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ГРАМОТНОЕ ПЛАНИРОВАНИЕ СОЗДАЕТ ХОРОШИХ ПИСАТЕЛЕЙ: УЧЕБНЫЙ ПЛАН МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ОТДЕЛЕНИЯ ФАКУЛЬТЕТА СВОБОДНЫХ ИСКУССТВ

АННОТАЦИЯ. Шесть американских филиалов, объединенных в кампусе Образовательного города, обширного образовательного проекта в г. Доха в Катаре, позволяют студентам, не покидая страны, получить североамериканские дипломы по широкому спектру гуманитарных дисциплин, таких как социология, антропология, лингвистика и политология. Среди студентов с Ближнего Востока и из Азии, тем не менее, область свободных искусств и образования не имеет большой популярности. В статье обсуждается исследование проекта Образовательный город, проведенное в Университете Содружества наций Вирджинии в Катаре (УСНКатар), чтобы проследить основные тренды в американской системе обучения письму и литературе, адаптированной для студентов различной национальной принадлежности.

В статье рассматриваются способы достижения катарским филиалом требований основного университета в Ричмонде, Вирджиния. Основное внимание уделено способам поддержки студентов направления дизайна, графики, дизайна интерьера и истории искусств.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Международное отделение, Ближний Восток, обучение письму, учебный план, образование, свободные искусства, Катар.

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DESIGN THINKERS MAKE GOOD WRITERS: EXPLAINING LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM AT AN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS

ABSTRACT. The six American branch campuses in Education City, the multi-varsity project in Doha, Qatar, offer degrees from their North American based home institutions which depend on students fulfilling core requirements in a range of humanities based classes such as sociology, anthropology, literature and political science. For students from the Middle East and Asia, this emphasis on a broadly based liberal arts education, has little resonance or context. This discussion will include a case study from the Education City project from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) to examine how trends in American pedagogy of writing and literature are being modified, translated and adapted for use with a diverse student population.

This article examines the ways the VCUQatar faculty manages the curricular requirements from their main campus in Richmond, Virginia. The discussion focuses on the ways faculty can support students across the majors in fashion, graphic, interior design and art history.

KEYWORDS: International branch campus, Middle East, writing pedagogy, U.S. curriculum, education, liberal arts, Qatar.

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In-country tertiary (college-level) educational offerings for students in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region are highly competitive. The best and brightest students are often awarded scholarships to study at institutions abroad. This causes a different type of brain drain, stratifying a population with access to quality education and preparation for a globalized job market

from their peers who do not have access to these tools. Youth are aware of the necessity of education for modern life; in a recent survey of Arab youth between the ages of 15 and 24, 45% stated that getting a good education is their first priority. At the same time, only 19% of respondents said that their country's education system helped prepare them (or is preparing them) to find a job

(Sabbagh et. al, 2012, pg. 25). Across the MENA countries, a lack of college readiness is often directly connected to applicants' need to improve and hone their writing skills. These problems persist when students are accepted into their first year of university.

College readiness concerns both institutions and students around the world, and universities and colleges in many countries have begun offering courses for high school students and other applicants to develop their skills. University-age students in the Middle East and North Africa lack familiarity with the conventions of academic writing in English. The secondary schooling system in this region focuses on students' performance on yearly exams (Al-Jarrah et. al 2013). Students' experience of writing is as a task through which they report back facts and other information in the same sequence in which they were taught. Problem based and student centered learning are two of the core principles of American style education that are missing from the curriculum of government schools in the region. Reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and practice with synthesizing many sources are all developmental challenges students must meet if they are to be successful in the university class. That they must perform these new, complex tasks in another language makes the demands of English medium universities all the more pressing. Competition for jobs in the private sector means that proficiency in English for academic purposes is essential for future professional aims (Watson, 2009, p. 15).

This article will help faculty, pedagogical trainers, and writing administrators understand the ways in which student perceptions of liberal arts degree requirements affects undergraduate writing at the university level. Much of the discussion focuses on challenges in introducing a new learning style to an international, multilingual group of students at an American branch campus in the Middle East. The analysis centers on student-generated content in response to faculty-created prompts and faculty reflection on student reactions to the curriculum. The intersection of these provides an overview of the rhetorical context of the first year of undergraduate writing and student understanding of the university experience. Primarily using

examples from student work in the writing classroom, and comments from the faculty across the majors, the discussion will offer analysis of writing, prompts, and interviews from a case study based on design majors at an arts university in the Middle East.

