A CASE STUDY OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSFER FROM FIRST- AND SECOND-YEAR WRITING TO THE DISCIPLINES

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A CASE STUDY OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSFER FROM
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ABSTRACT

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First- and second-year required writing courses, typically housed within English
departments and taught by English faculty, are valued by various stakeholders as a means
of preparing students for future writing contexts. While these courses are intended to
impart students with knowledge and skills to equip them for writing beyond the walls of
the English classroom, students are often dubious of the value of these required writing
courses to their future careers as students and professionals. As research on transfer
becomes an increasingly-prominent area of focus within composition studies, the
significance of students’ own perceptions of the value of required writing courses has
emerged as a key factor in determining how successfully they will transfer what they
learn in those classes to writing in the disciplines (WID). This case study draws on
insights from over 200 survey responses and six interviews to determine students’
attitudes at the University of Dayton toward ENG 100 and 200 and the value of these
courses to future writing contexts. Findings indicate that many students have
misconceptions and questions about the purposes of these courses, which can contribute to distorted views of how transferrable the skills and knowledge gained in these courses will be. In addition to shedding light on students’ perceptions of transfer, this research argues for the importance of understanding students’ forward-reaching conceptions of the purpose and value of writing instruction in order to ensure that transfer is possible.

*Keywords:* Transfer, first-year writing (FYW), second-year writing, writing in the disciplines (WID)
Dedicated to my mother, who inspires me to never stop learning
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In teaching ENG 200, the second of two required writing seminar courses within the Common Academic Program at the University of Dayton (UD), I began to be intrigued by the issue of transfer. This intrigue grew primarily out of students’ responses to a diagnostic assignment prompt I gave at the beginning of each semester, asking students to present an argument for why writing courses should or should not be required for students in their major. Regardless of whether they felt favorably or unfavorably toward writing courses, students’ responses largely focused on how effectively they believed their general education writing instruction would transfer to future, discipline-specific writing contexts. Some students, in their discussion of how writing courses were irrelevant to their futures, revealed assumptions about the goals of both ENG 100 and 200 and even about the field of English more broadly. For example, it was evident that students tended to conflate literature and writing instruction and, further, did not distinguish between creative writing and the argumentative, research-based writing taught in 200. These varying attitudes and common misconceptions motivated me to explore the topic of transfer further.

In its simplest form, transfer of learning is defined as “when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with
other related materials” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 3). Perkins and Salomon, who gave us this definition in their 1992 encyclopedia article on the topic, are credited with laying the initial theoretical groundwork for our understanding of transfer. Transfer has long been a topic of interest to administrators and instructors within writing programs, and this level of interest has increased in recent years (Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Driscoll, 2011; Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012; Mark Blaauw-Hara, 2014; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczkak, 2014; Downs & Robertson, 2015; Moore & Bass, 2017). The special attention placed on transfer is fitting considering the reality that general education writing courses—heretofore referred to as first-year writing (FYW)¹—are built on the premise that writing skills can and should transfer from one context to the next, even when these contexts look quite different. Students are often led to believe that the writing instruction they receive in FYW (and in high school) is meant to prepare them for future writing, but the idea—especially prevalent outside of English departments—that writing skills are universal or general has, of course, been contradicted by our own scholarship.

The phenomenon of transfer is relevant to all areas of education. Perkins and Salomon (1992) claim “the ends of education are not achieved unless transfer occurs” (p. 3). Writing instructors depend on transfer to occur from one assignment to the next (why else give feedback?) and from their course to students’ futures. Given the importance of transfer within education, it is not surprising that earlier studies on transfer focused primarily on whether it was taking place and how. Recent studies (Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Driscoll 2011; Driscoll & Wells, 2012) on transfer from FYW to

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¹ Much of the scholarship on this topic uses the term first-year composition (FYC) which is synonymous with FYW.
writing in the disciplines (WID)\(^2\) have begun to focus on a factor that has proven to have profound effects on whether and how transfer takes place: students’ attitudes toward this issue. Despite the foundational belief that transfer is possible and should be taking place, existing research paints a disheartening picture of students’ success in transferring skills from required writing courses to writing in their disciplines. Many students do not believe the skills they learn in FYW will be relevant to their futures, and this belief inhibits students’ ability to transfer successfully. The necessity of transfer to writing instruction and the evidence that students often fail to transfer successfully confirms that this phenomenon remains a necessary area for further investigation.

\(^2\) WID, in the context of this study, refers not only to students’ major-specific courses but to any content area outside of English.
In order to contribute to the collective understanding of students’ perceptions of transfer from FYW to WID, it is first helpful to consider previous research that has informed our understanding of FYW as an institutional practice, the theories that underlie transfer, how transfer functions among students, and students’ understandings of FYW and transfer. As transfer attracts significant attention among educational researchers, the literature reviewed in this section does not attempt to cover all the valuable work that has been done on the topic; rather, it focuses primarily on scholarship that directly relates to the context of FYW.

Conceptions of FYW

Discussions of FYW and transfer are integral to one another, since as Moore points out in the recently published collection *Understanding Writing Transfer: Implications for Transformative Student Learning in Higher Education* (2017), “Writing curricula in higher education are constructed under a foundational premise that writing can be taught—and that writing knowledge can be ‘transferred’ to new contexts” (p. 1). This premise continues to govern the way institutions construct their general education requirements, typically making it mandatory for students to take a first-year (and, in some cases, second-year) writing course. FYW is prioritized because of the belief that it is
necessary for imparting foundational writing skills that will transfer to writing in the disciplines (WID). Of course, this belief has not gone unchallenged.

In their landmark article, Downs and Wardle (2007) criticize the field of English for catering to and perpetuating unrealistic expectations that FYW can teach “students ‘how to write in college’ in one or two semesters—despite the fact that our own scholarship extensively calls this possibility into question” (p. 553). Perhaps our field has not pushed back against this expectation more due to external pressures from the institutions that hold these expectations for English departments. That is not to say we have been entirely complicit in attempting to meet institutional expectations. The field of writing studies has challenged the expectation, prevalent outside of English departments, that we ought to prioritize mechanics above all else, since “good writing” equates to error-free prose. Still, we uphold our role in attempting to deliver a set of transferable skills. Downs and Wardle treat the presuppositions underlying traditional FYW “that academic writing is generally universal, that writing is a basic skill independent of content or context, and that writing abilities automatically transfer from FYC to other courses and contexts” as harmful misconceptions (p. 554). Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) similarly draw attention to the fact that the standard institutional perspective on FYW is that its intended purpose is to serve as the groundwork for future discipline-specific writing, under the institutional assumption that “writing is a skill that can, in part, be taught in a writing class disassociated from other disciplinary content” (p. 124).

Downs and Wardle (2007) point out that there is no universal academic discourse, and that FYW instructors must define for themselves, even if unconsciously, what brand of academic discourse they will teach. Since these instructors are steeped in the academic
discourse that characterizes the field of English, “[i]n effect, the flavor of the purportedly universal academic discourse taught in FYC is typically humanities-based and more specifically English studies-based” (p. 556). While Downs and Wardle do not believe writing knowledge transfer is impossible, they do emphasize the difficulty of far transfer, arguing that “most current incarnations of FYC do not teach for it as explicitly as is necessary” (p. 557). Similarly, Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) call into question the effectiveness of the standard role FYW plays in teaching students to write, suggesting that perhaps instructors should focus “on teaching students how to learn to write” instead—that is, they should focus on issues of disciplinarity and rhetorical awareness (p. 142).

Despite the belief in a need to educate incoming students in foundational writing skills that underlies the current model, there is no clear consensus on just what these foundational skills are. Werder (2017) discusses survey results that showed “a sharp disparity between what writing course faculty and students say they expected in terms of writing proficiency at first-year and upper-division levels and an even more dramatic discrepancy between their views and those of central administrators [provost, deans, directors, as well as chairs of some large departments]” (p. 70). Both students and FYW faculty emphasized “critical reading and analysis” (p. 71). The main difference between these two groups is that FYW faculty additionally focused on the ability to present a clear thesis/position, while students (particularly at the beginning of the term) additionally focused on general aspects of being a good student, and at the end of the term focused more on technical elements like citations. Neither the WPC (Writing Proficiency Course) faculty nor students shared the FYW students’ and faculty’s focus on critical reading.
WPC faculty “overwhelmingly privileged organization,” while WPC students focused on “issues of expression such as clarity and concision, as well as the need to know conventions mainly of documentation” (p. 73). Almost every administrator surveyed almost exclusively focused on mechanics—that is, sentence-level issues like punctuation and even spelling. This inconsistency in various stakeholders’ expectations demonstrates just how muddled the goals of writing instruction can seem. Despite the ways traditional notions of FYW have been problematized, these assumptions that underlie the current model continue to dominate institutions.

Transfer Theory

In addition to understanding FYW, an understanding of transfer theory is also necessary to a discussion of transfer of writing knowledge and skills from FYW to WID. Much of the groundwork for our understanding of transfer theory was laid by Perkins and Salomon, who published several papers on the topic over the course of the 1980s and early ‘90s. Perkins and Salomon (1988) explain different types of transfer, including “near” versus “far” transfer and “low-road” versus “high-road” transfer. Near transfer refers to transferring knowledge across similar contexts, while far transfer involves contexts that appear very dissimilar (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 22). In the case of low-road transfer, the new circumstances share a “considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context” and therefore trigger an application of previous learning that has become automatized (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 25). On the other hand, “[h]igh-road transfer depends on deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another” (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 25). A useful distinction within high-road transfer is between forward-reaching and backward-reaching transfer.
Anticipating future situations that may connect to current learning is forward reaching; using prior learning in a current situation is backward reaching (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 26).

Of course, because effective writing depends almost entirely on context (a concept that our field openly acknowledges, though other stakeholders may not), it stands to reason that writing transfer often involves some level of high-road transfer. As Gorzelsky Hayes, Jones, and Driscoll (2017) note, “Although adaptation of originally learned skills in any subject area is needed to meet the demands of a new context, successful transfer of writing knowledge and skills faces the additional challenge of writers having to engage with new genres as they move into new disciplinary contexts” (p. 113-4). For example, a biology student who has to write a lab report is not likely to recall the writing she did for FYW (at least not directly) as an effective guide for this new disciplinary genre.

While the theory and its terminology given to us by Perkins and Salomon (1988, 1992) is still helpful for understanding and discussing the phenomenon of transfer, Wardle (2012), in her introduction to Composition Forum’s special issue on transfer, points out that “our field has not deeply theorized much beyond what David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon offered, or even much beyond the term ‘transfer,’ which we have problematized but continue to use” (n.p.). Wardle suggests that the term “transfer” itself limits our understanding of the complex nature of this phenomenon and proposes more innovative language to more accurately capture it. Namely, she uses the term “repurposing for expansive learning” in place of “transfer” (n.p.). This concept helps to complicate the view of transfer as a simple, linear process. Transfer is, in fact, difficult to
trace because of the complexity involved in repurposing past learning in new contexts for expansive learning.

**Transfer in Action**

Repurposing does seem to happen successfully in some instances, but not in others. Much of current writing transfer research focuses on the question of how stakeholders can promote more successful transfer, or repurposing, of skills and knowledge. To answer this question, we must first understand how transfer actually occurs and what may keep it from occurring. As Driscoll (2011) points out, “for over a century, educational researchers working in a variety of settings have been more successful in demonstrating how transfer of learning fails rather than how it succeeds” (p. 1). Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014), for example, identify three different ways students put prior knowledge to use: assemblage, remix, and setback/critical incident. Two of these ways illustrate failed attempts at transfer (p. 104). Assemblage refers to “drawing on both knowledge and practice and adding a limited number of new concepts to this critical knowledge base, an unsuccessful use of prior knowledge” (Yancey et al., p. 104). The more successful way students use prior knowledge and practice, called remix, involves “reworking and integrating prior knowledge and practice with new knowledge as they address new tasks” (Yancey et al., 2014, p. 104). Another unsuccessful way students make use of their prior knowledge and practice is “by creating new knowledge and practices for themselves when they encounter what [Yancey et al.] call a setback or critical incident, which is a failed effort to address a new task that prompts critical ways of thinking about what writing is and how to do it” (p. 104). Students’ failure, according to Driscoll (2011), is partly due to students’ tendencies to view each new writing
situation “as entirely new and foreign,” rather than make connections between the current situation and past learning and experiences (p. 2). In order to transfer knowledge and skills successfully, then, students must be able to recognize similarities between tasks and creatively repurpose past learning.

Gorzelsky et al. (2017) undertook a project, conducted over the course of two years at four different institutions, to analyze writing transfer longitudinally. They studied both students’ perceptions and their writing itself, done in FYW as well as in their disciplines. The study’s results revealed that the curricula was more effective at transitioning students from high school writing to FYW than it was at equipping students to write in their disciplines after FYW. The curricula’s limited success in preparing students for WID is not necessarily the fault of FYW instructors or their curricula, since the FYW courses studied all emphasized the importance of writing genre or context. Their “findings suggest that FYW successfully helped students extend this understanding to adapt and repurpose writing strategies to new contexts, but when students left FYW for their year 2 disciplinary contexts, many students returned to the static, high-school-based approach” (p. 117). As the researchers point out, it should not be surprising that students reverted to a more static approach, considering how much more writing instruction they receive in high school compared to one semester of writing instruction in college. “Thus, although FYW helps students transition from high school writing to college-level writing, its effects aren’t strong enough alone to prepare students for the next critical transition: successful WID” (p. 117). Gorzelsky et al. did find that greater levels of metagenre awareness were correlated with greater success in making an effective transition from FYW to WID. These metagenres came in the form of metacognition and using sources.
Wardle (2012) discusses the more static approach to learning as a detrimental learning disposition. Wardle emphasizes the role of disposition—either “problem-exploring” or “answer-getting”—for determining how successful a learner will be at repurposing previous knowledge or skills. A problem-exploring mentality promotes creative and abstract thinking, the type of thinking that leads to successful high-road transfer. An answer-getting disposition, on the other hand, involves more shallow, objective regurgitation of knowledge (Wardle, 2012). These dispositions are not intrinsic but are shaped by students’ educational experiences, which are increasingly focused on promoting an answer-getting mentality. While individuals can change their dispositions, Wardle explains that institutions bear these dispositions as well, and are not as easily changed. While much of the current scholarship on transfer finds its application in how educators can effectively support transfer (Yancey et al., 2014, p. 2), we must also acknowledge that students’ own dispositions play a role in how successfully they transfer skills. As Wardle (2012) notes, “individuals—and their histories, dispositions, and motivations—are central to [the phenomenon] since they are the ones actively working through problems and ideas” (n.p.). Understanding the significant role students’ attitudes play, however, can also enable educators to take a direct approach in encouraging the shift to a problem-exploring dispositions for students who are used to the answer-getting mentality that dominated their prior schooling.

Students’ Conceptions and Misconceptions of FYW and Transfer

In addition to overall dispositions toward learning, students also bring with them deeply-rooted ideas about writing and transfer. In many cases, these ideas may be based on misconceptions, which can have a negative effect on their ability to learn and transfer.
Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) note, in response to the results of their own research, that

[the strong similarity of responses from students of different majors, from
different high schools, and with a wide range of prior experience in high school
and college writing courses suggests that before students arrive in college writing
classrooms, they already share certain preconceptions about writing and what it
means to learn to write; and that those preconceptions limit students’ ability to
recognize, understand, or, finally, make use of most of the skills that composition
teachers are trying to teach. (pp. 128-9)

Bergmann and Zepernick investigated students’ perceptions of learning to write by
holding focus groups designed to make students feel comfortable to candidly share their
thoughts. The results of their study “suggest that students approach learning to write with
a number of preconceptions that strongly influence how much they are able to learn and
also with strong, if intuitive, rhetorical skills that if tapped appropriately might serve as
the basis for very effective writing instruction” (p. 140).

Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) were motivated by a common observation that
students rejected the idea that their high school writing and FYW instruction would bear
any relevance in future writing contexts. In the focus groups, students’ conversations
demonstrated a strong peer culture that holds to the belief that FYW “seems to be merely
an irrelevant distraction from the important work of professional socialization that occurs
in their ‘content area’ courses during the first year or two, and more particularly from
socialization into their peer culture” (p. 138). Bergmann and Zepernick found that
“[s]tudents do think of writing skills as ‘portable’ from one discipline or context to
another” (p. 129). However, because they view English classes as “inherently not ‘disciplinary’ or ‘professional,’” they do not see much value or transferability in what they learn from those courses (p. 129). Students’ attitudes toward the irrelevancy of FYW may be due, at least in part, to their shared belief that writing in English classes is all about empty aesthetics, while writing in more technical courses hinges on content. A major theme that emerged was that students viewed writing in the English classes as personal, expressive, and (beyond just a few basic rules) entirely subjective. This view stands in stark contrast to students’ views of writing in their disciplines, where they are aware of and respect the standards that govern writing within the discipline. Bergmann and Zepernick cite the diversity among FYW sections (compared to highly standardized courses in other disciplines) as a possible reason for students to delegitimize it.

