

Persistence and Self-Efficacy in Online Writing Courses: The Role of Relevancy

Abstract

While institutions struggle with losing 40% of their students by the end of their second year, according to the American Council on Education, the growth of online education threatens to increase these already high departure rates by another 10-20%. Can online writing instructors craft course content in ways that help promote student persistence? In this article, I situate the debate around content, differentiate course content from writing assignment content, examine alternative approaches to traditional research-based writing assignments, and suggest three types of writing assignment content that may help learners persist.

Persistence and Self-Efficacy in Online Writing Courses: The Role of Relevancy

While institutions already struggle with losing nearly half of their students in the first two years, according to the American Council on Education, the growth of online education threatens to increase already high departure rates by another 10-20% (Smith). Vincent Tinto has written widely on the numerous factors that coalesce into student departure decisions, recent research highlights the important role of the instructor and the instruction. In “From Freshman to Graduate: Recruiting and Retaining Minority Students,” Lisa Hobson-Horton and Lula Owens examined persistence data on two focus groups of underrepresented students. They conclude that making student work personally relevant and personally meaningful increases persistence (101).

This is consistent with the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, which states that writing assignments should be aimed at “genuine” audiences, including “teachers and other students to community groups, local or national officials, commercial interests, students’ friends and relatives, and other potential readers” (7). The Framework continues, “Teachers can help writers develop rhetorical knowledge by providing opportunities and guidance for students to . . . write for real audiences and purposes, and analyze a writer’s choices in light of those audiences and purposes” (10).

Online courses allow greater access, and the associated potential for retention, than ever before. Composition programs are in an opportune position to

contribute to student retention efforts. There is scant research, however, on how composition pedagogy and content might affect persistence in actual practice, yet it is clear that certain pedagogies may actually do more harm than good in terms of student persistence. For example, in “Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year’ Composition as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies,’” Douglass Downs and Elizabeth Wardle examine the deleterious effect that disconnected writing assignments can have on some first-term students. They describe a returning student who had failed to persist due largely to his experience in a first-semester writing class; despite having “spent every day writing papers for my last job [I] never really took the time to think about what I was writing” (565). Then, when called upon to write academically, he floundered. What provokes anxiety in composition students? The answer to that question is speculative, but Downs and Wardle cite numerous pedagogical problems including a lack of instructor training in writing studies, lack of textbooks that reflect current scholarship, and ongoing practices of using composition courses to weed out seemingly underprepared students (574). Is first-year composition, a course well suited to help students persist, doing the opposite?

Can writing instructors craft course content in ways that help promote persistence? What would such content look like, and how would it be received by a discipline in which there is already little agreement around what should be taught, how it should be taught, and what comprises composition content in general? In online writing courses, in which students are emerged in some aspect

of the writing process nearly continuously, what should they be writing about? Certainly, many students fall back on hackneyed topics (i.e., abortion, capital punishment, and the legal drinking age, to name but a few) while others work on projects that are perhaps seemingly less opinion-oriented and more inquiry-based but still pulled from a list of topics provided by the instructor or the textbook. These topics form the tacit content of composition courses and are arguably of more interest to learners than the assigned readings, textbook chapters, and discussions of rhetorical conventions because these are the topics about which students conduct their research, reading, writing, and revision.

The writing artifacts derived from this substantial coursework are the items on which students are graded. Therefore, while proposing a unified approach to *content* is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term and examine how it might support persistence-based instruction. Here, I situate the debate around content, differentiate course content from writing assignment content, examine alternative approaches to traditional research-based writing assignments, and suggest three types of writing assignment content that may help learners persist.

Situating the Debate over Content

Patricia Donahue, in “Content (and Discontent) in Composition Studies” asserts,

Given the paucity of articles and books about ‘content’ in composition studies these days, it would seem that it is something

that we either do not want to talk about or believe should not be talked about, or feel has been talked about to death. (30)

However, the role of content in writing studies has long been debated, and that debate continues today and is relevant to persistence. In 1957, Robert Bowen penned “The Purpose and Content of Freshman English Composition,” which spurred a series of similar articles written on the topic focusing on what exactly should be taught in first-year composition. Bowen hints at many of the problems that still plague composition programs today: disinterested learners, untrained instructors, and haphazard content selections ranging from personal narratives and grammatical exercises to popular cultural projects and literary criticism.