Composition scholars have established a scholarly body of work around undergraduate writing. In the last two decades, an increasingly diverse student population has precipitated a matching interest in examining the ways students grapple with the demands of undergraduate curriculum. Educational reform in the countries of the Arabian Gulf, including Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, has led to the establishment of partner universities, linked to home campuses based elsewhere and the adoption of pedagogical practices relatively new to the Middle East classroom (Profanter, 2011, p 1257.). Each of the six American universities in Qatar's Education City (EC) project, which include Weill Cornell Medical College, Georgetown University in Qatar, Texas A & M University in Qatar, Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q), Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMUQatar), and Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar), offer their signature degree programs to a diverse student body from across Asia and the Middle East. While the individual institution's emphasis is on medicine, international relations, engineering, journalism, communication, computer science, business administration or design, respectively, the undergraduate curriculum across these programs shares a common commitment to the liberal arts as part of the undergraduate educational experience. At the core of these courses, comprised of a mixture of mandatory classes that fulfill degree requirements and electives, is a focus on writing and reading. Pessoa et. al, 2014, demonstrated in their longitudinal study of undergraduates at the CMUQatar campus the difficulties multilingual students from government schools have in their transition to the academic writing: "In high school we only wrote 100-250 words in English class. They [the teachers] give you the topic. The students write paragraphs for each topic and each paragraph without thinking" (137). The lack of familiarity with

expressing one's opinion in writing is a foundational element of liberal arts curriculum and a skill that students are asked to demonstrate in a variety of courses from sociology to first year writing.

This discussion analyzes course materials and student work from another American branch campus abroad as a case study to examine the underlying principles of delivering effective writing pedagogy in a complex and multilingual setting. This study is focused on the writing experiences of first year-students enrolled in introductory writing classes at VCUQatar, an American branch campus in the Arabian Gulf state of Qatar. As multilingual undergraduates, these students represent a demographic of learner that will increasingly be seen in American branch campuses around the world and even the diverse population of students in America. They are often high achieving in their secondary settings but do not have access to the same types of pedagogy as mainstream American students.

As a public American university with a broad-based Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum, VCUQatar is well poised to design interventions in this area. All majors at VCUQatar are required to take a required set of three writing courses known as Focused Inquiry and the Writing and Rhetoric Workshop. In the case of Focused Inquiry, these courses are taken in the first year of a student's enrollment at the University and facilitate his or her transition into academic thinking, writing, and study skills. Many Academic Bridge Program (ABP) students, those who have not placed into a university program, take Focused Inquiry (UNIV 111/UNIV 112) as a way to gain experience at the university level and then reapply for a degree program. These students are the demographic for our sample of students with college aspirations but are academically unprepared.

That there is a liberal arts component at all in these degree programs is confusing to students coming from secondary school systems across the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, which view education largely as a transactional rather than formative experience. Students choose their disciplines based on the professions they are advised by family to pursue; such

decisions are generally based on future expected earnings. This view of education as vocational training is often at odds with the specialties and curricular requirements at American universities; this ideological tension is often brought to bear in the writing classroom where faculty have to help students adopt a broader view of their educational pursuits. "They need take writing classes?" is the repeated puzzled refrain from parents and community members when learning about the curricular requirements at VCUQatar. The connection between writing and creative expression is not evident to incoming students who used writing as a way to demonstrate memorization of a sequence of facts or ideas in their secondary settings.

In the case of many students in the Middle East in particular, their oral or presentation skills are much stronger than their writing personas. There are a variety of reasons for this skewed development, not the least of which is that secondary students, particularly in Qatar, are not required to write lengthy papers or essays in high school. The lack of experience with breadth of argument can lead to many initial challenges in the university classroom for the first few years of university. Many of these students benefit from group work or collaborative learning spaces in which groups often self-determine their best writer, to spearhead their projects.

The assumed emphasis on reading and writing skills in upper level classes has also given pause to the administrators and faculty of these various degree programs. Since each university is a slice of life from their home campus—they offer only one or two majors, rather than an entire undergraduate catalog—the focus on the courses in the majors has led to an oversight of the foundational courses which help students develop the key skills necessary for advanced academic discourse. Faculty across the campuses often report that while students are well spoken, given the importance of oral culture regionally, they are often underprepared in their initial years at university. The lack of preparedness in writing disciplines necessitates an underlying emphasis on complex skills such as critical thinking, reading comprehension, and research writing, which are essential in order to succeed in

upper level courses and complete the degree.

The challenges facing faculty and students at International Branch Campuses (IBCs) are numerous and inform the research questions of this study. How can faculty at international branch campuses navigate the complex demands of their home institutions and the needs of their students? In what ways can assignment prompts and design help bridge the gaps between student ability and institutional standards? How can design pedagogy and writing research work together to create more holistic writers and thinkers? A discussion of the challenges and opportunities facing faculty at IBCs is the other significant original material. The implications of American pedagogy in an international setting, a new and emerging field of discovery, are also discussed.

NU-Q, Education City's newest campus, recently instituted a new required two-course sequence for freshmen, during which students explore the conventions of academic writing. Their stated purpose is to use a "low stakes" writing pedagogy to acclimate incoming students to the university classroom and support their development through first person writing assignments, including literacy narratives and memoir. The NU-Q solution to bolstering student writing is a scaffolding approach, meeting students at their incoming writing ability and boosting this through curricular interventions. The message shared at the 2014 faculty training with the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence, was that writing was "everyone's responsibility," the philosophies of Writing in the Disciplines or Writing Across the Curriculum movements were not shared with faculty because of the concern it could trigger negative faculty feedback. The withholding of the terminology but encouragement of the philosophies behind a shared responsibility for writing is one such example of a strategy to meet both students and faculty expectations.

