60 percent (Bailey, 2012; Cohen et al, 2014; McNenney 2001) to 68 percent (Long, 2012). These numbers vary based on the strength of the secondary school feeder district and the socioeconomic area from which the students are drawn. Cohen, et al, estimate that in one inner-city college district the students who required developmental education in at least one subject reached nearly 90 percent (Cohen, et al, 2014, p. 246).

Other colleges were more hesitant about simply eliminating programs in developmental education, such as basic writing. Developmental courses became a tool to help students who were not initially prepared for college close skills gaps, primarily in math and English. Bridget Long (2012) elucidates the assumption behind them: “Students with...deficiencies who are not in remediation may never gain a sufficient academic foundation and may be more likely to drop out” (p. 184). She cites one study of Ohio students showing that students who took the developmental classes to which they were assigned were more likely to complete their degrees than those who did not, indicating that the classes were helpful in improving foundational skills (Long, 2012, p. 185). Tinto (2012) notes that success in the classroom is a key component in student success and a lack of skills may prevent students from completing gatekeeper courses successfully. Thus, while some colleges elected not to alter their basic skills program, several others addressed concerns about student completion by designing structures to mainstream. Arizona State University’s Stretch Program is one such example (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). This type of program, which incorporates supplemental instruction with mainstreaming, at least gave the basic writing student a sense that he or she is part of the institution even if not

completely, mitigating or even eliminating the stigma of remediation (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010).

One of the most successful examples of mainstreaming emerged from the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). In the early 1990s, the English faculty at CCBC, led by Peter Adams, began examining their own record of completion for developmental writing students. According to their research, 81 percent of students entering CCBC test into one or more developmental classes (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). The instructors were dismayed to discover that only 45 percent of writers who placed into developmental writing passed ENG 101 within four years (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). In fact, many students who passed the basic writing course never enrolled in or completed the college-level writing course (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). However, while instructors tinkered with aspects of their program, their primary redesign project for developmental writing — The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) — was not launched until Fall 2007, when CCBC began piloting ALP sections (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). According to a presentation that Susan George (2016) gave at the National Council of Workforce Education annual conference in October 2106, CCBC went to full scale with ALP as its developmental writing program in Fall 2016.

According to “The Accelerated Learning Program: Throwing Open the Gates” (2009), ALP functions as a co-requisite developmental writing model. Students take the college-level English class at the same time that they take their developmental English class. The developmental class then becomes a direct support or, in the words of Susan George, a “triage” for the ENG 101 class. Typically, in the ALP program, an ENG 101 class

will have 20 students, and 10 of those students will have the additional developmental class with the same instructor. Instructors may answer leftover questions, spend more time on writing workshops, provide more scaffolding, and work more thoroughly through steps of the writing process in connection with actual, college-level assignments.

According to the ALP information from CCBC, this reduces the stigma a developmental writing student experiences, provides more individual attention, and gives the instructor an opportunity to address noncognitive issues (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009).

The program is improving completion for CCBC. Between Fall 2007 and Fall 2010, only 33 percent of students who placed into developmental writing completed ENG 101 within a year. In contrast, 74 percent of ALP students passed ENG 101. ALP students also completed more college credits than their traditional developmental counterparts (CCRC, 2012).

Clarifying the Terminology

The terms of discussion in this area of higher education are slippery. Both internally and externally the discussion employs *developmental education* and occasionally *remediation* or basic *skills* to describe courses and learning support offered to students who have been deemed unprepared for college learning (Boylan & Bonham, 2014; Bernstein, 2013; Grubb & Gabriner, 2013). However, even determining who is *unprepared* is difficult because this designation generally connects to placement scores on standardized tests, which vary greatly from one institution to another (Merisotis & Phipps, 2014). Further complicating this discussion is the discipline of composition, which has introduced the field of basic writing to encompass writing instruction that falls below what most would

consider college-level writing courses. However, this terminology is rarely used outside of composition. For the purposes of this dissertation, developmental education will be used when engaging discussions outside of composition. Since ALP grows out of the tradition of basic writing and the methodology is informed by the scholarship in that field, basic writing will be used when referring directly to writing instruction that serves students who do not qualify at MWCC for the college-level writing course.

ALP and Best Practices in Developmental Education

The ALP program embraces developmental education reforms advocated by Grubb and Gabriner (2013). Their first recommendation is that schools move away from the skill and drill programs that typically characterize developmental education programs. Instead, higher education should move toward a curriculum that is contextualized and “real world” (p. 210). By mainstreaming students, ALP ties assignments in the basic writing class directly to the college-level composition class. Additionally, Grubb and Gabriner (2013) recommend that colleges avoid separating and stigmatizing developmental students (p. 211). ALP places students directly into a composition class that has at least half of the students as non-basic writing and does not identify the ALP students in any way. Finally, “Community colleges should recognize that innovation should be more widespread than what individual faculty can accomplish. This, in turn, means that widespread reform — including instructional reform — requires institutional initiative and support, not just the efforts of isolated faculty” (Grubb & Gabriner, 2013, p. 211). ALP represents a complete programmatic change that reaches well beyond the individual classroom.

Accelerated Learning at a Midwestern Community College

In Fall 2012, a faculty member serving as the liaison to the Tutoring Center and completing a report on tutoring on campus discovered that less than half of the students who entered developmental writing completed the first of the two required college-level composition courses, ENG 131, within two years (Kim, 2012). As a result of this study, the faculty in the English department began to look for alternatives to the college's developmental writing model. They found that ALP embraced reforms advocated by developmental education scholars and demonstrated clear improvements in student completion at CCBC. This faculty member worked with the state community college organization and CCBC to acquire a grant through the Kresge Foundation that would allow the college to pilot ALP sections in the writing program by subsidizing the smaller classes and allowing faculty members a stipend to seek professional development in ALP.

Prior to ALP at Midwestern Community College (MWCC), students who scored between an 18 and a 74 on the Compass writing placement test were required to take Basic Writing, ENG 093. Additionally, any student who scored between 51 and 82 on the Compass reading placement exam also had to take ENG 081, Developmental Reading. MWCC launched a pilot in Fall 2013 with four sections of ALP. In each of those four sections of ENG 131, 15 of the students were "regular" students who had either tested into the class or entered the class through the traditional developmental writing and reading track. Each ALP section of ENG 131 also included 10 students who had tested into the level below college-level composition class. These 10 students had a second class with the same instructor held immediately following the ENG 131 class. The second class, listed as ENG 093, served as a support class for the ALP students to provide additional time and support

for their ENG 131 writing projects. In all 32, students participated in the pilot. The same structure in the pilot continued in Winter 2014 with another four sections of ALP. The pilot project expanded to seven sections in Fall 2014 and contracted to five in 2015.

Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, 70 MWCC students moved through the ALP developmental writing model. Of those students, 79 percent passed their developmental class while only 56 percent of the students who placed into ENG 093 and took it alone passed developmental writing. Additionally, 73 percent of ALP students passed ENG 131 with a grade of C or better while only 31 percent of the cohort of ENG 093 students from the same period had passed the course with a C or better within one year.

This preliminary data was persuasive enough to convince the English faculty to pursue expansion of the ALP program; the college supported the expansion, resulting in 14 sections in Fall 2015 and Winter 2016. However, the scale up was plagued with challenges. Primary among those was a lack of knowledge in the Student Services area. Multiple meetings were held to help advisors, counselors, and admissions personnel understand the new model of developmental education. Yet students were consistently advised to schedule classes in the old model. Many students never visited advisors, so they scheduled their classes without knowledge of the new program. The English Department resorted to having an administrative assistant call students in the old developmental classes to advise of their other options. Additionally, because the registration system at MWCC would not initially allow students to schedule section-specific co-requisite classes, the Dean of English had to register all 150 students into their individual classes, some of them more than once when they were accidentally dropped for non-payment or other reasons. Remediating the situation required that the faculty rewrite master syllabi with new course numbers to allow

students to register. ALP classes then appeared in the Fall 2016 semester as ENG 131A with ENG 094 as the required co-requisite. With additional IT support that allowed students to register themselves for ALP sections, the offerings expanded to 17 sections or 45 percent of all developmental writing offering for the Fall 2016 term. Additional sections were planned for the Winter 2017 term, and the program expanded to evening sections for the first time. An ALP section has also been added to the abbreviated Spring 2017 term.

While this brief sketch of the history lays out what happened and some of the initial quantitative data that led to the expansion of the accelerated model, it does not explain the human element of the ALP story. It fails to capture the automotive students who were able to stay in their cohort because they had access to an accelerated option when they could not place into the college-level English classes. Given that this technical program only matriculates students once per year, the opportunity cost of developmental writing for those students would have been an entire year's salary as an Automotive Technician, approximately \$40,000. The facts of the history do not tell the story of "Ed," a student who was referred to ALP and registered with tears in his eyes when he realized that he would finish school a semester earlier than he thought and would be able to support his family. This history does not tell the story of the Honors Program students who found their voices and academic gifts in an ALP class. Qualitative research attempts to fill these gaps between facts and the very human story of ALP.

This Research Project and Next Steps

Early results indicated that the ALP program at MWCC answered Complete College America's demands for student success while adhering to Grubb and Garbriner's (2013)

recommendations for reforms. This dissertation will further evaluate the success of the ALP developmental writing program at Midwestern Community College. As Cindy Johaneck (2000) points out, every research project in composition occurs within a specific context that must determine the appropriate methodology for the project. Consequently, this dissertation, as a program evaluation, will attend to qualitative elements of traditional Composition research, in the vein of Mike Rose and Marilyn Sternglass, major figures in basic writing research, while it also attends to quantitative analysis to allow it to communicate the results of ALP in ways that external stakeholders, as demonstrated in the Complete College America research, can comprehend. First, it will complete a correlation analysis to examine the quantitative data. Additionally, it will include interviews with four ALP students to evaluate the program in their own words.

Research Questions:

1. Does ALP allow students to complete their writing sequence more successfully than their counterparts in the traditional developmental writing program?
2. Does ALP allow students to successfully complete Social Science general education courses?
3. How do students perceive their experience in ALP and how does that relate to their success as college writers?

This bounded case study will not predict success of ALP at other colleges. However, it will offer a model for deeply studying the success of the program with an eye toward continuous improvement.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Completion Agenda and the Context for Evaluation in Higher Education

In 2010, President Obama issued a challenge to significantly increase the number of graduates from American colleges, urging the United States to regain the lead in proportional degree attainment (Kelly & Schneider, 2012). Responding to Obama's call for increased completion, Bill Gates and the Achieving the Dream Foundation, as well as the Lumina Foundation, also pushed ambitious goals for degree attainment (Kelly & Schneider, 2012), ratcheting up public demands from citizens and politicians alike for increased completion. The "completion agenda" emerged in the public sphere and marks a fundamental rethinking of higher education (Kelly & Schneider, 2012; Rose, 2013) and a very different context for evaluating success and holding higher education accountable for that success.

In prior generations, colleges met their obligations to the general public by simply providing access to courses and programs, and though more students than ever before are accessing higher education, colleges do not see similar significant gains in degree completion (Kelly & Schneider, 2012), the new standard for evaluating a college's success. In light of the expanding public pressure for accountability, institutions of higher education must focus more than ever on student success, defined very narrowly, to ensure that students who enter their doors earn an academic credential (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Kelly & Schneider, 2012). One result of public

demands for accountability in higher education is a tension between the public evaluations of academic programs and the internal scholarly research.

The change in public criteria for evaluation can be seen in the public criticism of colleges. Proponents of the completion agenda, including policymakers and philanthropic organizations, argue that time to degree is the primary issue with completion and the primary problem with higher education (Edgecombe, 2011). One example of the public face of the completion agenda is Complete College America (CCA). Endorsed by governors from 33 states and funded by philanthropic organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation, this nonprofit organization published several reports including *Time is the Enemy* (2011). Their claim is that there is a crisis in higher education due to the length of time that most students take to graduate which will result in “today’s young people” being the “first generation to be less educated than their predecessors” (Complete College America, 2011, p. 2). Using data from the Achieving the Dream organization, the report argues that only 18.8 percent of students will earn an Associate’s Degree in four years (Complete College America, 2011). The report offers remedies from legislating the number of credits in a bachelor’s degree to embedding remediation into the college-level courses.

The Context for Evaluating Developmental Education Programs

The academic program this dissertation evaluates falls into the larger category of developmental education, a primary target for public critics of higher education, like CCA. General discussions of this area of pedagogy refer to classes considered below the college-

level, specifically those designed to remediate the basic skills of underprepared students (Boylan & Bonham, 2014; Grubb & Gabriner, 2013). At most colleges, students are required to take placement exams prior to enrollment, and students are then directed toward developmental classes based on a particular cutoff score (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Since the scores and tests vary from institution to institution, what is defined as college-ready is unclear, if not entirely arbitrary (Merisotis & Phipps, 2014; Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). As the definition of what is “remedial” or below the college level as well as who such a pedagogy serves is vague and unclear as it shifts from institution to institution (Merisotis & Phipps, 2014), making this a slippery term in both public and scholarly discourse.

Tension exists between how public critics and scholars contemplate developmental education. Although much of the public discussion of developmental education dates its advent from the open admissions policies of the mid-twentieth century, scholars in the field point to this as a myth; various forms of developmental education have existed throughout the history of higher education in the United States (Boylan & White, 2014; Brier, 2014; Merisotis & Phipps, 2014). This area of teaching became more pervasive and institutionalized due to increased access and increasing demand for higher education throughout the twentieth century (Long, 2014; Mutnick, 1996). While those outside of higher education see this program of study as remedying a lack of skills, scholars argue this area represents the democratization of higher education in that “developmental education embodies the quintessentially American belief that everyone deserves a second chance” (Lau, 2014, n.p.). Thus, developmental education is seen both as a second-chance policy to allow more students access to higher education on one side and also as a gatekeeper or

quality control — students cannot take college-level coursework until they “qualify for it” outside of the field (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006).

Part of what draws public scrutiny to this area of higher education is the number of students it serves. Currently, estimates of how many students nationally across all segments in higher education are placed in at least one developmental class ranges from 48–60 percent (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Long, 2014; Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; McNenny, 2001). If the data is segmented for community colleges, the estimated percentage of students in at least one developmental class is nearly identical at 50-58 percent (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Although neither inner-city schools nor students from lower socioeconomic bands dominate developmental education placement, a higher percentage of both groups as well as students of color are placed into developmental education even when their academic preparation is similar to that of white students (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006).

