

Final Report on Grant Activity

Professional Development Grant in Distance Learning and Instructional Technology

For the period June , 2005 to May 31, 2006

Submitted by Eleanor Kutz, Principal Investigator (with participants Christian Pulver, Judith Goleman)
May 31, 2006

Our midterm report on January 31st included the following information about a shift in focus.

Our original proposal focused on adding substantial assessment capabilities to the program and class website we had developed for Freshman English at UMB (www.freshman.umb.edu), and we had consulted with IT staff before submitting the proposal to be certain that they could support us in what we proposed. However, due to shifts in IT staffing and new demands on the contract staff at UMB over the summer and the fall, it was not possible to get support for all of the database work, linked to assessment, that we originally proposed. Therefore, as confirmed in conversation with Mark Schlesinger, we redefined our original project: We did some of the originally projected work on assessment and made some important adjustments to the existing database. However, we have shifted much of our original focus to designing a new website, linked to a new server, to support all of the English department's courses past freshman English, and to providing training for department faculty in using these interactive course sites in their teaching.

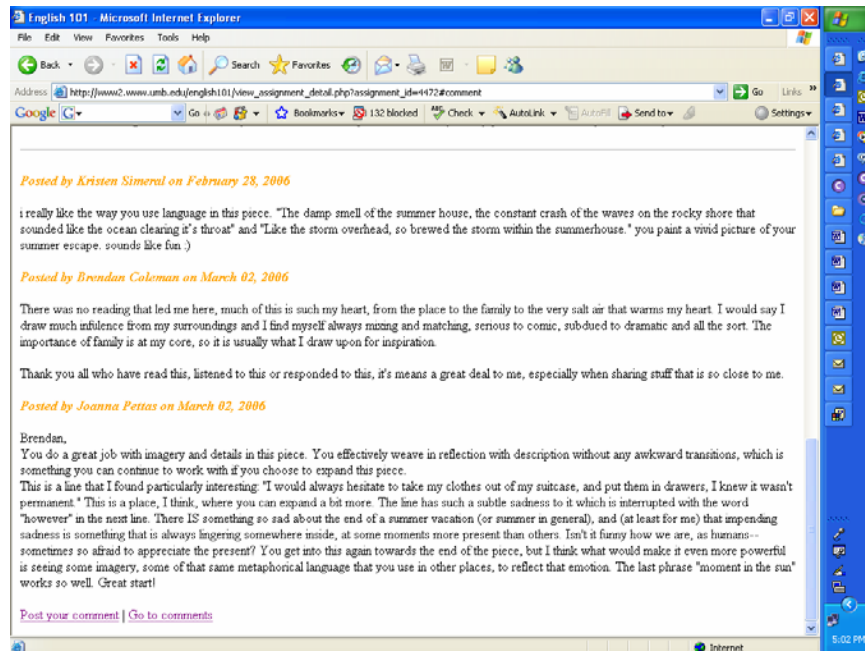
This final report reflects work on the extension of the original project to a new site and on original project deliverables.

- A new website, available for all English courses at UMB, is online for the Spring 2006 semester at www.litandwriting.umb.edu. The site includes an entry page listing all courses with links to individual section pages for each course, and links to an interactive database allowing all students in a section to post their own work and post comments on each others' work.

We have proposed further extension of this website platform to General Education Seminars in 2006-07. Judy Boggess, Director of Educational Technology, has agreed to fund this initiative and the directors of the Freshman and Intermediate Seminars (Taylor Stoehr, Judith Zeitlin) support it.

- Section-based, password protected, e-portfolios of student work with linked peer comments, accessible also as a class portfolio by assignment (initial design imbedded in the original website).

We further developed the student portfolio function, allowing students not only to post their work but to then remove work that they want to replace or that they do not want to keep in a final portfolio. We have been working with a UMB committee that is studying e-portfolio options for the campus and hope that students will be able to carry their class portfolios over into e-portfolios that will accompany them throughout their UMB careers. Christian Pulver will continue to work with both the portfolio project and the English site in 2005-06.