In addition to students’ potentially misguided beliefs about FYW’s focus on subjective aesthetic over clear content, it became clear to Bergmann and Zepernick that students in their study misconceived the field of English more broadly. Students did not observe a distinction between FYW and literature courses. Interestingly, their respect for disciplinary conventions did not apply to their perspective on literature courses (p. 132). Whether in composition or literature, they viewed English as entirely subjective. Driscoll (2011) found similar trends among the students she surveyed, who also demonstrated a belief that FYW courses are literary in nature, and therefore are irrelevant to WID. Students further demonstrated a belief that writing in their disciplines is not really writing at all, creating an even larger divide between the relevancy of FYW to WID. These misconceptions prevent students from seeing any transferability in what they learn in FYW.
Driscoll (2011) and Driscoll and Wells (2012) draw on expectancy-value theory—a theory that connects the amount of effort a person gives to a task to his or her expectation of how valuable or rewarding the task will be—to explain that students who see value in FYW to their futures will typically experience higher levels of motivation, leading to increased engagement and success. Because of the importance of students’ own beliefs about the value of FYW, Driscoll (2011) undertook research to gauge students’ attitudes toward FYW within an award-winning program at a large, Midwestern university. She surveyed students in FYW at the beginning and end of the semester to investigate their attitudes toward the usefulness and transferability of FYW over the progression of the course. Unfortunately, nearly half the students surveyed at the end of the semester either did not see any value in FYW for their futures or were unsure of the usefulness. It is also significant to note that students were more optimistic about the potential value of FYW at the beginning of the semester, but their views became increasingly negative. Results indicated that many students were unsure about how writing would play a role in their futures. Even for students who demonstrated more forward-reaching knowledge, their views were sometimes “incomplete or misinformed” (p. 17). Driscoll explains that, “[w]hile the surveys and interviews did not reveal where this forward-reaching knowledge comes from, it is very clear that this knowledge, accurate or inaccurate, exists and that it is impacting student attitudes about transferability” (p. 17). After the publication of this study, Driscoll, along with Wells, (2012) “argue that individual dispositions, such as motivation, value, and self-efficacy, need to occupy a more central focus in writing transfer research” (n.p.).
Driscoll’s and Well’s emphasis on the impact students’ dispositions have on their ability to transfer successfully is confirmed by Yancey et al. (2014) who note that, while their research “wasn’t designed to explore the role prior knowledge plays in students’ transfer, [they] found that prior knowledge—of various kinds—plays a decisive if not determining role in students’ successful transfer of writing knowledge and practice” (p. 5). Since student beliefs and attitudes, comprised of their conceptions and misconceptions, about FYW and its value or lack thereof to their futures can have such a profound impact on their ability to transfer effectively, more research is needed to determine the origins of these attitudes and how misconceptions can be most effectively uprooted.

**Pedagogical and Programmatic Implications**

Transfer research continues to be an area of focus for its potential to inform the way we teach and structure our writing courses and programs. Blaauw-Hara (2014) sums up “the current state in writing studies,” saying, “the theoretical stance appears productive and has inspired curricular change, but finding an application that works has proven elusive” (p. 355). Despite the obscurity of a definitive application, we continue to strive toward it. Gorzelsky et al. (2017) share that their results “illustrate the principles that successful writing transfer involves repurposing prior knowledge and that institutions can promote such repurposing by teaching for transfer” (p. 114-5). Scholars in the field have offered up many ways we might more intentionally teach for transfer.

One way is through incorporating a focus on threshold concepts in our FYW courses. In their chapter in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, Downs and Robertson (2015) discuss the ways making threshold concepts the
declarative content of FYW courses can aid in “the mission of teaching for transfer, because the threshold concepts of writing are general principles that apply across a wide range of writing situations, even as those situations vary widely” (p. 106). Teaching threshold concepts can be a way of meeting misconceptions head-on by requiring students to think about writing conceptually and to reevaluate potentially problematic prior knowledge in light of the threshold concepts. Blaauw-Hara (2014) agrees that “transfer theory and threshold concepts hold great promise for giving us ways to increase the relevancy of general-education writing courses such as First-Year Composition (FYC), which frequently suffer from a disconnect from the rest of the college writing environment” (p. 354).

After coding assignment sheets submitted by faculty members at his institution to find out what common factors came up in assignments across disciplines, Blaauw-Hara (2014) responded by changing assignments in his courses to more closely align with what students will be asked to do in future courses. He even shows students in his classes sample assignment sheets from other disciplines as part of an exercise in brainstorming how they might structure the assigned paper. Blaauw-Hara characterizes this approach as a transfer theory approach—one that is more utilitarian and easier to implement than a threshold concepts approach, since the threshold concepts approach would function more like a content course and would require a full redesign of the course. In keeping future writing tasks at the forefront and allowing them to shape the way he teaches now, Blaauw-Hara is demonstrating the concepts of bridging and hugging, as described by Perkins and Salomon (1988). Perkins and Salomon (1988) define bridging as “teaching
so as to meet better the conditions for high road transfer” and hugging as “teaching so as to better meet the resemblance conditions for low road transfer” (p. 28).

Gorzelsky et al. (2017) point out another way we can teach for transfer: by promoting metacognitive reflection in our teaching. Since especially high road transfer is facilitated by metagenre awareness, promoting metacognitive reflection in our teaching can prime students to repurpose effectively when met with future writing tasks. Clark and Hernandez (2011) discuss FYW curriculum they designed to promote genre awareness and its effects. The course assignments were designed to draw students’ attention to the function of discipline/genre in mediating writing. Some students recognized transfer, while others saw no connection between writing an academic argument essay and a paper within a disciplinary genre. Clark and Hernandez conclude that “it may be the case that genre awareness, unto itself, constitutes a threshold concept that is necessary for students to master before they can process to write effectively in other contexts” (p. 76). The perspective that FYW courses should include the teaching of threshold concepts in order to shape the way students think about writing has continued to gain traction, but the issue of transfer largely continues to be characterized by a skill-based approach, possibly because the idea that FYW should impart a certain set of transferable skills is, as mentioned previously, the assumption undergirding the institutional practice of FYW.

Models such as Downs and Wardle’s (2007) reject entirely the skill-based approach. Pointing out that writing cannot be divorced from content, Downs and Wardle call for a re-envisioning of FYW as a course strongly situated within the field of writing studies. This would allow writing instructors to be “concretely enabled to fill that expert reader role” (p. 559).
The existing theory and research has allowed our field to develop a framework for understanding the complex process of transfer and for proposing some ways we might encourage students to transfer effectively. In particular, the current research has shown us just how important students’ own perceptions are in determining how successfully they transfer skills and knowledge from FYW to future contexts. Some gaps still remain, however, in our understanding of students’ perceptions of FYW and transfer, as well as the sources of these perceptions.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the remaining gaps in the existing research, the current case study was undertaken with the goal of uncovering potential answers to the following questions:

**RQ 1**: What are students’ attitudes at the University of Dayton regarding the requirement to take ENG 100 and ENG 200?

**RQ 1.1**: Do they see these courses as valuable to their futures?

**RQ 2**: How do students perceive the transfer of skills and knowledge from first- and second-year writing courses to future writing contexts?

**RQ 3**: What are incoming students’ beliefs about the outcomes and content of ENG 100 and ENG 200?

**RQ 4**: What skills do students hope to learn from ENG 100 and 200?
CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

To answer these questions, I decided to undertake a descriptive case study, that is, one “that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset” (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). I apply this method to examine students’ perceptions of first- and second-year writing within the writing program at the University of Dayton (UD). The complexity of the transfer phenomenon prompted me to focus the goals and scope of my project in some important ways. Though I recognize its limitations, for this project, I operationalize the concept of transfer as it is traditionally understood: as knowledge or skills learned in one context carrying forward to another context in a productive way. Though some data has to do with backward-reaching transfer, my project focuses primarily on forward-reaching transfer since it asks students to make predictions about how writing courses will serve them in the future. To actually measure the level of transfer occurring from one context to the next—if possible—would require an extremely involved research model that is both long-term and dimensionally complex. Measuring the success of students’ transfer is outside the scope of this project. My research, rather, is focused on students’ own perceptions, something students are in the perfect position to provide.
The issue of student perceptions signifies the starting point for considering the topic of transfer since research has clearly demonstrated how students’ perceptions impact their ability to transfer. Driscoll (2011) demonstrated how the use of both surveys and interviews were an effective means of providing insight into students’ attitudes and beliefs. I draw on this research design for my own project. Conceptualizing my project as a case study allowed me to limit my scope to students in a program with which I am familiar and have access. Measuring their beliefs and attitudes using a mixed methods approach allowed me to widen the amount of data I could collect as well as deepen it through conversations with select students. Because UD’s general sequence of required writing courses is shared by many other universities, the attitudes and beliefs expressed by UD students may be useful for educators in other programs as well.

The two-course sequence, as opposed to a single FYW course, is preferred by some institutions, including UD, for its capacity for more thorough instruction and greater continuity of students’ writing skills development. Since students’ coursework tends to include more writing in their junior and senior years, as they complete upper-level courses in their majors, having a required sophomore-level writing course helps to bridge the gap from FYW to these upper-level, writing-intensive courses. It also allows for goals typically assigned to FYW to be divided between two courses, meaning each course can focus in on particular aspects of general writing instruction and, therefore, treat those aspects with a greater degree of thoroughness. Though I may use the abbreviation FYW at times to refer more generally to required writing instruction, the programmatic decision to divide FYW into two courses does impact the instruction students receive and possibly their attitudes toward it.
As described in University of Dayton’s current *First- and Second-Year Writing Program Handbook* (2017), “Most students entering the University of Dayton complete a two-year course of study in composition by enrolling in ENG 100 in their first year (either in fall or spring semester) and ENG 200 in their second year (either in fall or spring semester)” (p. 2). The catalog course description for ENG 100 states that it is an “[i]ntroductory composition course focused on personal and academic literacies, with an emphasis on expository writing. Instruction and practice in developing college-level reading, writing, research, and critical thinking skills. Emphasis is on a process approach to writing effective academic prose” (p. 4). While ENG 100 course sections are united by a common theme—literacy—ENG 200 is a “[v]ariable theme composition course focused on academic discourse, research, and argumentation. Instruction and practice in developing reading, writing, and research skills introduced in ENG 100 and employed across the curriculum. Emphasis is on rhetorical analysis and a process approach to writing effective academic arguments” (p 7). At the time of this study, 646 students were enrolled in ENG 100, and 521 students were enrolled in ENG 200.

Students enrolled in either ENG 100 or 200 were invited to participate in the current case study, which was conducted during the spring 2018 semester. A mixed-methods approach was taken to gather larger amounts of quantitative data through surveys and to gain more in-depth insights through interviews with a smaller number of students. A total of 92 students from ENG 100 and 115 students from ENG 200 completed a survey, which was shared with them by their English instructors. Respondents read an invitation to participate before answering questions in order to ensure clarity of instructions. Respondents were made aware that their responses were
voluntary and anonymous and that they could skip any question at any point during the survey if they preferred not to answer. The students responded to the survey within the first two weeks of the semester to ensure that the perspectives shared were forward-focused and based on expectations rather than experience in the course. At the end of the surveys, students were given an opportunity to provide their email address if they were willing to take part in an interview to discuss their perspectives further.

Across both surveys, 21 students communicated a willingness to participate in an interview, and ultimately, a total of six students were interviewed, three enrolled in ENG 100 and three enrolled in ENG 200. Interviewees were not selected based on survey responses or demographics but simply on logistical concerns, including availability. Three students enrolled in ENG 100—whom I will refer to as Nolan, Scott, and Nicole—and three enrolled in ENG 200—whom I will refer to as Michael, Nick, and Brandon—were interviewed to provide additional insight into some individual students’ perspectives on required writing courses. Nolan is a first-year marketing and finance major who earned college credit in high school, putting him ahead in much of his coursework. Scott is a first-year education major who hopes to teach either English or religion at the high school level. Nicole is a criminal justice major. Michael is a second-year pre-med major. Nick, who works as a paramedic, returned to finish his degree after taking some time off. He is a criminal justice major but is taking pre-med courses and plans to switch his major to pre-med and work in emergency reposition. Brandon is a second-year biology major.

Interviews were transcribed and coded so that common themes could emerge. Coding categories were created based on observable patterns across students’ responses (e.g., mentions of high school experiences or discussions of literature). Additionally,
students’ responses to the same question were compared and contrasted. While responses were kept anonymous in all other cases, interviewees did willingly engage in discussion of their survey responses.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Survey Results

Surveys were distributed and completed by students within the first two weeks of the semester. Raw data for all survey questions is included in Appendix B. Students were asked to identify their majors in order to provide information about the demographic of respondents. Individual majors were grouped into the following categories: business, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, education, and undecided. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the breakdown of reported disciplines for ENG 100 respondents and ENG 200 respondents, respectively. Of the 113 ENG 200 students surveyed, 94 (83%) reported to have already taken a course specific to their majors.
Figure 1. Disciplinary breakdown of ENG 100 respondents

Figure 2. Disciplinary breakdown of ENG 200 respondents
Attitudes toward the requirement to take ENG 100 and 200.

The majority of students (92% of ENG 100 students and 88% of ENG 200 students) are in favor of the requirement to take ENG 100. When it came to the requirement to take ENG 200, responses were not as favorable. For both groups of students surveyed (ENG 100 and 200 students), approximately 40% did not believe students in their major should be required to take ENG 200. The positive response (85% of ENG 100 students and 79% of ENG 200 students) to the question of whether students believed “writing courses should be required for all students of every major,” however, confirmed that the vast majority of students do see writing courses as necessary. Considering these results together, it appears students do see the need for a required writing course, though perhaps not two of them.

Attitudes toward transferability to future courses and careers.

The vast majority of ENG 100 students (93% of 86 respondents) believe they will learn skills in ENG 100 that will be helpful to them in their future courses. ENG 200 students’ opinions were also largely favorable toward the helpfulness of first- and second-year writing courses, though not to the degree that ENG 100 students were. Out of 112 ENG 200 respondents, 72% believed they had learned skills in ENG 100 that would be helpful in their future coursework, and 73% (of 111 ENG 200 respondents) believed they would learn skills in ENG 200 that would be relevant to their future major-specific courses. This leaves over a quarter of students in both cases who did not believe the skills they learned in ENG 100 or the skills they would learn in ENG 200 would transfer to future coursework. A cross tabulation of negative responses with the response regarding whether students in their major should be required to take ENG 200 reveal a
connection between students’ beliefs about transferability and about whether they ought to be required to take the course. Figure 3 shows us that 83% of students who did not believe they would learn skills in ENG 200 that would be helpful in their future disciplinary courses also said they did not believe students in their major should be required to take ENG 200. Similarly, 74% of students who did not believe writing would be an important part of their futures said students in their major should not be required to take ENG 200. Conversely, the majority of students who believed they would learn skills in ENG 200 that would be helpful in (i.e. transfer to) their disciplinary coursework also believed that ENG 200 should be required for students in their major (77%), and the majority of those who believed writing would play an important role in their professional futures also supported the requirement to take ENG 200 (75%)
ENG 200 students who did believe ENG 200 would teach them skills that would prove useful in the future were asked, as a follow-up, to list what they believe some of those skills will be. The 78 responses given were coded according to the following categories, which emerged across responses:

- Research -- included mentions of conducting research, writing research papers, and citation
- Reading -- included mentions of critical reading, ability to understand and analyze a passage, and annotating
- Argument & critical thinking -- included mentions of forming arguments/theses, critical writing, critical thinking, and rhetoric
- Organization & structure -- included mentions of paragraph structure, overall paper organization, and staying focused on the paper’s topic/goal
- Mechanics & professionalism -- included mentions of grammar, spelling, correctness, and professionalism
- Style -- included mentions of clarity, conciseness, and fluency
- Other -- included mentions of public speaking and creative writing
- General writing & communication skills -- included general mentions of stronger writing and communication skills, which sometimes included a focus on efficiency as well as effectiveness

Since students were allowed to list as many skills as they desired, some responses were coded for multiple categories. The representation of each category across responses can be seen in Figure 4.
Though the term “transfer” itself was not used in the series of questions that asked students to consider the helpfulness of ENG 100 and 200 to their future coursework, these questions nevertheless required students to engage in some level of forward-reaching transfer since, to answer them, they had to consider the way(s) their current instruction might inform and empower them in a different disciplinary context in the future. The tendency to list general writing or communication skills (Figure 4) may indicate that students have only a vague awareness of what sorts of skills FYW can help them develop.

Another way students were asked to think about future writing contexts involved anticipating the role of writing in their professional lives after college. Over a third of ENG 100 students and over half of ENG 200 students were either unsure or did not believe writing would play an important role in their chosen career fields. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of answers for both sets of students. Overall, students appear to be more convinced that writing courses will help them in their future coursework than in their future careers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 100</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(86 total responses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 200</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(110 total responses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Responses to the question: “Do you anticipate that writing will be an important part of your future career?”