The expense of providing developmental education to this large of a population has not gone unnoticed outside of higher education. The result of these often arbitrary placements is that in some urban colleges, the students may need to take upwards of 1/3 of their courses in developmental education (Tinto, 1993). Moreover, 10 percent of the credits earned in community colleges are developmental (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012); credits that must be paid for but don’t count toward a degree. In addition to the personal expense of paying for credits that don’t count, public criticism, particularly as it relates to the use of tax money, cites increasing expenses for developmental education that drains resources from other areas of the institution (Lau, 2014). A result of the public

outcry about the teaching of “high school” classes in colleges is that many four-year institutions are moving away from the mission of remediation and leaving it to community colleges (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; Long, 2014).

In response to this public critique, approximately 25 state legislatures have passed legislation regulating the delivery of developmental education in public universities. In Florida, California, Missouri, New York, South Carolina, Massachusetts, and Arizona public universities may not offer courses below the college level (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Meritosis & Phipps, 2014; McNenny, 2001). Other states have placed strict limits on what remediation public universities may offer, relegating remediation to community colleges (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; McNenny, 2001). Even CUNY and SUNY, early adopters of open enrollment and developmental education, have eliminated their basic writing courses (Rigolino & Freel, 2007).

Although it has always been a key part of their own understanding of their mission, community colleges are increasingly seen by those outside higher education as a site where developmental education is a primary part of their mission. This is because despite the high costs, most two-year institutions are called on to serve those who cannot afford to move directly to a university, first-generation college students, and minority students. The scenario results in an increase of the number of students who are likely to place into developmental classes regardless of state mandates on universities (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). This is particularly true in California, where basic skills education is supported by the state and two-year colleges are held accountable for this training ((Fitzgerald, 2001). Lau (2014) argues, “As long as community colleges hold dear the mission of access to serve populations traditionally underserved in higher education —

low-income students, minority students, returning adults, incumbent workers needing skill improvements and industry-recognized credentials — there will continually be a need for programs to empower successful transitions into college-credit programs” (n.p.). This complicates their own evaluations of their programs in the face of public demands for accountability that are tied to simplistic numbers of completers.

The public pressure of the completion agenda fundamentally changes the terms in which developmental education is evaluated. No longer is it the domain of individual institutions and practitioners. Instead, numerous politicians and public groups have begun to evaluate and determine the success of these types of programs. Again, one of the most public and vehement critics of developmental education is Complete College America (2011, 2012). In its initial report, *Time is the Enemy* (2011), this organization argues “too many students need it, and too few succeed when they get it,” noting that “remedial students are less likely to graduate” (p. 14). CCA expanded on these claims in a subsequent report entitled *Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere* (2012). The organization characterizes remediation as “broken” and claims, based on ATD data, that “most students don’t make it through college-level gateway courses” (p. 8). As a remedy, Complete College America (2012) advocates for strengthening high school education, co-requisite remediation, embedded academic assistance, and interpolating students into an academic program immediately upon enrollment. Emerging as a way to open access to college to students who did not meet traditional definitions of “academically prepared,” there is now some question of whether developmental education supports students or hinders them in their quest to reach their academic goals, as the CCA (2011) report suggests.

While scholarly work in the area of developmental education interrogates many of the same issues that the public discourse raises, there is considerable difference between the scholarly literature's approach to the critique of developmental education. CCA and others like it have complicated the evaluation of these programs by cutting out the experts in the field and reducing the definition of success or lack thereof to a few aggregate statistics. Even as legislators in several states passed mandates regarding developmental education, they relied on what they had seen in the public discourse and failed to consult with the instructors who taught these classes most frequently and, therefore, had the most familiarity with this student population (Grego & Thompson, 1996). The scholarship shows a much more complete and nuanced perspective, and the results are mixed.

A good deal of the scholarly critique of developmental education focuses on placement into these classes. The Community College Resource Center (CCRC) completed a study of placement policies in community college systems. Their research found that little analysis has been done on placement tool effectiveness and that the two most often used placement tests — Compass and Accuplacer — misplaced students as often as they correctly placed them (Scott-Clayton, 2012). According to the literature, the risks of poor placement are twofold. Too many students may enroll in college-level classes for which they are not prepared and fail; alternatively, and arguably more problematic is the risk that too many students who are prepared for college-level work are placed into developmental class that do not serve to increase their skills, costing additional time and money (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). California researchers place this rate somewhat higher at 75 percent (Hern & Brezina, 2016).

In fact, the length of time students need to earn a degree is one of the primary criticisms leveled against developmental education by CCA and others. Some of the scholarly literature supports the legitimacy of these concerns because, as is noted, students must invest time in these classes prior to moving into their college-level courses, increasing the likelihood that these students will not complete at all (Long, 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012; Sternglass, 1997). Thus, “Community colleges have succeeded in opening access to all; if that access is limited to developmental courses that offer primarily the same type of basic education that failed students in the lower schools, then students have been cruelly denied access to higher learning” (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014, p. 261). According to national statistics, fewer than 25 percent of two-year students who are required to take developmental classes will complete either their degree or certificate within eight years (Bailey & Cho, 2010). Comparatively, the students who did not need developmental classes completed within eight years at a rate of 40 percent (Bailey & Cho, 2010). At four-year schools, taking developmental classes did slightly decrease a student’s chance of graduating, and the negative effect was more significant if the student had to take a remedial reading course, particularly if that student had already passed the writing assessment (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Yet the community college outlook is less optimistic with only 10 percent who enter the college with developmental coursework graduate within three years (Lau, 2014).

The self-critique within the scholarly literature further recognizes that lengthy course sequences may be a contributing factor to a lack of student completion. Developmental education is often more than one course. It is actually a sequence of courses that students must complete. The number depends greatly on their placement, and

the developmental sequence may extend over several semesters (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Adams, 1993). Mounting evidence suggests that the traditional developmental sequences are keeping students from earning a degree or other credential (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Edgecombe, 2011). Moreover, a sizeable portion of students never even enroll in the developmental sequence after seeing their placement and contemplating the long road ahead (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Incidentally, these students are lost in the public completion data discussions because CCA, ATD, and others only track the students who actually enroll. Of those who do enroll, many are lost at exit points between classes before they even make it to the college-level courses (Edgecombe, 2011; Bailey & Cho, 2010). More troubling is the fact that “between 60 and 70 percent of students who fail to complete the sequence to which they were referred do so even while having passed all of the developmental courses in which they enrolled” (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009, p. 3). Finally, even for those who pass all of the required courses in their sequence, still more students fail to ever enroll in the college-level courses (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Edgecombe, 2011). All of these potential exit points work to undermine academic achievement.

The scholarly literature suggests another primary reason for this attrition in addition to the length of time required is the confusion that seems to underlie the veneer of orderliness in developmental courses (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Instead, this may be “a bewildering set of unanticipated obstacles involving several assessments, classes in more than one subject area, and sequences of courses that may require two, three, or more semesters before a student (often a high school graduate) is

judged prepared for college-level work” (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009, p. 1). The end result is that confused students simply give up at various points throughout the sequence.

Other scholarly evaluations have connected with the conclusions in the public criticism, noting that in addition to requiring often a lengthy investment of time, developmental courses also require a significant financial investment by both students and their institutions of higher education (Bailey & Cho, 2010). These classes typically require the same tuition as college-level classes but, as stated above, do not count toward graduation requirements (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Moreover, smaller class sizes and necessary academic supports such as tutoring and increased needs for advising drain resources away from other parts of the college, while a lack of corresponding increases to graduation rates makes this a difficult investment to justify (Lau, 2014).

Further scholarly criticism of developmental education argues that, despite the investment of time and financial resources, studies have shown that students who complete developmental classes don’t do significantly better than those who would place into developmental education but do not take those classes (Perin, 2011; Bailey & Cho, 2010). The literature points to potentially problematic pedagogy and curriculum, keeping developmental classes from improving students’ skills in a way that allows them to be successful in college-level classes (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). Developmental education is typically conceptualized in the public discourse and in the larger arena of higher education as a treatment for a deficit, remediation, despite changes in language surrounding this area of education (Lau, 2014). These courses can slip into “dumbed-down” versions of the college-level classes, in both instruction and materials, that never fully relate to the work students will do later (Adams, 1993). For fragmented skills-based

learning does not translate to application outside of the developmental education classroom (Perin, 2011). The classes are even structured in such a way that students are deprived of role models who might demonstrate what college-level work looks like (Adams, 1993). In addition to a curriculum that is fragmented and disconnected from college-level work, higher education's general marginalization of these classes means that developmental classes are frequently taught by part-time instructors who are also disconnected from curricular decision-making and the curriculum itself, as well as little support from the institution in their pedagogy. This should be no surprise that students in developmental classes who have exclusively adjunct instructors may have even less success (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Long, 2014; Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011).

The literature points out further complications in evaluating and measuring student success in developmental education courses. Students who are placed in these confusing sequences with marginalized faculty members also bear the stigma of not being "college ready" (Adams, 1993). Many of these students believed they were prepared for college and were discouraged when placed in developmental courses (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009; Adams, 1993). In fact, placement into developmental reading had more discouraging effects than any other remedial assignment (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). This is particularly problematic given that more vulnerable populations seem to find themselves placed here. Sternglass notes, "The trend of institutions of higher education demanding that basic level students 'prove' themselves within the first year of instruction is shown to be biased against students who come from both poverty backgrounds and inadequate educational backgrounds" (Sternglass, 2007, p. 299). More recent research has confirmed

that students of color also “bear the brunt of unintended consequences” connected to developmental education (Hern & Brezina, 2016, n.p.).

Despite the heavy criticism that has been leveled against developmental education, particularly in the public sphere and within higher education itself, scholars have observed that it still serves a purpose in colleges to provide opportunities in higher education that many students wouldn't have due to a lack of academic preparation, presenting a fuller, more nuanced picture. Considerations of student success in higher education frequently do not take into account the fact that developmental education often attempts to undo years spent in disadvantaged educational systems (Tinto, 1993). While CCA (2012) and other public groups may advocate for strengthening the high school curriculum to reduce the amount of time students spend in remediation, the scholarship shows that skills gaps persist, and students who are underserved by the high school system may never gain an academic foundation that allows them to complete a certificate or degree (Long, 2014). In fact, “two-year college students who successfully passed remedial courses were more likely to graduate than equivalent students who never took remediation were, suggesting that developmental courses did help those students who completed them” (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006, p. 915). Allowing sizeable numbers of students to fail is unacceptable as is reducing academic rigor in college-level courses, which prevents students from being successful in the workforce or in graduate-level programs of study (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The implications in the literature are even more troubling for the underserved, minority students and those from unstable socio-economic backgrounds. If underserved students had historically been denied admittance to college or failed their coursework as a result of skill gaps, “a large proportion of minority

graduates in the high school class of 1992 would never have received degrees” (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006, p. 915).

According to the scholarly literature, at worst, the research on success in developmental coursework produces mixed results on whether students who have to take remedial classes find them to be an obstacle to completion or not (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012; Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). The scholarly literature demonstrates the difficulty of defining and measuring student success, tasks that seem simple in the public discourse. In fact, the standard measures of students’ success, transfer and graduation rates within a given timeframe as CCA and ATD advocate, excludes the measuring of student progress in developmental sequences just because they tend to take longer (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Even attempting to measure student progress through proficiency tests following the sequence of developmental courses is problematic given how many students never make it far enough to take the exam (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). Many of the reasons students struggle are not academic but are in fact noncognitive, particularly economic instability and lack of power (Rose, 2013), and standardized tests cannot account for those issues. Moreover, simpler forms of measurement such as completion rates and scores on standardized tests, the measure that primarily occupy the discussion in the public sphere, fail to account for the social and economic benefits a student may reap by strengthening skills even without completing a full degree (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009; Sternglass, 1997). The divide between the public and scholarly discourse is problematic in no small part because it leads to limited understanding for decision-makers. New research in developmental education must help those external to the field, whether in the public sphere or simply in other areas of higher

education, understand these nuances in achievement and measurement so that they have the knowledge necessary to make good decisions about higher education policy and funding (Troyka, 2000).

History of Research and Evaluation in Basic Writing

Basic writing occupies a unique place in developmental education because it is also a sub-specialty in the discipline of composition. Although the discipline has escaped specific scrutiny outside of higher education where it is considered entirely under the umbrella of remedial or developmental education, it has received scrutiny from those within academia who are outside of the discipline. While many scholars date the infancy of basic writing back to the creation of English A at Harvard University (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006), Grego and Thompson (1996) would argue that it actually dates back to the Reconstruction Era as institutions of higher education began marking a lack in entering students (Grego & Thompson, 1996). As the literature in developmental education suggests, various forms of basic writing may go back even earlier. In response to public perceptions, scholars in the field attempt to dispel the myths outside the field, particularly those in other areas of higher education that the perfect college-ready student, “a nostalgic memory of a presence that never was,” ever existed (Grego & Thompson, 1996, p. 70).

Basic writing, as defined by researchers in the field, is both a part of developmental education and composition, but also distinct from each. The discipline of basic writing emerged from the open admissions policies, the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program, introduced at City College of the City University of New York

(CUNY) (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Through teaching in that program, Mina Shaughnessy began to struggle with methods to teach the incoming students who were not acclimated to college conventions and expectations (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). The terminology cemented when she founded the *Journal of Basic Writing* in 1975 (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). In 1977, Mina Shaughnessy published her groundbreaking work in *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. This book expanded on the sub-discipline of basic writing and focused on the primary way of identifying basic writers through their errors, though Shaughnessy (1977) is careful to note the unfairness of blaming students for their errors. While other instructors had engaged the concept of the basic writer, Shaughnessy represented a more intense focus on basic writers with a larger scale (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010).

According to the larger academy, and particularly at Shaughnessy's institution of CUNY, basic writing served two purposes: To help underprepared students to acquire the necessary skills to join the conventions of the academy and to keep underprepared students out of "regular" college classes (Bernstein, 2013; Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Soliday, 2001; Rodby & Fox, 2000). Still further, part of the quality control element that basic writing served was to "shield faculty from the rawness and inexperience of a new wave of open admissions students as it was to support those students in their quest for access to college instruction" (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010, p. 55). This made the jobs in other parts of the institution to assess and teach students more "predictable and containable, neat and tidy" (Grego & Thompson, 1996, p. 75). Thus, students were only admitted provisionally and required to demonstrate mastery before moving on; only a

select few faculty members, generally adjuncts or teaching assistants, then had to contend with basic writers' errors and inexperience (Bernstein, 2013; Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010).