Pessoa, Miller and Kaufer (2014) explain the challenges facing non-American students at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar: "Students describe difficulties understanding the genre expectations and the style of English academic writing" (127). Their four-year longitudinal study explores the literacy development of undergraduates across

the majors at CMUQatar. Their findings reveal that as students gain more skills to navigate the expectations of faculty, particularly with regards to reading and writing, their ability to meet the academic demands increases.

VCUQatar, the oldest campus at Education City, recently celebrated its fifteen-year anniversary. The university offers majors in graphic, interior, and fashion design, as well as painting and printmaking, to students from the Middle East and South Asia. The VCUQatar focus on the liberal arts, inherited from VCU degree requirements, is indicative of standard North American training practices for art programs. The humanities and social science courses present foundational concepts key to the American higher educational experience (Salmon & Gritzer, 1990, p.60). These core curriculum requirements accompany the expectation that students will demonstrate a certain standard of academic writing. What most campuses do not know, however, is how to support the development of writing without the benefit of the full-scale version of their home institutions. Argumentative, analytical writing is one of the most prominent types of writing in university-level courses, and involves selecting facts, and arranging, interpreting, and generalizing across these facts in order to create meaning in various disciplines and genres, depending on the particular course (Eggins et al., 1993). Students in the Middle East are often unfamiliar with these types of assessments and unable to relate these principles to their overall education, particularly in their first year at university.

The broad range of secondary education experiences for incoming students means that their first year at university is a calibrating opportunity; students from scientific schools, government schools, and international schools, with varying levels of English language and knowledge of critical thinking skills, find themselves in a classroom together. The curriculum of VCU main campus offers many instances in which students may focus on their academic skills and writing is one such common focus. The Focused Inquiry sequence, a two-part course taken in the first year, is a requirement in the common core curriculum across the majors. Students often resist this course and others like it, wondering why they

have to take writing courses or read literature; both skills are required in the Focused Inquiry sequence as well as the other six writing intensive courses, which are part of their liberal arts requirements. VCUQatar students are not alone in this "lack of interest" as art students in the liberal arts as Salmon and Gritzer (1990) note in their survey of art students. An ongoing conversation among art educators is how to ensure that both art courses and the social sciences are "meaningfully integrated into the undergraduate education of design students" (Salmon & Grizer, 1992, p.78). In other words, faculty need to strategically think about how to make liberal arts courses these spaces in which students can understand view their education as a complete system rather than vocational preparation.

One of the most interesting aspects of an integrated liberal arts and studies (LAS) core curriculum is the students' reactions to the presentation of writing and textual material. "I don't think as designers we need to read a novel," a student wrote in a course evaluation for Focused Inquiry II after reading a novel as part of the fiction unit. "All of the assignments in this course were valid except for the case study," noted another in response to the Writing in the Workplace unit on case studies. Students' reactions to the intensive writing and reading requirements in these core classes demonstrates their lack of familiarity with the premise of a broad-based liberal arts approach to learning, which is systemic at American universities. The confusion about the relevance of course material is not limited to the writing classes. Students resist the idea that courses like Art History survey are essential to the design process. "Students often try to circumvent the writing process," reports a faculty member in Art History. "She will say, 'Why should I write a description of this object when I can describe it to you?' They don't see writing as a creative or necessary activity." The resistance to writing is because for students, the vocational approach to their education equates creativity with building or the technical skills needed in their design classes. Their under-exposure to critical thinking in reading and writing makes them value these skills less. Therefore writing faculty in the arts educational setting are

most successful when they can mimic the pedagogy students are exposed to in their studio art classes using workshops and drafting to support the development of writing.

Scholars such as Christie (1998) and Columbi (2002) have been studying student writing across the curriculum for decades. The issues facing writing in arts' programs are understudied. Writing in the genres, such as history or sociology, is an established trend in compositions studies. Writing in international settings is even less so, particularly in specific contexts that require ESL learners to perform to the standards of normative tertiary English medium curriculum such as American branch campuses (Stenglin 2001). Text analysis is often the major focus of studies of student writing. However, students' writing does not exist in a vacuum but is highly contextualized within the curriculum. This project is supplemented with ethnographic approaches to documenting growth, development, and maturity in order to obtain a better picture of development that is not only based on textual features but also on mental processes and representations that may not always be visible on paper.

The principal investigator of this project has taught the Focused Inquiry I and II sequence for the past three years at VCUQatar and six sections of Focused Inquiry I course in particular. Experience in this crucial sequence of first year writing includes students from the Academic Bridge Program (ABP), which is a population of students that were not accepted into university but are using the additional to take a few courses at the tertiary level in preparation to apply again. These three years of teaching first year writing to students of Arab background has given the PI in-depth real-time experience teaching a primarily Arab student audience.

