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**Requiring First-Year Writing Classes to Visit the Writing Center:  
Bad Attitudes or Positive Results?**  
&  
**Leading the Horse: The Writing Center and Required Visits**

**Requiring First-Year Writing Classes to Visit the WC:**

*Stephen North*

“Nor should you require that all of your students drop by with an early draft of a research paper to get a reading from a fresh audience. [...] Even those of you who, out of genuine concern, bring students to a writing center, almost by the hand, to make sure they know that we won’t hurt them---even you are essentially out of line. Occasionally we manage to convert such writers from people who have to see us to people who want to, but most often they either come as if for a kind of detention, or they drift away” (North, 440).

- This quote is from the “Idea of a Writing Center”, which is a heavily referenced piece.
- North believes that requiring students to go to the Writing Center is detrimental.
- Even if they are pleased with the experience, they will most likely stop coming or view it as a punishment for bad writing.

*Pros of Required Visits*

- The Writing Center is able to reach more students.
- This heightens the reputation and popularity of the Writing Center.
- Having a professor require visits adds more credibility to the Writing Center.

*Trinity Email Sent Out to Faculty*

- Tennyson makes the point that there is a stigma behind targeting one student to attend the Writing Center, so it is more beneficial to encourage the entire class to go.

*Cons of Required Visits*

- There were long wait times when visits were required.
- The meetings were rushed.
- The space became overcrowded.
- These cons mentioned in the article are not exactly applicable to Trinity.

*Survey Results*

- Survey was conducted by the author of this piece to a small group of her students.
- When asked about their thoughts about the requirement, most students said that they felt “annoyed” or “indifferent” about it.
- When asked about their overall impressions of the Writing Center, most claimed that it was “positive/beneficial.”
- When asked about if they were going to return voluntarily, the majority said “maybe.”
- Are these results surprising?

### *Back to Trinity’s WC*

- RHET 103 class survey:
  - “What did you find most effective in the professor’s approach to teaching this course?”
    - “Encouraging students to go to writing center”
  - What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?
    - “Using the writing center to improve writing.”
  - What aspects would you like to see stay the same?
    - “Mandatory visits to the writing center”
  - What would you like to see remain most in the course the next time it is offered?
    - “go to the writing center more often”

### *Findings from other studies*

- USC
  - The center improved the students’ writing!
  - There was no negative impact regarding their attitudes towards the Writing Center.
- Bryant College
  - Students came to the Writing Center because faculty “forcefully encouraging” them to go.
  - Students gave positive feedback after their visits.
  - Students would not have gone if there wasn’t a strong incentive to do so.
  - When they received their grades, the rating for satisfaction lowered.
    - Blamed Writing Center tutors

### *Solutions*

- Incentivize to required visits
- Encourage students to go during various points in the paper
- Bring a class to the writing center to introduce them first
- Offer shorter time frames

- Have tutors role-play appointments during class time

### *Curriculum-based (Kail & Trimber)*

- Connected to the power that professors hold in institutions.
- Requirement = controlling
- Collaborative center is one where students come on their own
- Advertising is not effective when drawing students in, which is where required appointments come into play

### **Leading the Horse:**

*“You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink”*

- Clark compares required visits to the Writing Center to this adage
- In the context of the Writing Center, the student would be the stubborn horse, the professor would be the cowboy and the Writing Center the water

### *Psychological POV*

- Intrinsic motivation is more effective in a learning environment because the student is more excited and passionate about their work
- Extrinsic motivation is when there is a student motivated to come to the Writing Center because of things like required visits or simply for a higher grade
- As a Writing Center Associate, can you tell if a student is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated? If so, what are the differences and how do you approach each situation?

### *Research Design*

- Study conducted at USC
  - Purpose: to measure the effect that required appointments had on students' attitude and their visits
- Students were asked a series of questions to rate on a Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree)
- They were split up into teacher-motivated and non teacher-motivated
- 329 students

### *Results and Conclusions*

- ¼ of the teacher-motivated students → improved grade

- $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students felt that their writing improved
- Conclusion: recommendation that visits should be required which will hopefully lead to positive outcomes

*“And with the right encouragement, even the most recalcitrant horse, aware of his thirst and standing at the water's edge, might bend his stubborn neck and take a drink.”*

Final question: Since there convincing reasons to both sides of the argument, where do you stand? Required visits or not?