

WRIT 105

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Program

Teaching Innovations Program (TIP): a year-long program that supports faculty teams in developing or redesigning a course or academic program. The 2023-2024 cohort had a special focus on belonging.

Intervention

Fall 2023:

- “Who’s In Class” Self-Inventory Survey
- Redesigned Learning Units
- End-of-Semester Belonging Survey
- Redesigned Final Reflection Letter

Spring 2024:

- Beginning- and End-of-Semester Surveys
- Redesigned Learning Units (with a less explicit focus on “belonging”)

Participating faculty

Tatum Petrich, Instructional Specialist
Tavya Jackson, Instructional Specialist

Implementation

Fall 2023

Intervention Groups:

- Tavya, three 4-credit 105s
- Tatum, one 3-credit 105

Control Groups:

- Six volunteer IS faculty teaching a total of 15 sections of 105

Spring 2024

Intervention Groups:

- Tavya, one 4-credit 105
- Tatum, three 3-credit 105s

Spring 2024 Control Groups:

- One volunteer IS faculty, three full-semester sections
- One volunteer IS faculty, one half-semester section

Course Redesign Goals and Analysis

Summary

Goal 1: Develop a deeper understanding of our WRIT 105 students and the challenges they face in terms of belonging.

Status: Met.

Discussion: Through both qualitative and quantitative data, we gained substantial insight into students' sense of belonging and what they think contributes to and impedes this for them. We were also able to examine the potential relationship between various personal/demographic factors and students' sense of belonging. Based on specific data points, we see that students (in both the intervention and control groups) had a higher sense of perceived faculty support than perceived peer support. The data suggests that relationships between our students and their peers are more layered/complex than those with their instructors—regardless of belonging interventions. Additionally, the sense of perceived faculty support was higher for students in the intervention groups than for students in the control groups, which suggests a positive outcome from our belonging-focused interventions.

Goal 2: Promote student success (i.e., improve DFW rates in this course) through a combination of belonging-informed pedagogical approaches and course content.

Status: Unmet

- Tatum's Fall 2023 105 one section: 47% success rate (6Fs, 4Ws)
- Tatum's Spring 2024 105 three sections: 75% average success rate (3 Ds, 9 Fs, 2 Ws)
- Tavya's Fall 2023 105 three sections: 60.5% average success rate (4 Ds, 8 Fs, 3Ws)
- Tavya's Spring 2024 105 one section: 85% success rate (3 Fs)

Discussion: As indicated by the typical DFW rates in these intervention groups, the belonging interventions appeared to have little effect on students' academic success. Several other factors, such as class size, classroom size, and student attendance appeared to have more significant impact on students' sense of belonging than any particular curriculum choices.

Student Perspectives

An average of 63% of students from our intervention groups in the Fall and Spring indicated feeling a strong sense of belonging:

- “I think my sense of belonging when it comes to this class and the university itself is pretty good. I think I have found a place [...] I can finally call a home away from home...”
- “I feel a complete sense of belonging. I’ve found friends and people to connect with and I’m doing really well in classes.”

An average of 12.5% of students from our intervention groups in the Fall and Spring indicated that they struggled with a sense of belonging:

- “I don’t have a sense of belonging in this school.”
- “Everyone is sort of to themselves.”

Respect/absence of judgment and the professor were highlighted as the most important factors that contribute to students’ sense of belonging in a class.

Next Steps

We plan to work on streamlining the data from our beginning- and end-of-semester surveys in order to present our findings to the Writing Studies department in early fall 2024. We would like to host a session to discuss with other first-year writing instructors the results of our interventions, our observations regarding student belonging, and our colleagues’ observations, ideas, and suggestions. Based on the outcomes of this session, we will put together a set of guidelines for first-year writing instructors to use in their Writing 105 and 106 courses to foster a stronger sense of belonging in students. We will also share a list of texts that focus on issues of identity, community, and belonging, which instructors could use to develop one or more of the units in the WRIT 105 course.

Appendix

List of texts focusing on belonging, identity, and community:

1. [We Belong in College](#)—collection of Belonging Stories

The videos posted here are from a national movement where college students are sharing stories about times that they faced challenges, and the experience made them question whether or not they belong in college. This is a powerful campaign that is helping students all over the U.S. recognize that the obstacles they are facing in their education are shared by others

- [Simisoluwa](#)—dealing with grief or mental health setbacks (includes specific actions he took to improve his situation) 3:35 min

- [Ratha](#)—finding purpose in your education by discovering a topic/field that you're passionate about (addresses concerns of a student returning to college after having a child, in a society where women are not typically expected to find employment after college) 2:25 min
 - [Meril](#)—Gender belonging and being misgendered throughout the college application process 5:35 min
 - [Jordan](#)—struggling academically and taking steps to create a support system for minority students who want to go into healthcare professions 3:24 min
 - [Teshane](#)—first-generation college student and daughter of immigrants 3:52 min
2. America Ferrera, "[My identity is a superpower -- not an obstacle](#)" (TED Talk)
 3. Fadzi Whande, "[How diversity heaven can be inclusion hell](#)"
 4. Aesha, "[Stories of Belonging](#)"
 5. Laura Ramirez, "[How to Inspire the Art of Belonging](#)"
 6. Maia Kobabe, [Gender Queer](#) (excerpts from graphic novel)
 7. Zöe Sottile, "[My Dell Hid My Privilege and My Mac Hid My Financial Need](#)"
 8. Tiara McKinney, "[How Assimilation Changed My Identification with My Culture](#)"
 9. Mike Rose, "[I Just Wanna Be Average](#)" (excerpt)
 10. Maxine Hong Kingston, "[The Language of Silence](#)" (excerpt from *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, 1976)
 11. Temple Grandin, "[Autism and Visual Thought](#)"
 12. Raya AlJadir, "[Disability and body image: fitting in when your body does not](#)"
 13. Elizabeth Woods, "[Belonging – A Survivor's Story](#)"
 14. Rita Buehring, "[Community and Sense of Belonging](#)" (TED Talk)
 15. Kathryn Fitzpatrick, "[My Big Sad Disability Essay](#)"
 16. Barbara Mellix "[From Outside. In](#)"
 17. Steven Tejada, "[Education and Identity](#)" (TED Talk)
 18. Trevor Noah, "[Chameleon](#)" (excerpt from *Born a Crime*, 2016)
 19. Caroline Hwang, "[The Good Daughter](#)"
 20. Anthony Jack, "[The Hidden Divide on Campus](#)"
 21. Stephanie Birmingham, "[Uniquely My Own](#)"