

Final Written Report

Professional Development Grant

“How the Ethnographic Approach to Teaching Freshman Composition  
Motivates Student Writers”

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This is the final report for a professional enhancement project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant.

**A. Title page (provided above)**

**B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity**

Abstract of Conference Paper Presented:

This year's presentation is a continuation of last year's work. In last year's presentation, I established that the ethnographic approach to teaching freshman composition was one that highly motivated students. This year, I would like to report on how it motivates freshman writers as a result of my investigation of the intersection of motivation theory and composition studies. There are several variables associated with writing that have been proven to motivate students. I will relate some of these motivational variables to methods used in the ethnography classroom. One such variable is interest in a topic. For the purpose of an ethnography, the topic is a subculture chosen by the student. Another aspect that motivates student writers is authentic activity. When students research and write about subjects involved in their subcultures, they are engaging in authentic activity. Also, introducing new aspects of writing activities into the composition classroom have proven to motivate students. One new writing activity involved with conducting ethnographies is field notes, not to mention the different or new nature of the writing assignments. Finally, another way researchers believe motivation is encouraged in the writing classroom is for academic writing to be linked to other activities in the classroom. My ethnography is a semester-long project. Every activity is linked in some way to another activity, the sole purpose being to produce the fourth essay of the course, the ethnography itself. It

consists of information compiled from a semester-long study of members of the student's subculture.

### **C. Brief Review of Professional Enhancement Opportunity**

I attended the National College English Association (NCEA) Conference where I presented a paper on March 30. The conference ran from March 28 to March 30, 2019. Therefore, I traveled to the conference on March 27, 2019 and arrived home from the conference on March 31, 2019.

### **D. Summary of Experiences**

Almost every semester, I teach at least one freshman composition course. Therefore for a while, I have been grappling with the issue of how to best get students invested in learning how to write. Recently, I have been seeking solutions to this problem, and this research and presentation grew out of that. Every time I attend the CEA Conference, I gain invaluable critical feedback from colleagues regarding future directions for my research. This year, some faculty in my session at the conference were particularly interested in learning more about the ethnographic method because they had been using it in their freshman composition courses for the first time. One senior faculty member was so intrigued with this method that he called my presentation, "brilliant."

### **E. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Presently in my specialty field of Composition and Rhetoric, there is not enough research or training commentary addressing methods that can be used in the freshman composition classroom to motivate student writers. For so long students have been given stall assignments

that they have either seen before and/or are not interested in, but there is a better way. Consider the ethnographic approach to writing. As a result of this shortage of scholarship in my field and positive commentary that I have received on my scholarship at national conferences, including the 2019 College English Association (CEA) Conference, I will continue conducting inquiry in this area. I am currently working on an article on this topic and have also made several conference presentations on this issue.

Thank you for your continued support.