

Center for Academic Excellence

Dalton State College
A Division of the Office
of Academic Affairs

Special points of interest in this issue

- Upcoming activities and programs, pages 2–4
- Tenure and Promotion Workshop, page 4
- Open Classroom Initiative, page 5
- Faculty Development from University System Office, page 6
- Resources and Publishing, page 7
- Audio Feedback: A Tool for Student Engagement and Success, page 8
- Promoting Undergraduate Research: An Exploration of Student Misconceptions, Concerns, and Motivations, page 18
- Submission Guidelines, page 23



Journal for Academic Excellence

WELCOME TO RETURNING AND NEW FACULTY

The *Journal for Academic Excellence* sends out a big, hearty “welcome back” to returning faculty who may have been away during the summer, to those who took a couple of weeks off after summer school, and especially to new faculty. The *Journal for Academic Excellence* is the official publication of Dalton State’s Center for Academic Excellence. The Center’s mission, as found on its webpage, is

to facilitate, support, and enhance the teaching and learning process at Dalton State College. The Center serves to ultimately improve student success and achievement of learning outcomes by promoting the creation of effective learning environments through the provision of resources and faculty development opportunities.

The Center and the *Journal* exist to help you build upon your teaching skills and knowledge. However, both entities depend on faculty as well. The *Journal* is a refereed publication of articles on college teaching, adult learning, and higher education issues that affect teaching. You can find past issues in the archives on the *Journal’s* [website](#) to see the variety of articles we have published. You can also find the submission guidelines on the last page of the *Journal*. New and returning faculty are invited to

volunteer as reviewers as well.

Although the *Journal* is open to faculty members from other institutions, it draws most of its articles from Dalton State faculty. This issue contains two examples of the fine work of our faculty in engaging students in scholarship and conference attendance and in using technology to provide audio feedback on written assignments. Both are applicable across disciplines, another goal of the articles in the *Journal*.

The *Journal* also serves as a bimonthly newsletter about activities provided by the Center for Academic Excellence, as a clearinghouse for information about other conferences on teaching and learning, and as a forum for college teaching issues.

If you are new to Dalton State, you have been introduced in the last week or so to the Center for Academic Excellence; if you have been around a while, you may have known about the Center but not taken advantage of all it offers. Please check out pages 2 through 7 for the current planned activities, and follow updates about further programs for this semester. Also, Dalton State hosts a well attended conference on college teaching during spring semester, which may be an excellent opportunity for you to share your research.

As the director of the Center for Academic Excellence, I am pleased to officially welcome everyone back from summer! We've got a lot of great events and programs in store for you this Fall semester. We're very excited to continue the "Caught in the Act of Great Teaching" award. Be on the lookout for a new and improved nomination process this month.

Another great program we are rolling out this semester is the Open Classroom Initiative (details on page 5). The idea is that teachers can open their classrooms to showcase the great teaching that is going on around campus. If you are interested in participating, either by opening your classroom or by observing a class, please contact me and provide the information listed in the description of the Open Classroom Initiative program.

In addition to these two programs, we will be hosting three book groups and several workshops and webinars. If you have any specific topics or ideas for workshops please don't hesitate to contact me.

Here's to a great semester!



Dr. Katie Pridemore
Director, Center for Academic Excellence

SAVE THE DATE
**Fifth Annual DSC Teaching
and Learning Conference**
Friday, March 14, 2014

WHAT'S COMING?



Full SafeZone Training

Friday, October 11, 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Location: Liberal Arts 201

Refresher Session for SafeZone Training

Wednesday, October 9, 12:15-1:15 P.M.

Location: Memorial 119

Fall 2013 BOOK GROUPS

Team-based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching

Larry Michaelsen, Arletta Bauman-Knight, and Dee Fink ([Click here for Amazon info](#))

The Art of Lecturing: A Practical Guide to Successful University Lectures and Business Presentations

Parham Aarabi ([Click here for Amazon info](#))

Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do

Claude M. Steele ([Click here for Amazon info](#))

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO LEAD BOOK GROUPS

Responsibilities of Book Group Leaders

- Meet as a group during the first week or two of the semester to look over the book and set up a clear plan of action for the book group
- Lead book group sessions as determined by your plan of action

Contact Katie Pridemore at kpridemore@daltonstate.edu to volunteer

WHAT'S COMING?



Workshop on Using Turnitin

Presenter: Dr. Jenny Crisp

Date: Tuesday, August 27 **Time:** 2:00-3:00

Location: Memorial 130

Repeated Session: Wednesday, August 28,
2:00-3:00, Liberal Arts 201

Details: Dalton State College (and now, the USG as a whole) has a license for the Turnitin.com service, and it's much more than a plagiarism checker. It can be set so students can use it to check drafts, which is very helpful as they learn to use research correctly; the service also has a linked automated writing evaluation that helps with grammar much more effectively than Microsoft Word and that serves as a teaching tool because it explains grammar issues to students and offers links to websites to find out more.

It also allows online peer editing which can be graded or not; instructors can write guiding questions for peers to answer or can choose from a broad library of questions the service provides. It's also possible to assign partners, allow students to choose partners, or have the computer assign them randomly.

The service also provides an easy grading option, though one does need Internet access. There are sets of pre-made marks instructors can choose from (these have explanations and links, too) or instructors can make their own. Faculty members can write comments, highlight, strikeout, etc. There's a good audio feedback option, and now there's a new app which allows grading from an iPad both, online and off.

And, of course, it's the industry standard in plagiarism detection.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Workshops on Tenure and Promotion

**For Faculty Pursuing Tenure and Promotion
this Academic Year**

Presenter: Dr. Celeste Humphrey

Date: Friday, August 30

Time: 1:00-3:00 P.M.

Location: LIA 204

Details: This will be the first annual workshop on how to put together your Promotion and Tenure notebook. We will have samples from successful notebooks and detailed instructions on what constitutes "corroboration." Topics of discussion will include how long the notebooks need to be and what is meant by a narrative, as well as other relevant issues. Participants should bring what they already have and the facilitators will go over the materials with them. This workshop is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED FOR PEOPLE APPLYING FOR THE FIRST TIME AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT APPLIED IN THE LAST 4 YEARS** and who are applying for promotion and /or tenure this year. There will also be a few spaces for faculty who just want to know "what's up." We will fill those slots on a first-come, first-served basis. People who wish to attend the workshop should please get in touch with Celeste Humphrey AND [register here](#) for the session.