In the 1960s, this puzzlement over composition content continued. In “The Obvious Content of Freshman English,” Dudley Bailey expresses disdain for composition studies relegation to a “service course” and proposes that “...we must assert that we are teachers of a subject matter; and we must...take care to limit that subject matter rigidly” (233). This question was taken up again, at CCCC in 1965, when participants asked, “Is Freshmen English a liberal arts course or a service course?” (196). This desire for disciplinarity is well contrasted against the more diffused, interdisciplinary content-focus espoused in the 1980s by scholars such as Judith Scheffler, who wrote, “Composition with Content: An Interdisciplinary Approach.” Scheffler described courses organized around thematic concepts, such as “creativity,” with content instruction provided by experts from other fields and writing instruction taking a secondary place as a mere skill (52).

This debate over content continued into the 21st century. In 2000 the CWPA adopted an outcomes statement that formally delineates learning outcomes without specifically directing the subject matter of writing assignments, and in 2011 the CWPA collaborated with NCTE, WPA, and CCCC to adopt the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing that describes habits of mind and experiences with reading, writing, and critical thinking that are foundational to success. Thus, if these outcomes and habits of mind are of primary emphasis in *instruction*, student writing topics, which may be at the epicenter of *learning*, are secondary and may be determined by the institution, program, instructor, or student. This provides an opportunity to shape writing assignments in ways conducive to student persistence.

While certain aspects of content are fixed (WPA outcomes, an emphasis on writing studies, rhetorical conventions, form, and content); others are flexible, including the topics students are actually writing about. This presents a golden opportunity: to help students select topics that will help them persist. Downs and Wardle argue for re-envisioning first-year composition in a way that “shifts the central goal from teaching academic writing to teaching realistic and useful conceptions of writing—perhaps the most significant of which would be that writing is neither basic nor universal but content- and context-contingent . . .” (558). Arguably the most context-dependent content for FYC is the transition into academic writing, research, and inquiry. Downs and Wardle recommend that course readings be focused on issues with which students have direct experience. They recommend texts focusing on purpose, process, and procedure; these texts

may be supplemented texts that focus on cultural discourses, texts that focus on students' overall first-year academic experiences, and texts that focus on change, transition, and persistence itself.

In general, then, there are two types of content in writing courses. First, there is rhetorical content, described here as the writing studies approach. Second, there is writing assignment content, which is often student selected, thematic, or connected to other courses. The rest of this essay focuses on writing assignment content: the content about which students are researching, discussing, writing, and reviewing in their online writing projects. Furthermore, as elaborated in the sections ahead, I assert that this content should help students not only with their writing, but also with their persistence through their post-secondary studies.

Alternatives to Traditional Writing Assignment Content

In his work on adult learning theory, Knowles emphasizes the importance of focusing adult learning experiences on learners' needs, interests, and lives (23-25). This is directly in line with what Downs and Wardle suggest when they write, “. . . students learn to recognize the need for expert opinion and cite it where necessary, but they also learn to claim their own situational expertise and write from it as expert writers do” (560). It is also consistent with envisaging first-year writing courses as addressing students' lived experiences. As Robert Davis and Mark Shadle note in “‘Building a Mystery’: Alternative Research Writing and the Academic Act of Seeking,” alternative writing replaces student apathy toward mode-based writing topics with “excitement in research and theory directed toward projects that linked their academic and personal lives” (432-433).

Davis and Shadle explore what they call alternative research writing which draws on students' lived experiences; connects the personal, public, and academic; and crosses and combines genres. Davis and Shadle describe alternative research writing as "intensely academic" but "reaching beyond the disciplinary thinking, logos-dominated arguing, and nonexpressive writing we have come to call academic" by mixing "the personal and the public and . . . the imagination as much as the intellect" (422). Alternative research writing allows for "an inward turn" requiring writers to use research to "explore and mediate personal conflicts, contradictions, and questions" related to "an issue or theme of collective concern" (440). In this way, students are extending familiar topics, related to their personal experiences, into topics that may be of concern to their peers, community, or society at large, and conducting research to make these connections and answer critical questions.

The final product that Davis and Shadle describe often requires students to "compose with a large range of strategies, genres, and media" such as "lab reports, case studies, news stories, position papers, take-home exams, and research proposals" (418, 420). Davis and Shadle describe these as "syncretic discourses" that use "a variety of modes, genres, and, in some cases, media . . . from a number of disciplines and perspectives" (430). The relevant nature of alternative research, connected to students lived experiences, may contribute to student persistence.