**Beliefs about Student Learning Outcomes.**

Both ENG 100 and 200 students were asked a series of three questions regarding Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for their respective courses. The questions asked them, without looking up the list of Student Learning Outcomes for the course, whether they thought one of the outcomes focused on a particular goal (which changed for each question). For both groups of students, one goal did accurately reflect one of the SLOs for the course, while the other two goals—developing their abilities in interpreting literature and in creative writing—did not accurately reflect any SLOs for ENG 100 and 200. They were chosen based on research that has shown that students often believe all English classes, including FYW, incorporate literature and creative writing, even when that is not the case (Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Driscoll, 2011).

Results (which can be seen in Figure 6) confirm that most students believe creative writing and literature are included in the Student Learning Outcomes of their required composition courses. Especially in the case of ENG 100 students, many of the respondents who did not say “yes” were unsure, further confirming students’ lack of knowledge of the goals of their required writing courses, at least at the outset of the semester. Though, like ENG 100 students, most ENG 200 students did believe literature
and creative writing are included in the goals of ENG 200, the slight difference in their answers compared to ENG 100 students’ answers may be indicative of their increased awareness of the goals of required writing courses at the college level more generally, having already taken ENG 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Group</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Creative writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(86 total responses)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 200</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(110 total responses)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  | Yes        | No               |
|                  | 70%        | 14%              |
|                  | 16%        |                  |

|                  | Yes        | No               |
|                  | 62%        | 30%              |
|                  | 8%         |                  |

Figure 6. Responses to the following questions:
“Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your ability to interpret literature?”
“Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your creative writing skills (i.e. poetry, narrative, etc.)?”

Finally, both groups of students were asked a similarly-formatted question, but this time with a real Student Learning Outcome for the course being represented.

Response data for these questions can be seen in Figure 7. For ENG 100 students, the SLO in question focused on developing the “ability to produce rhetorically effective expository prose” (Appendix A). Most students recognized this as an outcome for the course, but about a third were unsure, and eight of the 86 students said “no.” ENG 200 students were asked whether developing their “ability to produce well-researched arguments and appeals” reflected one of the SLOs for ENG 200 (Appendix A). The majority of ENG 200 students did recognize this as a goal for the course, with just 13 out of the 110 respondents being unsure or answering “no.” While many ENG 200 students did believe literature and creative writing factored into the SLOs of ENG 200, this
accurate SLO regarding research and argumentation received a greater majority of positive responses, again demonstrating a slightly higher degree of SLO awareness than ENG 100 students exhibited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 100 (86 total respondents)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 200 (110 total respondents)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Responses to the following questions:*
Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 100 focuses on developing your ability to produce rhetorically effective expository prose?
Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your ability to produce well-researched arguments and appeals?

**Interview Results**

Six survey participants—three from ENG 100 and three from ENG 200—also participated in interviews to discuss their perspectives in greater detail. These interviews lasted an average of 16 minutes, with Michael’s interview being the shortest at 10 minutes and Brandon’s being the longest at 27 minutes. Students were all asked a series of questions concerning topics such as their general perspective on writing, their beliefs about transfer, and their goals and expectations for what they would learn in ENG 100 and ENG 200.

**Past experience with writing.**

All three ENG 100 students discussed teachers and classes they had in high school when asked about past people or experiences that had shaped their perspective on writing. These reflections mostly focused on the type of writing students were asked to
do and to what degree they enjoyed these assignments. Nolan focused on the literary content of his courses, as he discussed two English classes he took with a teacher he greatly admired, one of which he liked and the other of which he disliked:

I mean, just like the content in general was awesome, but sophomore year, the content wasn’t as good. It was just more of the things I was writing about weren’t things I enjoyed, and I really think that influenced a lot. Like, when it came to writing about *The Great Gatsby*, that was awesome. *Harry Potter*, that was awesome. Just, things that I think interest me personally I think really influenced how I feel about it. [...] I can’t sit down and read a book for an hour; that’s just not me. But when I was interested, it would be a lot different. I would be able to get actually into the book, and that definitely influenced what I wrote about it and how I felt. (Appendix C)

Nolan’s response reflects a common theme among students’ discussions of their high school experiences in that study of literature is inextricably connected to composition. Nicole, however, said, “Well, most of our English classes in high school were reading and writing combined, but then, our junior year, we took the reading, and then they also had a composition class, which was just the writing, and that one was honestly a huge one for me” (Appendix C). Nicole focused on her experience with creative writing in the class, saying, “that was where I, like, learned to like writing and actually enjoy writing for homework in school” (Appendix C). Nicole found that she thrived in this course that was purely focused on composition.

The ENG 200 students interviewed focused far less on high school experiences, though Brandon discussed the various high school English teachers he had and how some
were completely unhelpful and unsupportive while others were the opposite. He said, “Mostly, I got really good at English and writing just to prove to myself and prove to my teachers that I can actually do this; I’m not a terrible writer. And I ended up kind of liking it along the way. It’s a lot easier to me than doing math” (Appendix C). Brandon also identified the reading he does in his personal time as influencing his admiration for writing as a craft. Michael discussed his positive experience in ENG 100, where he especially appreciated having the opportunity to revise his papers for a new grade. Nick focused on the writing he does for his job as a paramedic, which is descriptive, but is “not meant to be creative or anything like that” (Appendix C). In discussing the people and experiences that shaped the way they viewed writing, the ENG 200 students provided more varied responses than ENG 100 students, who solely focused on high school teachers and writing for high school classes.

First impressions and reflections on ENG 100.

Students who were at the outset of ENG 100 shared their general impressions of the course thus far, which were mostly positive, though Nolan viewed only parts of ENG 100 as necessary to his education, saying, “I just think there’s some things that could be left out, [...] things that I don’t think are necessary for me, especially in the future, to be learning right now” (Appendix C). In critically considering how the course would serve him in the future, Nolan demonstrated forward-reaching transfer. The parts of the course Nolan deemed unnecessary seemed to relate mostly to the course theme of literacy. Scott also discussed the theme, though in a far more positive way.

Scott: I think, so far, one of the things [ENG 100] emphasizes is kind of the literacy standpoint and how important literacy actually is, not just in English but
every career path, and kind of further examining how we as students, like, became literate—who helped us, what helped us—and also kind of what we can do to get more literate and more skilled in writing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Cool. And is that interesting to you?

Scott: I think it’s interesting, yeah! I think it’s cool to see… like, right now, we’re reading a bunch of stories about how other people throughout history got literate throughout different, you know, socioeconomic status and different, I don’t know, different backgrounds. So, I think it’s cool. I don’t know if my classmates feel the same, but… (Appendix C)

Though Scott was personally fascinated by the theme of the course, he was also aware that his classmates may not have shared his perspective. Nicole also spoke favorably of her experience in ENG 100 thus far (just two class periods in), citing their first prompt as a refreshing contrast to the writing she was asked to do in high school, which typically centered on responding to a literary text. She commented, “The […] ability to say whatever I wanted and have that wide range of things to write about was a lot better than just that narrow question in high school” (Appendix C).

As with the students who were at the outset of ENG 100, ENG 200 students reflecting on their experience in ENG 100 had mostly positive things to say, though one student—Nick—described it as “kind of like another high school English class” (Appendix C). Michael simply described ENG 100 as a course that involved “a good amount of writing […] and learning how to actually make any paper better just from using past experience” (Appendix C). Michael’s reference to using past experience represents
backward-reaching transfer. Brandon’s reflections were the most enthusiastically positive. He enjoyed the “interesting themes” and the support of his professor, whom he “got along with [...] really well” (Appendix C).

**First impressions of ENG 200.**

Nick had a higher opinion of ENG 200 than 100, saying, “ENG 200 is way better than ENG 100. It might be just ‘cause it’s been a couple years, but—I don’t know—English was never my favorite topic, so I would say, out of all the Englishes I’ve taken, this is the best one” (Appendix C). Nick elaborated on what he thought was different about ENG 200, saying, “I like it. It definitely gets more into the creative writing aspect, one I’ve never really explored before” (Appendix B). Nick went on to say the theme of the course, science-fiction, also played a role in making it an enjoyable class for him.

Two weeks into the semester, Nick was likely considering the first assignment in the course, a personal memoir, in discussing creative writing. This first assignment is characteristic of the strategy employed by many instructors who choose to begin with more accessible assignments and scaffold to writing assignments that are more research-heavy. Brandon focused on research in his discussion of ENG 200, but first said, “I think it’s going to be very similar to ENG 100, obviously besides the theme. I think that it’ll be an interesting class” (Appendix C). Brandon appreciated his instructor’s goal of meeting the diverse needs of the students in the class: “he’s gearing it more towards, like, what we do in our careers, which I think is useful. As an ENG 200, I think that if we’re going to be required to take the class, then it might as well benefit us” (Appendix B). Michael’s comments on ENG 200 were limited to his belief that the course was superfluous.
Attitudes toward the requirement to take ENG 100 and 200.

Interviewees held differing opinions on the requirement to take ENG 100 and 200, though most agreed that at least one writing course was necessary. Nolan was the exception to this, as he believed some majors (including marketing and finance) should not be required to take any writing courses: “I’m thinking, push them right into the business. Don’t worry about the writing aspects” (Appendix C). Nolan explained that he felt his high school English education was sufficient for any writing he would need to do, so these “extra English classes [he] didn’t think were necessary” (Appendix C). However, Nolan did acknowledge that requiring writing courses does make sense for some majors, even other majors in the business school that involve more writing. Nicole and Scott both agreed that writing courses were necessary regardless of one’s major because of the prominence of written communication in everyday life. Nicole commented that “most people think of, like, pen and paper when it’s writing, but it’s not. It’s also, like, the messages we send” (Appendix C). Scott cited a comment from his ENG 100 instructor from class that day—that her brother-in-law, who works in the corporate world, does not interview applicants whose cover letters are unclear or improperly formatted—as an example of the importance of writing skills in the professional world, especially. Scott also ended the interview by re-emphasizing his conviction about the necessity of writing courses:

I think, and just no matter how much people—I’m sure this isn’t going to sway anything—but how much people complain about taking English, I still think it’s important, and I think it’s a skill that— like, my roommate’s a business major;
he’s gonna have to use it. I think every profession is gonna have to use it, so I think it’s important to keep emphasizing it. (Appendix C)

Brandon also emphasized everyday communication, mentioning e-mails as an example where he has noticed a deficiency in people’s communications skills. He felt both ENG 100 and 200 were necessary for all students and that some majors should require additional writing courses, as well. Nick also believed both courses were necessary. In general, he believed writing courses help English departments and students themselves gauge where students are in their writing abilities, since “everyone comes from different places” (Appendix C). As for requiring ENG 200, he explained, “For 200, I would say it should be required just to get people exposed to the styles of writing that you might encounter. A lot of these kids, myself included, starting, I didn’t know what I wanted to do, so they don’t know what kind of writing they might get into” (Appendix C).

Regardless of what major a student ends up in, Nick believed essay-writing is a common part of the college experience. Michael shared Nick’s perspective on the need for a required writing course to create a baseline for students who come from various educational backgrounds. However, while he believed ENG 100 is needed as that “one last learn how to write,” Michael did not believe ENG 200 was necessary for all students, saying, “I know a lot of people in my same study who just kind of see it as being pointless” (Appendix C). In response to Michael saying he would like to know why students are required to take ENG 200, I explained the rationale. Michael seemed fairly convinced, saying that the reasoning I explained made sense.
Beliefs about Student Learning Outcomes.

On the whole, the students interviewed struggled to articulate what they thought some of the major goals of their courses were. Though their speech was halting at times and sometimes included caveats, like “I’ll be honest, we went over them in class; I really can’t think of them right now” (Michael) or “I’ll be honest, I don’t really know those yet” (Brandon), every student did attempt to articulate what he or she thought some of the major goals of the course might be. Interestingly, students seemed to project their personal goals for the course onto their beliefs about the SLOs for the course. Figure 8 demonstrates this pattern by including the skills interviewees said they hoped to gain from ENG 100 and/or 200 alongside the skills they included in their articulation of the SLOs for the course, highlighting overlap between the two categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Skills they hoped to gain/develop:</th>
<th>SLOs focus on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nolan</td>
<td>Brush up on things lost from high school, grammar and mechanics, citation</td>
<td>Improving literacy for real-world advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Creative writing, literacy narrative, persuasive essay, brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Practice with writing, feedback from instructor, continue to grow in writing</td>
<td>Becoming a better writer, grammatical rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>How to build a paper, organization, paragraph structure</td>
<td>How to write a paper, interpreting literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Developing descriptions</td>
<td>Storytelling, description, brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Research, citation</td>
<td>Advanced writing, research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8. Correlation between interviewees’ personal goals and their articulation of SLOs*
In describing his understanding of the SLOs for ENG 100, Nolan focused on the theme of literacy and “improv[ing] people’s literacies” in order to “to give people the advantage they need in the real world” as a goal for the course (Appendix C). When asked about the skills he would hope to gain from ENG 100 and 200, Nolan commented on the fact that he had not received any writing instruction for the past year, so he would want to “hone in on some things that [he] didn’t get or lost, at least” since high school (Appendix C). Nolan also said, “Some of the skills that I don’t think I have right now that I think would be better that I’m hoping to at least get out of them is, I wanna say, not like writing in general, but more correcting mistakes I’ve made in the past” (Appendix C). Nolan clarified that he was referring to issues of grammar, mechanics, and citing sources. Though a direct connection between Nolan’s personal goals for the course and his articulation of the SLOs was not drawn, the concept of giving people a real-world advantage seemed to color the way Nolan thought about writing, particularly in his prioritization of more technical issues.

Nicole discussed the SLOs in terms of potential genres of assignments, including the ability to write a creative piece, a literacy narrative, and a persuasive essay. She also said another SLO might involve learning to brainstorm. Brainstorming also came up in her discussion of her own hopes for the course, which were influenced by her struggle with Attention Deficit Disorder. She explained, “I always have to do an outline to, like, understand what I want to write, and, like, finding ideas for that is really hard because my mind is, like, wandering, like, 24/7. And so, more, like, help with I guess just how to create ideas or, like, brainstorming about, like, topics and stuff one-on-one” (Appendix C).
Scott—who had been unsure about the literature outcome, had said “yes” to the creative writing outcome, and had said “no” to the expository writing outcome on the survey—took a holistic approach in his articulation of the major goals of the course:

I think, yeah, I think some of the big outcomes, like I said earlier, is to become a better writer, but also learning more about, like, even the English language and, like, just little rules that I didn’t know about when I was in high school, like for writing and such, that we just learned about today. And, I don’t know, overall, I guess, I’d say just to be a better writer, ‘cause that’s the class; it’s a writing seminar. (Appendix C)

Scott’s discussion of his personal hopes for the class were similarly holistic: “I’d say just being, I don’t know, almost trial-and-error about writing, you know, so, like, practice a bunch and then get feedback and improve on that. So, I think it’s more of a long-term process than a short-term kind of one-day process” (Appendix C). He went on to say that he felt his instructors would give him the feedback needed to help him “keep growing in writing” (Appendix C).

Having already taken ENG 100, Michael also kept it general in describing what he thought the SLOs for ENG 100 focused on: “I mean, I would probably say, just to have a better understanding of how to write a paper” (Appendix C). Michael went on to include “maybe just understanding how to read literature and then interpret it and kind of make it your own” as a possible goal for both ENG 100 and 200 (Appendix C). In light of that comment, it is not surprising that, on the survey, Michael reported to believe that one of the ENG 200 SLOs focuses on developing students’ ability to interpret literature.
Michael’s own goals for the course did not involve literary interpretation, but they did deal with the process of constructing a paper, which related to his articulation of SLOs:

Michael: I’d say, especially for ENG 100, just kind of how to build a paper in the best way that you can, because I feel like a lot of times, I know I do, at least, just kinda go with whatever I’m thinking of at the time, but then it’s always better to go back and kind of reevaluate it and maybe do different orders. Like, paragraphs. Like, I know just the other night, I was writing a paper that I had written a whole paragraph and then decided to make it my last one.

Interviewer: Gotcha. So, sort of some of those strategic structural, organizational things?

Michael: Yeah.

While Nick, unlike Michael, answered “no” to the question about literature on the survey, he believed one of the SLOs of ENG 200 focuses on creative writing skills. His response in the interview reflected this focus on creative writing, specifically storytelling and description, as well as a focus on the writing process, especially brainstorming. Similarly, he focused on description when asked about his personal hopes for the course:

For me, what I take away from it is developing descriptions for things. I’m a paramedic, so I get into weird situations a lot of the time, and the only way to describe it is with words. We talk to the doctor, and then we type it in a report. So, the structure kind of matters, but more so figuring out what words you’re gonna use. That’s more important than structure. (Appendix C)
Brandon’s description of SLOs in the interview was the most detailed and focused more on research:

Brandon: In ENG 100, they talked a lot about college-level prose, that kind of thing. So, I guess, in non-English terms, it would be kind of like advanced writing; you’re not in high school any more, so you’re not doing the five-paragraph essay. And just using literary skills to, like, convey a point; learning how to do basic research skills; obviously, citing; MLA format—that kinds of stuff for ENG 100. I’m probably missing a ton, but…

Interviewer: No, but those are main— some kind of big, sweeping things.