The earliest self-critiques of basic writing marked this marginalization. Ira Shor, in particular, criticized basic writing as divisive, famously referring to it as "our apartheid" (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Shor called for the dismantling of basic writing programs and the full acceptance of basic writing students. Similarly, David Bartholomae and Peter Dow Adams argued against the separation of basic writing students in their addresses to the Council of Basic Writing in 1993, as well as in Bartholomae's frequently-cited essay, "Tidy House." He argues that the separation imposed by basic writing as the act to "teach and enact a rhetoric of exclusion" (Bartholomae, 1993, p. 18). He further states, "We have once again produced the 'other' who is the incomplete version of ourselves" (Bartholomae, 1993, p. 18). It is less the acts of the writers themselves that mark them as separate but rather the lack of meaningful curriculum marks the cultural division between basic writers and the academy. As it responded to the vision of those external to the field, the initial philosophy of basic writing took away the intellectual work the academy values (Bartholomae, 1993). The inherent self-critique within the discipline has prompted increasing innovation in curriculum (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010).

The literature observes that as a consequence of the overriding focus on error, particularly in the larger higher education environment, developmental education, including basic writing, has had a tendency in the past to be "dull and monotonous," relying on skill and drill grammar exercises as a quick fix for the deficits these students exhibit (Lau, 2014; Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; Adams, 1993; Greenberg, 1993). Moreover, in addition to relying on grammar exercises, basic writing classes had a tendency to present

simplified versions of writing assignments that embrace the idea that writing must be learned through steps and stages of simple tasks (Greenberg, 1993). Unfortunately, this tendency toward less rigorous assignments reduces demands for critical thinking skills and disconnects the curriculum of the basic writing class from the more challenging types of writing demanded of students in the academy (Bernstein, 2013; Rose, 2013; Rodby & Fox, 2000; Mutnick, 1996; Bartholomae, 1993). The result is often a lack of transferable skills that failed to prepare students for the “real” work of composition and diminished motivation (Lau, 2014; Rodby & Fox, 2000).

Despite its identification of students through evaluating error since the field’s inception, the literature shows some researchers and practitioners moved in the direction of thinking of basic writing as more than a preoccupation with error that required remedy with a quick fix. Even Shaughnessy’s work moves beyond identifying and remedying error in student writing. She looked instead at patterns and the logic behind the error, focusing on the process of sophisticated thinking and writing (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Since Shaughnessy, the field has moved further from a focus on error to a focus on process in the 1980s with Mike Rose who labeled rules in academic English as stifling and Linda Flower, who focused on the linguistic strategies of basic writers. (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010).

Moving away from error focuses the basic writing curriculum more firmly on individual student needs as well as their strengths and capabilities (Adams, 1993). The basic writing curricula continued to evolve from what was initially an over-reliance on skill and drill in response to the demands of the academy external to the field toward a more substantial writing program. Distancing the discipline from an obsession with correctness, the curriculum and research tended to avoid creating objectives that focused on error or

what students lacked (Greenberg, 1993). The basic writing curriculum also reflected the general move in composition from product to process (Sternglass, 1997; Mutnick, 1996). Newer basic writing programs respond to this scholarship by embracing the idea that students must exercise considerable critical thinking throughout the writing process in order to reach the level of sustained ideas and depth required by academic writing elsewhere in higher education (Bernstein, 2013; Sternglass, 1997). Only by practicing these skills in the context of challenging writing and reading, and only by considering both rhetorical choices and correctness in the context of writing for an authentic audience and purpose do basic writers emerge as mature academic writers (Bernstein, 2013; Rodby & Fox, 2000; Sternglass, 1997). Finally, newer basic writing curricula offered students the opportunity to work collaboratively to improve their reading and writing skills (Sternglass, 1997; Greenberg, 1993).

Although some basic writing practitioners and researchers have come a long way from using error as a primary marker and the elimination of that error as its primary objective as the literature shows, error remains a persistent focal point to those outside the fields. The research and teaching still receives little support, particularly since many of those who teach basic writing are novice instructors or part-time (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). As one researcher notes, “Across the nation, basic writing programs are being scrutinized by numerous audiences — by politicians, boards of trustees, university administrators, and the public alike” (McNenny, 2001, p. 1). In fact, by the 1990s, many states eliminated basic writing curricula at the university level, due in no small part to public and political pressure to stop teaching what should have been learned already (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Too little research is done at the local level to communicate with

external decision-makers and improve understanding of achievement in these classes (Merisotis & Phipps, 2014; Troyka, 2000). Despite clear suggestions in the literature that basic writing as a discipline has evolved, students do demonstrate improved skills suggesting that basic writing helps students adapt to higher education's culture and expectations (McNenny, 2001; Adams, 1993).

New Models of Developmental Education: A Response to Both External and Internal Evaluation

Basic writing's evolution is a reflection of the critique and evolution of developmental education in general. As stated above, public pressure has been brought to bear on institutions of higher education, questioning not only results that seem unsuccessful but even the very need to teach what already should have been learned in the K-12 system. However, "To argue that remedial education should take place in the high schools, the elementary schools, the community colleges or some other intermediate level, is meaningless without real change in these locations" (Mutnick, 1996, p. 188). Despite the public pressure to eliminate developmental education and basic writing in particular, both inside and outside of the academy, scholars believe changing the approach then in developmental courses rather than eliminating them is key to increasing educational attainment in the United States (Long, 2014). Thus, colleges persist in revising and reforming developmental education in an effort to help unprepared students better succeed.

The literature shows three promising trends emerging in this process of revision: mainstreaming or acceleration, contextualization, and learning communities. Although there is not enough analysis for definitive results, the research suggests that all three of

these approaches promote student success more than the traditional approach of isolated developmental courses (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011). The new models all seek to remove the stigma of remediation and incorporate developmental learners more firmly into the academy (Rigolino & Freel, 2007). Mainstreaming places students directly into college-level classes and provides additional, often mandatory supports, to help students with skills gaps succeed at the college-level. Although students who otherwise would have placed into developmental classes were required to have special support, they were formally a part of the institution even if it was only a provisional part (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). In an accelerated or mainstream environment, students also have the advantage of taking less time to complete developmental education requirements. Accelerated developmental education “has shown higher pass rates in developmental and subsequent college-level courses...as well as higher rates of student persistence” (Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011, p. 4). Students of color in particular demonstrate gains in college-level skills, closing the achievement gaps with their peers (Hern & Brezina, 2016). The second trend, contextualization, places developmental skill attainment into the context of what students are already motivated to study (Perin, 2011). Deloris Perin’s research in particular advocates for contextualized reading programs that offer supplemental instruction within a disciplinary class. Perin (2011) notes, “The contextualization of basic skills in disciplinary content is used in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education as a way to engage students, deepen content learning, and promote transfer of skill. The approach is well-grounded in psychological theories of transfer and motivation” (p. 34). Early results suggest that students demonstrate short-term achievement as well as more potential for credential attainment

over the long term (Perin, 2011). Finally, learning communities have students take more than one class together. Research outside of developmental education has shown strong results in promoting student engagement with this model (McClenney & Arnsperger, 2012). Within developmental education, the results show a positive correlation for student achievement in the developmental course though persistence seems to diminish after two years (Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011; Bailey & Cho, 2010).

Several specific examples of new approaches to developmental education are mentioned in the literature. One prominent example of the new models of developmental education is the Arizona State University Stretch Program, which employs primarily mainstreaming to improve the educational achievement of students who are placed into developmental writing (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). ASU allows students an extra semester in a studio model to complete their ENG 101 course and awards them three elective credits if they take advantage of the additional year (Rigolino & Freil, 2007). In contrast, the California Acceleration Project (CAP) is a “faculty-to-faculty professional development network focusing on transforming remediation in community colleges, where the above problems are most acute,” as opposed to a single model that has been adopted at multiple campuses; it primarily promotes the acceleration of developmental classes to prevent the loss of students that typically happens between classes in a lengthy developmental sequence (Hern & Brezina, 2016). One other prominent model of reform in developmental education is Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST). The I-Best program is exclusive to occupational classes to accelerate the remediation of adult students to advance them to college-level programs on their particular career path (Bailey & Cho, 2010). By placing the developmental skill work directly into

vocational or technical classes, students learn both sets of skills simultaneously and are more motivated to complete their programs (Rutshchow & Schneider, 2011, p. 4). Early research demonstrates that students in the program are more likely to persist into credit-bearing college courses and accumulate sufficient credits to complete their credential (Bailey & Cho, 2010).

The Accelerated Learning Program

One final example of revisions in developmental education is the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). Because Midwest Community College (MWCC) selected the ALP Program for restructuring of its developmental writing program, this dissertation will focus extensively on that program. ALP was developed at Community College of Baltimore County and piloted in January 2007 (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). The program has expanded until all of the other developmental options were removed for students in Fall 2016. The writing instructors at CCBC began investigating ways to improve their outcomes when they realized that their students were far less successful than they had hoped; too many students in developmental writing at CCBC gave up before they ever reached the college-level course (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009).

Responding to the internal critique in the scholarly literature, the ALP program attempted to remove the isolation of basic writing as well as the exit points between developmental classes by allowing students to take the college-level writing class with more support (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). In the CCBC model, the ENG 101 college-level composition course incorporates eight developmental students with 12 students who qualified to enroll in the college-level course. The eight ALP students have a

second class with the same instructor to further enhance and support the writing instruction in the college-level course (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). As Adams, et al (2009) observes, “ALP has borrowed the best features of the existing mainstreaming approaches, added some features from studios and learning communities, and developed new features of our own” (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009, p. 56). The program embraced the philosophy Peter Dow Adams expressed in 1993: “If we no longer have basic writers work through pages of drill and practice, if we no longer restrict basic writers to paragraph-length writing, if we no longer require basic writers to write mechanical five-paragraph essays, then we may have much less reason than we did in the past for employing what amounts to a tracking system” (Adams, 1993, p. 24). The small class sizes also allow instructors to respond to the noncognitive issues identified by Mike Rose (1993) and other in the field of basic writing.

Since the program allows students to take college-level classes without qualifying for them, skeptics are concerned about the ability of developmental students to complete work up to the standards at the college level, and the possibility that the inability to work at that level may impact the overall rigor of the college-level course (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012). CCBC’s research on the outcomes of their students indicates that these fears are unfounded. Instructors who initiated ALP at CCBC believe that ALP works for several reasons. First, fewer developmental students fail to get to the college-level class. Additionally, ALP students indicate that they feel less stigma and exclusion from “college.” Moreover, cohort learning prompts students to support each other through the learning process as does small class size and numerous instances of individualized attention to writing development. ALP is inherently contextual learning because ALP students

complete the work of a credit-bearing class. Finally, there is greater attention to noncognitive issues that would not be possible in a larger class. (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009).

Evaluating ALP

In 2010, the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University evaluated the ALP program at the request of the English faculty at CCBC. Using a multivariate quantitative analysis, the CCRC found that students who participated in ALP were more likely than their developmental writing peers to pass ENGL 101 and ENGL 102. Additionally, ALP students were more likely to persist from semester to semester and complete more college credits than developmental writing students who did not participate in ALP (Jenkins, et al, 2010). Another aspect of this study analyzed the costs of this program in relation to the benefits. The costs for the ALP program were nearly double that of the previous model for developmental writing. However, given that more students were successful on their first attempt at the developmental class as well as ENGL 101 and ENGL 102, this program represented a substantial savings of \$442 to students (Jenkins, et al, 2010). Moreover, since more students persisted from semester to semester, fewer college resources were need to retain ALP students, suggesting that the program was worth the additional up-front costs (Jenkins, et al, 2010).

In 2012, the CCRC returned to CCBC to again study the results of the ALP program, using more data from additional years of ALP. Their findings corroborated the earlier ALP assessment. Researchers found that students continued to be more persistent in completing the two-course composition sequence. Additionally, researchers found that

student outcomes in the two composition courses were stronger than their non-ALP peers. The only negative finding in the report was that ALP students had a slightly lower level of enrollment and completion in other college-level courses than their non-ALP peers.

Significantly, both of these primary evaluations of ALP relied exclusively on predictive analytics, a research methodology that does not take into account the very prominent qualitative nature of research in the field of basic writing. This dissertation evaluates the Accelerated Learning Program, a new curriculum for developmental writing at Midwest Community College (MWCC). The difference between evaluation and other types of research is less the methodology of the research and more the questions that research seeks to answer (Merriam, 2009). Those questions are generally related to the value or worth of a program; the results of an evaluation asking those questions are communicated both internally within the discipline and equally often to external stakeholders (Merriam, 2009). For this reason, evaluative research requires a “contextualist paradigm” that is shaped by both internal disciplinary contexts and external contexts of decision-makers, contexts that must be consciously interrogated (Johanek, 2000). The contextualist paradigm of this dissertation necessarily engages multiple layers of public discourse demonstrated in the vast variety of literature discussed in this review. Those discourses include a very public discourse external to higher education but still influencing important decisions regarding developmental education. The discourses include those discussions taking place in higher education that is external to the discipline in basic writing. Finally, this evaluation must engage the discourse of the field itself, which other evaluations of ALP have yet to do. The result is a mixed methods analysis that incorporates completion data persuasive to the external communities while honoring the

research conventions of basic writing and incorporates qualitative data that may inform program improvements and allow student voices to finally communicate with the great public sphere of stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The completion agenda at both the state and federal level has pushed colleges to define their success in highly quantifiable ways, focusing particularly on graduation rates (Kelly & Schneider, 2012; Rigolino & Freel, 2007). As Bley, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) note, “policymakers...have called for more transparency in and accountability for postsecondary performance” (p. 1). The focus on success in remedial classes has taken an almost exclusively quantitative turn as well, Complete College America being one very prominent example. In *Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere*, CCA (2012) presents data from 33 states from the Complete Collage America/National Governors Association Common Completion Metrics (p. 4). This data revealed that more than 50 percent of all students and 67 percent of African Americans were required to take at least one developmental course (2012, p. 6). Further, CCA (2012) demonstrates through its data that only 62 percent of students referred for remediation ever complete it. The report strongly argues for co-curricular support for students who need remediation and cites the ALP program as one way of accomplishing this goal.

Traditional research in composition presents a conflict with the more quantitative mindset of policymakers. The most highly respected and most often cited literature in the field employs a qualitative, narrative methodology. One of the most prominent examples would be Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary* (1989). This study provides deeply detailed

“stories” (p. xiii) illustrating the challenges faced by several academically underprepared students. Rose (1989) argues that understanding these complex stories provides the path to helping underprepared students. Similarly, Marilyn Sternglass (1997) offers a deep qualitative longitudinal study of 53 developmental writing students in *A Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*. Much like Rose, Sternglass (1997) argues, “It is impossible to comprehend the nature of their academic experience or to contemplate educational approaches that will meet their needs without understanding how integrated these aspects of their experience are” (p. xi-xii). These approaches to research, focusing on student process and experience, makes up the vast majority of literature within the discipline (Troyka, 2000).