Methodology

Many strategies to overcome the liberal arts bias consider how the humanities methodology might be worked into design curriculum (Salmon & Gritzer, 1992, p. 78); this case study of the first year writing courses at VCUQatar approaches the discussion in a novel manner. This discussion relies on explicating samples of student writing in undergraduate writing courses. The analysis includes comparisons of

student's abilities to reflect on their performance in response to a particular assignment prompt.

This study includes a content analysis of the instructional materials used in three years of two foundational writing courses, Focus Inquiry I and Focus Inquiry II, offered to first year students at VCUQatar. These courses were chosen because they represent the initial contact Liberal Arts and Studies Program faculty has with ESL and EFL learners at VCUQatar. The course materials, including syllabus, assignment prompts, guidelines, and feedback on written work were analyzed to measure the degree to which process writing, assignment sequencing, scaffolding, peer review, and writing portfolios allow students opportunities to practice their writing skills prior to the final assessment. The degree to which such methods are used in course material will demonstrate a successful integration of writing theory into the curriculum at VCUQatar. The courses were measured for the degree to which they allowed the iterative stages of process writing for individual assignments.

Three years of documents from Focus Inquiry I and Focus Inquiry II were used for this analysis. Interviews with Art History, Graphic Design, and Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty about their teaching experiences supplement the student reactions to the expectations of the curriculum. Writing samples from sixty students enrolled across ten sections of these courses were assessed. Student writing was analyzed to determine the extent to which they acknowledged the writing assignment and their ability to meet the criteria. Five writing assignment guidelines were used to provide insight into the rhetorical context of the course.

The discussion also provides well-researched recommendations to faculty interested in improving assignment design, as well as writing pedagogy. Our suggestions include strategies for strengthening the incorporation and teaching of argumentative writing into a course, including assessment practices. An analysis of writing samples and assignment guidelines identifies key features of successful academic writing in this setting. The rhetorical properties of student text and the faculty instruction given in the assignment prompt are analyzed. This combination of textual

analysis allows for a much richer understanding of the writing situation in which students are performing.

By utilizing workshop sessions and peer feedback to train students as writers, the writing faculty members at VCUQatar have been able to connect for students their educational experiences in both their design and writing classes.

The main purpose of this investigation is to examine the effects of multinational student perceptions of liberal arts curriculum at an international branch campus. Such a study will offer suggestions for liberal arts faculty around the world who are teaching an increasingly diverse body of students. A sustained look at two specific courses within the first-year writing experience at VCUQatar allows us the opportunity to consider both student and faculty expectations of the learning process and outcomes. The discussion is informed by content analysis of classroom documents, including syllabi, assignment guidelines, and student writing. As such, this is a qualitative consideration of the teaching and learning experience in during students' first year in writing classrooms at VCUQatar.

A Writing Case Study: Focused Inquiry I

These courses are taught with a common syllabus, in conjunction with those offered on the Richmond campus. There are three units: Self/University, the University/Community and Culture/Global Citizenship. These three thematic units have accompanying major assignments, which are three-to-five page final essays and an oral presentation. Other than these requirements and common text in syllabi, the courses reflect the interests of the individual instructor. One key assignment occurs early on, asking students to focus on visual texts. Learning how to read and write about visual texts means that the composition classroom becomes a space where students are grounded in the principles of interpreting and understanding art. Thus, the Writing About Art or Visual Culture assignment is quite flexible; the goal is that students are required to examine and consider the properties of an advertisement, painting, or object and analyze how the parts contribute to the whole. Grounding students in the basics of analyzing visual culture supports their learning in later classes when they will

have to create their own brand, logos, and creative works. Students gain familiarity with analytical concepts through this first assignment and overcome their fear of writing. One student noted, "I was petrified ... especially in the first essay when we had to write about art" ("Personal Development," personal communication, 2013). In such post-assignment reflections, students acknowledge their concerns about their performance. They gather such pieces in their end of semester writing portfolios, which allows a second chance for reflecting on one's progress both within an assignment and across all of the assignments of a course.

Making Artists into Writers: Assignment Sequencing

Focused Inquiry I and II are created with the premise of assignment sequencing in mind. If students are able to pass these courses in sequence, then the ideas of sound writing are reinforced. If they earn lower than a C, then they repeat the course in order to practice the concepts. For each three-to-five page essay in Focused Inquiry, faculty members are encouraged to utilize the workshop approach where students draft their ideas, receive feedback, and then revise for their final version. Three essays, repeated by three essays in Focused Inquiry II, allow students to gain familiarity with the basics of academic prose. Students are cognizant of how these opportunities allow them to develop their skills, as they discuss in their reflection papers:

When I wrote my first essay it was preferred to write more than one draft. Having to write many drafts helped me improve my writing skills. When I thought I was done with an essay, I printed and read it aloud to be able to hear my mistakes ("A Great Achieving Semester," personal communication, 2012).

