

Final Written Report

Professional Development Grant

“Expanding the Borders of Freshman Composition Classrooms:

Assisting International Students in Becoming Better Writers”

29 March 2012

Regina St. John, Ph. D.

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:

In the 2009-2010 academic year, 274, 431 international undergraduate students were enrolled at universities across our nation (Institute of International Education). When coming to the States to study, international students bring with them a wealth of linguistic, cultural and philosophical knowledge; they represent the creative or talented of their nations. While studying in their native countries, they were those students who performed well in all of their academic classes, including their EFL (English as a Foreign Language) ones. When journeying to the United States, they were the same students who were high achievers in the ESL (English as Second Language) classes at their respective colleges, if their English language skills were weak enough that they were even required to enroll in those types of courses. Now on the first day of a new semester, some of these same students sit in your freshman composition classroom, huddled into a small group. Immediately, you wonder how you are going to be able to assist these international students in becoming better writers. You are not an ESL teacher, and you do not know any of these students' native languages. You even have trouble pronouncing their names when you call the roll. Plus, these international students seem almost invisible to the American students in the class. By the end of the first day of class, you are exhausted just thinking about the challenges that lie ahead this semester in this particular freshman class. How do we, as trained freshman composition teachers, assist our international undergraduate students

to become better writers while at the same time, demonstrate that we value their individual creativity or talent and their cultural identities? First and most important, we create a classroom environment conducive to their learning. When our international students feel more comfortable and accepted in our freshman composition classrooms, they will then be more open to learning how to become better writers.

C. Brief Review of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

I attended the National College English Association (NCEA) Conference where I presented a paper on March 29, 2012. The conference ran from March 29, 2012 to March 31, 2012.

Therefore, I traveled to the conference on March 28, 2012 and arrived home from the conference on April 1, 2012.

D. Summary of Experiences

In the English department here at Tech, I teach various courses to both undergraduate and graduate international students on a consistent basis, which draw on both of my specialty areas, TESL and Composition and Rhetoric. From regularly attending conferences like the NCEA, I gain invaluable critical feedback from colleagues regarding my present research and even advice about future directions for such research. I am also able to attend other sessions that have relevance to my scholarship and teaching.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

Presently, in the fields of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Composition and Rhetoric, there is a need for additional scholarship pertaining to college-level ESL students enrolled in mainstream writing courses like freshman composition ones, which are designed

primarily for our native speakers of English. As a result of both positive and negative commentary that I have received at previous conferences, including the 2012 College English Association (CEA) Conference, I am now planning to write a journal article about this issue. I will also continue to research and make presentations on this topic.

Thank you for your continued support.