Although research in the field tends toward a qualitative methodology, this is not to say that quantitative research is entirely foreign to composition. Many prominent scholars have employed experimentalist and often quantitative forms in their research (Foster, 1988). This type of research framing composition suggests that the knowledge of the discipline can be empirical and cumulative (Foster, 1988).

Composition has embraced both qualitative and quantitative research throughout its disciplinary history, framing knowledge as more dialectical than cumulative (Foster 1988). This type of research privileges process over product and attempts to grasp the meaning that the writer creates as he or she writes. As David Foster (1988) notes, “Precisely because thoughts cannot be observed and measured, like the particles and waves of matter can, a strategy to track them based on the assumption of verifiability can create unrealistic and exaggerated expectations” (p. 454). Therefore, the discipline has become “a hybrid entity embracing the contrarities,” underscoring the notion that all

knowledge cannot be assessed scientifically (Foster, 1988, p. 455). This is particularly true of studies that examine the twin humanistic concepts of context and audience, concepts crucial to an understanding of basic writers, which ALP students and their developmental writing peers fundamentally are.

Basic writing, the focus of the ALP program, began in the shadows of the composition discipline. Mina P. Shaughnessy (1977) began her work with students at City College in New York, stating, “student writers who appeared by college standards to be illiterate” (p. 3). Her subfield blossomed out of what others had previously called “remedial of developmental writing” and she introduced the current terminology, *basic writing* (p. 4). In her groundbreaking book, *Errors and Expectations*, Shaughnessy (1977) qualitatively analyzes the errors basic writing students make in their papers to understand “the logic of their mistakes in order to determine at what point or points along the developmental path error should or can become a subject for instruction” (p. 13). It tends to rely on “lore,” rather than quantitative research.

Although Shaughnessy introduced basic writing as a sub-discipline of composition worthy of academic study, “research on basic writing is in short supply” (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010, p. 122). Otte and Mlynarczyk (2010) attribute this lack of research to an overwhelming reliance on adjunct faculty to teach these courses (p. 122). These faculty members rarely have the time or compensation to conduct research projects on their own. Despite some quantitative research generated through linguistic analysis of error frequency and attempts at mass testing, the field has a tendency to rely on qualitative analysis for its research design (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010). Even as early as 2010, Otte & Mlynarczyk acknowledge that remediation has become increasingly political with various

groups and organizations questioning the quantitative data, the lack of data, and particularly quantitative data limits how the story of success in basic writing can be explained to external stakeholders.

In *How We Have Failed the Basic Writing Enterprise*, Lynn Quitman Troyka (2000) is even more pointed in her analysis of the difficulty of communicating composition research to external stakeholders: “Our first failure was we didn’t tend to public relations. Did we think college students’ need for BW [Basic Writing] and other basic academics would be accepted easily by our many publics?” (p. 114). She intensifies this critique, stating, “We didn’t doggedly seek to ‘prove’ our results to college administrators who control policy and funding,” (p. 115). Troyka (2000) marks the gap between the internal public relations within the composition field and the external decision-making public. She argues the need for clear way to communicate with external stakeholders and supporting evidence those alternative audiences can understand (p. 115).

Research Design of Previous ALP Research

Research in ALP has taken a different track than most of the literature in basic writing. In 2010, the Community College Resource Center (CCRC) set out to study the outcomes of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). Using a multivariate analysis, this study examined outcomes for ALP students in ENGL 101 and ENGL 102. Using a regression analysis to control for a variety of demographic factors, this study compared those outcomes to students who placed similarly in developmental English but chose not to participate in ALP. Additionally, it examined the correlation between participation in ALP and persistence from semester to semester and

retention from year to year. The results “clearly showed” that participating in ALP correlated to higher rates of completion for both ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 (Jenkins, et al, 2010). Additionally, through regression analysis, the researchers were able to determine that there was little instructor bias demonstrated toward ALP students versus non-ALP students (Jenkins, et al, 2010, p. 11).

In 2012, CCRC returned to CCBC to follow up on the ALP program. The second study adds a propensity score matching strategy to the original regression study in 2010. The data drawn from CCBC consisted of both demographic information and full transcripts for the ALP and non-ALP students. The analysis employed a descriptive analysis to compare results of ALP and non-ALP students. It also utilized a multivariate regression analysis to control for demographic characteristics. Additionally, the study conducted a matched analysis based on student characteristics and regressions. The results of this study demonstrated that students in ALP continue to be more persistent and have better outcomes in both classes of the composition sequence at CCBC than their peers who did not participate in ALP.

Evaluation of ALP at MWCC

Rather than attempting to predict the success of the ALP program at other institutions as the CCRC study did through its regression analysis, this dissertation is intended as an evaluation. Cindy Johenek (2000) argues in her analysis of composition research that all research is approached in a context, and it is the context of that research that should determine the methodology. On one hand, the place determines “what research methods are *possible*” (Johenek, 2000, p. 3). In the case of MWCC, the Institutional

Research Office determined that it did not have sufficient resources to dedicate to an analysis as sophisticated as the one provided by CCRC (Michalski, 2016). Additionally, the context determines the audience or audiences of research (Johanek, 2000). An evaluation, particularly one of a college program, has multiple audiences and purposes. At one level, an evaluation of this program at MWCC has to help stakeholders external to the English department, such as the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet determine if the program is worth funding despite the added expense of a smaller class size for the ENG 094 sections, decisions that are frequently informed by quantitative results (Troyka, 2000). For the associate dean in the Communications Division, the concern is how to advocate for funding and also determine whether the program needs additional revision to successfully help students complete their courses, an important consideration for continuing to support the program. For the ALP practitioners, the measure of student success is more multi-variant. It encompasses not just whether the students pass the class but how that student develops as a writer and a learner. While knowing passing rates is useful, connecting the pedagogy to student experience in the tradition of Composition research is critical to determining the future of the program.

To provide information to these multiple audiences, this dissertation will focus on the following research questions:

- Are students who are placed into developmental writing successfully completing the initial required college composition course in comparison to their peers?
- Are students who move through the ALP program successfully completing the second required college composition course in comparison to their peers?
- Are students who move through the ALP program as successful at completing social science "gatekeeper" courses as their peers?

- How do students who participate in their program view their progress and success as college writers?

Much as the context determines the methods that are possible and the audience to whom the research must communicate, the questions must determine what research methods are *necessary* (Johenek, 2000, p. 3). The first two questions prompt a quantitative methodology, focusing on the correlation of ALP students' successful passing of a variety of classes in comparison to students who did not take ALP. These are similar to the questions investigated by the CCRC studies. The third question also prompts a quantitative analysis and addresses an area of data not investigated in the CCRC studies but is important to the context of this evaluation. The final question requires a quantitative approach to provide the "story" behind the numbers, more in keeping with the tradition of composition research as demonstrated in the examples of Sternglass (1997) and Rose (1989). Very little published literature, including the CCRC studies, analyzes qualitative data connected to ALP programs. The context of resources and audience and the research questions that emerge from that context demand a mixed-methods hybrid methodology in this dissertation.

Quantitative Design

Sample

Since this is a bounded case study of correlation and not a predictive analysis, data for every student who placed between 18 and 77 on the Compass Writing Test and 51 or higher on the Compass Reading Test was analyzed. According to policies created by Communications Division faculty, these test results place students below the college-level in Writing and into developmental English classes.

Prior to the addition of the ALP program to the developmental writing curriculum, students who scored below 77 in writing enrolled in ENG 093: Basic Writing: Paragraphs to Essays and, if their reading score was below 82 on the Compass Reading Test, they also were required to enroll in ENG 081: Developmental College Reading, both offered as pass/fail courses. Students were required to pass both of these classes prior to enrolling in the college-level writing course, ENG 131: Introduction to College Writing. Almost all programs at the college then require students to earn a grade of C or higher and then enroll in either ENG 132: College Writing and Research or ENG 135: Business and Technical Writing and Research. The ALP program changed this pathway by allowing students who ordinarily would have taken ENG 093 and ENG 081 one semester then enrolled in ENG 131 to enroll directly into ENG 094: Accelerated Learning Program (ALP): Reading and Writing and ENG 131A: Introduction to College Writing (ALP) simultaneously. ENG 094 incorporates the learning objectives from ENG 093 and ENG 081 along with some additional learning objectives in study skills. ENG 131A mirrors the curriculum in ENG 131 exactly except for the required co-requisite of ENG 094.

This data was divided into two groups: ALP participants and those who took the more traditional route through developmental English through ENG 093 and, though not always, ENG 081. Because these students self-selected into these two groups, the data is not perfectly reliable. Additionally, this study does not control for either instructor bias in ALP sections and does not control for potential bias in students choosing ALP over more traditional routes through developmental writing. However, "Because action research usually focuses on gathering local data to improve local practice, it is not often concerned with external validity and, consequently the precautions usually taken to ensure external

validity are absent” (Vogt, 2007, p. 266). This study seeks to be formative in nature, to provide crucial information for improvement in the ALP program at MWCC.

Outcomes Examined

In comparing the ALP participants with students who took more traditional developmental writing classes, the following outcomes were examined.

ENG 093 Outcomes:

- ENG 093 — whether an enrolled student received an S or passing grade

ENG 131 Outcomes:

- ENG 131 attempt — whether the student attempted ENG 131
- ENG 131 pass — whether the student received a grade of C or higher in ENG 131
- ENG 132 and 135 Outcomes: (these are equivalent courses so their outcomes have been combined)
- ENG 132 and 135 attempt — whether the student attempted either of these classes
- ENG 132 and 135 attempt — whether the students received a grade of C or higher in these two classes

SOC 131 Outcomes:

- SOC 131 attempt — whether the students attempted this class
- SOC completion — whether the students received a grade of C or higher in this class

PSY 131 Outcomes:

- PSY 131 attempt — whether the students attempted this class
- PSY 131 completion — whether the students received a grade of C or higher in this class

POLS 131 Outcomes:

- POLS 131 attempt — whether the students attempted this class
- POLS 131 completion — whether the students received a grade of C or higher in this class

Other Persistence and Success Outcomes:

- Persist in English at MWCC — enrolled in an English class at MWCC in a term following ENG 093
- Persist in social science at MWCC — enrolled in a social science class at MWCC in a term following ENG 093

Rather than relying on raw data for these outcomes, the study will employ a chi-squared test. This test will allow the researcher to determine if there is a quantifiable difference between the traditional developmental students and the one who participated in the ALP program to be statistically significant (Vogt, 2007, p. 193). The quantitative section of this study will rely on the staff in the Institutional Research office to both gather the raw data and to perform the *chi-squared* test to determine how the raw data correlates to participation in the ALP program. Examining the outcomes of passing and failing these courses and testing their correlations to ALP is intended to either prove or disprove the hypothesis that participation in ALP has a positive correlation with passing additional composition classes and common general education classes in social science.

Qualitative Design

Quantitative analysis allows this evaluation to communicate pass/fail rates, retention, and correlations of those results to the ALP program. These are results that external stakeholders value and comprehend (Rigolino & Freel, 2007). However, in order to fully understand student success in an ALP course, a multi-variant, experience-based result, this dissertation also employs a qualitative methodology to gather data. Adding a

qualitative element also moves away from testing the hypothesis that the program allowed students to be more successful than their peers in the previous basic writing model. This is research that is “focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied” (Merriam, 2009, p. 1). This type of analysis adds a richness to program development because it allows “an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describes how people interpret what they experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). For this reason, qualitative research is very much in keeping with previous basic writing research, particularly such that examines writing process (Otte & Mlynarczyk, 2010; Johanek, 2000).

The model used will be a bounded case study: “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, or process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 2009, p. x). That design provides good specificity for examining a particular program or problem in current practice (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). This is a design model that, like the quantitative research design, embraces applied or active research that examines a local program or problem (Merriam, 2009, p. 3).

This added dimension of study allows the researcher to examine how the program impacts students from their perspective and how they make meaning of their reality in the program. As Rose (1989) and Sternglass (1997) argue, the student experience must inform the developmental of pedagogical approaches because meeting the needs of the developmental writer is inherently tied to understanding their experience. Ultimately,

incorporating a qualitative understanding of student experience into this study will provide a starting point for potential revisions to the program to increase its success.

The qualitative portion of this study was limited to former ALP students who had taken the class prior to September 2016, approximately 250 potential participants. Students had the opportunity to volunteer for an interview following an email advertisement from the researcher through the official college email system. The interviewer was only identified as a researcher from a local university who was conducting research on the ALP program. (A copy of the original email is included in the appendix.) Since the researcher could not observe the students without interfering with their activities in class, interviewing students on a volunteer basis was method selected to gather qualitative data. The interviews also provided an opportunity for students to divulge their own feelings and interpretations of their experience, ideas not necessarily available in observation situations (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Unfortunately, the result was a small group of volunteers, enough to provide information about student experience in a pilot of this evaluation methodology but not as much data as the researcher would have liked to inform potential program revisions. Future evaluations of the program will likely require some type of incentive or other methods to increase student participation.

For this study, a private room in the student center served as interview location to ensure that students felt physically separated from their academic experience in the anticipation that this would help them be more candid. Although the researcher was an administrator at MWCC, she identified herself as a researcher at a local university and dressed informally to help students be more comfortable. Additionally, it was intended that the focus would be on the student experience with the ALP curriculum rather than an

evaluation of the individual instructor or other classes in the department, and disconnecting the interview from the department was necessary to make sure this focus remained on the student experience. Students who participated were assigned a pseudonym for reporting purposes. Arrangements were made in advance to ensure that any student complaints or appeals from study participants could be transferred to another administrator in the event that students might need that in the future.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and the interview method selected was semi-structured (copies of the questions appears on the Appendix). A semi-structured approach allowed the researcher to be more flexible and open to the students' worldview and new topics that students might introduce (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). The open-ended nature of the questions also allowed the researcher to follow-up with more specific questions designed to better understand the individual student's context and interpretation of his or her placement in ALP as well as his or her journey through ALP. For example, one of the early questions in the interview asked students to reflect on the moment that they received their placement into developmental writing and to describe their own response to that. Responses to this question generally prompted follow-up questions about students' past experience with academic writing and how they worked through a negative response to placement. A later question asked students to reflect on their preparation to write in classes outside English after their experience in the ALP program, with follow-up questions about what specific classes they had taken and how much writing they had completed in those classes. The interviews were then analyzed to determine what major patterns or themes reappeared during the interviews with former ALP students (Merriam, 2009, p. 23).