Asking students to select topics, as is common practice in first-year writing courses, poses a conundrum: complete student choice may foster

individualized and isolated writing, limiting the social epistemic possibilities of invention, research, peer review, and revision. However, thematic courses may alienate those students who are disinterested in the topic, lacking in prior knowledge, or intimidated by writing about it. A balance can be struck. Online writing instruction provides an opportune environment for students to produce individual projects while reflecting upon their common experiences as first-term students, such as transitioning into post-secondary studies; balancing work, family obligations, and studies; and finding or following a new path. As the online writing course progresses, these dialogs about shared but unique experiences can morph into dialogs about topics progressively less focused on persistence and more focused on the nature of writing, such as locating and sharing resources, navigating new technologies, and collaborating on specific writing projects.

Hewett and Ehmann comment on how the online course becomes a “written dialog that occurs over time” (69). Participating in a dialog about their lived experiences, in particular their experiences as first-year students, allows students to reflect on how their experiences are similar or dissimilar to those of their peers, while co-constructing course content in authentic ways. Hewett and Ehmann write about how students craft their own topics, develop their own conversations, and choose what they will respond to and how. In this atmosphere, student interests drive student writing, and this contributes heartily to the overall course content, with the instructor functioning as an editor-in-chief, guiding the discussion and graded artifacts (43). The instructor as “editor-in-chief” is consistent with the recast role of a learner-centered instructor. Furthermore,

according to Linda Boynton, who authored “When The Class Bell Stops Ringing: The Achievements and Challenges of Teaching Online First-Year Composition,” students can (and frequently do) identify and share Internet resources if their work is truly collaborative (302). Self-paced courses and assignments may complicate the establishment of rhetorical community. David Reinheimer discusses the ramifications in “Teaching Composition Online: Whose Side is Time On?” where he argues that students should move through their assignments together, and write about common topics, to fully leverage collaborative research, workshops, peer reviews, and revisions (463).

To reiterate: the term *content* is contentious in first-year writing courses; writing assignment topics are often selected by students (and therefore perhaps not as collaborative as they could be); and an alternate approach to content, whereby students write about things that matter to them personally and make connections among their peers, may promote peer relationships and course relevance and, therefore, foster persistence. However, what exactly should students write about? Here I offer three types of writing assignment content that are accessible and relevant to first-year students, including writing about familiar topics, writing about digital literacy, and writing about transition and persistence.

Writing about the Familiar

Writing about the familiar means more than writing a personal narrative; it means writing about family, community, and work—topics that, as Knowles suggests, are timely and relevant to students and help them approach scholarly inquiry based on their lived experience, not just their social or political views.

Dubson notes that, by not encouraging familiar topics, we risk disenfranchising students: “Merely doing what they are told to do without any innate or internal interest in the work is going to prohibit or seriously compromise the kind of learning and growth that we want to encourage.” (101).

Sherry Rankins-Robertson, Lisa Cahill, Duane Roen, and Gregory Glau, authors of “Expanding Definitions of Academic Writing: Family History Writing in the Basic Writing Classroom and Beyond,” explore the implications of writing about familiar topics, in particular family history, especially in basic writing classes, in which students may feel disconnected from both the institution and expectations around academic writing. Here, instructors

can address students’ “disconnect” by providing writing assignments that enable students to simultaneously affirm what they already know (e.g., by allowing students to write about topics of personal, civic, professional, or academic importance to them); engage them with a real, rather than an artificial audience; and encourage them to learn new processes (e.g., rhetorical analysis or using primary versus secondary research), genres, and media. (60).

Rankins-Robertson, taught family history writing at Arizona State University, notes that writing about the familiar helps learners feel more comfortable by connecting them with an essay genre that they likely have encountered previously (86); is easily integrated into a larger sequence of research-based writing assignments (86-87); can be aligned to the WPA Outcomes Statement (88); and demonstrates the connection of an individual to a

family, community, and socio-historical context (104). Furthermore, Rankins-Robertson describes family history writing as “multiwriting,” stating, “Not only does family history writing engage students in multiple formats of research, but it is also multi--disciplinary, incorporates the use of multimodal composition, and spans multiple cultures” (97).

Similarly, Davis and Shadle propose that students write about things that matter to their lives and incorporate research to understand the value of expert viewpoints, third-party research, and data, always within the context of their lived experience. Thus students move from writing autobiographical pieces to “generative” ones that focus on “a new incarnation to grow into” (434). This emphasis on things that matter can, in turn, allow students to feel that their experiences matter while simultaneously encouraging learning that, as Knowles notes, is rooted in past experience.