A similar session will be held for

New Faculty on

Friday, October 25 at 3:00-4:00

Location TBA

Open Classroom Initiative

Information needed to register a class as an “Open Classroom”

Name:
 Email:
 Course Name:
 Course Number:
 Meeting Days & Times:
 Meeting Location:
 General topics discussed in course:
 General teaching style and/or methods used in classroom:



General guidelines for observers and observees:

Tips for observers

- 1 Contact the instructor ahead of time. This is not only polite, it lets the instructor expect your arrival allowing them to get over the ‘shock’ of having a colleague show up for their course.
- 2 Remember, this is not ‘your’ course and may not be conducted in ‘your’ teaching style. This is an opportunity to learn, not criticize. Not all instructors teach the same way nor can courses in different disciplines be taught the same way given disciplinary differences.
- 3 Refrain from asking too many questions during the class. Remember, this course is for the students. Do not take away from their time.
- 4 Be willing to meet with the instructor afterwards to discuss your observations. Remember to critique without being too critical. There is always some bias as to the proper teaching method. Discuss ways to improve teaching for yourself and for the instructor who was observed.

Tips for those being observed

- 1 Be willing to meet with the observer ahead of time to discuss the topic/theme of that day’s lecture. If meeting is not possible, at the very least, email them a short description of that day’s lecture topic.
- 2 The class should be a typical class. Do not adjust the course for the special visit from the observer.
- 3 Inform the students ahead of time that someone will be visiting to observe the course.
- 4 Be willing to meet the observer afterwards to discuss their observations. They are going to critique your class. Be willing to recognize that there is some bias as to proper teaching methods. Do not get stuck in trying to defend a teaching style. Instead, be willing to discuss your methods in an open and receptive way.



University System of Georgia
Creating A More Educated Georgia

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OFFICE

The USG Office of Faculty Development has scheduled a series of faculty development webinars this year that we believe will appeal to a broad spectrum of faculty interests. The majority of these sessions are conducted by USG faculty members who, like you, are using new, different and exciting strategies for teaching and learning. We invite you to attend online, listen, and share your thoughts. In turn, if you have ideas that you would like to share, please contact Ginger Durham at ginger.durham@usg.edu as we are always looking for presenters.

Sessions this year are to be offered solely online. Our office works closely with the Digital Innovation Group from Georgia College and State University to make each session a valuable experience for you. Registration is now open for the Fall Semester only. Later in the Fall Semester, we will open registration for the Spring Semester webinars.

Registration for the series can be found on this [USG OFD](#) page. To access previous year's sessions, please go to <http://itunes.usg.edu/>.

Once again this year we will be sponsoring our Teaching and Learning Conference. The Conference is scheduled for April 17 and 18, 2014, at the University of Georgia Hotel and Conference Center in Athens. More information will be forthcoming at a later date.

Publication Opportunity

International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

<http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/>

Submission guidelines at <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/guidelines.cfm>

What they want:

Research Articles: Research articles include 15-25 page manuscripts (approximately 4,000 - 7,000 words) that are theoretical or empirical in nature. Research articles are to be well grounded in the relevant literature and present knowledge, methods, and insights relevant to higher education pedagogy. The broad scope of the journal and its diverse readership necessitates that research articles address issues that have a wide appeal and significance to higher education practitioners.

- Instructional Articles: Instructional articles are 10-20 page manuscripts (approximately 3,000 - 6,000 words) designed to explain and clarify innovative higher education teaching methods. Instructional articles, while grounded in the literature on higher education pedagogy, focus on the explanation of tentative, emerging, or alternative teaching methodologies, rather than the strict reporting of empirical data.
- Review Articles: Review articles are 3-5 page manuscripts (1,000 - 1,500 words) that include commentaries and evaluations of recently published works - books, articles, or web sites - related to higher education pedagogy.

Resources for

College Teaching and Learning

Kennesaw State University has a large clearinghouse for resources on college teaching. It is categorized by disciplines as well as by teaching themes. Try it out:

[Conference Directory](#)

[Publications Directory](#)

Speaker and author MaryEllen Weimer maintains a website and organization named *The Teaching Professor*. You can receive daily articles from this source by going [here](#).

Audio Feedback:: A Tool for Student Engagement and Success

Jenny Crisp

Dalton State College

Abstract

This study examines the effect of providing recorded audio feedback about student writing on student engagement and success in writing-intensive courses. Three different techniques for providing such feedback—Adobe Acrobat Pro, Turnitin.com, and Desire2Learn—are discussed and relative advantages and disadvantages of each for students and faculty are presented. Students were surveyed about audio feedback in classes using each of the three methods. A majority of students report that they like audio feedback and that they feel it helps them to improve their writing. Finally, improvements in student writing are examined in English 0098, a class which uses both audio feedback and written feedback. Students' writing as measured by a departmental rubric improved more after students received audio feedback than it did after they received written feedback.

Author Information

Dr. Jenny Crisp is Assistant Professor of English and QEP Director at Dalton State College. She is interested in digital humanities and distance education. Her recent research examines the effects of audio feedback on student success in composition courses and in online classes. Other research interests include automated writing evaluation, interactive games as learning tools in distance education, and web-enhanced student discussion and peer editing in both distance and face-to-face courses.

Background

Most teachers of writing strive to incorporate rich, detailed feedback into their assessment of student writing. Specific, targeted feedback is associated with deeper learning (Balzer, 1989). At the same time, many students fail to read or simply misunderstand written feedback (MacDonald, 1991). Besides, too much feedback of the “bleeding red pen” variety can quickly become overwhelming for students who don't know where to begin. The best feedback prioritizes and occurs quickly, allowing students to learn from their mistakes, and, ideally, to revise.

The difficulty, of course, is in providing such feedback. Response time is a major challenge for professors teaching multiple writing-intensive courses. To speed response time and to address

some of the difficulties associated with written feedback, the author has begun responding with recorded spoken reactions to online student essays. In combination with digital markups, this allows for very quick, high quality grading or commenting on drafts for further revision and keeps students engaged in the writing process. Audio feedback not only helps struggling students to understand instructor feedback; it encourages students who are already motivated to engage more deeply (Bilbro, 2013).

Speed of Feedback

Recording a holistic comment on an electronic copy of an essay or a draft is much faster than handwriting that same comment. At the same time, a set of standard buttons or commenting tools that

mark common errors and allow quick noting of effective passages in student papers also speeds grading along. In many ways, this method of grading is also easier; anyone who has ever lost a student paper (or worse, a whole set) can attest to the value of having an archive.

Using audio in particular also allows for richer, more elaborate feedback without sacrificing speed. All of these advantages lead to a quicker turnaround time for sets of student essays. This means students are more likely to remember what they wrote and why when they get their papers back. Finally, the whole process is environmentally friendly; in some courses, students may never print their essays at all.