Conclusions

The design of this project means that it will be unlikely to offer predictions about ALP for other institutions. However, the quantitative portion should provide MWCC with the information it needs to determine if the program is indeed allowing students to be more successful than their peers who take more traditional development classes. Moreover, the quantitative portion of the study should allow the research and program coordinators to better understand how students are responding to and interpreting the program, possibly providing fodder for additional revisions to ALP. While this study may not predict the success of ALP at other institutions, it is designed to provide comprehensible data to external stakeholders, policymakers, and those who make decisions about budgets through clearly communicated quantitative results analysis. It is also designed to investigate student experience to provide a deeper knowledge for practitioners in how approaches in ALP are meeting student needs or where student experience may not be matching the intentions of the ALP curriculum. Other institutions will be able to adopt this hybrid model of program evaluation to both revise their own ALP programs and also clearly communicate their results to decision-makers.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study is an evaluation and, as such, its primary purpose is to determine if the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) is more successful than the traditional model of basic writing. Part of that evaluation is to determine if MWCC's completion data is similar to the completion data that CCBC found through their CCRC study. Additionally, this evaluation will expand the study of completion to include classes outside of the English department to determine if the numerical data mirrors the success in English classes. Assuming that these early indicators of success and preliminary data are correct and that the program will increase student success, its secondary purpose is to determine how successful the program is in developing students into mature academic writers and why. Answers to these questions will help inform potential revisions to the program for both administrators and practitioners.

While the quantitative section can provide a summary of information that helps decision-makers determine overall success of the program, it provides little information about how and why. Moreover, it potentially misses crucial successes that cannot be captured quantitatively and important points of consideration for revisions to increase program success. Therefore, the study relies on both types of data for its conclusions.

Cohort Numbers and Self-selection

Students who participated in the ALP program scored between 18 and 77 on the Compass Writing exam and at least 51 on the Compass Reading exam. These scores would qualify students for the basic writing class, ENG 093, and if they failed to score at least an 82 on the Compass Reading exam, students would typically also take ENG 081. In the traditional model, both of these classes would be required as prerequisites to the college-level writing class, ENG 131. Because students can take the Compass exams multiple times and that writing instructors can recommend waivers for students based on initial coursework, the Internal Research Office is unable to provide data on how many students are ultimately required to take developmental writing and reading classes. However, they estimate that approximately 70 percent of students are required to take a developmental class in either math or English (B. Chadwick, personal communication, January 12, 2017). Students were given the option of participating in the ALP program instead of the traditional prerequisite basic writing model. They were notified of this option through their advisors via email, telephone, and through fliers around campus that advertised the new model. The students who ultimately participated in ALP self-selected that option.

Selection of Classes for Analysis

The classes selected for this study provide leading indicators of student success in completing their degrees. ENG 093 is the primary prerequisite for ENG 131, and ENG 131 is the first required composition course for all certificate and degree programs at MWCC. Failure to complete these classes successfully means failure to complete a degree or certificate program. The second English class, ENG 132, is the most popular way of the meeting the requirement of a second composition class in all associate degree programs.

Students might choose, ENG 135: Technical Writing and Research, but a review of five years of enrollment data reveals that only 10 percent of the population chooses that option, so the numbers are too small for analysis in relationship to ALP.

The social science classes included in this study also meet degree requirements for MWCC associate degrees. SOC 131 is included in every program of study as the primary (and in some cases the only) way to meet the general education outcome in Civil Society and Culture. POLS 131 is the second most popular way to meet this general education outcome in associate degree programs. The last course, PSY 131, was chosen because it is one of the most popular transfer courses to four-year colleges and features the largest required writing assignment, a ten-page research project, of any social science course. A student's ability to complete this course successfully after ALP would influence their transfer opportunities and, ultimately, their ability to earn a four-year degree.

For the purposes of this study, students who initially enrolled in ENG 093, either in the traditional curriculum or in ALP, form the starting numbers for the cohort. As students withdrew from the class, they were no longer counted as completing the course for a letter grade and no longer appeared. Students who complete ENG 093 with a grade of S are considered "successfully" completing the class; students with a grade of U are counted as not successfully completing ENG 093 because they are required to retake the class. For all other classes in the study, a grade of C or higher are counted as having "successfully" completed the class. A C is required to meet degree program requirements and also for transfer. Students who earn a grade of C- or lower are counted as not completing the course successfully. Additionally, students who withdrew by the mid-semester withdrawal deadline established by the admissions office, earning a grade of W on their transcripts, are

counted as not having completed a full semester of the course or not having fully enrolled in the course.

Quantitative Findings and Analysis

Findings and Analysis for Research Question #1:

Are students who take ALP instead of the traditional developmental model as successful as their peers in the first required composition course (ENG 131)?

The number of students who remained enrolled in ENG 093 through the withdrawal deadline and subsequently completed the class successfully with a grade of S are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: *Enrollment in and Completion of ENG 093*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed 093	Percentage	Passed 093	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	708	90.54%	559	78.95%
13FA- ALP	33	31	93.94	29	93.55
14 FA - TRAD	722	649	89.89	497	76.58
14 FA — ALP	60	57	95.00	51	89.47
14 WI - TRAD	628	567	88.89	414	73.02
14 WI - ALP	36	32	90.29	27	84.38
15 FA - TRAD	586	514	87.71	371	72.18
15 FA — ALP	139	130	93.35	117	90.00
15 WI - TRAD	548	486	88.69	343	70.58
15 WI - ALP	40	37	92.50	35	94.59
16 WI - TRAD	375	332	88.53	258	77.71
16 WI - ALP	91	83	91.21	72	86.75

The number of students who remained enrolled in ENG 131 for a full semester and subsequently completed the course with a grade of C or better is summarized in the table below.

Table 2: Enrollment in and Completion of ENG 131

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed ENG 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed ENG 131	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	408	52.17%	343	84.07%
13FA- ALP	33	30	90.91	27	90.00
14 FA – TRAD	722	345	47.78	282	81.74
14 FA — ALP	60	55	91.67	49	89.09
14 WI – TRAD	628	256	40.76	223	87.11
14 WI – ALP	36	32	88.89	26	81.25
15 FA – TRAD	586	227	38.74	185	81.50
15 FA — ALP	139	129	92.81	105	81.40
15 WI – TRAD	548	198	36.13	160	80.81
15 WI – ALP	40	35	87.50	30	85.71
16 WI – TRAD	375	107	28.53	79	73.83
16 WI – ALP	91	81	89.01	61	75.31

The Chi-Squared analysis of course completion in ENG 093 is summarized in the table below.

Table 3: Chi-Squared Test for Completion of ENG 093

	COHORT	Took Eng-093	Passed ENG-093	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	31	29	2	3.973325159	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	708	559	149			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.043785311	24.4759887	6.524011299			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	57	51	6	5.283989254	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	649	497	152			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.087827427	43.65023112	13.34976888			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	32	27	5	2.095628197	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	567	414	153			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.05643739	23.36507937	8.634920635			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	130	117	13	20.56005881	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	514	371	143			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.252918288	93.83268482	36.16731518			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	37	35	2	10.27861328	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	486	343	143			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.076131687	26.11316872	10.88683128			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	83	72	11	3.912633564	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	332	258	74			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.25	64.5	18.5			

The Chi-Squared analysis of completion rates in ENG 131 are summarized in the table below.

Table 4: *Chi-Squared Test for Completion of ENG 131*

	COHORT	Took ENG-131	Passed ENG-131	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	30	27	3	0.788033191	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	408	343	65			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.073529412	25.22058824	4.779411765			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	55	49	6	1.991572258	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	345	282	63			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.15942029	44.95652174	10.04347826			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	32	26	6	0.978393804	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	256	223	33			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.125	27.875	4.125			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	129	105	24	0.000897908	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	227	185	42			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.568281938	105.1321586	23.86784141			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	35	30	5	0.543233083	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	198	160	38			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.176767677	28.28282828	6.717171717			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	81	61	20	0.091442859	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	107	79	28			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.757009346	59.80373832	21.19626168			

Discussion of Findings

The raw data indicates that students enrolled in the ALP model rather than the traditional model of basic writing are more likely to successfully complete ENG 093 than their peers. Part of this completion is attributed to a higher percentage of ALP students who remain in the ENG 093 class for the duration of the semester. On average, ALP students are 3.68 percent more likely to remain in the course rather than withdrawing, and the percentage for each semester is consistently higher than that of students enrolled in the traditional model of basic writing. Additionally, the ALP cohort students were on average 14.95 percent more likely to earn a passing grade of S than students who chose the traditional basic writing model.

These statistics are consistent even when the size the ALP cohort varies greatly. The range of variance from semester to semester in successful completion of an S in ENG 093 is less than 10 percent despite changes in the number of students. The largest ALP cohort,

139 students during the Fall 2015 semester, successfully completed the ENG 093 course at a rate of 90 percent. These findings are significant because only students who are placed into developmental writing and go on to complete ENG 093 may continue on to complete the required college level course, ENG 131. Students who do not complete ENG 131 cannot graduate with an Associate’s Degree at MWCC. Therefore, completing these early English classes functions as a leading indicator of overall program completion.

The rates of successful completion of ENG 131 for students who remained in the course for the full semester were nearly identical for both ALP students and their peers in the traditional model of basic writing. The variance of only a few percentage points between ALP students and their peers in the traditional curriculum suggest that the ALP curriculum provides similar basic writing skills as compared to the traditional curriculum. However, as Table 2 shows, there are significant differences between ALP students and traditional basic writing students in the rates at which they enroll in ENG 131 and remain in the course for the duration of the semester. On average, ALP students enroll in ENG 131 and remain in the course for the duration of the semester at a rate of 90.13 percent. In contrast, students in the more traditional basic writing model only enroll in ENG 131 and remain in the course for the duration of the semester at a rate of 40.69 percent for a difference of nearly 50 percent. Therefore, the actual successful completion rate is better summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: *Overall Completion of ENG 131*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Passed ENG 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	343	44 %
13FA- ALP	33	27	82
14 FA – TRAD	722	282	39
14 FA — ALP	60	49	82

Cohort	Total # of Students	Passed ENG 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage
14 WI - TRAD	628	223	36
14 WI - ALP	36	26	72
15 FA - TRAD	586	185	32
15 FA — ALP	139	105	76
15 WI - TRAD	548	160	29
15 WI - ALP	40	30	75
16 WI - TRAD	375	79	21
16 WI - ALP	91	61	67

On this chart, it is clear that ALP students successfully pass ENG 131 with a grade of C or better at a rate on average of 75.67 percent, while their peers in the traditional basic writing model successfully complete ENG 131 at an average rate of 33.50 percent. Given that every student at the college must complete ENG 131 prior to graduating, these statistics suggest that ALP may have a significant impact on the graduation rate as the ALP students move through their selected pathways.

The chi-squared analysis for completion in ENG 093 shows that at the 95 percent confidence interval, the frequency of completion is different enough to be statistically significant except for the Winter 2014 semester (labeled 14WI). The conclusion here is that there is a correlation between taking ENG 093 as an ALP class and completing ENG 093. In contrast, none of the difference in frequency for completing ENG 131 is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval. This may mean that the students complete ENG 131 at too similar a rate to demonstrate significantly significant frequency of completion. Alternatively, the sample size may be too small to test for differences in frequency. However, it should be noted that even if the difference in frequency of passing ENG 131 is not statistically significant, the ALP students take that class a full semester ahead and pass at virtually the same rate. This suggests that ALP provides an advantage to

these students even if there is no correlation to passing the class at a higher rate. As the ALP program expands, this test should be completed in order to determine which of these scenarios is most accurate.

Findings and Analysis for Research Question #2:

Are students who take the ALP program instead of the traditional developmental writing model as successful at completing their second required composition course (ENG 132) as their peers?

The number of students who remained in ENG 132 for the duration of the semester and completed the class with a grade of C or better are summarized in the table below.

Table 6: *Enrollment in and Completion of ENG 132*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed ENG 132 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed ENG 132	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	258	32.99 %	230	89.15 %
13FA- ALP	33	25	75.76	22	88.00
14 FA – TRAD	722	177	24.52	146	82.49
14 FA — ALP	60	35	58.33	30	85.71
14 WI – TRAD	628	142	22.61	121	85.21
14 WI – ALP	36	17	47.22	15	88.24
15 FA – TRAD	586	83	14.16	67	80.72
15 FA — ALP	139	66	47.48	58	87.88
15 WI – TRAD	548	94	17.15	73	77.66
15 WI – ALP	40	19	47.50	18	94.74
16 WI – TRAD	375	12	3.2	6	50.00
16 WI – ALP	91	32	35.16	27	84.38

The chi-squared test findings for completion of ENG 132 is summarized below.

Table 7: *Chi-Squared Test for Completion of ENG 132*

	COHORT	Took ENG-132	Passed ENG-132	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	25	22	3	0.034012422	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	258	230	28			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.096899225	22.28682171	2.713178295			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	35	30	5	0.252509311	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	177	146	31			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.197740113	28.8700565	6.129943503			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	17	15	2	0.123365048	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	142	121	21			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.11971831	14.48591549	2.514084507			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	66	58	8	2.171867933	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	83	67	16			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.795180723	53.27710843	12.72289157			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	19	18	1	3.193772101	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	94	73	21			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.20212766	14.75531915	4.244680851			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	32	27	5	15.125	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	12	6	6			
"Expected" values	Proportional	2.666666667	16	16			

Discussion of Findings

With the notable exception of the Winter 2016 semester, only a small difference between the percentage of students who pass ENG 132 with a grade of C or better is apparent between ALP students and their peers in the traditional basic writing model, though ALP students pass at a rate that is consistently slightly higher. This similarity suggests that students in the ALP program who take ENG 093 and ENG 131 are at least as prepared as their peers in the traditional basic writing model, if not more so.

Once again, the greater difference lies in the number of students who enroll in the course and remain in it for the duration of the semester. ALP students on average successfully completed ENG 132 at a rate of 51.91 percent, while only an average of 19.11 percent of their peers in the traditional developmental writing model completed ENG 132. In fact, 35.16 percent of ALP students who started in developmental writing in the last

semester of the study, Winter 2016, successfully completed ENG 132 with a grade of C or better. In contrast, only 32.99 percent of the students in the Winter 2013 cohort of traditional basic writing students had successfully completed ENG 132 with a grade of C or better even though they had nearly three years longer to do so.