Downs and Wardle also stress that when students write about something that they and their instructor know about, the instructor is more effectively able to help them than if students “had been researching stem cell research or the death penalty” and can therefore encourage the student to dig deeper based on their collective knowledge (566). Because students are writing about, revealing, and researching similar topics, they can identify with each other’s experiences and share research strategies and sources. Downs and Wardle write, “Developing a ‘community map’ of opinion helps students envision research and argument as community inquiry and identify gaps that their primary research can address” (563). They recommend starting with questions (rather than topics), working

through collaboration, and ending with presentations (the results of which may be very useful to other online students also at risk of departure).

One of the most familiar topics, and potentially most beneficial to persistence, is family. Indeed, mattering, belonging, and support are critical to student success (See Baker and Pomerantz; Corwin and Cintron; Maestas, Vaquera, and Muñoz-Zehr; Nora; Ralye and Chung; Rendón; Saunders and Serna; Schlossberg). Ideally, students should feel that they matter to their institutions, instructors, and peers, but online learners may feel sufficient mattering if they feel emotional support from their family members and friends. Writing about these important relationships and the support that can be drawn from them can be a critical first step in helping students identify social support networks they may later leverage during difficult times.

Writing about Digital Literacies

Not only are many students new to their institutions, but they are also new to the online course environment. Therefore, it is beneficial for instructors to understand their students' digital backgrounds and for students themselves to reflect on their own digital experiences. Selfe and Hawisher write extensively about digital literacy narratives. In *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States*, they examine how literary practices are shaped by race, class, gender, socioeconomic status, and access to technology. They define technological literacies as “. . . the practices involved in reading, writing, and exchanging information in online environments, as well as the values associated with such practices—cultural, social, political, and educational” (2).

By writing literacy narratives, students evaluate their own personal histories and make connections from their earliest uses of technologies to their current feelings toward technologies, including their own affective response to their perceived self-efficacy.

Literacy narratives need not conclude in the past tense; rather, students may write about their future aspirations; mastery of online courses; and advancement toward academic, workplace, and personal goals. Case studies conducted by Selfe and Hawisher indicate that students overvalue the technical skills that they have cultivated over time and undervalue those digital literacies taught on post-secondary campuses. They may, for instance, consider themselves proficient at editing videos, posting updates, and even producing Web sites, and feel that these skills are more pragmatic than the essays and posts required in online courses. Here, instructors may find that they can leverage these skills to motivate digitally savvy online learners to produce high quality digital artifacts and to motivate wary students to see the value in information and digital literacy. However, this starts by having students express their digital narratives and having instructors assess these to prescribe more useful instructional strategies.

Writing about Transition and Persistence

Nothing is more pertinent to first-term students than their transition to a new academic environment. In “Social Networking Phenomena in the First-Year Experience,” Jay Corwin and Rosa Cintron write, “The freshman year is often deemed one of the greatest transition periods of a student’s life with minimal parental involvement” (25). By providing writing assignments that allow first-

year learners to understand that they are in a state of transition, reflect on how their experiences are matching their expectations, and relate to their peers' similar circumstances, instructors can help students advance through their first year.

In his CCCC's presentation "First-Year Composition and Retention: The Neglected Goal," Kevin Griffith describes a pedagogy in which he focuses the content of assigned essays themselves on issues related to persistence. Griffith advances a first-year composition curriculum in which writing assignments involve researching issues related to the transition from high school to college, the social history of college, and controversial college issues. His assignments are "designed with the idea that through them students would gradually feel that college experience was part of their identity, and that they had a stake as citizens in this new community" (9). Perhaps the most intriguing part of Griffith's work is his focus on the transition from high school to college. Although recent high-school graduates are not the only student demographic at risk for attrition, they are certainly among those students who researchers have identified as at risk.

Similarly, Downs and Wardle suggest that students should be researching graduation trends; unemployment trends; the role of race, class, and gender; student debt; university programs; and career outlooks. They may also conduct research on their institution and its requirements; transfer institutions; degree completion requirements; employment opportunities; professional qualifications; enrollment practices; student borrowing and source of student aid; and support services available to them, their peers, or their family members. Finally, they may write about student success measures, such as study skills, time management, and

tutoring, to name but a few. These topics involve legitimate research, address student-oriented concerns, lend themselves to peer collaboration, and promote affiliation among students, faculty, and staff at institutions.