Brandon: Yeah, broad stuff. Then, in ENG 200, it would be, like, refining your research skills.

Brandon focused exclusively on research, including research methods and citing sources, in his discussion of personal goals for the course, again showing an overlap between his own goals and his beliefs about SLOs.

With their varied beliefs about Student Learning Outcomes, students demonstrated that SLOs can often be an elusive aspect of these courses. Students were readily able to answer what their personal goals for the course were but were less sure of the institutional goals for all students. In almost every case, there was clear overlap between the skills they hoped to gain or develop in ENG 100 and ENG 200 and their beliefs about the SLOs for all students in the course.
Understanding of transfer.

In both their implicit and explicit discussions of transfer, students revealed a general understanding of their present and future writing instruction as building on previous instruction and, likewise, that their own development as writers was an ongoing process. For example, Nicole explained transfer by saying, “the things I learned in English and writing in high school will help me in ENG 100, and I can use the knowledge I gained there here. And then, what I learn in 100 will help me in 200” (Appendix C).

Scott said it this way:

I think, like I said before, it’s a process of building on it, so like, hopefully the writer I am now I’m not going to be my junior year or senior year. Hopefully, I’ll be a lot better, because I’ll have practice; I will have written a lot and gotten feedback and then improved on that skill. So, I think, taking the skills that, like, even the basic skills and building foundations on them and keep building all the way up through your junior and senior years, so when you’re graduating from education or whatever, you kind of have that strong foundation; you can apply more skills than you would think before. (Appendix C)

Brandon mentioned the fact that it’s impossible “to take everything from every class” because “you can only absorb so much information,” but he explained how “some of the general, broad skills” would transfer to content courses in other disciplines (Appendix C).

He explained that, after ENG 100,

the next semester, I did history, so there were skills transferred over to history. Then, history transferred over to philosophy, because we did a couple papers in philosophy, and then, I’m hoping that those skills kind of build upon themselves,
as they have been. And I have an upper-level philosophy class right now, I have
this ENG 200, and I have an SSC, and all those have writing. So, hopefully, my
writing gets, like, good. (Appendix C)

Some of them privileged certain skills as being more transferrable to their majors or
careers. For example, Brandon, in discussing his hopes for how ENG 200 would help
develop his ability to conduct research and cite sources, discussed the importance of these
skills in the sciences. Scott consistently related his writing instruction back to his work as
a paramedic, explaining whether something would or would not transfer effectively. For
example, while he enjoyed the instruction he had received on the writing process, he
explained that the time-sensitive nature of his job would likely prevent him from being
able to apply it. When discussing his hope to develop his capacity for description in ENG
200, Scott said, “I’m a paramedic, so I get into weird situations a lot of the time, and the
only way to describe it is with words. We talk to the doctor, and then we type it in a
report. So, the structure kind of matters, but more so figuring out what words you’re
gonna use. That’s more important than structure” (Appendix C).

In discussing both how past knowledge and skills have transferred to present
coursework and how that work will inform future writing, students demonstrated an
awareness of and ability to engage in backward-reaching and forward-reaching transfer.
They seem to evaluate the usefulness of ENG 100 and 200 by the transferability of skills
taught in those courses—or, rather, the skills they believe are taught in those courses—to
their futures.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

The results of this study illuminate some possible answers to the research questions outlined previously. While these insights apply to University of Dayton students specifically, UD students’ perceptions may help to add a new layer of color to the developing picture of students’ perceptions of FYW and transfer on a more universal scale.

**RQ 1: Students’ attitudes regarding the requirement to take ENG 100 and ENG 200**

Students in this study at the University of Dayton are largely in favor of the requirement to take ENG 100. Interviewees’ comments on the topic suggest that ENG 100 is valued for its role in ensuring that students from diverse educational backgrounds all have a set of basic writing skills that will serve them in their future courses or even in everyday life. Thoughts on ENG 200 are far less unified, as close to half of students do not agree with the requirement to take ENG 200. While most interviewees did believe in this requirement, Michael shared the sentiment of some of his peers that ENG 200 goes above and beyond the basic skills they need and takes up valuable space in their educational itineraries. The interviewees in favor of the requirement to take ENG 200 seemed to recognize the value of more advanced instruction after their first-year writing course. Brandon’s focus on the more advanced writing and research skills ENG 200
would help him develop are an example of this view. Even for students who were unconvinced of the necessity of two required writing courses, the majority of students are in support of requiring some writing instruction for students of all majors.

RQ 2: How students perceive the transfer of skills and knowledge from first- and second-year writing courses to future writing contexts

Insight from students who participated in the interviews suggests that students are aware of and concerned with the issue of transfer as it relates to their writing instruction. Even when questions did not mention transfer or appear to directly relate to the concept, students were quick to engage in discussion of how past, present, and future writing instruction would play a role in their other coursework or professional lives. For example, Nick referenced the writing he does in his current job and the writing he expects to do in the future at multiple points in the conversation when discussing the way his writing instruction in ENG 200 will or will not serve him in his professional life. Scott used the metaphor of laying a solid foundation and building skills from one context to the next, demonstrating his understanding of a continuous process of transfer. Students’ perceptions of the transferability of knowledge and skills they expect to learn in ENG 100 and 200 inform their opinion on the requirement to take these courses. This can be seen especially clearly in Figure 3, which demonstrates a strong correlation between students’ beliefs about the transferability of what they learn in ENG 200, as well as their beliefs about the role writing will play in their futures, and their convictions concerning the requirement to take ENG 200. These findings align with previous research (Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Driscoll, 2011; Driscoll & Wells, 2012), which has also indicated that
students view these courses as valuable if they believe they will be able to transfer skills to future contexts.

The survey responses demonstrated that ENG 100 students are more optimistic that the skills they learn in ENG 100 will transfer to future courses. Though not as optimistic as ENG 100 students, ENG 200 students are also largely hopeful about transferability of their writing instruction to future contexts. The fact that ENG 200 students were less hopeful about transferability may be because ENG 200 students are more aware of their majors, and the vast majority of them had already taken at least one course specific to their majors. As students develop a greater level of awareness of their chosen disciplinary and/or career fields and the writing (or lack thereof) they expect it will involve, they may be more critical in their evaluation of the transferability of ENG 100 and 200. The fact that a higher percentage (though not by a significant margin) of ENG 200 students reported that they did not anticipate writing would constitute an important part of their future careers lends some support to this theory (Figure 5).

**RQ 3: Incoming students’ beliefs about the outcomes and content of ENG 100 and ENG 200**

Overwhelmingly, incoming ENG 100 and ENG 200 students in the study are unaware of the Student Learning Outcomes for the courses. This was made evident by both the survey and interview data. Students’ lack of awareness, however, does not mean they enter FYW courses *tabula rasas*. Rather, they bring with them the same misconceptions about FYW that have been represented in previous research—namely, that these courses are, in part, aimed at teaching creative writing and literature. Students’ comments in the interviews illustrated what has also been discussed in previous research,
that students are influenced by their experience with writing in high school, which is typically integrated with literature and sometimes creative writing. Students’ references to literature being included in their course themes and creative writing assignments being included (especially at the beginning of the term) may have also informed these views. Indeed, some instructors do include literary and creative writing elements in their courses, but these elements are not included in the SLOs for either course. While students’ beliefs that SLOs focus on skills such as literary interpretation and creative writing are not entirely unfounded, they are still misconceptions since they do not accurately reflect the SLOs for either course.

ENG 200 students did appear to be slightly more aware of SLOs than ENG 100 students. This distinction was most apparent in the vast majority of ENG 200 survey respondents recognizing the “ability to produce well-researched arguments and appeals” as the focus of one of the SLOs for ENG 200. Most ENG 100 students recognized the “ability to produce rhetorically effective expository prose” as an outcome for ENG 100, but only to the same degree (roughly two-thirds) that they believed literature and creative writing to constitute outcomes for the course. Second-year students may be slightly more aware of SLOs since they are more familiar with college writing courses, having already taken ENG 100, or perhaps they are simply more enculturated in the practice of reading syllabi or course descriptions. Nevertheless, even these second-year students revealed a disparity between their understanding of the goals of the course and the actual outcomes intended for the course.

Even though Student Learning Outcomes are included on syllabi and sometimes read aloud by instructors on the first day of class (which was fresh in the minds of the
students in the study), clearly, students are largely unaware of these SLOs. While the exact verbiage of these SLOs is not as important, it is important that students understand why they are in these courses and what they should hope to gain from them and, conversely, what the goals of these courses do not include.

RQ 4: Skills students hope to learn from ENG 100 and 200

Both survey and interview results revealed that individual students approach ENG 100 and 200 with a variety of expectations. As the various categories in Figure 4 show, many students simply hope to improve their communication skills overall. Two-thirds of the students did identify more specific areas they would like to develop through ENG 200, and these areas were fairly diverse. Interviewees also reflected this level of diversity in their discussions of their personal goals for ENG 100 and 200.

These students also demonstrated a tendency to project the skills they hoped to develop onto their beliefs about the Student Learning Outcomes for all students in the course. For example, Nicole focused on her need to develop more effective strategies for brainstorming and then included brainstorming in her articulation of the SLOs for ENG 100. In the same way, Brandon focused almost exclusively on research in his discussion of what he hoped to gain from ENG 200 as well as in his explanation of what he believed the SLOs for the course to be. However, while there was certainly overlap between students’ own goals and their articulation of the SLOs, students often included some aspects of writing in their articulation of SLOs that they did not include in their own hopes for the course and vice versa. For example, Michael mentioned the ability to interpret literature as an SLO but did not include this as a personal goal for the course, and Nolan identified technical aspects of writing, including grammar and citations, as
areas he would like to improve through ENG 100 but did not explicitly mention these aspects in his discussion of the SLOs for the course. Therefore, it appears that, while students’ personal writing goals influence their beliefs about the goals of ENG 100 and 200, students also consider the purpose of ENG 100 and 200 in terms of what they believe every student should need.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

This descriptive case study was undertaken in order to capture the perceptions of ENG 100 and 200 students toward these required writing courses and the transferability of skills and knowledge gained from these courses to future writing contexts, particularly WID. Research questions were aimed at uncovering students’ attitudes regarding the requirement to take ENG 100 and ENG 200, their perception of the transfer of skills and knowledge from first- and second-year writing courses to future writing contexts, their beliefs about the outcomes and content of ENG 100 and ENG 200, and the skills they hope to learn from ENG 100 and 200.

Findings show that students are supportive of the requirement to take writing courses, though they are more skeptical of the need for a second writing course (ENG 200) as opposed to ENG 100. Though they may not discuss transfer explicitly, their concern with the helpfulness or usefulness of writing courses to their futures demonstrates forward-reaching transfer. Findings also indicate that students are largely unaware of the SLOs for first- and second-year writing. Their beliefs about the goals for these courses tend to be informed by their high school experiences in English classes and their personalized goals for these courses. These findings confirm that students, however (mis)informed they may be about writing courses, have firm ideas in many cases of the
content and goals of these courses and how valuable these courses will be to their futures. Educators must be aware that first- and second-year students enter our classes with a whole host of beliefs about writing. As has been demonstrated by Bergmann and Zepernick (2007), Driscoll (2011), and Driscoll and Wells (2012), these beliefs are significant since they can be extremely influential in coloring students’ experiences in our courses and in determining how successfully they will transfer the skills and knowledge they gain. In order to transfer successfully, students must believe in the transferability, which they understand as the value, of writing courses to their futures.

This study is limited by its scope as a case study as well as its focus on students’ perceptions at the outset of these courses. This research design was intended to gauge the attitudes and beliefs students bring with them when they enter first- and second-year writing courses. However, it would be helpful for additional researchers to take on more longitudinal studies that trace how students’ perceptions evolve over time, including once they are farther removed from FYW and thoroughly enculturated in their disciplinary work. There is also still ample room for probing more deeply into the question concerning the origins of students’ conceptions and misconceptions about FYW. As transfer continues to attract the attention of educational researchers, the significance of students’ perceptions must remain a central focus, since, after all, it is ultimately students who engage in the process of transfer, and it is students FYW courses seek to equip with writing knowledge and skills that will enhance their educational and professional lives.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Student Learning Outcomes for ENG 100 and 200

ENG 100 Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of ENG 100, students should be able to:

1. Write about primary and secondary texts on the topic of literacy from the perspective of English Studies and at least one additional discipline in the Humanities Commons in a manner that reflects their ability to read critically
2. Engage in a process approach to writing college-level prose
3. Produce rhetorically effective college-level expository prose
4. Demonstrate effective use of scholarly sources in their writing
5. Recount in college-level prose their personal literacy histories and current literacy practices
6. Examine in writing the discourse of a community different from themselves with respect to factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and so forth
7. Explore the relevance of Catholic intellectual tradition for the study of reading, writing, and/or rhetoric as human endeavors
ENG 200 Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of ENG 200, students should be able to:

1. Write about primary and secondary texts on the course theme in a manner that reflects the ability to read critically;

2. Engage in a process approach to writing college-level prose;

3. Produce rhetorically effective college-level expository prose;

4. Produce well researched academic arguments and appeals that are documented in accordance with the MLA style manual;

5. Examine one topic from at least three disciplinary perspectives, two of which are in the Humanities Commons;

6. Examine one topic with attention to differences such as race, class, gender, and/or sexuality.
APPENDIX B

Survey Response Data

Q1 - Which writing seminar are you currently taking this semester?

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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ENG 200</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
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Total: 100% 207
ENG 100 Respondents

Q2 - What is your major? Please type your answer below. (If you have not declared a major, type “undecided.”)

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<tr>
<td>UNDEcided</td>
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<td>International Business Management</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Graphic design</td>
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<td>Discover Business</td>
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<td>Sports Management</td>
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Q3 - Do you believe students in your major should be required to take ENG 100?

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Q4 - Do you believe students in your major should be required to take ENG 200?

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Q5 - Do you believe writing courses should be required for all students of every major?

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Q6 - Do you believe you will learn skills in ENG 100 that will be helpful to you in your future courses?

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Q7 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 100 focuses on developing your ability to interpret literature?

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Q8 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 100 focuses on developing your creative writing skills (i.e. poetry, narrative, etc.)?

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Q9 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 100 focuses on developing your ability to produce rhetorically effective expository prose?

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Q10 - Do you anticipate that writing will be an important part of your future career?

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Q11 - Would you be willing to participate in an interview to further discuss your perspectives expressed in this survey? (Interviews should take approximately 20 min. of your time.) If you answer yes, please type in your email address.

<table>
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ENG 200 Respondents

Q12 - What is your major? Please type your answer below. (If you have not declared a major, type “undecided.”)

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Pre-Dental
accounting
Mee
Biology
Electrical Engineering
Accounting
Criminal Justice
computer Engineering
MIS
Mechanical Engineering
Early Childhood Education
Pre-Medicine
Computer Engineering
Accounting
Mechanical Engineering
Marketing
Marketing
CEE
Discover Business
Pre-Physical Therapy
Sport Management
Criminal Justice
Graphic Design
FIN & ECB
media productions
Biology
Discover business
accounting
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<td>Discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
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Q13 - At this point in your studies, have you taken a course that is specific to your major?

<table>
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Q14 - Do you believe students in your major should be required to take ENG 100?

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Q15 - Do you believe students in your major should be required to take ENG 200?

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Q16 - Do you believe writing courses should be required for all students of every major?

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Q17 - Did you learn skills in ENG 100 that you believe will be helpful in your future major-specific courses?

<table>
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<th>Answer</th>
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<td>112</td>
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</table>
Q18 - Do you believe you will learn skills in ENG 200 that will be helpful to you in your future major-specific courses?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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</table>
Q19 - Please list some of the skills you believe you will learn in ENG 200 that will be helpful in your future major-specific courses by typing them below.

Using different rhetoric
desciptions
how to compose a research paper
writing and communicating effectively
Better writing and grammar skills
-Writing a research paper
strong writer
critical analysis abilities
Organization of papers and paragraphs, argumentative skills.
write more formal documents
Grammar and writing skills crucial for daily communication in my profession.
Learning how to construct meaning sentences.
Writing
how to write long term papers for assignments in my major classes
professional writing

~

It allows for students to speak and write more fluent and sophisticated

Good writing skills. Ability to clearly and concisely write my thoughts/opinions.
more academic writing than creative writing
Argumentative writing and bettering writing skills for better communication
Being able to convey my ideas clearly
writing formal letters, using proper spelling and grammar
How to critically write

More concise writing, Being able to research accurately

Critical thinking, Analyzing readings
Formulating thoughts

Writing

Just a different way of thinking and improving my writing. In business, we will have to fill out reports and communicate with people.

writing strategies, public speaking

Proper Professional Writing

communication, writing, speaking

Improved writing skills

How to write correctly, professionally, and so on.

Better explanations of my ideas

reading

proper research and interpreting text

Research

Credibility of sources, and learning more about research

Being able to do research that is helpful and being able to write papers that are concise and stick to your topic.

Writing

research

I believe that I will learn more about how to conduct effective research when writing a paper, which is something that I definitely think is important in my field of study.