The drafting process is a way students further define their ideas and document their progress of assignments over the course of the semester. One student reflects on the various stages in the Writing about Art assignment, particularly with her ability to generate thesis statements:

My first attempt of writing a thesis statement was horrifying. ... [the] thesis statement is not valid because it does not mention why it is important. I revised the thesis statement and came up with a

different solution ... it was still incomplete and needed more revision. My thesis statements are still weak; they need to be more specific, and it should have a valid argument, which I am very bad at ("Skill Achievements 1," personal communication, 2013).

By calling attention to writing as a creative, rather than solely academic practice, students are able to make the connections for themselves over the duration of the semester:

As an art student, I found writing as difficult as explaining my paintings. By time, I found that writing can be a better way of expression than talking, because, unlike talking, writing cannot be interrupted. Taking Focused Inquiry II allowed me to understand most of my mistakes in order to improve. I realized that practicing is one of the most important keys to succeed in writing, just like drawing, painting, and even public speaking ("Practice is Key," personal communication, 2012).

The chair of one of the majors remarked to a senior student how impressed he was with her essay application for a competition. "I learned how to write in Focused Inquiry," said the senior who was graduating with a degree in Painting and Printmaking. Her memories of the principles of sound writing still had relevance three years later. She is an example of the type of lasting change such instruction can have on students. This anecdote is also another reason that a sustained longitudinal study of students across the majors at VCUQatar could result in useful findings for faculty across the disciplines.

Scaffolding

While the two parts of Focused Inquiry are designed for first-year students specifically, the other writing courses each have their own role in developing students' writing habits. In a design-themed curriculum, this might be one model of supporting students' writing, particularly those in the ESL or EFL categories. Rather than attempting to "fix" everything at once, spreading out the skills students must attain throughout their education is an example of scaffolding. Writing and Rhetoric Workshop, for example, is the next course for students across the majors and in this course students work towards mastery of research principles. Faculty members are encouraged to use a

formative approach to early assignments and allow students opportunities to demonstrate competency.

The next course in the sequence, Textual Analysis, offers a variety of electives, including analysis of poetry, film, or novels, and affords students opportunity to work with specific types of text in a concentrated way. The penultimate writing course for graphic and interior design majors, which also counts as a LA elective for fashion design, is known as Writing in the Workplace. This course features workplace style issues students may encounter as professionals. It included the standard cover letter and resume, but students also engage in creating Case Studies on ethical or communication dilemmas, as well as Consultant Teams where they design interventions for industry clients with contemporary problems. Such assignments help students make connections between classwork and the need for writing skills in their future professional lives.

Peer Assessment

Peer review can add value and present challenges in any writing classroom; both are even more pronounced in a room with EFL and ESL learners (Topping, 1998, p. 250). Peer feedback in an art and design environment, however, is different because of the amount of time students spend in their studio classes giving and receiving critique in groups. Guided by faculty, students spend the majority of time in their majors drafting pieces, demonstrating them, receiving feedback, and utilizing it, either revising or building it into their next project. These skills help them to consider client needs, whether a hotel chain, marketing department, or fashion icon. This consideration of the client is an example of audience awareness; the need to adapt and reconfigure for the needs of the audience, and the role of the peer in guiding one towards those realizations is similar to the peer feedback and audience awareness required in peer review workshops in their writing class. Focused Inquiry I makes use of these common formative practices to improve student learning by treating each assignment as an iterative practice so students can maximize their success. Through peer feedback, students are engaged in making meaning of their texts

and those of their classmates rather than relying on the professor as the authority figure— another dynamic that is carried over from their design courses (Topping, 1998, p. 256). A student's reflection on the various ways peer review helps her as a writer outlines the effectiveness of this method in Focused Inquiry I:

Before handing in our paper, we are obligated to participate in peer review workshops instructed by our professor. Peer review allows me to see the wider view of perspective than my own. It is an active participation that the whole class has to join ("Improving My Writing Skills as an Artist," personal communication, 2013).

She also acknowledges her active role in the peer review process of giving as well as receiving feedback. This is the type of connection peer review and writing process pedagogy makes possible for students in courses outside their major:

Not only it is beneficial for my peer to get criticisms from someone else, it also a test for myself to identify all the flaws in my peer's essay. It is a good practice to be conscious of other people's mistakes in order to not do the same. In conclusion, evaluating each other's writings involves pointing out problems and complimenting strengths, which increases confidence ("Improving My Writing Skills as an Artist," personal communication, 2013).

Peer review workshops are essential tools for students to receive feedback, test their ideas, and improve their arguments. The draft stage is important for non-native speakers of English as peer feedback helps them clarify the key concepts in their papers. For design majors at VCUQatar, the peer draft workshop mimics the critique stage for work in classes in their majors. Using a workshop in a writing class helps make thematic curricular connections between writing and other creative disciplines. Faculty can help students overcome their confusion by highlighting writing as a multi-stage process much like the approach to design materials.