This method of evaluation also supports active learning. Instructors can turn around a set of drafts in a day or two, just by reading them and providing a holistic audio comment letting the students know what is going well and what still needs work. This quick feedback lets students continue their writing virtually uninterrupted but with targeted, high-quality advice (Crisp, 2011). The speed of response keeps students engaged in the process. Students like this a great deal; they also like being able to listen to the comments whenever they need to.

Universal Design

One distinct advantage of audio feedback, regardless of the method used, is that it allows for universal design for accessibility by all students (Bauer, 2011). The audio file is very helpful for students who prefer to learn by listening as well as for those with a visual impairment. The addition of speech-to-text technology, more and more accessible through tablets and smart phones, can allow a transcript of the audio file to be created quickly and easily for those who prefer to read or who have a hearing impairment. All three grading methods discussed below allow for typed comments and transcripts.

Methods

As technology has changed over the last few years, the author has tried several methods of creating audio feedback attached to electronic versions of student essays. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, but each is effective at recording in a format that students can listen

to and at attaching the feedback to the essay for return to the student.

Adobe Acrobat

By using Adobe Acrobat Pro, it is possible to record audio feedback; to highlight, underline and comment on text; and to create and maintain a set of custom stamps for marking problems that occur repeatedly in student writing.

While it is possible to require students to turn in essays as Acrobat files, this poses a difficulty for some students. Often, it is simpler to have students turn in electronic copies in Microsoft Word, either by email or using a plagiarism detection service such as Turnitin.com. The Turnitin service has several advantages: it provides an archive of essays without filling an inbox, it will convert essays in multiple formats to Acrobat's .pdf format, it provides some virus protection, and it functions as a plagiarism checker at the same time.

Papers that have been emailed can simply be opened and converted to .pdf using "Save As." For papers in Turnitin, instructors can set their Turnitin preferences to always downloaded as .pdf files.

Essays can be marked up with Acrobat's native tools: highlight, underline, comment bubbles, etc. All of these can be customized with brief typewritten notes or URLs for sites with more information.

It is also possible to create a custom stamp palette with stamps to drag and drop onto the margin of a student's essay. The author's institution places special emphasis on Type 1 errors (comma splices, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and subject-verb agreement errors); stamps for each of these, as well as stamps for other common errors and stamps for things students do well, are easily created. The author's stamp palette has a big green check mark for good points students make, and a happy face for times they successfully use humor or make an improvement from a previous draft or earlier essay. The stamps are easy to create in a simple drawing program such as Paint, or icons may be downloaded from one of many free websites. Either way, importing them into Acrobat is easy using the "Create Custom Stamp Palette" command.

Comments can be recorded with any microphone, including the built-in mike on most laptops.



The controls function just like most recording devices, with standard “play” and “record” buttons. In the audio files, instructors can tell students what they’ve done well in addition to what needs work. This gives students better, more engaging feedback without adding to grading time; students can know what strengths they have to build on. Instructors can also prioritize the things that need work for them. In some ways, this is better than individual conferences; students can replay the comments anytime to refresh their memories.

Once essays are graded in Acrobat, they must be returned to students in a course management system such as Desire2Learn or by email.

Advantages. One of the biggest advantages of using Acrobat Pro is the extreme flexibility of the markup options; instructors can create a custom stamp palette that suits their needs, and the program allows additional feedback to be typed in for any stamp, highlight, or underline if it is needed. Also, it is perfectly possible to record several audio files per paper. If concepts need lengthy explanation, this speeds up the grading process; the instructor can highlight the text in question and record an audio file in the margin of the paper next to the highlight.

Another major advantage is that these essay files can be saved to any computer or flash drive, and students can review them on any computer that has Acrobat Reader installed. There is no need for them to have Internet access to view the paper after the initial download.

Disadvantages. The conversion of files from word processing formats to .pdf adds an extra step. If students are asked to do this, most must first learn how, and many must download and install an application to do so. If Turnitin.com is used, there is still some time involved in the download.

Also, Acrobat Pro is not a free program. Only the instructor must have the full software; students can view and listen to their essays using the free Acrobat Reader, but to annotate and record, instructors must have Acrobat Pro version 8 or later. Version XI, the most recent, is currently priced at \$119, a discount rate for students and faculty. (1)

Additionally, while the electronic markup will appear to students working on an Android tablet, the audio will not function. From an iPad, neither

the markup nor the audio functions. Students must use a desktop or laptop computer running Windows or MacOS or a Windows tablet.

Finally, in order for professors to mark up the essays and for students to review them, they must be downloaded onto computers at both ends. This takes some time for professors who must download and re-upload many essays, and it is sometimes something students must learn to do.

Turnitin.com

While www.turnitin.com can be used as a file conversion tool to allow professors to use Acrobat, it also has its own grading capability. Instructors can use Turnitin’s Grademark service to mark up essays with buttons and comments, to grade them using rubrics, and, a new feature added in the spring of 2012, to record brief audio feedback.

Advantages. The Turnitin service is easy for both faculty and students. Many students have already used Turnitin, some even in high school, so they are familiar with the software. Uploading is easy through the web-based interface, and it accepts many file types as well as cut and paste text. The feedback is also easy, with highlighting, underlining, comments, and preset buttons that professors can drag and drop onto essays. Professors can also make their own custom set of buttons to fit their assignments. The feedback is also easy for students to see by signing back in to the site.

The site also offers additional functionality for plagiarism detection and peer review. The plagiarism detection can be used as a teaching tool if professors make it available to students before the due date; many beginning writers don’t understand how to paraphrase, so reviewing Turnitin’s feedback on a draft can help them see where they’ve paraphrased correctly and where they need to do more work. The peer review function is fairly powerful; faculty can assign specific partners, can allow students to choose, or can have partners assigned randomly. There are preset question sets available, or professors can write their own. Finally, like essays, peer reviews can be graded with or without rubrics. There are preset rubrics available, or faculty can write custom, reusable rubrics.

Disadvantages. One disadvantage of the audio recording function in Turnitin is that is limited to a

single, three-minute, global comment only. This means that it works best for holistic comments and cannot be inserted at points in the essay to explain specific points. It can, however, be paused and restarted during recording, so a professor can explain each mark in order, pausing to scroll down as needed – as long as the recording is no longer than three minutes.

One concern with Turnitin.com is that it is an external service, not a part of any single institution of higher education. Students should understand this and be given the opportunity to opt out, though generally they prefer to be able to access the resources. Although there were once concerns with copyright, Turnitin has since made it clear in its terms of service, and U.S. courts have affirmed, that copyright in student works rests with the student. (2)

Additionally, like Adobe Acrobat, Turnitin has very limited functionality from Android tablet computers. From an Android tablet, students can see markup and instructors can add a holistic typed comment but cannot mark up the paper itself, and audio does not function from either the instructor or the student perspective. In the summer of 2013, Turnitin.com released an instructor iPad app which allows faculty to download essays and grade using all of the Turnitin features whether or not the iPad is connected to the Internet; graded essays will sync automatically when the iPad once more has Internet access. However, from an iPad, students can see electronic markup but cannot listen to audio. From the student perspective, a desktop or laptop computer is still required for this technology.