Research

Progressive writing skills and use of research databases

research

Research centered writing

writing better research, produce better arguments/be able to support them

Good writing habits/Better researching skills

Conducting research, writing papers

How to better organize my writing and write substantial and relevant evidence to support my claims. Also how to research using credible sources.

just being more comfortable writing, it also making writing faster when you have done more of it.
Concise writing and better at interpreting literature
writting
Author credibility, research, sources
critical thinking, writing, citation, format
communication, grammar, professionalism
creative writing skills
Writing skills, communication of writing and annotations.
Putting arguments together for papers
Constructive Writing, and easy understanding of texts
Critical writing
Being able to write is important for every major.
confidence in writing
Learning how to communicate more efficiently.
Writing, critical thinking, annotating
building writing skills in general will help with research papers, media writing, ethnographies, and just learning how to form and express a complete thought, in general
Developing better writing skills and organizational patterns
How to properly cite and give convincing yet simple arguments for others to understand
I believe the class will overall just help me become a stronger writer.
Proper sentence structure
critical reading
organization, better grammar, overall better writing
Composition
Drafting of thesis, and remaining focused on papers goal
structuring a paper
annotation, research
Writing
annotating and being able to analysis a passage you just read
Q20 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your ability to interpret literature?

<table>
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<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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</table>
Q21 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your creative writing skills (i.e. poetry, narrative, etc.)?

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<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>
Q22 - Without looking at the Student Learning Outcomes, do you think an outcome of ENG 200 focuses on developing your ability to produce well-researched arguments and appeals?

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<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</table>
Q23 - Do you anticipate that writing will be an important part of your future career?

<table>
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<td>28.18%</td>
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<td>Unsure</td>
<td>16.36%</td>
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</table>
Q24 - Would you be willing to participate in an interview to further discuss your perspectives expressed in this survey? (Interviews should take approximately 20 min. of your time.) If you answer yes, please type in your email address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
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<td>91.74%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I = Interviewer
S = Student

Nolan, ENG 100

[Opening remarks]

I: So, remind me what your major is.

S: I am a marketing and finance major. So, I mean, I haven’t told them I want to be a finance major yet, but I plan on it.

I: That’s your plan?

S: Yeah, definitely the plan.

I: Okay, great. That’s a neat double major, because you’re kind of approaching business from two pretty different angles.

S: Perspectives, so that’s gonna be something--I’m excited for it. I mean, it’s gonna be, I think, two summer classes, but, I mean, I can do that.

I: Oh yeah, I feel like that’s probably worth it.

S: Yeah, it’s a lot better than taking a full semester--not a full semester, just maybe a fifth year. Could be fun.

I: Sometimes it’s worth it, you know, but…
S: Oh, yeah. I’m guessing you went to UD for your undergrad?

I: Actually, no. I went to Lindsey Wilson College, which most people here haven’t heard of it. I’m from this area, but it’s in south-central Kentucky. It’s a private Methodist college, and it’s also a liberal arts school, so it has kind of the same setup as far as gen eds and all that go. Now, which semester are you in right now?

S: Second semester of freshman year, so pretty much just starting.

I: Okay, great. So, you’re already kind of ahead of the game in knowing exactly what you need to major in.

S: Yeah, it’s good. I came in with like, I think it was, 10 credits, and so it just kind of put me ahead. I’m taking classes I shouldn’t be taking right now just ‘cause of that, but you know, gotta do what I gotta do.

I: Yeah. That gives you a real edge, though. I didn’t come in with any credits when I started college, and both of my younger brothers have done dual credit and things that really make a big difference. When you start, you’re already jumping ahead.

S: You definitely can tell between the two. Like, my roommate, he didn’t come in with any credits, and he’s taking all these math classes and classes I don’t have to take, which is nice, ‘cause there’s a lot of them.

I: Yeah, that is nice. It saves you a little bit of time. I’m thinking too, that might kind of influence you--’cause you’ve probably taken some courses already specific to your major?

S: Yeah, it was like AP calc, AP stats, AP macro.

I: Right, so a lot of students in your position probably wouldn’t be there quite yet, so you might have a little bit of a unique perspective in that you are a first-year but also kind of have a little bit of that experience in your major courses.

S: By this time, I’ll be junior standing next year. So, that’s fun.

I: Yeah, that’s great.

S: No, it’s definitely exciting.
I: That's a whirlwind. That's awesome. Okay, so I’m just gonna ask you a few questions on here, and then, you know, we can stray if we want--that’s fine--but this will just help us facilitate a little bit. So, first question is, what first comes to mind when you think of your experience in ENG 100 so far, which is very brief, right?

S: Yeah, I mean, I’ve been in class for a week and a half. I mean, at first, it seems like something that it’s kind of necessary, like the first initial class. But after, we’re talking about literacy, I guess--that’s what I’ve gotten from my ENG 100--and I just think there’s some things that could be left out, like, in all honesty, just some things that are over the course that we’re going to be doing that I think could be left out, things that I don’t think are necessary for me, especially in the future, to be learning right now.

I: Alright. Yeah, I know it’s kind of hard to comment right now, but you can look at the syllabus to get an idea of what you’re going to be talking about.

S: Yeah.

I: Okay, so in the survey, you’ll have to remind me how you answered when it asked the question, basically, do you think that writing courses should or should not be required for students in your major. So, what did you answer to that?

S: I answered they shouldn’t be.

I: Okay. So, you’re thinking specifically in terms of finance, marketing, maybe.

S: Yeah, I’m thinking, push them right into the business. Don’t worry about the writing aspects, ‘cause I do believe that everything I needed for--cause I knew my major going into senior year of high school, so I was like, “Alright, I’m gonna do this,” I learned everything I needed for English, writing, all that, literature and stuff like that. I think I learned most of what I needed skill-wise for high school in high school, I guess, so all these, like, extra English classes I didn’t think were necessary.

I: Right. So, you already felt well-equipped kind of in that area.

S: Yeah, yeah.

I: And, then, I think it asks as a separate question, you know, “Do you think they should be required for students of all majors?” So, obviously not. But, do you think there are majors where it makes sense?
S: Yeah, there’s definitely majors, like not even-- like, I guarantee there’s some majors in the business school that require a lot more writing when people have to write, like, briefs. Yeah, there’s definitely some majors--a lot of majors, I could guarantee it--that should require English courses.

I: And UD does offer, also, more business-specific writing courses, like those technical and professional business writing courses. Those are typically, however, you know, more upper-level, so you would also have to take 100 and 200 and then take those later on. Okay, so, since you do have to take ENG 100 and 200, what sorts of skills, then, do you feel like you would at least hope to get out of those courses?

S: Definitely retain some of the things I lost in high school, ‘cause obviously I didn’t take any English all first semester. Second semester of senior year, I took like an English elective, which was more movie-based, so definitely hone in on some things that I didn’t get or lost, at least. What else? Some of the skills that I don’t think I have right now that I think would be better that I’m hoping to at least get out of them is, I wanna say, not like writing in general, but more correcting mistakes I’ve made in the past. So, things like, there’s the top 20 mistakes that we’re going over right now in the book, and I think a lot of those I could definitely improve on.

I: Okay. And with that, are you thinking in terms of, like, grammar and mechanics?

S: Yeah, I think it’s more like smaller things like grammar and mechanics. Like, citations is always gonna be something that you need, things like that. But bigger picture, overall structure, things like that, I don’t think are completely necessary.

I: Gotcha. Yeah, and in business writing in particular, those little mistakes can be big mistakes, right?

S: Yeah, exactly.

I: Okay, and so, do you think, based on your impression--and you probably don’t know much about ENG 200, right, ‘cause that’s looming in the future, but ENG 100, since you’ve at least had a chance to kind of get introduced to it--do you feel like it is going to kind of teach you those skills?

S: Yeah, ‘cause right now we’re going over the top 20 mistakes, and we could probably go more into that, but I definitely think ENG 100, at least, will help me with that. It’ll definitely help me.
I: Okay, gotcha. Alright, now, did you guys, when you went over your syllabus, did you talk about student learning outcomes? Do you remember? Usually, it’s like a list...

S: I mean, briefly. It was like a list of like 10, probably.

I: And then, the survey asked about those too, because a lot of students, that’s something that’s really easy to gloss over, not really pay attention to. So, what do you--obviously, they’re going to be worded in a certain way, there’s going to be a certain number of them-- but, what’s kind of your general sense of some of the major outcomes of the course, for ENG 100?

S: Is it what the teachers are trying to get out of the students?

I: Yeah. What are they wanting you to accomplish by the end of the semester?

S: They definitely--let me think about this one...The teachers, I mean, from the teacher’s perspective, I definitely feel like, they just want to improve everybody’s writing as a whole. Based on the outcome, the student learning outcome, I’m trying to remember them, because we just went over them Monday, or yesterday. They’re...I mean, the course is based around literacy, so I feel like that is like a big part. They want to improve people’s literacies, because it does give people a better opportunity in the real world being able to be literate on a certain level of literacy. So, I feel like that’s definitely one of the main priorities; they’re trying to give people the advantage they need in the real world, so that’s definitely...

I: So, that’s kind of like a content aspect of the course?

S: Yeah.

I: And then you’ve got the composition aspect.

S: Yeah.

I: Okay, cool. Alright, thanks for kind of taking a stab at that.

S: No problem.

I: And, I mean, those are some major outcomes, and obviously, like I said, those would be broken down, right? But those are two big, broad categories. So, now, stepping back, so you already talked about writing in high school. Typically, that’s a big influencer in...
how you view writing, but even before that, you’re writing all through school. Can you pinpoint any people or any experiences that have influenced your view on writing in general?

S: I mean, my sophomore English teacher--really awesome person, I still talk to her to this day, great--I took her senior year. She was like the-- my first semester senior year, I took her, and it was like a Bible literature class, but it was more--not Bible, British literature class. So, that was really fun. I mean, just like the content in general was awesome, but sophomore year, the content wasn’t as good. It was just more of the things I was writing about weren’t things I enjoyed, and I really think that influenced a lot. Like, when it came to writing about The Great Gatsby, that was awesome. Harry Potter, that was awesome. Just, things that I think interest me personally I think really influenced how I feel about it. ’Cause, I mean, there was also just books I could not, like, I mean, I can’t sit down and read--just me personally--I can’t sit down and read a book for an hour; that’s just not me. But when I was interested, it would be a lot different. I would be able to get actually into the book, and that definitely influenced what I wrote about it and I how I felt.

I: And also, that setup you’re describing is typical of high school, particularly, high school English classes where literature and writing are combined, so you’re writing about the things you’re reading. And, in fact, the field of English, especially in college, is very much divided, like, between literature and...

S: Yeah.

I: So, while you might do some reading and you might even read some type of fiction in an English--like, a writing--class you’re required to take, it is different in that--hopefully that’s encouraging to you--it’s more about the composition itself, kind of studying composition. I will tell you, too, when it comes time for you to take ENG 200, try to check out the themes and see what they are, ’cause they all have a theme. So, whereas ENG 100 is a little more standardized, ENG 200, all the courses have the same outcomes they’re trying to meet, but instructors get to kind of do that different ways. So, if it really-and for most people it does, right--really make a difference that they’re writing about something they enjoy or are interested in, try to find out what the themes are, ’cause they don’t list them, which is a little crazy to me.

S: No, they don’t.

I: When you go to register, you won’t see them, So, I encourage you to contact the faculty in English; any English faculty member can probably kind of steer you. ‘Cause I
know already, there’s classes here where they teach *The Great Gatsby* or *Harry Potter*, or things like that. So, if there’s kind of particular topics you’re interested in…

S: Definitely.

I: Then, you know, try to do that for yourself, so that you can enjoy it.

S: Enjoy it, no, yeah. I mean, the writing part is more just sitting down and doing it, and when I do it, it’s kind of just flow with it, but yeah, I get it. If I’m more interested in the topic I’m writing about, it’s great. And then, writing— I know, junior year, we had like a creative writing unit--write whatever you want--and I find that really fun, as well. That’s more of a broad, but yeah, that’s something that definitely interests me more than, you know, writing about *The Grapes of Wrath* or something.

I: Right, something that you have to. So, you mentioned that, maybe for other majors in the business school, writing might be kind of a more important aspect.

S: Yeah.

I: How do you see-- and you might be in a better position to answer this than most freshman would be, since you have a pretty firm idea of kind of the field you’re going into--but how do you see the role of writing-- or how do you anticipate writing will play a role, maybe, in your future career? And, I know that might be-- or, we’ll start with even in your discipline-specific courses, okay, so in your marketing and finance courses. How do you think writing is going to come into play in those?

S: I definitely feel like when you’re addressing other people, you’re going to have to prepare things, and that comes with writing. Like, you’re going to have to write out what you have to say to people. I know, in marketing, you have to talk to a lot of people. I’m really open to talking to people. It’s what I did for my job over break; I just sat down and talked to people. And I feel like writing definitely-- preparing out what you’re going to say--just that whole process in general--is writing, and I definitely think that’s definitely something that could come into play in my future career.

I: Okay.

S: But yeah, preparing talking to other people is definitely something. And then, finance, I haven’t looked much into, but I definitely feel like that’s a little more numbers… or, yeah that makes sense. But yeah, I really think the structural format of writing in finance
and marketing--more marketing--is definitely necessary to be able to write out what you’re going to say.

I: Kind of those communication skills in general?

S: Yeah! Communication skills.

I: Yeah, you see those coming up on job listings all the time.

S: And it definitely starts with writing.

I: Okay. And do you think that’s something you would continue to practice in those courses you would take, like marketing courses, for instances?

S: Yeah, I know there’s definitely presentations, speech; it’s definitely something I definitely will do by preparing for those speeches, preparing what I’m going to say.

I: Alright, a couple more questions. So, one term that’s commonly associated with this conversation we’re having about writing is “transfer,” so that’s in the title of the survey; it’s what I’m interested in looking at. What do you think is meant by this term kind of, you know, in this context?

S: So, transfer?

I: So, we talk about transfer of writing skills.

S: From college to real-word?

I: Well, that’s part of it. That could be part of it. I’m looking more specifically at from ENG 100 and 200, basically, to your discipline-specific courses--so, like, marketing and finance courses.

S: So, I mean, the transfer from going to these introductory writing courses--there’s probably another writing course, like as you said there’s advanced writing courses probably I’ll take later in three or four years, but I think now it’s more the skills that I’ll be transferring to those, it’d be more refining them. So, it would be more instead of transferring a whole new set of skills I learned in ENG 100 and 200, it’s more taking the skills I already have, making it better, and then using those in my majors.
I: Alright, great. Well, that’s pretty much all of the specific questions I had. So, my last question is just if there is anything you want to add, anything that, when you were taking the survey maybe, if you had a spark or a thought you wanted to share.

S: I definitely thought about just the emphasis on the writing courses, like how much I mean I know it’s only two classes that a majority of people are required to take that are not in a writing specific major or English-specific major. I definitely think having a chance to, like, opt out-- I know of 200, per se, or 100. I’m not sure how 200 works. I know 100’s a lot of-- like, there’s a concept, there’s the outcomes; you’ve gotta do them. You're supposed to come out of the class better than when you came in with your skills in writing, and I think, after that 100 class, you’re gonna get more-- I mean, at least in my perspective, I’m gonna be in more advanced classes; like, I’ll be taking junior classes next year, and I think those are gonna be a lot more writing where I can practice those skills already without having to take the extra English course. That’s definitely something I thought of, especially when I looked at the required courses and saw I had to take another English class.

I: Yeah, and there are a lot of students that have discussed a difference between ENG 100 and 200 in that way. UD is a little unique in that way; there a lot of places that only do one semester or possibly two semesters in a row that constitute your first year in English. Part of the reasoning behind the way they do it is because they found that, for most students--and this may not be the case for you because you’re coming in a little ahead of the game--but for most students, if they don’t take a writing course in their sophomore year, they have sort of a writing slump, where they’re really not writing just yet. Then, they get into those upper level major courses, right, and start writing.

S: Yeah, that I can see, yeah.

I: So, like, you were talking about needing to brush up on things that have sort of been in the past; that’s part of the reasoning behind it, so it makes it a little more of a smooth transition. Also, ENG 200 focuses a lot more on research, so they don’t really try to incorporate that too much into 100.

S: Well, I mean, that’s good. I mean, research is definitely something that anybody will use in any major, so that’s definitely a positive. That’s something I didn’t know.

I: Yeah. And it’s kind of building on, you know, the writing skills that you’re obviously still working on refining, and it’s gonna continue to work on those. But yeah, that’s a component of ENG 200 that 100 doesn’t really get at. But they are, however, changing the structure of 100, so it’s being revised. So, probably students that you’ll get to know
later that are taking it in the next couple years won’t have the exact same experience you had with 100, but right now, the experience that you have is reflective of kind of all the sections; they have that literacy focus and have the same student learning outcomes and all of that.

[Closing remarks]
Nicole, ENG 100

[Opening remarks]

I: So, my first question for you-- so you’re just starting ENG 100, correct?

S: Yeah.

I: Alright, so you’ve barely gotten into it at this point, but what are your impressions so far of ENG 100?