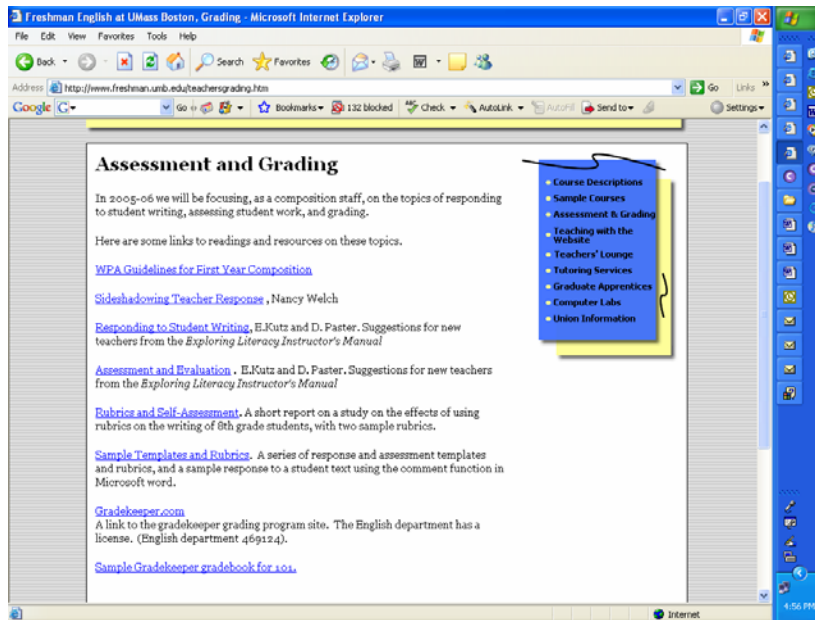


- Tools offering guidance in e-feedback and in self-assessment, including on-line models to be used within each section for the development of class-generated and assignment-specific guiding questions and rubrics; self and course assessment tools. Online guidance in using these tools.

We created a teacher-focused assessment site, accessible from the For Teachers link from main Freshman Writing Program page. This site provides staff-generated material on approaches to assessment and grading within the program, shared criteria for successful student writing at each course level, samples of student writing that meet the criteria for particular grades, and examples of how students and teachers might respond to those examples using the web-based assessment tools available on the site. We created assessment pages within the teacher's section of the original Freshman English site with models for template and rubrics, but we were unable to get support for developing a new data-base to make these tools interactive. We developed substantial material for teacher's resource pages for responding to student writing, assessment, using templates and rubrics.

We did further work on the comment function for the websites, so that the paper on which students and teachers are providing peer comments appears in a separate window, allowing them to more easily move between paper and comments.

We held meetings with Freshman English staff throughout 2005-06 to discuss approaches to and philosophies of responding to and assessing student writing, and offered relevant resources on this site.



- Further faculty development through instructional workshops and one-on-one support in teaching with the website and working with the assessment tools it will offer.

We took on significant new faculty development in creating a new website for all English department courses and offering workshops and one-on-one support for new faculty users. We also offered a demonstration and introductory workshops for General Education Seminar faculty who will be using the site in 2006-07.

- Documentation for administering these features of the website and maintaining and updating the data-base.

We have continued to prepare new documentation as we refine and update the websites. A link to a document “Teaching with the Website” appears on the teacher’s pages of the Freshman English site and on the bottom of the entry page to the English Litandwriting site.

- Outreach to a wider community across campus through linkage with paired general education sections and to community colleges through an existing Urban Collaborative network and through the ongoing placement of UMB-prepared teachers of composition in community college teaching positions.

We continue to provide outreach, focusing on the enhancements to pedagogical practice afforded by the specific capacities of this website design. In 2005-06, the site was demonstrated for the CIT faculty seminar and for the full English department faculty, a presentation on the pedagogical impact of using the website for responding and assessment was made at the CIT Teaching for Transformation Conference (January 20, 2006).

We were also involved in a system-wide collaboration to organize a conference on Writing and Technology at UMass/Amherst in April 2006. The principals for this grant presented a session on the implications of the website work at that conference. Another presentation was made at the College Composition and Communication Conference in March 2006. As a result of this outreach, we have provided technical assistance to other institutions (one of our feeder schools, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, and the Higher Education Opportunities Program at NYU) that are building on this model.