A final disadvantage to feedback on Turnitin is that it must be viewed and listened to online; students cannot save graded papers to view from computers without Internet access, although they may print them, along with any electronic markup and typed comments.

Desire2Learn

Finally, Desire2Learn, the newly adopted learning management system used by the University System of Georgia, allows instructors to record both audio and video feedback on assignments turned in using the dropbox within the LMS.

Advantages. Using Desire2Learn for audio

feedback in a class that uses the LMS means that students only have to master one computer application. Many find this to be very helpful, especially when students are not particularly tech-savvy or the course is not in a computer field.

The D2L dropbox has advantages for the professor as well. Grading can be done online, or, if the professor has access to an iPad, assignments can be graded offline using Desire2Learn's free Assignment Grader Pro application. Like the Turnitin.com app, this app can be set to download assignments when it has wireless access and to enable grading offline. Graded assignments can be set to synch automatically with the class, or they can be synched manually. Regardless of whether the grading is done online or off, on an iPad or a computer, the instructor can type comments, use rubrics, record audio, and record video. In most formats (.pdf, .doc/docx, .ppt/pptx, xls/xlsx, .csv, .txt, and many images), the instructor can also mark up the assignment. From an Android tablet, the instructor can use rubrics and typed feedback, but cannot record audio or mark up files in any format.

Disadvantages. With D2L, students can save graded assignments to a flash drive or a computer for viewing offline, but the process is not as seamless as Acrobat because the audio and video files must be downloaded and saved separately; they are not embedded in the student work.

Results

Student response to audio feedback

The author has used all three methods of providing feedback on student writing over the last two years and has solicited student feedback on the audio.(3) Student attitudes were measured on a Likert scale in response to the following statements:

- I like the audio comments
- The audio comments have helped me improve my writing
- The technology is easy to use.

Students in traditional classes, but not students in online classes, were also asked to respond to "I like receiving my essays electronically" as a control question. The author assumed that those who strongly dislike the electronic format will also dislike electronic audio feedback. However, as only nine

students disagreed with the statement, these numbers do not seem to be significant. Students in fully online class sections were not asked this question because their entire courses were electronic. Finally, all students were asked to add comments about the audio feedback (included in Appendix 1).

Overall response

Students over the past four semesters (Fall 2011-Fall 2012) overwhelmingly report that they like receiving audio feedback on their writing. Furthermore, students also believe that receiving audio feedback has helped them improve their writing. Finally, most students seem to find the technology easy to use; however, the few who

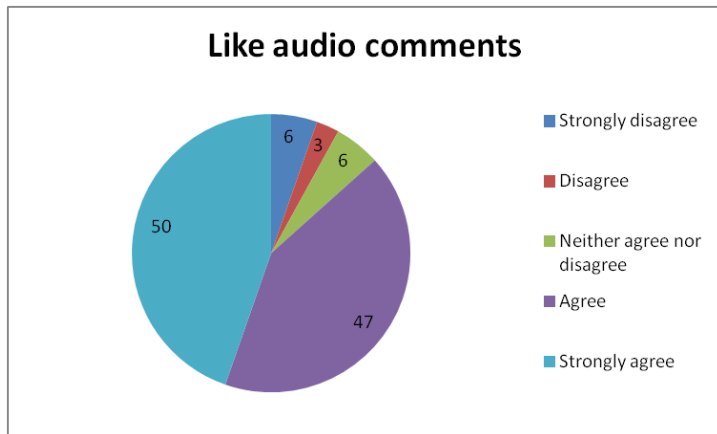


Figure 1: Student response to the statement "I like the audio comments."

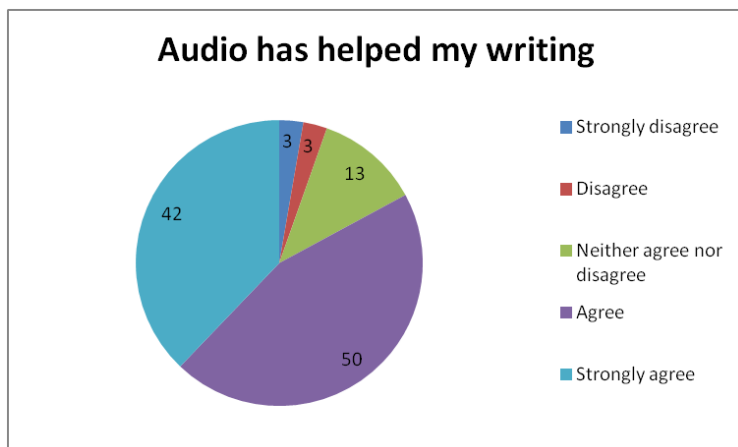


Figure 2: Student response to the statement, "The audio comments have helped me improve my writing."

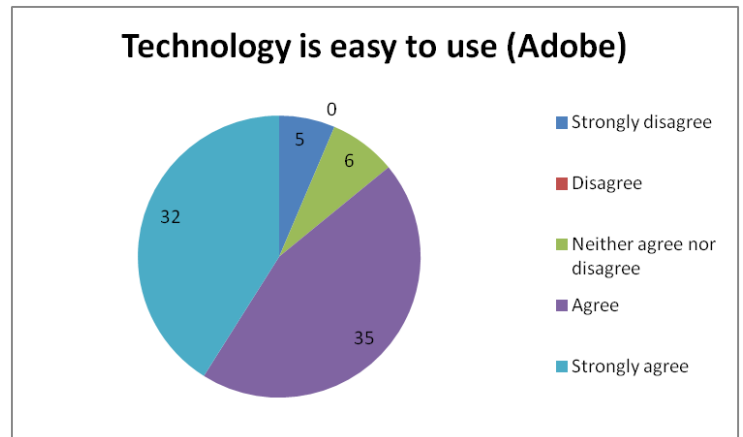


Figure 3: Response of students who received feedback generated using Adobe Acrobat to the statement, "The technology is easy to use."

dislike it seem to dislike it strongly; there were very few "disagree" or "neither agree nor disagree" responses. This held true over both Adobe Acrobat and Turnitin.com (surveys are underway now for Desire2Learn, as it is in the first semester of implementation). The bimodal distribution of student responses was even more pronounced among students using Turnitin.com; in that case, all students without exception either agreed or disagreed strongly to the statement, "The technology is easy to use."

