A New Approach to Remedial Communications at Seneca

by Kiley Bolton, Jean Choi, Danielle Mercier, Claire Moane, John Stilla, and Maxine Britto

in the December 2018 issue

In Fall 2018, the Schools of English and Liberal Studies (FCET, KG, MK, NH, S@Y) across Seneca began exploring various models of communications remediation. As with the development of the new COM101 course, a working group of faculty and chairs representing the two full-time and the part-time ELS schools was formed in October 2018 to explore different models that support students who place into remedial and developmental courses originally designed to support EAC150 (i.e., EAC149, EAP300, EAP500). This group, the Foundations Working Group, also includes colleagues from the English Language Institute. The mandate of this working group is to research and develop an evidence-based remedial or "foundations" model that Seneca can adopt and implement in Fall 2019 to support learners who require additional supports to complete COM101.

The first task for the working group was to review the research literature to identify evidence-based models of remediation. The completed literature review and meeting minutes are posted on the English and Liberal Studies Committee LMS.

The importance of strong communication skills in the workplace is evident across the research literature. Roessingh and Douglass (2012) note that even students who graduate from a program of study "may have difficulties transitioning to the workplace and securing the jobs they have worked hard and long to prepare for" due to weak communication skills. Given this, Seneca is looking at models of remediation that support the development of communication skills. It is noteworthy to see that, in recent years, there have been a number of policy changes that have led to large-scale shifts to remediation education at the post-secondary level in the United States (e.g., Bers, 2018; Jenkins, Speroni, Belfield, Jaggers, & Edgecombe, 2010).

The literature points to three main approaches to remediation:

1. focus on skills before entering college

2. co-requisite models
3. contextualized support

Of these three approaches, the research suggests the co-requisite model is the most effective. The most successful models "provide clear opportunities for students to remain on a pathway to reaching their college goals rather than becoming mired in years of remedial work" (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011, p.1). The co-requisite model comprises students enrolled in remedial and college-level courses concurrently. This approach was developed and assessed by the Community College of Baltimore with almost 150 other community colleges adopting their model (Jenkins et al., 2010). Results of the research evaluating these models suggest that there are higher pass rates in developmental and subsequent college-level courses and higher rates of student persistence. As a result of this promising research, the Foundations Working Group is now exploring a co-requisite model that will support our students and is feasible at Seneca.

In order to provide opportunities for face-to-face discussions, the working group and the SELS chairs will be holding open faculty meetings in early January 2019 at Newnham, Seneca@York, and King campuses. Faculty and staff are invited and encouraged to share their suggestions at these meetings. If you have specific questions about how the new model could impact your program or service area, please connect with the SELS Chairs, Kiley Bolton, or Jean Choi.

COM101: Research Update
Our COM101 research project is well underway. Data collection from the COM101 addenda is in process, and the first phase of the faculty survey was completed in October 2018. The second phase of the faculty survey will be distributed in early December 2018. Faculty currently teaching COM101 are encouraged to participate. In addition, plans are in process to disseminate surveys in Winter 2019 to students who have completed COM101 to gain a better understanding of their experience in the course. We are also planning to develop a survey for program areas so that they can provide their perspectives. The findings of the research will enable us to incorporate your feedback and your students' feedback into COM101 in the spirit of continuous improvement.

References

Bers, T. H., (2018). Improving student progress and completion of developmental English. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2018* (182), 11-19.

Jenkins, D., Speroni, C., Belfield, C., Jaggars, S. S., & Edgecombe, N. (2010). A model for accelerating academic success of community college remedial English students: Is

the accelerated learning program (ALP) effective and affordable? Community College Research Centre. Teachers College, Columbia University.

Roessingh, H., & Douglas, S. R. (2012). Educational outcomes of English language learners at university. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 42* (1), 80.

Rutschow, E. Z., & Schneider, E. (2011). *Unlocking the gate: What we know about improving developmental education.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

View the December 2018 issue of the Academic Newsletter.

December 2018 issue

tags : communication-courses, december-2018