Horner advises having students co-author writing about “growth and change” with dialogic responses to other students (21). For example, students might work on transition action plans, persistence plans, academic plans, and career plans. While many students are still determining their majors in the first year, others are enrolling after years in the workplace and may have very specific goals in mind. Encouraging students to focus on these goals in concrete, actionable, research-based ways allows them to explore things directly relevant to their careers and academic investments, such as career prospects, degree requirements, internship opportunities, funding sources, transfer credits, and even advanced degree programs. Not only are these relevant, but they are also directly related to students’ abilities to persist.

In Summary

Persistence is rarely discussed with those who are most at risk of departing: students. While institutions struggle to attract, place, and retain students, they do little to address the issue of persistence in a transparent manner. Learners may not realize that they are in a state of transition, that they can accomplish academic work, and that academic adjustment and integration takes sustained effort over time. If they realize that transition is a normal part of beginning post-secondary studies, they are more likely to understand their feelings, verbalize their concerns, and make persistence a personal goal. By

understanding the debate around content, incorporating alternative approaches to research-driven content into online writing courses, and encouraging students to write about topics that promote persistence, online writing instructors can leverage disciplinary content with situated contexts and help students build successful persistence strategies.

Works Cited

- American Council on Education. Who Passed the GED Test? A Statistical Report. General Educational Development Testing Service, 2004. Web. 15 Mar 2010.
- Andrews Knodt, Ellen. "What is College Writing For?" *What is "College-Level" Writing?* Eds. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006. 146-157. Print.
- Bailey, Dudley. "The Obvious Content of Freshman English." *College Composition and Communication* 9.4 (1958): 231-235. Web. 15 May 2011.
- Baker, Stephanie, and Norleen Pomerantz. "Impact of Learning Communities on Retention at a Metropolitan University." *Journal of College Student Retention* 2.2 (2001): 115-126. Print.
- Bowen, Robert, O. "The Purpose and Content of Freshman English Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 8.2 (1957): 109-111. Web. 22 May 2011.
- Boynton, Linda. "When The Class Bell Stops Ringing: The Achievements and Challenges of Teaching Online First-Year Composition." *Teaching English in the Two Year College* 29.3 (2002): 298-312. Print.
- Cohen, Arthur M., and Florence B. Brawer. *The American Community College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996. Print.
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Content of the Freshman Composition Course." *College Composition and Communication* 16.3 (1965): 196-197. Print.
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments." Feb 2004. 29 Nov. 2007.
<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/digitalenvironments>
- Corwin, Jay, and Rosa Cintron. "Social Networking Phenomena In The First-Year Experience." *Journal of College Teaching and Learning* 8.1 (2011): 25-37. Print.
- Crissman, Jennifer L. "The Impact of Clustering First Year Seminars with English Composition Courses on New Students' Retention Rates." *Journal of College Student Retention* 3.2 (2002): 137-152. Print.

- Davis, Robert, and Mark Shadle. "'Building a Mystery': Alternative Research Writing and the Academic Act of Seeking." *College Composition and Communication* 51.3 (2000): 417-446. Web. 09 Sept 2011.
- Donahue, Patricia. "Content (and Discontent) in Composition Studies." *Writing on the Edge* 15.2 (2005): 30-36. Print.
- Downs, Doug, Heidi Estrem, and Susan Thomas. "Students' Texts beyond the Classroom: Young Scholars in Writing's Challenges to College Writing Instruction." *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Eds. Joseph Harris, John D. Miles, and Charles Paine. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2010. 118-128. Print.
- Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year' Composition as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007): 552-585. Print.
- Dubson, Michael. "Whose Paper Is This, Anyway? Why Most Students Don't Embrace the Writing They Do for Their Writing Classes." *What is "College-Level" Writing?* Eds. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006. 92-109. Print.
- Duffelmeyer, Barbara Blakely. "Critical Computer Literacy: Computers in First-Year Composition as Topic and Environment." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 17.3 (2000): 289-307. Print.
- Edward, Norrie S. "First Impressions Last: An Innovative Approach to Induction." *Active Learning In Higher Education* 4.3 (2003): 226-42. Print.
- Goleman, Judith. "Historicizing the Form/Content Split in Composition Studies." *Writing on the Edge* 15.2 (2005): 21-25. Print.
- Griffith, Kevin. "First-Year Composition and Student Retention: The Neglected Goal." Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Milwaukee, WI, 27 Mar 1996. Conference Presentation. Web. 7 Apr 2011.
- Hermanowicz, Joseph C. "The College Departure Process among the Academic Elite." *Education and Urban Society* 37.1 (2004): 74-93. Print.
- Hewett, Beth L., and Christa Ehmann. *Preparing Educators for Online Writing Instruction: Principles and Processes*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2004. Print.