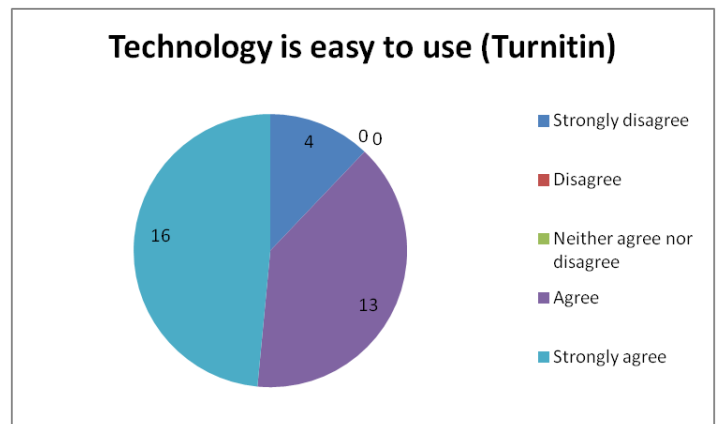


Figure 4: Response of students who received feedback at www.turnitin.com to the statement, "The technology is easy to use."

Effect on student success

Investigation of the effects of audio feedback on student achievement is ongoing, but preliminary results are promising. Students in English 0098 receive feedback in writing on some essays which are written with pen on paper, and through Adobe Acrobat audio and electronic markup on others written on a computer. All essays, regardless of format, are evaluated on the same rubric, the English 0098 end-of-term essay rubric (Appendix 2). Therefore, in these classes the pen-and-paper essays and handwritten instructor feedback serve as a control.

In those classes, student scores on the essay following feedback went up by an average of 3.71 points on a 100-point scale for audio feedback; for written feedback, the average score on the next paper actually declined slightly, by 1.16 points. Further research needs to be done with a larger sample (n=58 students because of small class sizes), but these initial results suggest students are better able to incorporate audio feedback than written as they work on their next essay.

Conclusions and Future Study

Clearly, further research is needed to confirm

the initial promise of audio feedback's effect on student success. Ideally, more faculty members as well as more students would be involved in order to help determine whether gains based on different types of feedback vary from professor to professor. It is entirely possible that some of the differential in student improvement is related to the professor's skill in providing written feedback or even to handwriting; having more professors involved would help to rule out or confirm these possibilities.

Additionally, technology continues to develop. The ideal technology for audio feedback would combine the ease of use and offline accessibility of Adobe Acrobat with the speed of use from the professor's perspective of Turnitin.com or Desire2Learn, and like Turnitin.com and Desire2Learn it would allow for both audio feedback and markup without the need for elaborate file format conversions. The ideal technology would also be integrated into a single system for student access such as a learning management system so that students would not have to log in to multiple systems to accomplish different course tasks. The potential for such a system exists; it is possible to integrate Turnitin.com directly into D2L. However, that functionality is an additional expense beyond

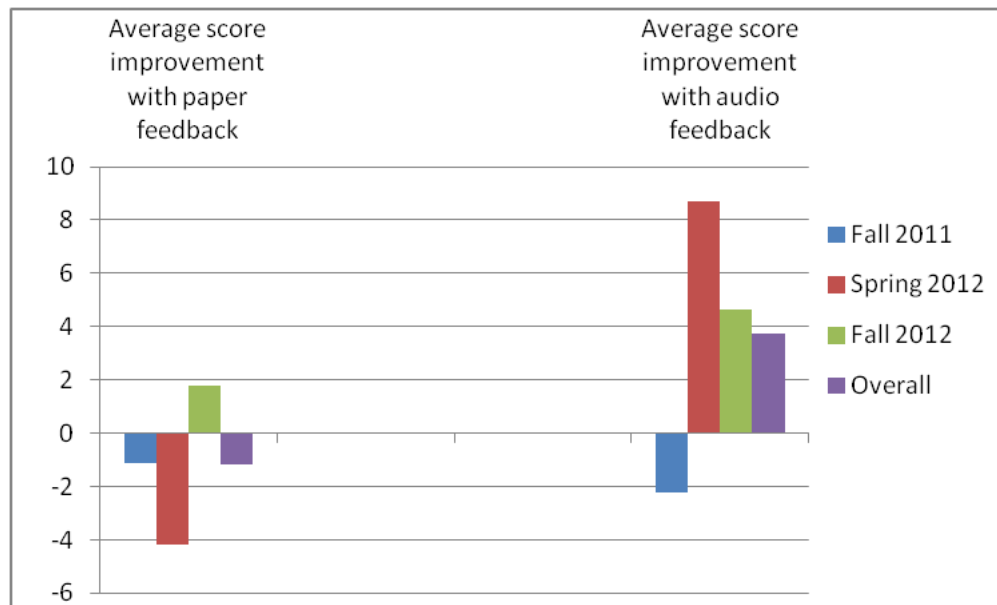


Figure 5: Average student improvement on end-of-term essay rubric after paper feedback vs. audio feedback

the basic D2L license and many institutions, including the author's own, have chosen not to purchase it; furthermore, at this time the D2L integration of Turnitin.com does not have the full functionality available on the Turnitin.com website. Finally, as both students and faculty increasingly turn to mobile computing, the need for a technology that is fully usable from both major tablet platforms is increasing.

In spite of the technology considerations and the need for more research, the use of audio feedback seems to be justified on the basis of student feedback alone. Students overwhelmingly like audio feedback. Many report that it helps them to better understand what they can do to improve (Appendix 1). In all, this is a promising practice for student engagement that also seems to hold considerable promise as a means of increasing student success in writing.

Notes

(1) <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatpro.edu.html>

(2) http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/about-us/privacy-center/copyright-protection

(3) The author's study, questionnaire, and use of aggregated student data has been determined to be exempt from ongoing oversight by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the author's institution.

References

- Balzer, W. K., Doherty, M. E., & O'Connor, R. (1989). Effects of cognitive feedback on performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106, 410-433.
- Bauer, S. (2011). When I Stopped Writing on Their Papers: Accommodating the Needs of Student Writers with Audio Comments. *English Journal*, 101(2), 64-67.
- Bilbro, J. J., Iluzada, C. C., & Clark, D. E. (2013). Responding Effectively to Composition Students: Comparing Student Perceptions of Written and Audio Feedback. *Journal On Excellence In College Teaching*, 24(1), 47-83.
- Crisp, J. (2011). Evaluating Student Writing with Adobe Acrobat Pro. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, 34(4), 1.
- MacDonald, R. B. & Appalachian State University. (1991). Developmental students' processing of teacher feedback in composition instruction. *Review of Research in Developmental Education*, 8 (5).