S: I like it a lot better than high school English because that was based off, like, you read the book and then write the paper of the book. And they give you, like, prompts, and it’s not necessarily like -- so far, we’ve already written one paper in English, which sounds crazy because I’ve only had two classes, but it’s fine. And in high school, they would give you, like, the book, and then the question would be really, like, descriptive and like there’s only one way to answer it, but the essay we had already was, like, you got to choose your favorite essay or, like, writing assignment from high school or your least favorite and write about it, which was very, like, open, I guess. And so, like, just the, like, ability to say whatever I wanted and have that wide range of things to write about was a lot better than just that narrow question in high school.

I: And you’re kind of getting at one of the differences there, too, between what’s typical for high school English versus college English, which is literature and writing being totally intertwined, right, in the same class versus in the university, typically, those are separate. So, while there might be some literature kind of sprinkled in, it’s a writing class, right?

S: Yeah.

I: Alright, cool. And so, now, you said that you do think all students should have to take writing courses, right?

S: Yeah.

I: So, all students at UD. And you are a criminal justice major, right? Good for you for already knowing what you want to major in--not that you can’t change your mind. So, tell me a little bit about why you think that. Why should all students have to take writing courses?
S: Well, I feel like, especially, like, in the jobs we have nowadays, writing is basically—and all, the, like, cell phones—which is another reason—and, like, everyone just sends messages back and forth, so writing is, like, everyday things. And if people just send-- I don’t know how to describe it. You need writing every day, and if you don’t know how to write, it’s just not gonna work, basically. Does that make sense?

I: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. Yeah, I think people write a lot more often than they even realize they do, probably.

S: Yeah. Like, most people think of, like, pen and paper when it’s writing, but it’s not. It’s also, like, the messages we send.

I: Yeah, sure. And I know you said you weren’t quite sure yet, you know, as far as your future career, if writing was going to be a big part of that or not. But I know, typically, in the legal field in general, there is quite a bit of writing. Okay, so, now I’d like to know what kind of skills—so, obviously, you’ve already learned some things from high school English, even if you didn’t like it as well—but what sorts of skills would you like to get out of ENG 100, let’s say? Just kind of in general, writing skills that you really feel that you want to either improve or new skills you want to pick up.

S: Well, like, for me, I have ADHD, so it’s really hard for me to concentrate on things. So especially the writing, like, the—‘cause I always have to do—what’s it called—it’s not the rough, the part before it, before the rough draft. It’s like the outline. Yeah! The outline.

I: Yeah, prewriting, outline…

S: I always have to do an outline to, like, understand what I want to write, and, like, finding ideas for that is really hard because my mind is, like, wandering, like, 24/7. And so, more, like, help with I guess just how to create ideas or, like, brainstorming about, like, topics and stuff one-on-one.

I: Okay. That’s often kind of the first hurdle and can even take up the most time in some cases. Once you start writing, it tends to go a little quicker. Okay, great. And then, I know you probably don’t know much about ENG 200 yet, right? Is there anything in particular you kind of have in mind that, like, would be saved for ENG 200 that you would like to learn there, or does it just kind of depend on what you end up with with ENG 100?

S: I don’t really know.
I: Yeah. They do kind of build on each other, and there are things that are taught in 200 that are not really taught in 100...

S: Yeah, that’s what I was going to say.

I: Especially research; research is kind of a big part of 200 that’s not really… Okay, so do you get the impression, then, that ENG 100 is going to help you with that and teach you that skill that you want to learn?

S: [Nod]

I: Okay, great. Now, some of the questions asked you about student learning outcomes, and those are typically listed, you know, on the syllabus; sometimes the professor will read them out loud, but even if they do, right, it’s usually something you kind of forget about or might just sort of gloss over. So, I’m not going to expect you to quote them for me or anything like that. I wouldn’t be able to do that either. But, can you just kind of paraphrase for me what you think some of the main goals might be for ENG 100, let’s say, since that’s the one you’re familiar with? So, what might some of those student learning outcomes get at in terms of goals for all of the students in the course?

S: Be able to write a creative piece? Can I just name specific types of writing?

I: Yeah, you can. I mean, however you want to go about it, ‘cause we’re not…

S: Well, I know you have to write a literacy narrative. I know that one. Probably a persuasive essay, too, and… another one might be... learn how to brainstorm.

I: Hopefully, that’s at least part of it for you, right?

S: Yeah.

I: Yeah. And those student learning outcomes are pretty kind of big, sweeping things, right, and little tasks and assignments that you complete might kind of contribute to that. But they’re typically like, “By the end of the semester, the student would be able to do this or develop their ability to do that,” but those are all hopefully things that are kind of going to feed into those goals. Yeah. Okay, so you talked about your high school writing a little bit, and you weren’t as crazy about the way it was set up. Can you think of any particular--it may be high school since that’s kind of where you’re coming from, but it could be even earlier than that--can you kind of pinpoint any people or experiences that have shaped the way, or influenced the way, that you think about writing?
S: Like, in a good way?

I: Yeah, well, I mean, if that’s kind of-- if you have generally a positive-- which it seems like at least you think it’s important, right, because you think students need to take those classes.

S: Well, most of our English classes in high school were reading and writing combined, but then, our junior year, we took the reading, and then they also had a composition class, which was just the writing, and that one was honestly a huge one for me. And my teacher’s name was [instructor’s name], so I called him Fish, but he doesn’t know that. But, he’s the one who like—’cause I write poetry a lot-- and they did, like, kind of like a poetry slam thing called Write Club. I don’t know if you’re familiar with it; most people aren’t. And I did-- he’s like the one who convinced me to try out and do that one, and that was, like, a huge step for me cause I’m, like, really scared of public speaking.

I: Yeah.

S: And so, that was like really big, and share my writing and stuff, so that was where I, like, learned to like writing and actually enjoy writing for homework in school.

I: Yeah. And that’s a little unique sometimes to have a high school level course that’s just composition focused. But it sounds like you did some creative writing, then, in there.

S: Yeah. And that was, like, the one class we got to choose on our own.

I: Okay, so was it all creative writing, or was some of it more, like, traditional essay writing?

S: Well, for the class, most of it was just like a topic and then you got to choose from there, so kind of like what we did in our past assignment, like, in ENG 100.

I: Kind of like a prompt.

S: Yeah. But three times during the semester, we had to do Write Club, which was kind of like what I did for the poetry slam, but it was in class and it was you and another student in the class each got a topic that were, like, opposites and you would have to talk about why one was better than the other in front of the class and write a paper on that.
I: Okay, cool. Yeah, so that’s some of that persuasive writing, too. And 200 is especially focused on that type of argumentative, persuasive writing, also. So, if you enjoy that, you’ll get to do more of that, that arguing on paper. Okay. Now, do you have a sense yet of how writing might play a role in your discipline-specific courses, so meaning, courses you would take as a criminal justice major? … Do you know if you do a lot of writing in those courses or what type of writing you might do in those courses?

S: I know for the sociology course I’m in right now, which is on criminological theory, we have to write a paper for the end of the semester— I’m trying to remember what it’s on—about, like… but we have to write a paper for that that’s really detailed, and you have to include, like, pictures and stuff, which strikes me as odd. But I feel like— ‘cause that’s, like, worth a lot of our grade, so that class has a lot of writing incorporated. And then, for my CGS 101 class I took last semester, we had assignments every week where we just had to write out things, and so I feel like it would keep going, and so writing will be a big part, but it’s not going to be, like, the main part.

I: Okay, so, kind of a way to…

S: But it’s just going to be, like, informing.

I: Yeah, it sounds like… There are a lot of, you know, non-English kind of areas where writing is a big part of the way that you either just kind of show what you’ve learned, like you would with an exam, like an essay exam type of thing, or even just exploring some kind of research or issue that you don’t really talk about quite as much in class. Alright, so it sounds like so far, it’s already been a part, so it will likely continue to be. Great. Do you anticipate, then, with criminal justice, do you anticipate that will be part of your future career, having to write?

S: Yeah. Since I like writing, people have asked if I want to be, like, a journalist, like investigative. No. I’m more about, like, action, and I don’t really want to sit at a computer all day.

I: Okay.

S: But, I’m pretty sure for reports and stuff, it will be.

I: Okay.

S: So, like, it definitely will be there, just not, like, the main aspect.
I: Gotcha. Alright, a term that we often talk about with the type of research that I’m doing where I’m looking at writing that you learn in, like, ENG 100 and 200 and then--what I was asking you about, you know--your discipline-specific courses and the writing you do there, we often use this word “transfer” to talk about the skills you learn, like, in ENG 100 and 200 and how those are used later on. Do you kind of have a sense of that term “transfer” in this context and, like, what is maybe meant by that?

S: From, like, ENG 100 to 200?

I: So, that could be, or even kind of thinking of ENG 100 and 200 as a block, since they work together, and thinking about writing skills you learn there carrying forward into your future courses.

S: Kind of, really, just like that.

I: Yeah, basically.

S: Like, the things that were in high school will help-- like, the things I learned in English and writing in high school will help me in ENG 100, and I can use the knowledge I gained there here. And then, what I learn in 100 will help me in 200.

I: Yeah, great. Kind of building blocks. Alright, so that’s pretty much all I have, other than just if there’s anything else that kind of sparked for you while you were doing the survey or anything else you wanted to mention.

S: [Shakes head]

[Closing remarks]
Scott, ENG 100

[Opening remarks]

I: Alright, so, ENG 100: At this point you haven’t done a whole lot just yet.

S: Not a whole lot, no.

I: It’s still pretty new.

S: Yep.

I: But what are your impressions so far of ENG 100?

S: I think, so far, one of the things it emphasizes is kind of the literacy standpoint and how important literacy actually is, not just in English but every career path, and kind of further examining how we as students, like, became literate--who helped us, what helped us--and also kind of what we can do to get more literate and more skilled in writing.

I: Yeah. Cool. And is that interesting to you?

S: I think it’s interesting, yeah! I think it’s cool to see… like, right now, we’re reading a bunch of stories about how other people throughout history got literate throughout different, you know, socioeconomic status and different, I don’t know, different backgrounds. So, I think it’s cool. I don’t know if my classmates feel the same, but…

I: Well, I’m glad that you enjoy it. Yeah, it is-- that’s one of the things-- like, 100, all of them focus on that literacy element, so it’s kind of a neat thing to study. Alright, and so 200, do you kind of have a sense of what 200 is going to be about?

S: Not really, no.

I: Okay, so 200 is a little different, right? It does kind of build on some of those same things, but with 200, there’s a little bit more research focus, and also, 200 classes are themed, so like, you kind of have that theme of literacy going, but typically, with 200s, they’re kind of all over the place, so they have different themes. So, I teach a 200; my theme is Sherlock Holmes. There are themes that are about kind of more abstract concepts…

S: Yeah.
I: All kinds of different things. So, it’s pretty neat. But yeah, there is a difference there. I’m glad you’re liking 100 so far. So, remind me, since I’m still getting this pulled up, did you say that you do or do not think students should have to take writing courses?

S: I think they should, ‘cause I think writing is important throughout all aspects, like today in my English class, actually, my professor was talking about how her brother-in-law is, like, a big corporate business guy, and he looks at corporate, like, cover letters and if, like, the corporate letter is not formatted properly or if it doesn’t make sense, they don’t even interview; it just gets tossed out. I think it’s important to write, so…

I: Yeah. I do have your answers pulled up now, so you’re an education major?

S: Yep.

I: Cool. Do you know what age group?

S: High school, preferably.

I: Yeah, certainly for that, you’re going to have to do a lot of…

S: Yeah, exactly.

I: Yeah, that’s a good point, though. Just in the professional world in general, it is pretty important. Okay, what sorts of skills do you think you need to get out of ENG 100, or 200 for that matter?

S: I’d say just being, I don’t know, almost trial-and-error about writing, you know, so, like, practice a bunch and then get feedback and improve on that. So, I think it’s more of a long-term process than a short-term kind of one-day process.

I: Yeah, great. And do you feel like ENG 100 and 200 together will deliver that to you, teach you those skills?

S: I think so, yeah. I think, well my professor always seems to know a lot about what’s going on--she seems very knowledgeable--so, her feedback along with all the feedback I’ve gotten in high school and such will help me, you know, keep growing in writing. You know, that’s kind of what the point of the course is.
I: Great. And you’re kind of getting into this idea of transfer, too, which is what I’m looking at. With the survey that you took, you might have noticed that that was part of the title. So, I’ll just kind of jump--this is supposed to be a later question--but I’m going to jump down here. So, “transfer” is one of those terms that we use a lot in this conversation when we talk about that idea of writing kind of building, right, on. So, you might take ENG 100, and then you take 200, and then you write in your education courses or whatever. So, how do kind of you see that transfer taking place? Can you explain that a little bit to me?

S: What you’re asking, you mean like, transition almost?

I: Basically, like the transfer of those skills.

S: Okay, okay. I think, like I said before, it’s a process of building on it, so like, hopefully the writer I am now I’m not going to be my junior year or senior year. Hopefully, I’ll be a lot better, because I’ll have practice; I will have written a lot and gotten feedback and then improved on that skill. So, I think, taking the skills that, like, even the basic skills and building foundations on them and keep building all the way up through your junior and senior years, so when you’re graduating from education or whatever, you kind of have that strong foundation; you can apply more skills than you would think before.

I: Great. Yeah, hopefully… I mean, that typically is how it is with writing: you just kind of continue to get better and better. We’re always in the process, right? And a lot of things are that way, but definitely writing.

S: Yeah.

I: Okay, great. So, the survey asked you a little bit about student learning outcomes… So, it sounds like you were a little unsure about the first one, which asked about interpreting literature. And then the second one asked about creative writing skills, and you said “yes” for that one. And the last one was “producing rhetorically-effective expository prose.” There’s a lot of big words in there. So, you said “no” for that one. So, basically with these, actually, in fact, that last one is the only one that’s really a student learning outcome of 100. But, this helps to illustrate-- and so far, pretty much all the students that have taken this have kind of struggled with really not being sure. And the student learning outcomes, understandably, right, it’s usually something you kind of look over once and forget about.

S: Yeah, yeah.
I: Even faculty, you know, we’re not going to recite them, right, word-for-word for you. So, that’s understandable. But, do you have a sense of kind of what some of those main outcomes of 100 might be? In other words, what are some of the big goals of the course for you as a student?

S: I think, yeah, I think some of the big outcomes, like I said earlier, is to become a better writer, but also learning more about, like, even the English language and, like, just little rules that I didn’t know about when I was in high school, like for writing and such, that we just learned about today. And, I don’t know, overall, I guess, I’d say just to be a better writer, ‘cause that’s the class; it’s a writing seminar.

I: Yeah, right. Great. Alright, so you talked about high school a little bit. So, are there any people or experiences that you think have really influenced the way that you view writing, whether it be kind of your positive attitude toward it or any other part of how you view it?

S: Yeah, I personally like to write, so I went to a high school where it was very academically rigorous, so they made sure we wrote a lot—a lot, a lot. And so, I think that along with just the great feedback that my teachers gave me. So, for example, my senior English teacher, [instructor’s name], he would give the class—we would have to write a page paper every week, so that would kind of—It got tedious at times, but it was more of the repetition and the—And he would put a different—he called it a roadblock—a different skill we had to use or something we couldn’t do. So, I think that was one of the big steps in my writing, ‘cause it helped me to diversify my writing and not just write the same kind of paper every time.

I: Yeah. That sounds really cool. And a lot of practice if you were writing every week.

S: Exactly, yeah.

I: Even though, you know, it’s a shorter piece, but still a lot of…

S: Yeah.

I: A lot of students are kind of used to writing more shorter pieces, and that’s one of things that does kind of separate the high school writing from the college writing for them is starting to have to write those longer essays.

S: Yeah.
I: Alright, great. So that was something that was a pretty positive experience for you.

S: Yeah, it was.

I: That’s awesome. So, how do you anticipate writing might play a role in your education courses, then?

S: I think it’s gonna be a big part of it, because education is-- There’s theory but then there’s practice, and the whole practice of it is how you apply it to your own personal life, and so, kind of articulating my thoughts on the paper and then submitting it to my professor, is kind of how I tend--or I plan to--get my ideas across and emphasize what I want to emphasize as a teacher and what I want to do as a teacher. So, I think writing will be a big part of that, ‘cause it will kind of communicate my thoughts in my head to my professor, and then they can give me feedback if that’s gonna work or not gonna work. So, I think writing’s gonna be maybe even a good medium to help me and my education professors figure out what’s the best teaching style for me and so on.

I: Yeah, great. Definitely. And then, do you have a sense of--you’ve already gone through this a little bit--how writing would play a role in, you know, your future career as a teacher?

S: Yeah, I think it’s gonna be a huge part, ‘cause my desired field is either religion or English, so I’ll have to know what’s good about writing in order to do it, so then-- And also, if I ever want to pursue higher education, writing would be extremely important, and having that skill would be--I don’t even know--crucial to getting my master’s degree or doctorate. I don’t know if that’s going to happen, but… so, writing definitely, it never really goes away; it’s kind of always there. You always need to be ready to use it.