Therefore, the successful completion rates for ENG 132 might be more accurately summarized in the table below:

Table 8: *Overall Completion of ENG 132*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Passed ENG 132 by Winter 2017	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	230	29 %
13FA- ALP	33	22	67
14 FA - TRAD	722	146	20
14 FA — ALP	60	30	50
14 WI - TRAD	628	121	19
14 WI - ALP	36	15	42
15 FA - TRAD	586	67	11
15 FA — ALP	139	58	42
15 WI - TRAD	548	73	13
15 WI - ALP	40	18	45
16 WI - TRAD	375	6	2
16 WI - ALP	91	27	30

Although a small portion of students may have elected to take ENG 135 as their second composition course rather than completing ENG 132, the difference in percentages of students who complete overall is striking. An average of 46 percent of ALP students complete ENG 132, while only an average of 15.67 percent of students who enrolled in the traditional model of basic writing completed ENG 132. Given that ENG 132 is the primary way that MWCC students meet their graduation requirements in written communication,

these statistics suggest that ALP may have a positive impact on the graduation rate once it is scaled up to include a much larger portion of the population of basic writing students.

The chi-squared analysis shows that the difference in frequency of students passing ENG 132 is not statistically significant at the confidence level of 95 percent except in the Winter 2016 semester (labeled 16WI). This lack of statistical significance may indicate that there is no correlation between taking ALP and passing ENG 132 despite what the raw data suggests. Alternatively, the number of students in the sample may simply be too small at this point to demonstrate statistical significance. This chi-squared test should be repeated as more students move through the curricular pipeline and into ENG 132 to determine which of these scenarios is most accurate.

Findings and Analysis for Research Question #3:

Are students who take the ALP program as successful at completing Social Science gatekeeper classes (SOC 131, POLS 131, PSY 131) as their peers who took the traditional developmental model?

The table below summarizes the number of students who enrolled in SOC 131 and subsequently completed the course with a grade of C or better.

Table 9: *Enrollment in and Completion of SOC 131*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed SOC 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed SOC 131	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	261	33.38 %	199	76.25 %
13FA- ALP	33	17	51.52	15	88.24
14 FA – TRAD	722	221	30.61	158	71.49
14 FA — ALP	60	32	53.33	21	65.63
14 WI – TRAD	628	179	28.50	139	77.65
14 WI – ALP	36	18	50.00	15	83.33
15 FA – TRAD	586	153	26.11	97	63.40
15 FA — ALP	139	59	42.45	59	77.97
15 WI – TRAD	548	144	26.28	105	72.92
15 WI – ALP	40	16	40.00	11	68.75

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed SOC 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed SOC 131	Percentage
16 WI – TRAD	375	100	26.67	64	64.00
16 WI – ALP	91	32	35.16	32	75.00

The table below summarizes the number of students who enrolled in and successfully completed POLS 131.

Table 10: *Enrollment in and Completion of POLS 131*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed POLS 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed POLS 131	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	274	35.04 %	236	86.13 %
13FA- ALP	33	23	69.70	20	86.96
14 FA – TRAD	722	198	27.42	154	77.78
14 FA — ALP	60	28	46.67	25	89.29
14 WI – TRAD	628	169	26.91	138	81.66
14 WI – ALP	36	15	41.67	14	93.33
15 FA – TRAD	586	138	23.55	110	79.71
15 FA — ALP	139	43	30.94	39	90.70
15 WI – TRAD	548	128	23.36	101	78.91
15 WI – ALP	40	15	37.50	15	100.00
16 WI – TRAD	375	87	23.20	63	72.41
16 WI – ALP	91	23	25.27	19	82.61

The table below summarizes the number of students who enrolled in PSY 131 and successfully completed the course with a grade of C or better.

Table 11: *Enrollment in and Completion of PSY 131*

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed PSY 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed PSY 131	Percentage
13FA -TRAD	782	337	43.09 %	236	70.03 %
13FA- ALP	33	22	66.67	17	77.27
14 FA – TRAD	722	241	33.38	169	70.12
14 FA — ALP	60	33	55.00	23	69.70

Cohort	Total # of Students	Completed PSY 131 by Winter 2017	Percentage	Passed PSY 131	Percentage
14 WI – TRAD	628	240	38.22	162	67.50
14 WI – ALP	36	13	36.11	9	69.23
15 FA – TRAD	586	138	23.55	83	60.14
15 FA – ALP	139	50	35.97	40	80.00
15 WI – TRAD	548	136	24.82	89	65.44
15 WI – ALP	40	19	47.50	16	84.21
16 WI – TRAD	375	72	19.20	49	68.06
16 WI – ALP	91	24	26.37	18	75.00 percent

The chi-squared test for SOC 131 completion is summarized in the table below.

Table 12: *Chi-Squared Test for Completion of SOC 131*

	COHORT	Took SOC-131	Passed SOC-131	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	17	15	2	1.349365423	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	261	199	62			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.0651341	12.96168582	4.038314176			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	32	21	11	0.5406903	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	221	158	63			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.14479638	22.87782805	9.122171946			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	18	15	3	0.334622302	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	179	139	40			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.100558659	13.97765363	4.022346369			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	59	46	13	5.395599835	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	153	97	56			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.385620915	37.40522876	21.59477124			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	16	11	5	0.140659341	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	144	105	39			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.111111111	11.66666667	4.333333333			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	32	24	8	1.680555556	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	100	64	36			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.32	20.48	11.52			

The chi-squared test of completion in POLS 131 is summarized in the table below.

Table 13: *Chi-Squared Test for Completion of POLS 131*

	COHORT	Took POLS-131	Passed POLS-131	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	23	20	3	0.013109413	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	274	236	38			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.083941606	19.81021898	3.189781022			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	28	25	3	2.145408163	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	198	154	44			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.141414141	21.77777778	6.222222222			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	15	14	1	1.365373227	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	169	138	31			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.088757396	12.24852071	2.75147929			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	43	39	4	3.209785563	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	138	110	28			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.311594203	34.27536232	8.724637681			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	15	15	0	4.00990099	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	128	101	27			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.1171875	11.8359375	3.1640625			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	23	19	4	1.196687371	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	87	63	24			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.264367816	16.65517241	6.344827586			

The chi-squared test of completion in PSY 131 is summarized in the table below.

Table 14: *Chi-Squared Test for Completion of PSY 131*

	COHORT	Took PSY-131	Passed PSY-131	Failed	Chi Square Calculated	Critical Value for 1 DOF @ 95% confidence interval	Result
"Observed" values	13FA_ALP	22	17	5	0.549911135	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	13FA_TRAD	337	236	101			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.065281899	15.40652819	6.59347181			
"Observed" values	14FA_ALP	33	23	10	0.002878887	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14FA_TRAD	241	169	72			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.136929461	23.14107884	9.858921162			
"Observed" values	14WI_ALP	13	9	4	0.017751479	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	14WI_TRAD	240	162	78			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.054166667	8.775	4.225			
"Observed" values	15FA_ALP	50	40	10	8.223001095	3.841	Statistically Significant Difference
"Expected" values	15FA_TRAD	138	83	55			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.362318841	30.07246377	19.92753623			
"Observed" values	15WI_ALP	19	16	3	2.959661286	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	15WI_TRAD	136	89	47			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.139705882	12.43382353	6.566176471			
"Observed" values	16WI_ALP	24	18	6	0.532386868	3.841	No Statistical Difference
"Expected" values	16WI_TRAD	72	49	23			
"Expected" values	Proportional	0.333333333	16.33333333	7.666666667			

Discussion of Findings

In most cases of these social science classes, ALP students completed at a similar rate to their traditional basic writing peers. The difference between the two groups is generally no more than 10 percent and often much closer than that. In POLS 131 and PSY 131, ALP students consistently completed the courses at a slightly higher percentage than their traditional basic writing peers. In SOC 131, the traditional basic writing students successfully completed the course more often than the ALP students, but only by approximately four percentage points. All four other semesters saw ALP students exceed their peers in terms of successful completion of the course. The statistics for all three classes then suggest that ALP students are at least as well prepared as their peers in the traditional basic writing curriculum.

Once again, the more striking data is the number of students who enroll in these three courses and remain in the class for the duration of the semester. In all semesters, the numbers are higher for ALP students. The largest variation between the two groups is in the SOC 131 class. In that class, 71.22 percent of ALP students on average enrolled in and remained in the course for the duration of the semester. Only 28.59 percent of their peers in the traditional basic writing courses enrolled in and remained in the SOC 131 course for a full semester. On average, 41.96 percent of ALP students enrolled and remained in POLS 131 compared to 26.58 percent of their peers from the traditional basic writing classes. Similarly, in PSY 131 44.60 percent of ALP students on average enrolled and remained for the semester while only 30.38 percent of traditional basic writing students did so. Given that these three courses are the most popular way for students to meet general education

requirements in social science, these statistics once again suggest that ALP might have a positive impact on graduation requirements, though increased options not accounted for in this study make that correlation less clear with the social science classes.

For all three social science courses — SOC 131, POLS 131, and PSY 131 — the difference of frequency of completion, at the 95 percent confidence interval, is only statistically significant in one semester per course. This corresponds to what the raw data indicates, namely that there is no apparent difference in the ability of ALP students to complete courses in the social sciences. This indicates that students acquire basic writing and reading skills in ALP at the same rates as their non-ALP peers. As the ALP program continues to expand, this test should be repeated to determine if the sample size may have impacted the ability of the data to show statistical significance. Additionally, the real difference in the raw data was in the number of students who signed up for these required courses; nearly 20 percent more students enrolled. Future statistical analysis should look to measure enrollment in addition to completion to determine if the difference in frequency and the potential for this to demonstrate a leading indicator of program completion rates is statistically significant.

Qualitative Findings and Analysis

If I wouldn't have taken the ALP program, I think it would have been a lot harder for me to stay in college. — Carlie, former ALP student

While the raw data discussed above can show a correlation between success in both English and non-English classes and participation in ALP versus the more traditional developmental model, the chi-squared tests on this data tend to show that the difference in

frequency is potentially not statistically significant. However, this quantitative analysis does little to explain the full picture of ALP. In order to understand how and why ALP students like Carlie appear to be more successful in their classes, this dissertation employs qualitative research in the form of interviews with four former ALP students. AJ, Susan, Carlie, and David are all recent high school graduates who took ALP in their first semester in college. All of them believed ALP was a positive experience, but for subtly different reasons.

The ALP experience for these students actually began the moment they placed into their English classes. All four interview subjects expressed dismay and dissatisfaction with their Compass testing placement in writing. A.J. stated, "I thought I'd get higher cuz I love reading and writing, but apparently it wasn't as high as I wanted." She elaborated further, "I thought it was an insult because I was like, 'oh I need extra help.'" Susan had the most negative reaction to the writing placement test. She stated, "That test said like I was basically kind of dumb." Susan's reaction may be explained by her background in writing. She describes herself prior to college as someone who loved to write, someone who took as many writing courses as she could in high school. In contrast, Carlie explains that she wished she had been able to get help before the test so that she could improve her score. Of the interview subjects, only David did not express surprise at being placed in a level below the college writing class. Although he did acknowledge that he was "ticked off," David recognized that his grammar was "horrible" and likely the reason that he was placed as he was. He believed that the placement was accurate.

Despite their initial disappointment in their college writing placements and the differences in their responses to that disappointment, all three described their ALP

experience with enthusiasm. Even Carlie who felt that the test called her “dumb” believed that she would have fallen behind in the college writing class, ENG 131, if she had started in that course without ALP. A.J. also noted that she had learned more in the ALP program than she believed she would have learned in the ENG 131 class alone, not because they had more assignments to do, but because they had more time with the instructor and with the work. Given the quantitative findings, which demonstrate that more ALP students complete both English and social science classes successfully, their response is not surprising.

As students are asked to reflect on their negative feelings toward the placement test, they engaged in self-criticism. When asked to rank their writing skills prior to ALP from 1 to 5 — 1 being low and 5 being strong — Susan and Carlie ranked themselves at 3 and 3.5 respectively. However, David and A.J. both ranked themselves at 2. When asked why they chose those rankings, Susan and Carlie discussed various aspects of writing, such as word choice and development. In contrast, both David and A.J., who ranked themselves lower, focused on errors as the primary issue in their writing. David stated simply that his grammar was “horrible.” A.J. explained, “I’m good at writing long, like a lot, but I was not good at punctuation and like where comma splices go and all that fancy English stuff.” Every participant stated that after ALP, they would rank themselves as at least a 4, and Carlie even put herself as a 4.5.

When asked about the improved ranking, all of these writers cited significant writing development in aspects other than error. Carlie in particular reports that she is far more conscious about audience and language than she was when she began the ALP program. She feels she has eliminated “weasel words” from her papers and defines those

as “exaggerated words that are used more in advertisements that we use a lot to exaggerate.” She cites this language use as a reason that her previous papers were weak. Similarly, Susan cites more thoughtful word choices and a confidence to experiment with words as an area in which she has seen a great deal of improvement. David, who previously described the ills of his writing as “horrible” grammar, discussed how he improved on the five-paragraph essay form he had learned in previous English classes by engaging his reader more fully in a counterargument he might include in his papers. While the quantitative data demonstrates that students are passing their classes, it cannot capture or portray this growth from the simplistic to a much more sophisticated understanding of writing and audience that ALP appears to promote.

How is ALP different? A review of the course master for ENG 093, the traditional basic writing course, suggests much about the philosophy and pedagogy behind basic writing classes at MWCC. Engaging in the basic writing pedagogy of starting with a simpler form of writing to build to the college level, the course master specifies that this course will move from “Paragraphs to Essays” during the course of the semester. The course description states, “Intended for students whose placement scores indicate the need for instruction or review in order for them to write *acceptable* college compositions in ENG 131” (emphasis added). Further, the course objectives emphasize elements of the five-paragraph essay — introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion — and classic rhetorical modes. The course topics and objectives also cite several areas of grammar, mechanics, and usage as primary foci of the course. A review of the last three years of book orders for basic writing classes (ENG 093) at MWCC, by far the two most popular books are *Along These Lines* and *Evergreen*. Both of these books offer training in classic rhetorical modes,

such as description and compare and contrast, featuring extensive workbook sections to practice grammar concepts. In contrast, not a single ALP section of ENG 093 had a book order for a grammar workbook of any sort, and the first course topic is “Rhetorical Awareness;” grammar and mechanics are not mentioned. It should be noted that the interview subjects’ more sophisticated considerations of audience and language are more consistent with the learning objectives in the college-level writing class, ENG 131. Consequently, they would likely have had to wait an additional semester before encountering these concepts.

Although the differences in the structure and textbooks for the course are clear, the experiences of the former ALP students draw the deepest distinctions. Neither Susan nor Carlie reported experiencing difficulty with grammar and mechanics, yet both were placed in a developmental class. Moreover, both report that they ultimately were happy to have been placed in ALP despite their assertion that they were fairly good writers, at least a 3 on a scale of 5, and enjoyed writing and reading. One might imagine a wholly different response to the traditional developmental track, which would feature considerable work in an area neither student needed. Moreover, although Susan expressed great satisfaction with the ALP classes overall, her one criticism was that ENG 093 could have been more advanced: “It basically was high school. It felt like high school to me.” Because of the way ENG 093 is structured, it is even more closely aligned with the grammar and five-paragraph essay writing skills more typical of a high school classroom. Would Susan and Carlie have persisted in such a class? While this answer will never be known, the question might open an explanation as to why so few students make the transition from completing ENG 093 to completing ENG 131.