Appendix 1: Student comments on audio feedback

Note: Comments have not been edited for content or mechanics.

Fall 2012

English 0098 (Adobe Acrobat)

- I thought it was an extra way of helping us
- I like the comments
- It helps a lot!
- I like doing it on the computer, but I take long finishing them since I do not have Internet at home.
- It was different, but it was also very educational.

English 1101 (Adobe Acrobat)

- I like it. It's easier to save the attachments to a USB Drive and take them where I need them.
- This feels much easier. What I don't understand, I can ask about. This seems to save us some time.
- It helps, thanks!
- It's a new way that I really like. It actually shows me what You think of my essay.
- I really like being able to see my essay online, and it's even better to hear your own voice telling me my mistakes and helpful advice that can make my papers more effective.
- It's pretty good.
- like it!
- Like being able to turn in and get feedback electronically
- I liked this way receiving my essay by email because you explain it very well
- unable to hear audio
- Can't see the notes written on the iPad, have to use a regular computer.
- its a pretty cool way to get back a paper , still enjoy a little personal interaction and asking about different errors on my paper.
- Turning our essays online helps a lot. It saves us time and its a lot easier than turning a hard copy where you have to



get all the papers together etc. Also by doing it electronically it is more organized than on paper.

- You're a great professor, and your teaching is great because it helps me understand why I made an error.

English 1102 (Turnitin.com)

- My selected answers serve as a direct representation of how I feel regarding the technology used to both grade our papers, and receive beneficial feedback as well
- Getting responses back on line and the audio feedback was amazing and very helpful!
- Fun class. Easy to comprehend material.
- It was sort of hard to get used to the electronically submitted essays, but once I figured it all out it's really simple and easy to use and review your paper
- Love the class!! Have learned so much in just this one semester it has been great!
- I loved the audio. It makes it easier for me to understand where I have errors on my paper
- The audio comments allowed me to pinpoint what I did well on as well as what I needed to work on. On top of that I could look back and play the comments and compare them to other papers.
- This English class is one of my top favorite classes.
- Everything is easy to use, along with being self-explanatory.

Summer 2012

English 1102 (Turnitin.com)

- Audio comments were great!
- It helped me a lot that you left the comments.
- Pretty helpful, but I have to get used to not getting a paper copy. Overall easily accessible.
- Seeing what I did wrong on my papers helps. However, hearing what I need to do to improve my writing helps me grow as a writer and a student. Turning in papers on paper you cannot get as much feedback as you do on Turnitin.com. Some students do not have time in their day to go to a professor's office and talk about a paper. The audio added to each paper is like getting time to sit down and talk to a professor.
- I really enjoyed the class and the way its material was set up. It made it easy to follow and you always knew what needed to be done. The online essays made things very simple. I didn't have a difficult time with submissions or responses.

Fall 2012

English 0098 (Adobe Acrobat)

- I like the audio commentary because it helps me better understand what I did wrong and how to fix it.
- I like doing my essays in paper better
- I like receiving my essays in audio form because it shows me my weaknesses and my strengths.
- I love the help but my essay writing is not getting better
- I like seeing everything electronically it helps me a whole lot.
- I have really enjoyed the audio comments. They have helped me a lot.
- Shows what I need to improve
- Can increase the audio of the voice
- I feel like it really helps me improve my writing when you email me. I like to hear the comments that you have on my paper. It is very helpful.
- Using this has helped me with my essay. I have improved everytime because of this program.

English 4140 (Turnitin.com)

- I never had a professor grade on turnitin.com and give audio feedback. I really like it. It helped me a lot with my editing.
- Shouldn't this be an audio comment?
- Dr. ____, You have done a wonderful job incorporating new technology into our class. I realize the technology is not new, but it is new to me as a lot of these processes were unfamiliar to me until this semester. Thank you very much!
- British Romantic Literature has been my favorite class. I would go so far as to say it contains the most interesting subject matter of all of the classes I have ever taken in my academic career.
- I like the printable version of the editorial comments along with the paper.
- I liked the audio, but the downside is if I have a question right after listening to the audio I can't ask and you can't respond.
- I like the audio comment option because the intonations of the reviewer's voice can sometimes "say" more than the analytical written comments with respect to the reviewer's emotional response to the work. . . . And it gives the feedback a more personal touch.

- I think the audio comments and turnitin.com are excellent tools to improve writing and evaluations thereof.
- I love the electronic audio comments because you receive more positive feedback from your instructor as opposed to getting a paper back with red marks all over it. It helps to hear what your strengths and weaknesses are so that you can focus on an area more attentively.
- I really enjoyed it, and I wish more professors used it like you do.
- The audio comments help to construct a better overall feel for the changes needed in the paper. Written comments help to point to certain issues, but audio comments allows a more direct discussion of the paper and the issues found. Overall, the audio comments add another means of discussion that improves the critique.

Spring 2013

English 0098 (Adobe Acrobat)

- It is very helpful with improving my writing. I like how it has all of the notes about each error because it show me what area I need to improve on.
- I think that the audio helps me with feedback, and I love it!!!
- It helps to get my weak points.it also gives me the reult of my writting organization and development skills.with the help of teacher comment, I can evaluate myself easily and work on my weak points. The teacher's good comments also increase my confidence and help to motivate.
- I am not a big fan on the audio feedback. I like to be able to talk back when I have a question.
- The audio feed back is great; however, I sometimes like the feed back explained in person.
- The audio feedback has helped me with my papers that I have written, although I can't seem to get in write experience anymore. I wish that I could so I could use this technology to my advantage.
- It works well for me.

Humanities 1201 Online (Desire2Learn)

- The audio feedback gives this cold computer world some human warmth.
- It was helpful.
- I loved the audio feedback. I miss the interaction in the classroom and it was nice to hear my teacher's voice!
- The audio feedback is very neat. It lets me know that I'm not

just doing busy work and that professors are actually taking the time to look at my work! Thanks!

- I loved being able to heard your comments. I really add3ed a nice touch to this important assignment and to the class.
- I was nice to hear your review and opinion on my essay.
- great tool!



Appendix 2: End-of term essay rubric for English

ENGLISH 0098 EXIT ESSAY RUBRIC

REQUIRED BENCHMARKS	
Two or fewer Type I errors	
Essay is sufficiently long (departmental minimum is 300 words).	
Essay addresses prompt.	

CRITERIA		
	Pass	Fail
Essay has a clear thesis and develops and supports it.		
Essay has an introduction and conclusion and is organized into clear paragraphs.		
Essay uses sufficient concrete examples to support the ideas.		
Essay has few Type II and Type III errors.		
Essay contains language that is clear and idiomatically used.		