I: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, if you’re interested in teaching English, that’s an obvious one, yeah, you’re gonna be using it, right? Actually, my husband, he teaches ENG 200 in the department also, but he taught English at the high school level also. And we’re fairly young, right, so we got our-- I just did English, but he did English education at the high school level. So, if you have questions about that, I can always, you know, give you his info if you want to know what it’s like. Alright, so, is there anything else you wanted to add? Any ideas that popped into your mind as you were taking the survey?

S: I think, and just no matter how much people--I’m sure this isn’t going to sway anything--but how much people complain about taking English, I still think it’s important, and I think it’s a skill that-- like, my roommate’s a business major; he’s gonna
have to use it. I think every profession is gonna have to use it, so I think it’s important to keep emphasizing it.

[Closing remarks]
Michael, ENG 200

[Opening remarks]

I: The first would be--and this would apply to ENG 100 and 200--obviously you’ve finished 100, but 200 you’re just at the outset of--but, what first comes to mind when you think of your experience in ENG 100, or if you want to think about 200, even though it’s not been very long, right, you can think about that too.

S: I mean, for 100, I think just a good amount of writing--writing papers--and then working on to make them better and learning how to actually make any paper better just from using past experience.

I: And so, remind me how you answered in the survey since the answers anonymous. I can sort of go back since I have your email and find what you answered, but you can just remind me how you answered this, when it asks if you think all students should be required to take writing courses or should not be.

S: I think English 100 yeah that's probably a good one that everyone should take just as a one last learn how to write, but ENG 200, I don’t think so.

I: Yeah, a lot of students kind of share that perspective, as far as making that distinction. There are students who say neither or yeah, we need both, but there's also a fair amount that kind of share your opinion. OK. And then, what sorts of skills do you feel you need out of either a first year, like an ENG 100, writing course or even ENG 200?

S: I’d say, especially for ENG 100, just kind of how to build a paper in the best way that you can, because I feel like a lot of times, I know I do, at least, just kinda go with whatever I'm thinking of at the time, but then it’s always better to go back and kind of reevaluate it and maybe do different orders. Like, paragraphs. Like, I know just the other night, I was writing a paper that I had written a whole paragraph and then decided to make it my last one.

I: Gotcha. So, sort of some of those strategic structural, organizational things?

S: Yeah.

I: Great. And you feel like you got that out of 100?

S: Yeah, I think I did.
I: Gotcha. OK. And so, then, 200 seems--it sounds like maybe, then, that seems more above and beyond to you than what you would need.

S: Yeah.

I: And remind me of what your major is.

S: Pre-med.

I: Pre-med. Gotcha. Now, the survey asked you about some student learning outcomes, and that’s something students oftentimes just kind of gloss over right when you’re looking at the syllabus. Sometimes the professor might read them aloud in class or something like that, but it’s usually sort of in the periphery. So, obviously, we’re not going to--you know, I don’t expect you to quote them for me or anything like that, but do you have kind of a general sense or could paraphrase what some of those sort of main goals are for ENG 100, since that one you took. What do you feel like some of the main goals of that class might have been?

S: I mean, I would probably say, just to have a better understanding of how to write a paper. I know, like, they have the--like my English class was social justice and the one I’m in now is prohibition, so I think maybe just understanding how to read literature and then interpret it and kind of make it your own.

I: Okay. Cool. And ENG 200 outcomes, there might be some overlap there, right, but there are also some 200-specific outcomes. Do you have a sense of what some of those might be?

S: I’ll be honest. We went over them in class; I really can’t think of them right now.

I: That’s okay. Yeah, like I said, it’s not something that even faculty usually have memorized or anything like that. But maybe some of those same things in 200, you feel like are going to continue on as goals for the class?

S: Yeah.

I: Alright. Now, I want you to think back a little bit to if there are any particular people or experiences that you can kind of pinpoint that have just influenced the way you view writing in general, you know, whether it’s how important you think it is, or what sort of a role it might play, or whether you like it don’t like it--things like that.
S: Well, my English teacher, or professor, last year was [instructor’s name]. I really liked her, personally. And, I know it’s how a lot of the professors do it, but I really liked how you turned in your paper and got a grade on it, and then you got to go back and revise it. I think that’s really beneficial just to kind of know where you are in this paper and then to go ahead and make the changes.

I: Yeah, that’s a really useful thing, and I think, from my experience, that’s more common here at UD than at a lot of other places.

S: Yeah, and I think that kind of helps best to learn, too.

I: Yeah. So, you think that was helpful for you, then?

S: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

I: Alright. So, you are probably already somewhat in the midst of your major-specific courses as a pre-med student, or have you not quite gotten into that yet?

S: Not quite yet.

I: OK, so that’s maybe a little bit on the horizon.

S: Yeah.

I: So, how do you anticipate, then, writing would play a role in those future discipline-specific courses?

S: I mean, maybe if I’m doing a research paper--personally, I doubt I’ll do it; I don’t really like research, so I doubt that that would come up, but I think that would probably be the most likely scenario, I guess.

I: Okay, gotcha. And then thinking a little bit beyond that, and your answer might be somewhat the same, which is fine, but looking ahead to your future career, do you have a sense of what that might look like? Any idea how writing might come up there, or what kind of a role it would play?

S: I mean, in all honesty, what I want to do is just a lot of notes; it’s not really, you know, formally structured. It’s kind of just however you memorize it. Like, I’m just thinking of patient notes and stuff like that.
I: Right. So, more just kind of record-keeping type stuff, not necessarily essay writing?

S: Yeah, exactly.

I: Okay, gotcha. Alright, so, a term that is often associated with this conversation we’re having is transfer. You may have seen that in the survey title. And so, when we’re talking about transfer, I would like to get a sense of what you think of with that term. Or, what do you think that might mean in this context? So, transfer of writing skills is what we’re talking about.

S: Okay. I guess just again, the transfer of knowing how to set up a paper and then knowing what to kind of change, and grammatical errors, and stuff like that. So, transfer of knowledge, I guess.

I: Okay. So, and some of those sound kind of skill-oriented, knowing how to do those things, regardless of what the paper’s about, maybe.

S: Yeah.

I: Alright. That’s all the specific questions I have, but was there anything else you thought of as you were taking the survey or any ideas that it sparked that you would also want to include?

S: Not really. I just, I would like to know the reason why we’re required to take an ENG 200. I mean, obviously, it’s not like I’m questioning you, but how did they decide that? ‘Cause like, for me personally, I know a lot of people in my same study who just kind of see it as being pointless, which I mean, I guess nothing’s pointless, but…

I: Yeah, I actually can tell you a little bit of the reasoning behind it, just since I know, long before I ever came here, but part of the reasoning behind it--because, you know, not all schools do it that way, right, of having two separate writing courses--is that because of sort of what you communicated about not quite being in your major-specific courses where you might do writing yet. They saw that there was sort of a sophomore slump with writing where you really weren’t writing during your sophomore year, and it’s easy to get really rusty over that time. So, then, when you jump into the more writing-intensive courses that a lot of students would be taking as juniors and seniors, the writing experience they had was pretty far in the past at that point, so that’s one part of it. Another part is that ENG 200 does incorporate more of the research skills that ENG 100
does not, so that’s another piece to it, as well as some other outcomes that are not in ENG 100, but I think that’s one of the major ones is that research component.

S: That makes sense, then.

I: So, there’s certainly reasoning behind it, but it is also always kind of under construction, so UD is always trying to find ways to improve. In fact, ENG 100 is currently being revised, so students coming through in the next couple years will take a different ENG 100 than what you took. It will look different for them. That literacy theme won’t be the same anymore.

S: Okay.

I: So, it will change, and ENG 200 will likely change in the future, as well. So, that’s why it’s important for us to be open to possibilities.

S: Yeah, absolutely.

[Closing remarks]
Nick, ENG 200

[Opening remarks]

I: So, for you, 100 is a little bit further in the past, but you still have kind of that general impression. Did you find it helpful?

S: For me, it was kind of like another high school English class.

I: Okay, fair enough. And what are your impressions so far of 200?

S: I like it. It definitely gets more into the creative writing aspect, one that I’ve never really explored before. I think it has to do with the topic of the class, though too. Like, mine is sci-fi. If I had gotten something I didn’t like, I wouldn’t have liked it.

I: Okay. Yeah, it’s kind of crazy to me that they don’t list the themes when you’re registering, so--unless you ask--you really don’t know what you’re getting into. So, that does help that it’s a theme you enjoy; that’s helpful, for sure.

S: Yes.

I: Now, did you say that students should or should not have to take those required writing courses?

S: I think they should, just ‘cause everyone comes from different places, so it kind of gives you a gauge of where you as a student are, and as an English department, you can look at those students and figure out what you need to change, if anything--especially for 100. For 200, I would say it should be required just to get people exposed to the styles of writing that you might encounter. A lot of these kids, myself included, starting, I didn’t know what I wanted to do, so they don’t know what kind of writing they might get into.

I: Right. That’s a good point.

S: People start as engineers and end up a business major or something like that.

I: Right, right. Yeah, that’s a very good point. And 200, especially if you’re taking it first semester of your sophomore year, a lot of students haven’t even had any of their major-specific courses yet at that point, so--I would say most of them.
S: Right. It gets you exposed to all the different ways to generate writing. I mean, that’s what college is is writing papers. So, that’s going to help in the long run, so I think 200 should be required.

I: Okay, great. That’s helpful. What sorts of skills do you think you would need out of either 100 or 200? What are some basic goals you would have to get out of it?

S: For me, what I take away from it is developing descriptions for things. I’m a paramedic, so I get into weird situations a lot of the time, and the only way to describe it is with words. We talk to the doctor, and then we type it in a report. So, the structure kind of matters, but more so figuring out what words you’re gonna use. That’s more important than structure.

I: Clarity, yeah. So, that’s important. So, that would be a primary one for you that you would be focused on.

S: Yeah.

I: And do you feel that--and again, I don’t know if you really have a sense of 100, if it did achieve that for you--but do you have a sense of whether 100 and 200 together would kind of deliver that for you?

S: I can’t remember enough about 100 to speak for that, but 200 it definitely has gotten me there. A lot of the processes we’ve used so far, I’m not going to use, just because we’re pressed for time a lot of the time, but it just helps me, you know. I’m reading my narrative, and I can go back and change things once or twice. I feel like that helps a lot.

I: Great. Okay, so that’s kind of a personal goal for you. Now, some of the questions asked about student learning outcomes, and most of the students really just don’t know, right, about those; they’re not sure. Sometimes it’s gone over the first day of class on the syllabus, or something like that, but there are student learning outcomes that are the same for all ENG 100s, all ENG 200s. They’re not the same—you know, ENG 100 and 200 do share some of the same goals, but they also have their own, as well. Meaning, any professors teaching 200 are gonna have those same student learning outcomes. So, do you have a sense of what some of those might be? Again, I’m not gonna expect you to be able to rattle them off word-for-word or anything.

S: I would just say, storytelling, description, and then the process of writing your story—not just typing it out, but actually brainstorming, figuring out what you want to put on the
paper. So far, we’ve been exposed to four or five different ways just to brainstorm an idea, and I think that’s probably one of the big things of ENG 200.

I: Yeah, I think the student learning outcome that really gets at that has to do with a process approach to writing. I don’t remember exactly how it’s worded, but that is definitely an important piece of it. A lot of students do kind of--and again, in your line of work, you may be limited in terms of how much time you can take, but for writing an essay…

S: Yeah, and that’s part of what college is is writing essays throughout.

I: So, some students would just kind of limit that process to sit down, draft it, and it’s done. That’s not the best way to go about it.

S: This is the first time I’ve ever actually used a process other than just “Oh, I’m gonna write about this,” and then just typing it out, and it helped tremendously. I was able to bust out a paper in like an hour and a half, which for me, is very impressive.

I: Yeah, there’s a time and a place for that really kind of fast getting it on the page, but it shouldn’t necessarily be the end of the process, right?

S: Yeah, that’s what my process was.

I: So, do you feel that there are any specific people or experiences that you’ve had that have influenced your view of writing? You’ve already discussed some of the experiences you’ve had with 200, but anything even further back from that?

S: No, other than just my job, but it’s very descriptive at that point. It’s not meant to be creative or anything like that.

I: More technical?

S: Yeah, other than outside of ENG 200, I really couldn’t remember.

I: Okay. So, we’ve already talked a little about this. What is your major at UD?

S: Right now, it’s criminal justice, but I’m taking pre-med courses, and I’ll be switching to pre-med as soon as the semester is over.
I: Gotcha. I can make a note of that too, in case you-- I don’t know what you wrote on the survey.

S: Yeah, I don’t remember.

I: Okay, very cool. So, do you have a sense of how writing would play a role in those pre-med courses you would end up taking?

S: Not yet. I don’t know, when it comes to major-specific courses, what they’re going to require writing-wise. I can only imagine that it’s going to be stuff more like lab write-up than anything else, then eventually, towards the end, more like a narrative, which is what we do anyway.

I: So, you’ll just be ready, whatever it is.

S: Yeah. I don’t know. Hopefully.

I: And then, do you have an idea of what you would want your future career to be?

S: Yeah. Emergency reposition.

I: Okay, and do you have an idea of how writing might function in that career?

S: Same thing, we’ll just write what we find and what we did. It’s real cut and dry. We’re not going to be making stories. Maybe someday, I would make a book; it would help, but I don’t like writing those.

I: That would be more of a personal pursuit?

S: Yeah.

I: But again, that clarity that you were talking about is important, for sure. So, with my research, a term that often comes up is “transfer,” basically, talking about that transfer of skills that you learn in first- and second-year writing, like ENG 100 and 200, to writing that you do in the future. So, basically, are those skills gonna carry forward? And sometimes, it may be that some are more transferrable than others, and it really depends on what types of writing you do in the future. Do you have a sense of what that might look like for you, or what it’s already looked like in the past, because everything kind of builds, right? So, I’m sure when you were in high school, you took English classes, you took 100…
S: Just, going back to my work and trying to find bits and pieces that I can change to make more descriptive, whether it’s just changing a word and adding a synonym instead or changing the way the sentence reads to kind of get a different vibe from the passage, whatever it might be. But that’s about the only thing I can see that would transfer right now.

I: It kind of sounds to me, too, almost like some of these skills are not brand new, but you’re kind of refining them, maybe?

S: Yeah, exactly. My writing process before was, like I said, just write it all out. That’s my rough draft. We were supposed to edit it. I would just edit the sentences and then turn it in. This is by far the most in-depth.

I: And that’s really typical. A lot of people do write that way, but that’s good that you’re open to trying to improve that process.

S: I know English isn’t one of my strong suits, so it’ll help.

I: Yeah, sure. I’ve heard it said that a C paper is an A paper turned in too soon. ‘Cause even--for lack of a better word--good writers, you know, really experienced writers, I mean, we don’t write perfect first drafts. So, you always have to kind of put it through that refining process. So, that’s great that your instructor has already communicated that to you and that you’re actually listening. Anything else that you thought of as you were taking the survey, or anything else that relates to your writing experience at UD that you would want to share?

S: ENG 200 is way better than ENG 100. It might be just ‘cause it’s been a couple years, but--I don’t know--English was never my favorite topic, so I would say, out of all the Englishes I’ve taken, this is the best one.

I: Great.

S: Again, it might be the topic, the science-fiction aspect of the class, or it might be the writing process, because I’ve never been exposed to it to the point where we break it down, where we brainstorm, and then brainstorm again, and then brainstorm again. So, I don’t know why; it’s just the best English class I’ve taken so far.
I: Well, that’s great. That’s good to hear. Yeah, and I’m sure it could only help having a topic that is inherently interesting to you. But, it sounds like a lot of it is outside of the theme, so that’s good too. All of that process stuff is really important.

[Closing remarks]
Brandon, 200

[Opening remarks]

I: So, you have had 100, and now you’re in 200, so what comes to mind when you think of your experience with 100?

S: So, I’ll just kind of give you some background, I guess. Since I am a science major, typically, science majors aren’t--stereotypically, I guess--aren’t really that good at writing. I happen to really like writing, mostly because early in high school, I sucked at writing. I was really bad at writing, and I had a teacher my junior year who taught me how to actually write essays, because my sophomore-year English teachers were not supportive at all of my writing; they just told me my writing was garbage, essentially, which is like, “great, you’re a teacher; that’s awesome.” And my junior-year teacher--her name was [instructor’s name]--and she was this old lady and just super nice and really supportive of my writing style, because it’s like, writing style shouldn’t--I don’t know, I feel like in high school, they grade on your writing style, not the actual content, which makes no sense to me at all, because everyone has a different writing style.

I: Right. And by style, just tell me a little bit about what you mean by that.

S: Like, I have more of a formulaic style; like, it’s not pretty, it’s not flowery and all that, ‘cause I’m a science major. I’m concise, but I can expand on my ideas. To me, as long as the content is there, it’s a good paper for me. And then, I had an SAT tutor who also really helped with my writing, and once I got into ENG 100, my writing was a lot better than it used to be, and I found that I did really well in that class, also because my English teacher--I don’t know if you know [instructor’s name]. I had him.