- Hobson-Horton, Lisa D., and Lula Owens. "From Freshman to Graduate: Recruiting and Retaining Minority Students." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 3.1 (2004): 86-107. Print.
- Horner, Bruce. "Re-Valuing Student Writing." *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Eds. Joseph Harris, John D. Miles, and Charles Paine. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2010. 9-23. Print.
- Knowles, Malcolm S. *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984. Print.
- Maestas, Ricardo, Gloria S. Vaquera, and Linda Muñoz Zehr. "Factors Impacting Sense of Belonging at a Hispanic-Serving Institution." *Journal Of Hispanic Higher Education* 6.3 (2007): 237-56. Print.
- Nora, Amaury. "The Role of Habitus and Cultural Capital in Choosing a College, Transitioning from High School to Higher Education, and Persisting in College among Minority and Nonminority Students." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 3.2 (2004): 180-208. Print.
- Powell, Reichert Pegeen. "Retention and Writing Instruction: Implications for Access and Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication* 60.4 (2009): 664-683. Print.
- Rankins-Robertson, Sherry, Lisa Cahill, Duane Roen, and Gregory R. Glau. "Expanding Definitions of Academic Writing: Family History Writing in the Basic Writing Classroom and Beyond." *Journal of Basic Writing* 28 (2010) 56-77. Print.
- Rankins-Robertson, Sherry. "An Informed Pedagogy: Using the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement to Design First-Year Composition Curriculum." Diss. Arizona State University, 2010. Print.
- Reinheimer, David A. "Teaching Composition Online: Whose Side is Time On?" *Computers and Composition* 22 (2005): 459-470. Print. .
- Rendón, Laura I. "Validating Culturally Diverse Students: Toward a New Model of Learning and Student Development." *Innovative Higher Education* 19.1 (1994): 33-51. Print.
- Salvatori, Mariolina Rizzi. "Teaching Content in Composition." *Writing on the Edge* 15.2 (2005): 16-20. Print.
- Salvatori, Mariolina Rizzi, and Patricia Donahue. "The Figure of the Student in Composition Textbooks." *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Eds. Joseph Harris, John D. Miles, and Charles Paine. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2010. 118-141. Print.

- Saunders, Marisa, and Irene Serna. "Making College Happen: The College Experiences of First-Generation Latino Students." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 3.2 (2004): 146-63. Print.
- Scheffler, Judith. "Composition with Content: An Interdisciplinary Approach." *College Composition and Communication* 31.1 (1980): 51-57. Print.
- Schlossberg, Nancy K. "Marginality and Mattering: Key Issues in Building Community." *Designing Campus Activities to Foster a Sense of Community: New Directions for Student Services*. Ed. Roberts, Dennis C. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989. 5-15. Print.
- Seitz, James E. "Content and the Composition Curriculum." *Writing on the Edge* 15.2 (2005): 26-29. Print.
- Selfe, Cynthia, and Gail Hawisher. *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004. Print.
- Sullivan, Patrick. "An Essential Question: What Is 'College-Level' Writing?" *What is "College-Level" Writing?* Eds. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006. 1-28. Print.
- Sullivan, Patrick and Howard Tinberg. "Introduction." *What is "College-Level" Writing?* Eds. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006. xiii-xviii. Print.
- Tinto, Vincent. "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research." *Review of Educational Research* 45.1 (1975): 89-125. Print.
- . *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993. Print.
- . "Theories of Student Departure Revisited." *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*. Ed. John C. Smart. New York: Agathon, 1986. 359-384. Print.
- Vie, Stephanie. "Blogs: Where the World Wide Web and the Writer's Journal Meet." *Writing and the iGeneration: Composition in the Computer-mediated Classroom*. Eds. Terry Carter and Maria A. Clayton. Southlake, TX: Fountainhead Press, 2008. 69-84. Print.
- . "Digital Divide 2.0: 'Generation M' and Online Social Networking Sites in the Composition Classroom." *Computers and Composition* 25 (2008): 9-23. Print.

Warnock, Scott. "The Low-Stakes, Risk-Friendly Message Board Text." *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Eds. Joseph Harris, John D. Miles, and Charles Paine. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2010. 96-107. Print.

---. *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2009. Print.

White, Edward M. "Defining by Assessing." *What is "College-Level" Writing?* Eds. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006. 243-266. Print.