Promoting Undergraduate Research: An Exploration of Student Misconceptions, Concerns, and Motivations

Kristin M. Barton

Dalton State College

Abstract

As undergraduate research agendas become more common at smaller state and regional colleges, the instructors at these schools are being asked to encourage students to write and present original scholarship at academic conferences. But in order to effectively work with students in this area, it is imperative that faculty first obtain a better understanding of students' thoughts on exactly what an academic conference is. Through pre- and post-test methodologies, first-time student presenters were asked about their knowledge of and thoughts about what an academic conference was. Emerging from the data were three primary themes: misconceptions students had about what academic conferences were, concerns about presenting at academic conferences, and motivations for why and how they thought presenting at academic conferences could benefit them.

Author Information

Kristin M. Barton (Ph.D. Florida State University, 2007) is an Associate Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Communication at Dalton State College. He has had articles published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* and *Communication Quarterly*, and contributed chapters to books on the NBC television series *Heroes*, the works of Joss Whedon, and *The Walking Dead*, among others. He is also a contributor to and co-editor of the forthcoming book *Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century* (McFarland, 2013).

There can be little doubt that undergraduate students who present papers at academic conferences benefit in numerous ways, but some students (and faculty) sometimes fail to see the inherent value in promoting a research agenda in class. In one perspective on the subject, Spilich (1997) notes, the "belief that research experience enhances the education of undergraduates...is based mostly on anecdotal experience" (p. 57). Since then, though, numerous studies have found that conducting and presenting research at conferences (across virtually every discipline) helps retention (Nagada et al., 1998), "enhances the educational experience" (Lopatto, 2004), and increase students' abilities to think logically and analytically (Ishiyama, 2002). Tinto (1993) argues that students who are more fully integrated into

the collegiate environment may be more likely to complete their degrees, suggesting that more than just being involved in the social "environment" on campuses, students should also be involved in the academic environment as well. Volkwein and Carbone (1994) offer that one way to more fully immerse students into the culture of campus is to introduce them to the academic resources and opportunities that help provide them with a richer college experience. In other words, just as students enhance their extracurricular experiences with all the clubs, events, and groups on campus, so too should they be introduced to their scholarly equivalents. One of these scholarly opportunities for students, as mentioned above, is participation in academic conferences.



However, with that being said, relatively little research has explored students' perceptions of academic conferences, which could help instructors better motivate students to present original research. For state colleges with an increasing pressure from administrations to be more active in helping students in conducting and disseminating original research, it is imperative that faculty first gain a better understanding of the students themselves with regard to what they know and how they feel about the subject. To explore this, pre- and post-test survey methodology was employed to gauge upper-level students' understanding and perceptions of academic conferences before and after giving their first conference presentations.

Methods

The students who participated in this research were enrolled in an upper-level communication course in which the primary assignment was a 20-25 page paper meeting the content and formatting requirements standard at most academic conferences. The students were informed at the beginning of the semester that they would be encouraged to submit their research to conferences, but that it was not required. In total, eleven students (representing a total of five different majors) completed the pre-test survey regarding what they believed academic conferences to be like and their attitudes about them, and nine students completed the post-test surveys following their first conference presentation (two students from the class elected not to submit their papers to academic conferences). The conferences students presented at included the Albany State Symposium on Undergraduate Research (October 2012), the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association (February 2013), and the Georgia Communication Association (February 2013). IRB approval was obtained before administering the surveys and students completed informed consent forms before data was collected.

Instruments

The pre- and post-test surveys were similar in design in order to accurately evaluate and

compare students' responses. The pre-test contained a total of six free-response questions, and students were encouraged to provide detailed answers. The six questions included:

1. Prior to your involvement in this class, please describe what you knew about academic conferences or any thoughts you may have had about what they were.
2. What were the factors that made you decide to submit your paper to an academic conference? Or, if you did not, what were the factors that made you NOT want to submit?
3. What are your fears or concerns about presenting a paper at an academic conference?
4. What do you see as the benefits to you personally as a result of submitting to an academic conference?
5. Based on your experiences so far, would you consider writing/submitting an academic conference paper in the future? On your own or only if an instructor was involved?
6. Additional Comments: Is there anything else you think about academic conferences?

The post-test instrument contained a total of eight free-response questions:

1. Did the conference meet your expectations?
2. What surprised you about the conference?
3. What did you like most about the conference?
4. What did you like least about the conference?
5. Were you more or less nervous than you had anticipated? Why or why not?
6. Was there anything that the conference organizers could have done to make your experience better?
7. Was there anything that you could have done to make your experience better?
8. Would you recommend this experience to classmates or friends?



Pre-test Findings

Student responses fell into one of three general categories: motivations for why they would submit to an academic conference, concerns about submitting/presenting, and misconceptions about what academic conferences are like. Listed below are some of the responses which serve as a representative sample of the student attitudes and beliefs.

Motivations

- “Achieving something worthwhile in my college career that would carry over into a job/the future.”
- “Just the idea of being able to write a paper on nearly anything I love and get a chance to present it is very cool.”
- “A chance to feel like I have a voice.”
- Resumé benefit.
- Looks good on graduate school applications.
- Instructor enthusiasm about going to conferences.

Concerns

- “I’m nervous that people are going to blow holes in my research and ask questions I can’t answer.”
- Fear of public speaking.
- “Not doing it correctly”/Fear of not presenting in the same way as everyone else.
- Not being able to condense long papers to 15-minute presentations.

Misconceptions

- “I imagined a round-table discussion on topics.”
- “First thought was an extremely large stadium-style presentation of...papers.”
- “A very formal reading of your paper with a question and answer session.”
- “Always thought it was something that was required of professors and unpleasant given the tone they used.”

- Presenters must have specific qualifications/credentials.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the basic misunderstanding undergraduate students have of academic conferences than the first two quotes under the “Misconceptions” heading. Students’ perceptions of academic conferences ran the gamut from the smallest, most intimate gathering to an enormous presentation reminiscent of large lecture classes (a perception most likely influenced by films featuring scenes of large lecture presentations such as *A Beautiful Mind* and *The Da Vinci Code*). Using these findings, it is possible to dispel some of the major misconceptions surrounding academic conferences in order to alleviate the major concerns students have about presenting.

This could be done in a number of ways, including a breakdown of the instructor’s own experiences at academic conferences, showing videos of academic conference presentations (many of which are available on YouTube), or holding practice or “mock” conference sessions as part of the class (which the researcher has found works extremely well and serves as a practical way to prepare students for presentations). Also from the findings, it seems clear that students understand the inherent benefits to presenting papers at academic conferences, but it certainly would not hurt to reinforce the academic and career impact that having presented a conference paper might have. As for the concerns the students in this study most commonly cited, each of those can be remedied with practice and preparation, and by providing them with a clearer picture of how academic conferences operate. It is not the purpose of an academic conference (nor is it the experience of the researcher) that anyone would intentionally try to pose questions to the researcher for the explicit purpose of “stumping” them, but at the same time students should be aware that by presenting they are expected to have a thorough understanding of their topic that may go beyond what is presented in their paper.