Writing Portfolios and Self-Assessment

The writing portfolio is a well-established method of assessment (L. Fernsten & J. Fernsten, 2006, p. 309) and (Kicken, Brand-Gruwel, Merriënboer, & Slot, 2009, p. 472). When used across curriculum or to standardize

performance, the portfolio model needs contextualization (Elbow, 1994, p. 45). In the defined space of Focused Inquiry I and II, however, the final writing portfolio allows students to archive, reflect, and assess their work, which is the essence of student learning and the role of such an assignment (Jensen 2010). In asking students to present and consider their writing activities, the portfolio assignment "redistributes power to students" (Jensen, 2010, p.96) by making them authorities of their own texts.

For design majors, the writing portfolio is another means to create resonance with the work they are engaging in their majors. In their design courses, students assess, prepare, and present overviews of their work, whether over a semester or several courses in their major. Allowing opportunities to gauge the development of their writing identity is an important way of equalizing their liberal arts experience with their degree-related work. Gathering, organizing and categorizing their various writing pieces is an important rhetorical exercise for students and final step in the course in self-directed learning (Kicken, Brand-Gruwel, Merriënboer, & Slot, 2009, p. 455).

An important aspect of the portfolio is the cover letter assignment in which students are asked to consider their development as writers over the course of the semester. This opportunity for self-assessment is as significant in their learning as peer feedback (L. Fernsten & J. Fernsten, 2006, p. 306); they are weighing their strengths, areas for growth, and measures of progress. Students can demonstrate an understanding of the role of the course in their development both as writers and artists. Such commentary is counter to the verbal exchanges they often have with faculty. "Students often prioritize classes in their major rather than those in general education," one instructor shared. "They will come in and say 'I'm not coming to class today because I have a project due in Interior Design.'" The prioritization of design related classes is an example of students' lack of acknowledgement of how liberal arts courses such as literature and writing could inform their practice as artists.

Other barriers to the student engagement in the general education curriculum include cultural ideas about

the purpose of education for Qatari women. "A student once told me that she eventually 'will be married and have children'," a faculty interviewee who teaches in Graphic Design recounted. "I shouldn't push her so hard in the course because the degree was not going to be used in the workforce." The social expectation for female Qatari students, approximately 80% of the enrollment at VCUQatar, to be married after university and use their education chiefly as mothers raising the next generation of citizens. The fertility rate for married Qatari women is high, as most women have 5 children and are married by 23, many of them while enrolled in university (El Guindi 2012, 551). "Yes, students tell me all the time their degree won't be used after marriage," confirmed another faculty member in the Art History department. Familial expectations for women tend towards martial responsibilities superseding professional goals. Such social expectations neutralize many of the motivational techniques used by faculty to galvanize students towards high wages or prestigious jobs. "Many of these students don't need to work," another faculty participant said, referring to the high degree of affluence of the Qatari students. "So the rationale of good grades to secure a good job does not work." In absence of the traditional motivation techniques, for employment, the liberal arts faculty has to find alternate ways to make meaning in the curriculum for their students. Often this comes through selecting texts and materials that are related to the Middle East region or contemporary themes, such as women's issues, that students will find engaging.

Some students do make meaning for themselves during the writing process itself, as they are asked to reflect on their writing as a body of work: one first year student reflected, "The most common misconception that students believe is that they no longer need to write once they have entered a fine art and design institution" ("Improving My Writing Skills as an Artist," personal communication, 2013). Students with well-established writing practices also identify self-assessment as key to further development: "My writing this semester has been very consistent. With my essays, I have been able to articulate good arguments and write stronger papers. However, in order for my writing

to advance, my self-editing skills need to improve" ("Semester Self Evaluation 1," personal communication, 2011).

Portfolios have been used by faculty in Focused Inquiry I, II, and the Writing and Rhetoric Workshop to help students reflect on their progress as writers over the course of the semester. The portfolio cover letter offers them a chance to present an overview of their identity and development as writers. Students are asked in their cover essay to "reflect conceptually on the class, your writing, and your learning" (Rajakumar, personal communication, April 2013). This invitation to digest one's experiences is essential for students who are learning confidence in establishing their voice as artists; both design and writing are linked. Students' reflections in their cover letters are revealing; they explore their position compared to perceived skills at the start of the semester: "At first I found difficulty in writing formally" ("A Great Achieving Semester," personal communication, 2012). They make arguments about their ability to improve. As one student reflects, "I truly believe that the difficulties I faced is why I improved. Without knowing my mistakes, how else would I know what to fix?" ("Personal Development," personal communication, November 15, 2013).

Discussion

This research offers overviews of the implications for teaching undergraduate writing in international settings, in particular recommendations for faculty teaching writing intensive courses. The traditional methods of iterative writing practice resound with the stages of the design process. Writing, drafting, giving and receiving feedback, and revising are key elements of the composition process that are even more crucial for second language learners. What this project has revealed is that liberal arts curriculum can be strengthened if faculty work together across the disciplines to explicitly reference these similarities to students.