This is not to say that ALP does not attend to correctness in students' writing. The course master does specify that as part of their writing process, students will develop their skills in editing and proofreading. Indeed, both A.J. and David, who had ranked their writing skills at a 2 with particular emphasis on their lack of grammar skills, felt their skills in this area improved a great deal. A.J. reports, "I understand more about punctuation, like I said. I am good not doing run-on sentences anymore." ALP focuses on grammar individually and holistically, as one aspect of the overall process of writing rather than isolating grammar skills into discreet exercises as the more traditional basic writing curriculum tends to do. What is more important about ALP in terms of its distinctiveness is what A.J. and David say about developing aspects of their writing beyond grammar. David recognized clearly that one of his primary weaknesses was being unable to address a counter-argument productively with a reader who does not agree with him. He states, "And my counter-argument was basically if I ever had to write one, disrespectful like 'you're stupid; I'm smart.' Pretty much that." David's recognition that he needs to engage that reader in order to be truly persuasive moves beyond the typical modes taught in the ENG 093 curriculum. He likely would have had to wait an additional semester to encounter this type of instruction in the college-level writing class. Additionally, David displays a fairly sophisticated understanding of his choices as a writer when he talks about "various ways of writing" and organizing his ideas. Carlie and Susan echo this more sophisticated understanding of language when they talk about their word choices and the impact on their own writing. Carlie in particular marks the "accuracy" and precision she sees in her own writing, a fairly astute and sophisticated observation for a developing writer.

Another innovation of the ALP class is combining developmental reading and writing into one course. In the traditional model, ENG 093 only addresses concepts of writing; the concepts of reading are assigned to a different developmental class, ENG 081. For most developmental students, both of these classes must be completed prior to enrolling in ENG 131, where they will again encounter course objectives in critical reading. The second required composition class, ENG 132, combines the study of literature with continued development in research and academic writing. Faculty members at MWCC have raised concerns that students are not fully prepared to read at the college level, concerns that would have been extremely difficult to address solely with the quantitative data. The interviews suggest that this is not an issue. None of the interviewees reported difficulty with the amount of reading though some of them acknowledge that it is a lot. A.J. reported that her ENG 132 class had “read three books already. We’ve done a bunch of poems,” and she believes that she is doing well in the class. Carlie spoke the most about her reading skills and how they developed during the ALP class:

I used to not read and just scan. But now I read instead of skimming. I mean when necessary I skim, but I find it easier and more interesting to read on my own because in high school and prior education it was more like a group project to read rather than individually reading. I think just spending more time actually reading and break down, more analyzing, helped me grow as a reader.

While none of the other participants talked specifically about reading, their confidence in their ability to complete ENG 132, a course with a heavy reading emphasis, suggests that they are similarly equipped to manage college-level reading.

In addition to a change from the traditional course topics emphasizing modes and mechanics, another key aspect of ALP that would not be explicit in the quantitative data is

the importance of the instructors and the teaching. When ALP started at MWCC, the instructors in the English department voted to make ALP a “special assignment.” This decision allowed them to require a master’s degree in English, a higher credential than most developmental classes which typically will allow for a master’s in the art of teaching, rather than a field specific degree. It also allowed them to designate special mandatory training for these courses that is not required to teach other writing classes. A result of this has been that the classes have been taught almost exclusively by full-time faculty members; adjuncts did not even begin teaching in the ALP program until Winter 2016. The ALP faculty members meet frequently to discuss their experiences teaching the course and share pedagogical ideas about making ALP courses work better. As part-time faculty began teaching ALP courses, they were trained in the curriculum and interpolated into this denser mentoring community. More typically, part time faculty are provided with mentors, both full and part time veteran faculty members, but the contact between new adjunct faculty and their mentors tends to be more sporadic than the mentoring that is taking place with ALP.

The importance of this focus on pedagogical development becomes evident in each interview. All four interviewees believed that their relationship with their instructor was a primary benefit of taking the additional ENG 094 class in the ALP program. A.J. captures the overall impression of the teaching when she states:

Our teacher, he was very hands on. He helped with whatever you needed. If you needed to go to his office after hours to get him to read something for you. Or just give advice on something. He was always there. No question was stupid to him so even if you were like I don’t know if there is supposed to be a comma or a period, he was 110 percent okay with tell you what it was.

Susan elaborates on the relationship she had with her teacher, stating, “I felt like she cared more about my grades and wanted to see me a success in life.” The additional three hours of class provides more of an opportunity for instructors to build these types of deep relationships with their students. While one cannot conclusively draw a straight line between the completion percentages of ALP students and the relationships they have with their instructors, the interviews underscore the crucial element of pedagogical development for ALP faculty by demonstrating how important those relationships were to the developing writers in this program.

The most extensive example of the effect of an ALP relationship is found in Carlie’s interview. She connects ALP directly to her success: “I think it would have been a lot harder for me to stay in college” without ALP. She notes that her instructor “went out of his way to show us the library, the way back to our next class.” She further states, “he inspired me to get involved with the school.” Finally, she states, “it really inspired a lot of the passion I could say for school again.” No assessment can measure the impact this relationship has had for this student though one can see the outlines of the impact in the completion data. The required training of ALP focuses on noncognitive course objectives, which, in conjunction with the additional three contact hours, allows ALP instructors to build these types of relationships with their students.

Another aspect of the ALP program that might not be apparent in the data is the amount of time these students needed to be on task in order to develop as writers. Although they all felt disappointed initially to be placed below the college level, they universally state that they ended up appreciating the extra class. Carlie noted that she would have been behind if she had not had the extra support for her college-level English

class. Similarly, A.J. and David discuss the amount of time they were able to spend with their instructors and how that helped them better understand the concepts they were learning in the college-level writing class. Carlie commented, "Writing a lot and getting a lot of practice. It just made it more natural I would say." Carlie's statements are particularly interesting because at the time of her interview she was taking an online geography course that she didn't care for. She missed the interaction with her professor, particularly the ability to ask questions face-to-face. Additionally, her most telling observation was about her lack of motivation to read the material; she just didn't feel like she had time "to sit down and read" the book. She stated, "I just take the quizzes and hope for the best." The additional three hours per week for ALP gives students the gift of time to focus on their work, work that would most typically be done outside of the ENG 131 class or not done in many cases. On this topic, Susan offered the following observation:

You don't have to take one class to pass. You can take it more than once or you can take two classes to pertain because I know a lot of the kids in my English 131. They just didn't I guess you could say understand anything and they couldn't comprehend anything while me and the other 8 kids, we knew what was going on. We understood everything because we had that extra hour with the teacher by ourselves for her to explain everything.

Susan raises an interesting point about the usefulness of ALP for students who are not placed in a developmental writing course. The program might consider marketing the classes to any student feels the need for additional time on task to develop as a writer.

Although the completion data at the beginning of this chapter suggests it as higher percentages of ALP students enroll and remain in courses required for graduation, what can never be measured by a numerical assessment is the students' change in how they view

themselves as writers, a crucial element of the ALP program and they are most likely influencing student success according to the qualitative data. A.J., who rated her writing skills at a 2 initially, believes that she is “very” confident about her writing ability in college. She states, “I feel if I had to, I’d be able to do well, knock it out.” She states further, “I’m comfortable now because I know what to write about, know how to write it.” Similarly, Carlie, David, and Susan all reported that they felt far more confident about their writing both in English classes and in other college-level classes. In fact, as the quantitative data suggests might happen, all four students enrolled in the second required English class in the semester following their ALP class. The numerical data suggests that their peers in the traditional basic writing model are not doing that.

David, who repeatedly used the word “horrible” to describe his own writing, offered an intriguing and unexpected response to this. During his interview, David told a story about contacting one of the full-time psychology instructors at MWCC. He initially contacted her prior to taking the ALP classes. Her response to his email was to chastise him about the lack of professionalism she perceived in his writing. He states that he emailed the same instructor again after ALP, and she no longer felt the need to intervene in his writing. Moreover, another psychology instructor he encountered claimed to be a “tough grader,” but David still felt successful in that course and didn’t perceive her as a tough grader at all because his writing did not receive heavy criticism.

Perhaps Susan’s interview offers the most elaborate insight into ALP confidence and persistence. Of the four interview subjects, Susan was the only one who did not successfully complete ENG 132 with a C or better. She describes the first paper she wrote for the class, one in which she put her “heart” and her “all,” and inexplicably earned a failing

grade. At the end of the term, the best she could earn for the course was a D, which she describes as “not passing.” What is remarkable is that Susan does not accept this instructor’s negative evaluation of her writing ability. Instead, she ranks her writing ability at a 4 and reasserts her ALP instructor’s opinion that she is “college-ready.” Anyone can imagine a developmental writer being discouraged by encountering difficulty in the next English class; the statistics demonstrate that writers starting on the traditional track are unlikely to enroll in the class at all much less complete it with a C or better. However, Susan immediately enrolled in the ENG 132 class again the following semester, defying the completion statistics, and noted that she was earning a 95 percent in the class when she was interviewed. She concludes that “sometimes you have to take a class twice to pass.”

This is not the only story Susan told to illustrate the persistence she has learned from ALP. In the beginning of her interview, Susan noted that one of the primary things she learned about writing in ALP was “not just do it one time and then turn it in. And I felt like I had to edit it more than once. And finally get the best I could out of that paper.” She demonstrates how she adapts this skill to other classes when she took a psychology class in the semester following her ALP class. She describes the challenges she faced learning to write in APA because, “It is so hard. It’s just so hard.” Rather than giving up or settling for a low grade, Susan asked her instructor for help and used her writing handbook as a resource. She worked on the paper for a week, and states, “I never ever work on a paper for a week unless it’s like something really important.” The result is a perfect grade on the essay. Susan states, “I was really proud of myself with that.” If ALP is able to impart the diligence and the pride of writing well, as Susan’s example suggest, this may explain why ALP students complete both their English and non-English classes at a higher frequency

than their counterparts in the traditional developmental program, valuable insights for practitioners and administrators alike.

Much like Susan's story, the interviews overall provide a richness to the quantitative data, delving in the how and why students who take ALP seem to perform better than students who follow the traditional developmental model. Clearly, the quantitative research shows a high correlation between successfully completing courses and taking the ALP classes. However, David's interview provides a reminder that even though decisions are made about populations of students based on statistics, developing writing are always already considered best at the level of the individual. Even before the formal interview started, David wished to tell his story about how he saw himself ending up in the ALP program rather than starting with the college-level English classes. Although David allowed extensive notes to be taken and provided permission for his story to be part of this dissertation, he did not wish to have the prologue of his interview recorded though he allowed the recording of his responses to the interview questions. He began his story by talking about how his sixth grade English class made him feel like a failure; his grade hovered just below a C for the entire year. Consequently, when he arrived at seventh grade and his instructor asked him what grade he believed he deserved, David failed himself. Other years of schooling provided mixed evaluations of his ability so that by the time he arrived in twelfth grade, the teacher told him he was "smart," but he could no longer believe her. Today, David is a successful ALP student who has passed both required sections of college writing classes on the first try. His literacy narrative cannot be quantified or assessed with a placement test. The noncognitive challenges he presents cannot be remedied with a grammar workbook. Instead, to truly be successful, ALP must

provide students with what they need on an individual basis and important less for practitioners and administrators alike.

David's decision to preface his interview with his story without allowing that portion of the interview to be recorded can be read as an unconscious desire to keep his story from being coded into data that may not be statistically significant. He chose to preface his "real" interview with a story that necessarily, for him, colors the interpretation of the data he presents for study, a story that he believes will help the data, the challenges, make sense in a very personal way. David's example is one that reminds us that these students are individuals and any consideration of their development as writers must be counted as something other than a statistic.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In 2000, Lynn Quitman Troyka published an open letter entitled, “How We Have Failed the Basic Writing Enterprise,” in the *Journal of Basic Writing*. In that letter, Troyka marks the failure of basic writing to communicate its goals and successes outside of the discipline. She notes that audiences external to basic writing researchers require evidence and “compelling stories” to support innovation in basic writing, and she argues for the need to make a strong case to administrators who make funding decisions for the value of basic writing (Troyka, 2000). However, she states, “Yet, we were silent” (Troyka, 2000, p. 115). The result of this silence is that boards of trustees have withdrawn support for remediation, and the public sharply criticizes higher education for teaching what was already taught (Troyka, 2000). She argues that basic writing researchers have plenty of fine stories within the discipline, but these must be communicated to ensure the continuation of basic writing as an opportunity for students to learn the writing skills they need to be successful in college.

Increased public scrutiny over the last seventeen years particularly with the very public completion agenda, makes it even more crucial that those who promote innovation in basic writing communicate their knowledge and evaluation with multiple audiences, particularly if those reforms appear more expensive. It is important that we hold ourselves accountable for student success but also that those engaged in the enterprise find ways to

effectively define that term and communicate that success to external stakeholders. This dissertation meets the challenge that Troyka issued by engaging the multiple audiences of evaluation rather than remaining silent and providing a framework for the research valued by basic writing to answer the research questions. The research here demonstrates a compelling case for transforming the rest of the traditional developmental writing classes into ALP program courses for the vast majority of students at MWCC. Moreover, it provides ways to communicate the effectiveness of ALP to the larger public, the trustees and administrators of the college, and the practitioners and researchers within. Finally, this dissertation presents the possibilities of not only reaching those audiences but of designing ways of determining the impact of a program like ALP by focusing on qualitative research as well as quantitative, a method of program assessment that could be applied productively to other types of academic programs.

Implications of the Quantitative Data

As CCA and other organizations outside of higher education that influence funding and policy demonstrate, there is an implicit methodology in the public sphere that focuses on raw data related to completion. Clearly, quantitative assessment of this type has currency with policy-makers, administrators, and the majority of the audience that determines funding in higher education (Rigolino & Freel, 2007). This dissertation offers raw data as a way to open discussions with multiple audiences about how successful ALP students are as they progress through English classes and into the social science courses.

