

## **Professor Sean Thomas**

In its September 2019 report, "Access, Enrollment, and Success in Transfer-Level English and Math in the California Community College System," the RP Group examines enrollment and throughput data collected between 2015 and 2018 and concludes that AB 705 implementation has increased student access to and completion of transfer-level English and math courses; however, the study adds the caveat that "continued work needs to roll out [AB 705 related] changes across the system and close long-standing racial/ethnic gaps with regards to access and success." This sabbatical project proposes to further that work in a very specific way by generating a set of video-lectures and study guides to support students who are enrolled in English composition and physiology writing support courses.

This project naturally extends from the comprehensive overhaul of English 1A completed last year. As one of the two primary authors of that course revision, I am intimately familiar with the key pedagogical innovations in that course's design, especially the central role of inquiry-based pedagogy and the intentional incorporation of interdisciplinary approaches to reading and writing. These two shifts are necessary to retool our English composition sequence at CR, especially if our intention is not only to increase throughput rates in first semester writing courses but also to support student success and persistence in their other classes, such as Human Physiology. The third valuable emphasis of the revised English 1A is its focus on discourse communities, with the intention being not only to help students understand what discourse communities are but to provide opportunities to practice active engagement in the discourse community of their English course. Teaching across the disciplines this semester has provided me with invaluable perspectives on how to teach English 1A in a manner that can help students move across discourse communities. Happily, I have found Biology 7S (Writing Support for Human Physiology) to be a lively and engaged discourse community that is motivated to work on writing. Importantly, the coherence and solidarity of this group is not simply a feature of being aligned around the same course content; it is also a result of the instructor having flipped the physiology class. I am confident that integrating a thoughtfully developed, intentional flipped approach in teaching English composition courses will help realize

the potential of the revised version of English 1A/1S to support student success more fully than I am able to in a lecture/discussion format.

My current experience in teaching both English 1A/ 1S and co-teaching Biology 7S indicates a need to provide meaningful, engaging and context-specific writing support materials for students; yet, there are no currently available OER resources or major publisher composition textbooks that are even close to adequate to fill that void. Even the recently published *Flipping English: A Pathway to Student Success-AB 705 Compliance*, despite its promising title, would not be useful as a resource in my classes because it foregrounds thesis construction and a survey of the "rhetorical modes" to provide students templates for how to persuade audiences-a traditional, de-contextualized approach to teaching English that straddles the line between developmental and transfer-level courses and does not mesh well with an inquiry-based, interdisciplinary approach. My English 1A/1S students have not responded well to similar content in the textbook I selected for my section this semester, and judging by the writing I have seen in Biology 7S so far this term, students struggle with their writing for their physiology research project, and most of them have already completed English 1A. In my view, the answer to the question of how to continue to increase student access and success following on the implementation of AB 705 will not be found by searching through publishers' catalogs or integrating what is made available for free online. It lies, instead, in providing instructor- generated materials that students can access at their own convenience and as frequently or repeatedly as needed to facilitate their learning.

My plan for this project is best expressed by enumerating its five primary objectives, which are as follows:

1. Research flipped classroom teaching strategies, especially concerning the use of video lectures.
2. Create and record a series of original video lectures and written/visual instructional materials that deliver the course content of the English composition course sequence.
3. Research approaches to teaching reading and writing in the biological sciences that are applicable to Biology 7/7S.
4. Create and record a shorter set of original video lectures and written/visual

instructional materials to support student writing in Biology 7/7S.

5. Write an article for submission to *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* that describes the work I have done.

Although I am a novice at video creating and production, I am confident that I will be able to accomplish these goals within the time frame of the six-month period away from teaching that I have requested.

The primary benefit of this sabbatical will be to support the success of College of the Redwoods students by providing them a series of accessible and engaging video lectures and other supporting materials that are tailored to the English Department's composition sequence as well as to the discipline-specific writing required of students in the Human Physiology writing support course (Biology 7S). The immediate student audience for these materials will be, of course, those who are enrolled in my sections; however, I will make the materials available to my colleagues and other students if there is interest in using them in other classes. The materials I create for use in Biology 7S will be given to the Biology Department to use as they see fit.

A related valuable outcome will be my professional development, which will in turn positively impact my students. I am endeavoring to learn a new teaching method and to become proficient in a medium that I have not previously used for instructional purposes (video). I am willing to take on these challenges because I am convinced that continuing to rely on an in-class lecture/discussion format would prevent me from serving the needs of my students as well as I should. Additionally, a significant aspect of work done for this project is its cross-disciplinary English-Biology collaborative work to support student success in reading and writing; therefore, it could potentially provide a model for other disciplines to create similar concurrent support offerings. Lastly, in writing an article for publication, I will strive to share with a wider audience my perspectives about teaching writing in a post-AB 705 context and inform others about my experience in co-teaching a concurrent writing support course for a discipline outside of English.