In the instance of VCUQatar, this has meant that writing faculty meets and discusses the challenges faced by other faculty with writing intensive courses, namely those in the Art History major. While at the time of publication, these discussions are in the early stages, there are future plans and possibilities for a co-taught course or for faculty members to

work together in designing and delivering their courses to reiterate core writing principles to students. Together they can echo for students the foundational principle that writing, like design or the creative arts, is a process based activity: the creation and implementation of low stakes writing allows students to break down major formal assignments, such as research papers, into successive steps.

Another instance of faculty sharing knowledge is the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) seminar held for faculty across the six Education City branch campuses. Led by writing faculty from Texas A and M University in Qatar and VCUQatar, the day long seminar offered participants suggestions, examples, and exercises created around syllabus and course design that could boost process writing methodologies. The WID seminar provided an overview of the research behind writing as learning pedagogy that helped faculty participants create a plan to incorporate practice, feedback, and progression into their syllabi. These types of professional development opportunities are essential for faculty to build networks of collaboration.

Students improve the most when faculty members are explicit in their assignment design and prompts as to their evaluation or assessment criteria. Faculty prompts greatly influence student writing and can help frame the results.

Students also need faculty to make connections for them across the curriculum of shared writing skills and tasks. Often faculty are not aware of the nature of the assignments that they assign; many primary sources, for example, require students to demonstrate an ability to juggle multiple voices at once, a skill they may not have been taught.

While students do demonstrate learning over a prolonged period, from the first year to their third, for example, faculty can shorten or accelerate this learning period by being more explicit in their writing prompts. Through samples, gathered as rhetorical artifacts, we can see how the language of prompts and other documents, such as syllabi are essential in guiding students as they create responses to their assignments. In their reflective writing, students can express realizations on their own about

the interconnected nature of their courses. But such acknowledgements were not true of all students. For ESL students, the challenges of performing in their second or third language, English, are compounded by other situational factors, including their motivation, adaptability, and utilization of campus resources, including the professor's office hours or Writing Center services. For many students in this case study, the difference between success and frustration was attributed to the degree to which they could successfully meet the demands of the writing tasks they were assigned. This type of analysis shows how students who begin to grasp the fundamentals of argumentative writing structure can understand their rhetorical functions in other classes. In so doing, we advocate for more situated studies such as this one.

Allies on Campus

In class, writing instruction is of vital importance to student development. There are also two other resource areas that have been major supporters of good writing pedagogy at VCUQatar: the library and the Writing Center. Both are academic services typically available at most American universities; the degree to which they are integrated into the writing courses can supplement the overall support available to students in their long-term writing development.

The VCUQatar University library is staffed with research librarians who are assigned to the various departments; because of the large number of Focused Inquiry classes, there are several librarians, in addition to the LAS designate, who are paired with faculty members to offer information literacy sessions. These sessions are a two-part series, which take approximately three hours, or two class periods. The librarian works with the faculty member to cover skills relevant to the final research essay assignment, then presents the following in class: finding and evaluating credible sources, paraphrasing, and citing. This allows students to receive information from more than one knowledgeable source, and establish a relationship with the library staff. The diversification of teaching this material helps support the faculty member as well as the students and the librarian. This 360-degree collaboration is one of the clearest examples of the ways in which writing courses can engage other parts of the

institution to support the mission of developing holistic writers.

The second major support system for first-year writing courses at VCUQatar is the Writing Center (WC). The center boasts two full-time and one part-time trained staff members who are available to meet with students in a one-on-one appointment, either pre-booked or walk-in. The WC also affords an excellent peer tutoring system, which has tremendous success when the tutors and staff have been furnished with the assignment guidelines and rubrics ahead of time. Faculty collaboration with the writing center includes requiring certain students to attend sessions in the WC if they need additional support for a particular assignment. In many instances, the peer tutors are students who remember taking Focused Inquiry or another class for which they are working with a tutee; their position as learners can help decode assignments for their tutees. This is a learning circle where both sets of students, the peer tutors and their peers, are reinforced in good practice through their work together.

Allies in the Classroom

Given the intimate nature of the VCUQatar community, with less than 100 faculty members, many of the collaborative connections between faculty result in cross-pollination in the classroom. For example, in the Design Internship course, the design professor invited a member of the LAS faculty to talk to students about cover letters and resumes; sharing class time and providing resource support to colleagues is an advantage of this approach, sending the message to students that these skills are multi-disciplinary and integrated across the curriculum. These kinds of initiatives could be more widely implemented at universities with more administrative support.

Another example of a focused writing course is Writing in the Workplace, in the Client Consultancy unit. Design faculty members participated as clients in the fall of 2014, by offering a problem as a client project, which students could bid for. This assignment, designed to simulate a design firm's competitive pitching and bid award, is perhaps the clearest example of drafting, revision, and polishing. Students formed teams, which simulated their own consultant companies, complete with name, vision,

mission and logo, as they would if they were creating products in any of their design classes. Once teams assembled, they all participated in a bid day, in which clients presented real-world scenarios. Both corporate entities, such as Vodafone, and faculty member exhibits were presented to the student teams, who chose two projects to bid on. The client then awarded each team with the winning bid work on executing their proposed solution. The Client Consultancy Unit is one of the most exciting aspects of the Writing in the Workplace course because students see how writing is connected to their professional experiences.