I: Uh-huh.

S: Yeah. He really liked my writing, and I got along with him really well.

I: Great.

S: And so, yeah, I just really enjoyed that class. Yeah, a lot of interesting themes in that class, too. We did a lot of economic--well, there was a bunch of different themes, ‘cause it was ENG 100.

I: Did you guys talk about literacy? Was that kind of the focus?
S: Yeah.

I: Okay, because I think that’s pretty standard amongst the 100s.

S: Yeah, we did a literacy--actually, yeah, that was the whole theme, now that I think of it.

I: But different aspects of that, I’m sure, which would bring in the economic stuff and all that.

S: Right, we did financial stuff, like economic disparity, so people who don’t have food and are struggling, living on the edge kind of thing. So, it was interesting to see that kind--writing about that, too.

I: Yeah. Very cool. And so, it sounds like your English experience in high school really kind of set you up for success there, too.

S: Yeah.

I: I mean, not your early experience in high school, but…

S: Mostly, I got really good at English and writing just to prove to myself and prove to my teachers that I can actually do this; I’m not a terrible writer. And I ended up kind of liking it along the way. It’s a lot easier to me than doing math.

I: Yeah. And I mean, what you were saying about the writing style, too, is like--ENG 200 and 100 are full of students from all over the map in terms of what their major is, so it’s gonna make sense for you in your field to write that way, to have kind of a formulaic style. People in the field of English tend to write a little differently, but it totally makes sense for you to kind of practice and hone in on that writing style where it is a little bit more formulaic and a little more concise and all that, because those are the qualities that are valued in the sciences, so that is great, I think. OK, so ENG 200 you just started, so you probably only have kind of a vague impression of what that course is going to be like, but what are you thinking so far with ENG 200?

S: I think it’s going to be very similar to ENG 100, obviously besides the theme. I think that it’ll be an interesting class. So far, it’s been pretty good. The readings that we do, we’re doing psychological-type reports; they’re, you know, psychological articles, so actual content-based ones, ones that are tough to read. I don’t particularly like reading scientific articles. I read a lot of them anyway, because I did a lot of internships and stuff,
and I work in a lab, and I’m kind of required to know background. They’re not the most interesting things to read, definitely, but once you get past that, the actual, like—I’m starting to understand the theme and how it connects and everything, and I think that’s pretty interesting. I’m sure you probably know about that.

I: I know some, but I don’t know everything. But yeah, so for you, you probably have that experience. For a lot of students, this is probably going to be their first time probably reading some stuff like that, so it may be even more difficult for them, right, but it is good practice.

S: Right. But, I also do like how he’s gearing the class to--I mean, we’re not all science majors in the class; I mean, it’s an ENG 200, so it’s going to be varied--but he is gearing it more towards kind of like a professional aspect, ‘cause there are no English majors in the class, so he’s gearing it more towards, like, what we do in our careers, which I think is useful. As an ENG 200, I think that if we’re going to be required to take the class, then it might as well benefit us. I think it will benefit us anyway, ‘cause I think, like--and I said this in class--if you can’t write, if you can’t like express your ideas in a responsible way, then you’re kind of useless to anything you go into. You should know how to write; you should know how to get your ideas on paper. Even emails, some people write awful. I’ve had professors that will not even know how to write emails, and I’m like, “You expect us to write these beautiful works of art, and then you send me, like, ‘Thanks.’”

I: Yeah. “Sent from my iPhone.”

S: “Sent from my iPhone.” I started doing that back, and I’m just like, no.

I: Yeah. But, you do bring up a good point, that just communication in general--I mean, that’s a part of any field. But, it is true, too, that the types of writing that you’re doing might be a little different, right, depending on the genre you’re writing in. Like, let’s say you write a literary analysis in an ENG 200 class. You might not write another literary analysis every again, but it is still practicing some of those skills.

S: It also teaches you, you know, you’ve gotta keep track of where you get your sources from and everything, because that’s also extremely important in science, ‘cause if you don’t reference anything in a paper you write, you could probably lose your degree, like immediately.

I: Very important, yeah. So, you’ve already kind of gotten into this. My next question was, why do you believe--so you said that students should have to take writing courses--
so why do you think that? You have already kind of touched on that, but is there anything else you want to add?

S: Yeah, I think just up until an ENG 200 is probably appropriate... for science majors. I think if you’re in communications or anything that’s non-science, you could probably do like an ENG 300 or whatever, ‘cause then it gears towards what you specifically want, but I think for science majors, I think that ENG 200 is probably a good ending point. But, I do think that they should continue to incorporate some sort of writing stuff in your major classes--and, obviously, I’m a sophomore, so I don’t know what they’re gonna do--they may have us do, like, lab report writing or some type of class like that, so I have no idea what to expect.

I: Yeah. I know that, through the English department, there are some of those upper-level writing courses that are typically more geared toward, like, business majors, I think--so, professional and business writing and technical writing, things like that. So, I’m not sure, for science majors, what they do, but yeah, that’s a very particular genre of writing, so the general kind of stuff you learn might not prepare you 100% for that.

S: Right. And if they do offer a lab report writing class, which is a super weird class to begin with, but I probably would try and take it, just because it would be useful.

I: Yeah, definitely. Alright, so what sorts of skills do you think pretty much any student would need to get out of, like, an ENG 100 or 200?

S: You definitely need to get basic ability to do research, citing your sources. I know, obviously, like, the whole plagiarism thing. I think that, yeah, it’s super important to cite your sources. And I do think that some people intentionally plagiarize, but I think sometimes the majority of it is people just forget to put sources in. Like, they have the reference page and everything, but they may just forget the in-text citation, which also is something you need to get out of, like, a basic English class, and so that’s a skill that you need to develop, as well. I’ve not done that; I could easily see myself forgetting to do something and getting destroyed by that, but hopefully that does not happen. I know that--I’ve written lab reports before, and I’ve written annotated bibs, and all these, like, technical English-type writing, so I know that citing your sources and getting all your information is super important, but keeping track of it, honestly, is sometimes really difficult for me, ‘cause I’m very scatterbrained, so…

I: Yeah, that can be difficult, especially if you do a lot of research. You’re like, “Where did I get this from again?”
S: One thing that I’m really hoping to get out of it is refining how to do research, because I’m good at doing research for science-type stuff, but if I’m doing research on, say, like, I don’t know...I’m trying to think of an example... I’ll do what I did research on last time; let’s just say economic disparity, the example I used before. If I’m doing that, that’s a super vague topic; it’s super broad. Normally, when I do research, I try to--I, like, pick a side and then research that. Apparently, you’re not supposed to do that, because it kind of chops off half of the other thing, so just kind of, like, getting good techniques to really attack something and make it useful for you so you’re not aimlessly wandering around at the library databases.

I: Right. And those are kind of general academic skills, too. And ENG 200 does focus more on the research aspect than 100 does, so that’ll be helpful for you, I’m sure. And there’s also with ENG 200, all of the 200 sections will have a library session, so you’ll actually have a research librarian go over a lot of that stuff with you, you know, how to use the databases really effectively and stuff. Sometimes, you feel like you’re just kind of wandering around the abyss, trying to find something, so hopefully, you’ll find that helpful. Okay, great. So, it sounds like research, then, is a really important aspect to you.

S: Yeah, ‘cause I’m not, like, super good at doing the online research, so I would like to get better at that.

I: So, that’s kind of a newer, maybe, aspect…

S: Yeah. I mean, I’ve done it a lot, but I’m not--doesn’t mean you’re good at it.


S: Yeah, I mean, it’s always a learning process. Everything is.

I: Alright, so, the survey asked you about some student learning outcomes. Let me see what you answered there. Students learning outcomes tends to be one of those things that we don’t really know all that well, right? We might read it on the syllabus once or kind of hear it read once.

S: Yeah, and I’ll be honest, I don’t really know those yet.

I: Yeah, it doesn’t tend to be something that you know that well, and even for faculty, like, I don’t have them all memorized or anything like that. But, they are an important aspect, right? It kind of says this is what you’re supposed to achieve in the course. So,
could you just paraphrase for me, then, what you think some of the student learning outcomes might get at for ENG 100--we’ll start there--and then, if you think there’s any that are kind of particular to 200, you could say that also.

S: Alright. In ENG 100, they talked a lot about college-level prose, that kind of thing. So, I guess, in non-English terms, it would be kind of like advanced writing; you’re not in high school anymore, so you’re not doing the five-paragraph essay. And just using literary skills to, like, convey a point; learning how to do basic research skills; obviously, citing; MLA format--that kinds of stuff for ENG 100. I’m probably missing a ton, but…

I: No, but those are main--some kind of big, sweeping things.

S: Yeah, broad stuff. Then, in ENG 200, it would be, like, refining your research skills. I don’t--I know my professor, [instructor’s name], said MLA, APA, all the formatting stuff isn’t as important, because I’m not going to be using MLA in my field. I don’t actually know what we use; I think we use APA, but…

I: Yeah, and even, I know in Biology, sometimes you use CSE, which is really kind of a more obscure one that doesn’t come up, really, in any other field. And, in fact, with that style, not only does it dictate, like, how you cite things, but it also dictates kind of the style of writing itself, right, so it dictates that you do have to be very concise.

S: Yeah, and it’s third-person, objective, you know, no pronouns.

I: Right. So, that will be different. I mean, MLA is used in a lot of--not just English, right, but a lot of other fields. But also, yeah, APA is really common too. I mean, there’s…

S: Is APA--Chicago is history, right?

I: Yeah, so that one, I mean, if you don’t do history, you’ll probably never use it, although sometimes people will use footnotes, right, and Chicago Style is the style that uses footnotes, but sometimes if you publish something, a journal might kind of have their own style of citing.

S: I know, it’s super weird.

I: So, you just kind of have to be able to learn as you go.
S: Actually, yeah, that is a good point, because I remember in one of my classes--not English or anything; it might have been English--but someone told me that each journal has a different writing style.

I: Sometimes they do. Now, sometimes they’ll just kind of go with the standard MLA, or APA, or something like that, but yeah, sometimes they have kind of specific, so you’ve gotta be flexible, I guess when it comes to that.

S: Right.

I: Okay. So, you already kind of talked about this. I had a question on here about experiences or people that have influenced your view of writing. You told me a little bit about your high school experience, right, kind of very different sorts of instructors that you had.

S: Yeah.

I: I’m glad that you had the good instructor come along.

S: Right, right.

I: But is there anything that you think has influenced the way you see writing or your perspectives on it?

S: Well, I mean, I read a lot. So, I just-- one of the things I always liked is, it always kind of amazes me how people structure novels. I don’t know, it’s just something that’s always intrigued me is how those are, like, crafted in such a way. It sounds, like, super nerdy, but…

I: No, that’s true, though. I think, sometimes, especially people outside humanities tend to think of reading--or, like, literature--as being very, I don’t know, just something you kind of, like, mystically create or conjure up.

S: Yeah, it takes, like, a ton of work. Even just crafting an essay, it takes, like, a ton of work.

I: Yeah, and it really does use kind of both sides of your brain. Well, cool. I’m glad you like to read. A lot of students don’t. That’s good. What kind of stuff do you like to read?

S: Mostly fiction. I’ve been into Tom Clancy lately.
I: Okay. Cool.

S: Stephen King is my favorite author.

I: You guys might read-- I don’t know…

S: I don’t think we read Stephen King. I think we read H.P. Lovecraft.

I: Yeah, I know there’s an essay from Stephen King that--I don’t know if you guys will read it or not. He actually writes some essays, too, in addition...You should look that up some time. It’s kind of interesting, you know, about writing; he’s really writing about writing, which is kind of cool when you get to see authors do that sort of behind-the-scenes stuff.

S: He has a really weird writing style.

I: I actually haven’t read any Stephen King. My husband loves Stephen King, but I haven’t read any; I don’t really read that kind of stuff, but I probably should pick one up some time.

S: I mean, they’re kind of like, his plot development is super bizarre. It’s, like, circular, but it’s, like--it circles, but it’s linear; it’s super weird. I don’t even know.

I: It sounds like it works your brain while you’re reading.

S: It does, honestly. It’s like, I mean, it’s great because he’ll connect things back from the beginning, which obviously, most authors should do that, but…

I: Right, but they don’t all do it the same way.

S: Right.

I: Alright, well, cool. Again, some of these other questions we’ve already kind of hit on, like, “do you anticipate writing will play a role in your future discipline-specific courses?” So, it sounds like you’re not super familiar with what that’s going to look like yet, but maybe some lab reports and things like that. Anything else you want to add to that?

S: No, I think I probably covered that.
I: And, do you have an idea of how writing might play a role in your future career, if you know what you want that to be yet?

S: To be honest, I have no idea what I want to do, which is great.

I: You’ve got time.

S: Yeah, I’m also a sophomore, so I’m not, like, concerned at all, but I have a feeling it’ll play a large role, any writing. If I’m going to go the med route or a PhD route, writing.

I: Yep, I’m sure. Alright, great. So, now I want to just ask you--this is the last question on here, and then there’s just a catch-all “anything else you want to talk about”--but I did want to ask you, I don’t know if you paid attention to the title of the survey or anything like that, but “transfer” is in there, and transfer is kind of one of these important words when we’re talking about writing, you know, from first- and second-year writing, for instance, like ENG 100 and 200, to then writing in the disciplines, or writing in your career, or whatever. So, do you have a sense of what we’re talking about with that word “transfer”?

S: Like, transfer of skills?

I: Yeah.

S: So, yeah, that’s what would come to my mind. I guess, you don’t have to take everything from every class, because you’re not going to--you can only absorb so much information--but just some of the general, broad skills--some of the learning outcomes, I guess--from ENG 100, ‘cause that was the first writing class I took, have taken, in college, and then the next semester, I did history, so there were skills transferred over to history. Then, history transferred over to philosophy, because we did a couple papers in philosophy, and then, I’m hoping that those skills kind of build upon themselves, as they have been, and I have an upper-level philosophy class right now, I have this ENG 200, and I have an SSC, and all those have writing. So, hopefully, my writing gets, like, good.

I: That’s great. Actually, it sounds like you’re taking more courses that have you writing than most sophomores do, which may be because those are upper-level courses.

S: Yeah, they’re also...the biology--science curriculums here, it’s almost like there’s more other stuff than science.
I: Really? Okay.

S: I don’t mind it as much as other students do. The only class I really hated was comm, like oral communication. I just struggled in that class.

I: Is that, like, a public speaking class?

S: It’s a public speaking class, yeah. And I’m a pretty social person. I’m very good at speaking in crowds, it’s just the way the speeches were designed was like, this is not gonna…

I: Was that course specifically for science majors?

S: It’s a UD general course; it had nothing to do with anything.

I: Gotcha. Yeah, I mean, that is--I mean, you do speak sometimes. But, so you would see writing as more of kind of a thing that you’re actually gonna be using?

S: Yeah. See, when I do speeches, I don’t write out, like, a formatted thing; like, that’s a waste of time for me. I have, like, bullet points. I’m really good at just paraphrasing and talking off the cusp.

I: So, you’re not doing this. [Hides behind paper]

S: No, I never read off a paper. Like, I’ll reference a paper. Like, if I have note-cards or something, I barely use them, but I’ll reference them if I need some, like if I have a quote.

I: So, then, were you required to write out speeches?

S: Yeah, we had to have the full outline and with all these...They tried to make it like an actual class.

I: Yeah, I think even with writing, too, the equivalent of that might be professors that require you to turn all these kind of steps along the way, and sometimes that’s helpful, but not every student works the same way.

S: Yeah, my brain just doesn’t work that way.
I: Like, I don’t have my students--I don’t know if Mr. Goode will have you do this--but, I don’t have my students turn in outlines, just because, like, it’s helpful for some students, and I guess you should know if it is, but not every student. A lot of students may do that work more up here [points to head], or it might look a little messier.

S: We do a lot of prewriting stuff, but we’re not going to be required to turn that in, I don’t think. And that’s helpful, you know. I don’t do a lot of prewriting, or I haven’t done a lot of prewriting; I usually just kind of--the way I attack essays is I’ll jot down, like, I’ll write “intro” and just jot down some random stuff, and…

I: That’s kind of a type of--it’s a plan, right?

S: Yeah, it’s a little bit of a plan, and I’ll reference it, but mostly, I’ll just write the whole thing and then read it and delete it, paragraph by paragraph, and rewrite it.

I: Hey, that’s a way to do it. That is a style of drafting where you just kind of write a draft and then write a whole new draft, and it kind of gets more refined as you go.

S: Yeah.

I: And the thing with that, too, is you actually have to start early enough that you have time to do that.

S: I usually do that, yeah.

I: That’s great that you do that, because some students, they might actually write their best writing doing it that way, but if you wait until the night before, you really can’t do that.

S: I mean, I could do that, but I haven’t done that because I’m also kind of a schedule-oriented person. There’s some things I can get away with doing, like, two hours before it’s due, but not writing.

I: Alright, well, is there anything else about either your experience with writing here at UD or anything you think has just kind of shaped your experience in general that you want to add?

S: No, I think that’s pretty much everything.

[Closing remarks]