Post-test Findings

Generally, results from the post-test revealed



that students found the experience of presenting their original research at an academic conference to be an engaging and rewarding experience. Every student who completed the post-test survey indicated that they would recommend the experience to a classmate or friend, although some acknowledged that it would be more beneficial for those who “value academia” and that they would warn them that there are bound to be “kinks” in every experience. Based on the responses, the most common issues that arose from the experience were communication issues on the part of the conferences, including not clearly explaining the “rules and participation requirements” and noting that “the night before the conference isn’t the time to send out information about registration the next morning.” While instructors can do little to remedy this, faculty can work with students and conference organizers throughout the submission and registration process to keep the flow of information moving as smoothly as possible.

It should be noted that many of the concerns students indicated in the pre-test were never mentioned in the post-test surveys. Specifically, while many of the students expressed concerns about “not doing it correctly” (with regard to giving their presentations), none of them indicated that, in looking back, they felt they did it incorrectly. This can most likely be attributed to two factors. First, holding a mock conference as part of the class and providing general guidelines for academic conference presentations were essential to properly prepare the students for the experience. Second, the nature of the conferences at which students presented (which were state or regional conferences), routinely allow for a myriad of presentation styles to be utilized in presenting research, including the optional use of PowerPoint, the practice of reading a prepared synopsis, or a more informal discussion approach. With this amalgam of methods routinely seen at these types of conferences, it helps instill in the students that there isn’t necessarily a “right” way to present and, perhaps more importantly, there isn’t a “wrong” way either.

Other concerns that emerged across numerous

pre-test surveys were the fear of public speaking and trepidation about being asked difficult questions about their topics. Again, these were not mentioned at all in the follow-up surveys. As before, this might also be attributed to classroom practice sessions, which included a question-and-answer session following the presentations that mirrored what they might experience at a real conference (faculty members from various departments were invited to sit in on the mock conference panels and ask questions about the research).

Discussion

Overall, students reported having a very positive experience with their first academic conference presentations, and several members of the class have already presented at multiple conferences since. Certainly this study should be seen as a pilot study with a limited sample, but there are some definite trends that have emerged despite the limited scope. For instructors who plan on encouraging students to conduct original research and present, it seems that the key to assuaging fears about the process is to provide a detailed explanation of what an academic conference is and what the students can expect. While all the presentations made by the students in the sample were oral presentations, it would also be wise to inform them of other types of presentations they may be asked to give, including participating in a panel session or adapting their research for a poster session. Also, as stated several times previously, a practice conference does well to prepare students for the experience. This is most beneficial when mirroring actual conference proceedings as closely as possible, which includes a panel chair to introduce the session (and each speaker), having the students sit at the front of the room facing the audience, adhering to standard conference time limits (15 minutes is generally considered standard), and opening the floor for questions following the presentations.

As smaller colleges around the country continue to grow, the emphasis on undergraduate research is sure to grow as well. To make our

students competitive with students at other larger USG institutions, faculty members need to prepare them to become scholars within their respective fields of study. While not all of the students will go on to seek graduate degrees, presenting original research at an academic conferences will benefit Dalton State's graduates by developing critical thinking skills, fostering a sense of accomplishment, making them better public speakers, and provide them with résumé-building experience that will help them stand out within today's competitive job market.

References

- Ishiyama, J. (2002). Does early participation in undergraduate research benefit social science and humanities students? *College Student Journal*, 36(3), 280-286.
- Lopatto, D. (2004). Survey of Undergraduate Research Experiences (SURE): First Findings. *Cell Biology Education*, 3(4), 270-277.
- Nagada, B. A., Gregerman, S. R., Jonides, J., von Hippel, W., & Lerner J. S. (1998). Undergraduate student-faculty research partnerships affect student retention. *The Review of Higher Education*, 22(1), 55-72.
- Spilich, G. (1997). Does undergraduate research pay off? *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly*, 18, 57-59 & 89-90.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* (2nd Ed). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Volkwein, J. F. & Carbone, D. (1994). The impact of departmental research and teaching climates on undergraduate growth and satisfaction. *Journal of Higher Education*, 65(2), 146-167.

Portions of the post-test survey were adapted from a survey administered by Dr. David DesRochers at Dalton State College in the Department of Natural Sciences



Journal Submission Guidelines and Editorial Policies

1. Faculty members (and professional staff) may submit the following:

- Book reviews on scholarly works on higher education administration or issues, college teaching, or adult learning published within the last two calendar years.
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research. This is defined as a study in which an activity, strategy, approach, or method that reflects best practices or evidence-based research is tried in the classroom. The faculty member sets up an intervention, executes it, and assesses the impact, employing quantitative or qualitative methods. Articles should indicate that IRB process was followed where applicable, with documentation.
- Literature review that synthesizes, in a relevant and interesting way, the evidence, theory, and/or research on a particular aspect of higher education, college teaching, adult learning, brain research, etc. Professional staff could write about issues in student services or advising, for example.
- Essay of personal reflection of a classroom incident or phenomenon with an evidence- or theory-based approach to interpreting the incident or phenomenon.
- Articles should attempt to have cross-disciplinary appeal and applicability.

2. Style Sheet

- Submissions should be in APA VI format and Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Use APA guidelines in terms of margins. The writer should try to preserve his or her anonymity as much as possible. The editor will redact the name of the writer from the document's title page before sending to reviewers.

3. Review Process

- The submissions will be peer reviewed by three faculty members, whose identity will be known only to editor and not to each other. One member of the review committee will be a faculty member in general discipline represented in the article, one will be a faculty member with an advanced degree in education, and one will be drawn from the advisory committee or other volunteer reviewers.
- Articles will be returned to the writers in a timely manner with an indication of rejection; conditional acceptance (revise and re-submit, with suggestions for doing so), and accepted (possibly with request to edit or make minor changes). A rubric will be used for assessing the articles. It will be available to potential submitters upon request. If none of the members approves the article, it will be rejected. If one of the members approves the article, it will be considered a conditional acceptance. If two approve it, it will be returned for the necessary editions and published when finished. If three approve it, it will be published as is or with minor corrections.

4. Submissions should be sent as Word files to btucker@daltonstate.edu

5. Published articles will appear in the *Journal for Academic Excellence*, which will be available on the Center for Academic Excellence's website and thus accessible by Internet searches.