The introduction of Art Education in this course was another example of integrating writing within the arts curriculum. Working in teams, students were asked to consider the needs of various stakeholders of the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. Students were asked develop a training module in the basics of art appreciation to implement for the guards of the museum. In teams, they interviewed security guards and janitorial staff to assess their language abilities, interests, and previous experience with art. This assignment required students to synthesize their general knowledge about art appreciation for a specific audience in an iterative process. They created a prototype, which was then demonstrated to their target audience. Based on feedback, the groups revised their documents, which included a range of brochures, pamphlets, flashcards, and other print materials. The course had mostly juniors and seniors and is usually taken in their last year of study; Art Education is the final unit in this course and one of the strongest examples of bringing together art curriculum and writing pedagogy.

Art History

During the course of this investigation, faculty members of the newly added art history major at VCUQatar raised the common challenge of covering material while accommodating writing pedagogy in a discipline specific course. "I can't get through my material, let alone deal with their writing issues," faculty said in discussions. This content dilemma is familiar to Writing in the Disciplines proponents; instructors who are under pressure to get through material will not

make time for tasks they feel students should have gained in their writing courses. Faculty members are supportive of the emphasis on writing in required courses, which is similar to the support of art faculty of the liberal arts (Salmon & Gritzer, 1990, p. 70).

Several discussions about the level of students' writing led to a collaboration between LAS and Art History faculty; they suggested pairing the foundational survey courses of art history required for all students regardless of major, with the two sequences of Focused Inquiry. This idea was met with some resistance by LAS faculty who felt that a skills-based approach to a writing course downgraded the LAS offerings. "We are not a 'fix-it' shop," a faculty member exclaimed during a department meeting when the idea of a paired teaching approach was raised. "We have our content areas too," someone retorted. The idea stalled at the level of gaining departmental support. While the faculty members originally engaged by the idea were assigned to other courses, those with the potential to pair the survey course of Art History and Focused Inquiry lacked direction about how to do so. There is potential to revive such an idea, but it will take a more concerted effort from the chairs of the collaborating departments. This example of the start and stop nature of collaborative projects across the disciplines demonstrates that the responsibility of teaching writing is still a contentious one between faculty of various disciplines.

Designers and Citations

One of the debates at VCUQatar regarded standardization of citation style across the curriculum; many were advocates of this approach and in favor of using the Chicago Style Manual. Students who were presented with a variety of style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, might benefit from this consistency. When the LAS faculty explored this issue further, the discussions revealed that faculty members across the majors were unsure of citation style requirements, since they were not required in their specific disciplines. The idea of a campus-wide citation style is still under discussion, but is one example of how the Qatar campus can see and address curricular issues in a much more flexible manner than a larger campus with more stakeholders and programs.

Allies Across Campuses

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Education City (EC) project is the proximity of so many well-established academic programs to one another. The benefit of this is that there is a knowledge-sharing entity that can work in a myriad of ways. TAMU at Qatar organized a "Writing in the Disciplines" faculty workshop for a liberal-arts-themed conference. The seminar was designed to support faculty at the EC branch campuses and other educational institutions in Qatar to assist in syllabus development and assignment design to more effectively utilize writing pedagogy in the disciplines. These types of efforts bring together professional WC staff, faculty, and trainers to share best practices. Discussion included sharing of assignment design and assessment practices, as well as broad principles related to Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines practices. Participants included directors of writing centers as well as writing faculty.

Future Possibilities

The growth of Arabian Gulf economies means that the expansion in higher education is likely to continue. As more students enroll in institutions like the branch campuses in Qatar's Education City and the universities mature in their programmatic initiatives, there will be more opportunities for collaboration across the curriculum. Future areas for curricular development, specifically in the area of writing pedagogy, include interdisciplinary

courses in the vein of Writing Across the Curriculum or Writing in the Disciplines. Faculty members who are interested in these sorts of initiatives will need institutional support in order to implement them. Centers of Teaching Excellence or Writing Programs are examples of other ways institutions could formalize their support for a cross-pollination of writing practices.

Other interesting possibilities for collaboration through curriculum are the cross-registered or co-taught classes within the EC branch campuses. Students are able to enroll in certain electives across the six programs, which mimics a much broader set of course offerings typical of a larger university. As faculty become aware of research interests and courses, they will be able to continue to share resources, knowledge, and perhaps eventually teaching space. While co-taught classes are currently offered by faculty from the same institution, sharing faculty as multidisciplinary experts across programs would be an asset to building a holistic curriculum, boosting students' academic skills, and creating the mega-campus that is the core of the EC project.

Finally, a center for teaching excellence or research would be an essential addition to such multi-branch campuses where faculty members can receive support in addressing context specific problems, such as teaching writing to new populations of learners.

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