This data is compelling. Students successfully complete English and social science classes slightly better in ALP. What is significant about this data is that students enroll in

those classes and remain in them for the duration of the semester at much higher rates than their peers in the traditional basic writing model. In all cases, ALP students pass English classes at a higher rate than those who moved through the more traditional basic writing model. Additionally, ALP students are passing all three social science courses at the same or slightly better rates than their counterparts in the more traditional basic writing model. To a public audience that is used to responding to this type of data, the raw data alone demonstrates success in ALP though some work must be done to help them understand that even similar success rates between ALP and non-ALP students in the social science classes still demonstrates success.

The most compelling raw data was not even a part of the initial research questions in this evaluation. While the percentage of students who complete these courses are fairly similar, the percentage of ALP students who sign up for them in the first place is significantly higher. This may be the strongest leading indicator of degree completion because these are courses students must pass in order to graduate. Future evaluation of this program should allow this data to lead to more investigation both quantitatively and qualitatively of the correlation between ALP and enrollment in required courses.

Although the raw data strongly suggests that ALP is successful, the statistical analysis is murkier. In almost every other case, with the notable exception of passing ENG 093, there was no statistical significance in the difference of frequency in pass rates between ALP students and their peers who moved through the more traditional developmental classes. Taken alone, this statistical analysis suggests that this program may not increase success of basic writing students, and for audiences primarily interested in cost and completion statistics, might doom the project. Fortunately, this analysis is one

element in a hybrid of several different methodologies. Looking back at the raw data, as Chapter Four suggests, reveals that the sample sizes thus far for the ALP program may be too small to reveal differences in frequency that are statistically significant. Moreover, this lack of statistical significance may suggest that the study measures the wrong things. Perhaps the idea and agenda of completion has led to a focus on that when the difference ALP provides, as noted above, occurs somewhere else such as initial enrollment. As another element of the study, the qualitative data provides some additional illumination of the apparent lack of statistical significance.

Implications from the Qualitative Data

The quantitative data can help evaluators form some initial impressions of student success in the ALP program and assist in communicating that success to an audience used to that sort of data. However, it does little to provide a rich understanding of what student success in a basic writing program such as ALP means or how it is accomplished. Additionally, it runs the risk of mischaracterizing the program as the chi-squared analysis potentially does. Certainly David's unconscious fear of being aggregated into data and statistically insignificant finding seems to play out in the statistical analysis. Only the students' own voices, the stories that composition values and understands, can complete the picture of what is happening with the development of ALP writers. Moreover, engaging the type of research that practitioners of basic writing value brings that crucial audience into the evaluation of this program and promotes more ways to understand and improve student success.

One of the most important aspects this qualitative research revealed is that the student/teacher relationship in the ALP classroom was the crucial lynchpin in ALP student success. Each student interviewed detailed how important that relationship was to their development as confident academic writers. ALP works specifically to engage students in meaningful interactions with their instructors. Even though A.J. tended to be very brief in her responses, she had a lot to say about how her instructor's approach supported her efforts in the class. David, in particular, highlighted the dangers of when that relationship was fractured, dangers so emotionally compelling that he didn't have the confidence to voice those feelings in a digital recording. If David's negative feelings toward instructors and English classes had persisted, and if he continued to feel like a failure in writing courses, he likely would not have persisted beyond his basic writing class. The quantitative data show none of this. This is not to say that student impressions of instructors in ALP cannot be measured. It is to say that without the qualitative data informing this and future evaluations of this program, we might not have known to even look for it. Yet professional development for ALP instructors must include discussion of strategies to strengthen those relationships that build on the success that the ALP program has witnessed at MWCC.

According to the Higher Learning Commission, the regional accrediting body for MWCC, an instructor is qualified to teach college-level writing with a master's degree in English. However, the early data on student/teacher relationships in ALP classes has been so profound that MWCC faculty members voted to make ALP a special assignment that requires additional training. Prior to assignment to teach an ALP class, instructors must attend a minimum eight-hour seminar on ALP. Although the seminar covers topics such as creating an effective ALP combination of syllabi and reading apprenticeship concepts to

facilitate course objectives in reading, the seminar works primarily to help instructors engage students on noncognitive issues so that instructors provide guidance and mentorship specifically in those areas. Providing faculty members with tools to work with students in noncognitive areas is regarded as crucial to persistence and retention in the ALP program, and the data collected in this evaluation underscores the importance of that training.

Another marker of student success inadequately measured by the quantitative data is persistence. The data show that students enroll in required classes, like the three social science classes at a higher rate, but does little to suggest why. Susan's story about working on her APA style paper in psychology suggests the importance of persistence and its connection to high levels of passing classes in the social sciences. She describes herself as proud of that effort. One might argue that persistence could be gained elsewhere or that a thorough study would also interview students progressing through the more traditional course of study should also be interviewed. Allowing the quantitative information to guide the methodology of the evaluation tells us we do not have to do that. Enough of the quantitative data suggests that students are more persistent in ALP, that they pass their classes at a similar or higher rate, and that they skip a semester of developmental education — a huge benefit in itself. What needs to be done in the evaluation is to continue to study the way ALP promotes success, build on that, and help external audiences better understand it through the stories that students share with us.

Future Areas of Research

This dissertation presents an evaluation of ALP at MWCC that supports the case to continue to expand the program beyond its initial pilot. However, there are other aspects of the program and its surrounding context that require more study.

Placement

The ALP experience actually starts here. Students developed conclusions about themselves as writers before they ever met their ALP instructor. Students need to better understand what the placement communicates, rather than assuming they are “horrible” or “dumb.” Even though they ultimately came to terms with the idea of a developmental class and embraced what they were learning, all four of the students in this study expressed confusion and dismay at their placement. These emotions were even more acute for A.J. and Susan, who described themselves as strong writers, students who “loved” reading and writing.

During the time that the students included in this study matriculated into MWCC, the college required every student to take the Compass Reading and Writing tests for placement. As Chapter One notes, placing below 77 in writing and 82 in reading created the means for placement into developmental classes. A 2012 study by the Community College Resource Center challenged the validity of that placement procedure (Scott-Clayton). The study found that, in English, there was little predictive validity in the Compass test (Scott-Clayton, 2012). Based on that data, the study argued that using multiple pieces of information to place students would reduce serious misplacement by 15 percent and would reduce the number of students who were directed to remediation but did not require it (Scott-Clayton, 2012).

In response to this study and the fact that the Compass test was eliminated as an option for placement, MWCC moved to a multiple-measures style placement in November 2016. The new procedure asks students to self-report their GPA. A GPA of 3.0 or above results in the student moving directly into ENG 131, the college-level writing course. A GPA between 2.9 and 2.0 places the student into either ALP or the traditional developmental English sequence. A GPA below 2.0 means that the student cannot be placed. Alternatively, students can submit SAT and ACT scores to change their placement. Students who cannot be placed by any other means will take the Accuplacer Reading test to provide a modicum of guidance about where the student should be. Thus far, it is too early to determine if this placement procedure is effective at all, much less if it is more effective than previous efforts at placement. Because placement forms the beginning of the ALP experience, it will be important to include this in future evaluations to ensure that placement supports student success. Moreover, the model in this dissertation, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, will allow for a full evaluation of placement. While the quantitative data is compelling, the qualitative data can explain what is happening behind the numbers, just as it has for the ALP program.

Another aspect of placement that should be investigated is whether or not students who can place into college-level English courses according to the placement policies established by the faculty members at MWCC could still benefit from placement in ALP. For example, a student with a low high school GPA and high standardized test scores may still require assistance adapting to the college environment. Carlie perhaps best illustrates the need to look further at placement. She described her progress in her high school classes as “fine,” and was surprised that the Compass test placed her into developmental courses.

However, she also notes that she would likely not have made it through college if she had not taken ALP. How many other students like Carlie could benefit from ALP even if all the standard placement processes tell us they do not need it? Allowing students who qualify for college-level work to choose instead to join the ALP program is an aspect of ALP that has not been studied. It should be noted that in an era of intense pressure to focus on completion, adding another class to a student's schedule may not be popular, but then this dissertation demonstrates that evaluation and research cannot simply enslave itself to what is publicly popular. Instead, it will have to make a clear case for what may seem counterintuitive to public audiences and work to change the narrative of what is "popular."

Reading Skills

One area of concern that reading instructors at MWCC raised is that ALP may not support sufficient development of reading skills. In fact, a member of the board of trustees also asked this question at their March 2015 meeting when information about the pilot for ALP was introduced. The reason the concern was raised is because ALP students do not take the required reading skills class that most other developmental English students take. Instead, the developmental English curricular committee built reading skills objectives into the course master for ALP. Even so, the ALP courses are not taught by experts in the field of reading. The quantitative data suggest, because there is little difference between the pass rates of ALP students and their peers in the traditional developmental model (which includes the reading class), there is no reason to believe that ALP students are hindered by the lack of the specialized reading class. However, this is still an area worth further study as this dissertation has already shown that sometimes quantitative data measures the

wrong or right things inadequately. Moreover, the qualitative portion of this study did not include questions specifically designed to help students reflect on reading skills.

English Language Learners

Thus far, MWCC has excluded English language learners from its ALP classes. Students who did not graduate middle school in an English-speaking country are required to take a different placement exam specifically designed for English language learners. That exam functions as the prerequisite to an entirely different set of classes from ALP and the native speaker traditional developmental English sequence. If students do not place directly into the college-level writing course, ENG 131, they may be referred to the English Language Institute, which has six levels of reading and writing classes. They may also place into the bridge semester between the ELI and the college-level English classes. The ELL faculty members have proposed an accelerated ELL course that will combine the reading and writing bridge semester courses into a co-requisite course with the college-level writing class, very much in the model of the native speaker ALP classes. Almost no work has been done to study the impact of ALP specifically on non-native English speakers. A new evaluation will need to be conducted at MWCC to determine the success of accelerated learning for this population.

Conclusions

In March 2015, the MWCC Board of Trustees heard a presentation that revealed some of the preliminary data from this dissertation. The ALP program presentation came midway through a long meeting, and the members of the board were clearly tired. They patiently listened to an explanation of how ALP works and even seemed interested in the

data revealed by the CCRC studies of ALP, as well as preliminary data from MWCC's program. However, these board members truly became engaged as instructors told stories about their students. They talked about how they worked with students who had never felt like they were successful writers in the past. They shared their observations of the sense of victory these students experienced when writing a strong college-level paper for the first time. The trustees heard the names of the students and the stories of the instructors, the very kinds of stories that Troyka (2000) believes can no longer be silent. Thus, the board members expressed overwhelming support for a more expensive program to reach these students.

Two great dangers remain in the quest to ensure that basic writing students have the skills necessary to guarantee opportunities to be successful in higher education. First is the failure to communicate with people who make decisions, particularly funding decisions, about basic writing programs and offerings. Neglecting this audience, failing to make a clear and convincing case for what basic writing can do, undermines higher education's commitment to the students these programs serve. Incorporating quantitative data assessment that inherently has currency with this audience is key, but so is helping them understand the student voices and stories in the qualitative data. This is what is missing currently in public assessments of developmental educations. Second, basic writing programs are in danger of measuring all the wrong things, thereby raising the potential that as David Bartholomae (1993) and others have pointed out, do more harm than good to the very students they serve, focusing too easily on fast remedies and easy fixes. Instead, the evaluations of these programs must allow the interplay of results from different

methodologies to inform the continued research and shape the new directions for basic writing.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Email Invitation

Dear (MWCC) Student,

I am a student in the Doctorate in Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University and am working on a dissertation project designed to help Henry Ford College evaluate the ALP program.

To inform this project I am conducting interviews with former ALP students. I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to answer a series of questions about your experiences in the ALP program and in your classes after it.

Your participation in this study is voluntary which is explained along with other details in the informed consent form. When interviews are completed, I will use pseudonyms for participants and their institutions to protect the anonymity of all participants.

If you have any questions please give me a call at (313) 845-6385 or send an email to jlernst@hfcc.edu.

I hope to hear from you soon,

Jennifer Ernst
Ferris State University Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Evaluating the ALP Scale-Up at a Midwestern Community College

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Ernst

Email: jlernst@hfcc.edu

Phone: (313) 845-6385

Faculty Advisor: Sandra Balkema

Email: balkemas@ferris.edu

Phone: (231) 591-5631

STUDY PURPOSE

You are invited to participate in a research study about the ALP program in writing. The researchers are interested in gaining insight from you regarding the success of that program.

PARTICIPATION

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a former ALP student. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked a series of questions related to your experiences in ALP, your writing skills, and your experiences in classes after ALP.

POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this study.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

This research is designed to examine the effectiveness of this program so that it may be revised for future classes of students. Additionally, the researcher is interested in any subsequent tutoring that may be helpful for former ALP students.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Signing this form is required in order for you to take part in the study and gives the researchers your permission to obtain, use and share information about you for this study. The results of this study could be published in an article, but would not include any information that would identify you. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University.

In order to keep your information safe, the researchers will protect your anonymity and maintain your confidentiality. The data you provide will be stored in a locked file. The researchers will retain the data for 3 years after which time the researchers will dispose of your data by standard state of the art methods for secure disposal. The data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The main researcher conducting this study is xx a doctoral student at Ferris State University. If you have any questions you may email her at jlernst@hfcc.edu or call (313) 845-6385.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.

SIGNATURES

Research Subject: I understand the information printed on this form. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact the people listed above in the "Contact Information" section. I understand that I may make a copy of this form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

Signature of Subject: _____ **Date of Signature:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Contact Information: email - _____ **phone -** _____

Principal Investigator (or Designee): I have given this research subject (or his/her legally authorized representative, if applicable) information about this study that I believe is accurate and complete. The subject has indicated that he or she understands the nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating.

Printed Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date of Signature:** _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ALP STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Your ALP class served as a replacement for a developmental writing, pre-college writing course prerequisite requirement for ENG 131. Looking back, did you feel like you need to take a developmental writing class? Did you feel that way when you received your original placement?
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being pretty weak and 5 being very strong, how would have rated your writing skills prior to your ALP class? Why did you choose that rating? Can you give me an example of something you did in ALP class that made you choose that rating?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, again 1 being pretty weak and 5 being very strong, how would you rate your writing skills after your ALP class? Why did you choose that rating? Can you give me an example of something you did in a class AFTER your ALP class that made you choose that rating?
4. Did ALP help you grow as a writer? Why or why not? Can you give me an example that you think shows why or why not?
5. Have you taken ENG 132? Did you feel confident going into that class? If you haven't taken it, why not?
6. Has your writing changed in classes outside of the English department? If so, how? If not, why not? Can you give an example that shows this?

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 412F · Big Rapids, MI 49307 Date:
September 13, 2016

To: Dr. Sandra Balkema and Jennifer Ernst

From: Dr. Gregory Wellman, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Evaluating the ALP Scale-Up at a Midwestern Community College*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because it is designed to improve a specific program. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative.

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Version 12.2014