Adapting and Expanding Student Support Services to Foster Success in Academic English Writing Courses

UCI Program in Academic English/ESL
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INTRODUCTION

Support Services that We Offer to Students in our Academic English (AE)/ESL Program
• AERC Grammar Workshops (Academic English Resource Center)
• AERC Writing Workshops (Academic English Resource Center)
• Project Success (One-on-one Tutoring)

Background: AE/ESL Program
• Three Writing Levels: AE 20ABC
• Same eight core grammar topics
• 1355 students in Fall 2016, mostly international freshmen from China

Core Beliefs that Shape our Approach
• Retention Effort needs to adapt to increased demand (81 sections in F16 vs. 9 in F11).
• Grammar Review is essential, verbs are crucial, and proficiency should be at least 75%

AERC (Academic English Resource Center)
Each instructor gives four 50-minute workshops per week and is compensated with one course release.
We offer one grammar workshop (eight times) and one writing workshop (four times) per week.

GRAMMAR WORKSHOPS (AERC)
1. Grammar Terminology 5. Number
2. Identifying Subjects and Tenses 6. Articles
3. Subject-Verb Agreement 7. Verb Form/Modals
4. Verb Tense 8. Word Form

50-minute workshops: Instruction (25 minutes), Practice (10 minutes), Makeup Quiz (15 minutes)
Effectiveness: Quiz Pass Rates of 87% in F15, 81% in W16, 85% in S16

WRITING WORKSHOPS (AERC)
• Supplement instruction given in class
• Tied to the AE writing curriculum—the workshops are tailored to the current readings/assignments each quarter, although the topic titles might stay the same
• Applicable to students at all levels
• 9 workshops given each quarter
• Topics change weekly
• Students receive Language Development points for attending
Writing Workshop topics have included:

- General/important writing skills
  - Introductions & Conclusions
  - Paragraph Development
  - Quoting & Citation
  - Analysis in Writing
  - Cohesive Writing
  - Summary Writing
  - Academic Vocabulary & Dictionary Use
- Preparation for specific assignments
  - Timed Writing Exam Preparation
  - Article / Book Discussions (connected to paper topics)
  - Progress Letter & Portfolio
  - Academic Honesty

Student Satisfaction (based on survey results): Average of 92%

Logistics—AERC

- Securing Classrooms (ideal capacity of 25-40 seats)
- Attendance
  - Students reserve a seat using the SignUpGenius.com website, which is updated weekly.
  - Students receive signed attendance slips, worth Language Development points.
- Weekly surveys (for Writing Workshops)

PROJECT SUCCESS (ONE-ON-ONE TUTORING)

History

- Fall 2011: Loss of LARC tutoring for AE because of CA Budget Crisis
- Fall 2012 to present: Population Boom of International Students
- Fall 2014 to present: Collaboration with the Writing Center to address at-risk students in Academic English
- Funding from Dean of Humanities: willing to support us if we have 80% pass rates and above

Project Success Writing Specialists

- Two AE Instructors and 3-8 Writing Center Writing Specialists act as Project Success tutors.

Student Population of Project Success

- Project Success is available to students who have failed an Academic English 20 class once.
- Writing Specialists are currently able to take 90 students.
- We adapt student eligibility quarterly based on budget and need.

Logistics of Project Success

- Students sign up for three sessions spread out throughout the quarter.
- Online tools are used for booking appointments, reviewing work and keeping meeting notes.

Credit in Academic English

- Project Success sessions substitute Language Development activities.
- Attendance is mandatory if students choose to participate in Project Success.
- Attendance disputes are resolved through AE classroom instructors, not Writing Specialists.

The Success of Project Success

- Students who attended all three sessions averaged a 95% pass rate over the past two years.
- The fewer sessions students attend, the less consistent their pass rates are.
- Pass rates for Project Success students are 86%, which is higher than target percentage of 80%.

Looking Ahead

- Why not passing with Project Success?
- Students skip a quarter: What happens?
- Does writing improve with Project Success?