Everyone is Responsible for Everything: Corequisites and the First-Year Seminar

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ABSTRACT

Following state legislation mandating corequisite support in lieu of remedial prerequisites for underprepared students, this article tells the story of a specific corequisite program piloted in South Texas. Our model transformed certain sections of our institution's first-year seminar into corequisite courses, which were paired with required gateway classes. We argue, this model helped to extend existing networks of student support beyond classrooms and beyond advising.

The University of Houston-Victoria (U of H-V) is a small, public Hispanic Serving Institution in southeast Texas. Originally established as a teaching center for upper division and graduate students in 1974, U of H-V achieved "downward expansion" in 2010, a term used to refer to the expansion of the university's offerings to include freshmen and sophomores at the university. This expansion also reconfigured the student body, making it more urban, young, and diverse. As an example, in the fall of 2018, U of H-V enrolled 3,237 undergraduate students, 42% of whom identified as Hispanic, with 32% representing the first generation in their family to attend college. This student population increasingly reflects the demographics of the local area, where the population is over 50% minority, and approximately 50% Hispanic.

In addition to diversifying the student body, downward expansion also resulted in enrolling more students who need extra support in order to succeed in a college environment, particularly in first-year math and English courses. Our institution's most recent efforts to provide this support forms the basis of this article, namely the unique version of corequisite support that emerged at our institution, as an organic outgrowth of our specific history, combined with a statewide mandate to create corequisites. Certainly, as we explain, the passage of state legislation helped provide the impetus for our move toward corequisites. Yet we were also motivated to re-assess our developmental curriculum, even without the new legislation, based on our own frustrations with the previous iteration of developmental classes. We knew (and know) our students need help with getting through their gateway courses but also

finding an effective form for that assistance has been a challenge. We will briefly describe our previous efforts at providing that support before explicating our rationale for the current program.

As we discuss in more detail in the course of this article, our response to the recent mandate to create a corequisite combined the purpose of the corequisite with our institution's first-year seminar; we created a few special sections of the first-year seminar designed especially for students designated as TSI-incomplete in one or more subject areas, each section of which supports a specific gateway course. Our idea was that the mission of the first-year seminar, to orient students to life at the university, could itself be advanced by making it more academic for these students, or more clearly contextualized with explicit links to academic work. In order to achieve this, we believed that corequisite remediation could be meaningfully accomplished in the first-year seminar.

To achieve this mashup of the first-year seminar and corequisite, we initiated an otherwise unlooked-for collaboration between academic faculty and student support services staff, and we found that this cross-pollination between divisions of our institution also offered another payoff: it had the potential to extend and strengthen institutional safety-nets meant to support students underprepared for college. We find that remediation for underprepared students happens not only in academic content classes, but as part of a larger pedagogical ecology, or as one researcher describes it, "a constellation of people, programs, initiatives, opportunities, constraints, and cultures that emerge and interact within a specific university context" (Schoen, 2019, p. 38). Based on preliminary findings

from our 2018-2019 pilot, we believe that our mashup of the first-year seminar and corequisite effectively extends the university's existing ecologies of support and responsibility for underprepared students to more corners of the university, providing a promising framework for addressing the non-cognitive issues that impede the progress of so many students. We argue not only that the missions of the first-year seminar and corequisite curriculum symbiotically support one another, but that our structural choices in creating the corequisite helped to extend existing networks of student support beyond classrooms and beyond advising.

Institutional Context, or the Local Learning Ecology

Shortly after U of H-V's move to serve freshmen and sophomores through downward expansion, it became evident that our students were underprepared for their college coursework, especially in college algebra, and in reading and writing, as faculty raised serious concerns about their students' performance and their ability to succeed at the college level. In response to this need, the Division of Student Affairs created a series of Non-Credit Bearing Options, or NCBO classes. These classes were taught by staff members with backgrounds in the appropriate subjects (either a BA/BS or MA/MS in math or English), lasted for 8 weeks, and were optional for students to attend. Additionally, instructors for the NCBOs were told not to link their instructional efforts to the very credit-bearing English and math courses that they were supporting, nor even communicate with the main course instructors about course content (based on misunderstandings or poor communication between student affairs and faculty). In addition to the problem of poor communication, we eventually concluded that an eight-week, optional, non-credit bearing course was never going to accomplish its goal of improving student performance at our institution.

Given these shortcomings of the NCBO, we eventually moved to a truly remedial course sequence with "basic" math and English courses that served as prerequisites for College Algebra and English Composition. These courses were mandatory, lasted a whole semester, bore credit, and were taught by faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences (which houses the math and English departments). Additionally, while these courses were prerequisites for the primary gateway classes of College Algebra

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and English Composition, the basic courses could be linked through theme and content to U of H-V's first-year seminar courses, which aimed to prepare students for how to succeed in college. However, while these "remedial" courses seemed more academically rigorous than the NCBO, they suffered from two key problems: (a) the courses stigmatized students, and (b) the courses functioned as a potential obstacle to the main gateway class, providing another roadblock to student success, increasing the risk that students would drop or stop out before ever taking the main class (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Smith Jaggars, 2012; Sullivan, 2013; see also Trammell, 2018). Our observations of students at U of H-V support these claims. Instructors and staff who interact with first-year students report that students sometimes made fun of each other saying, "Oh you're in English for dummies," or "That's the dumb people's math." One student reflected that both the developmental courses and first-year seminar were "holding me back," a sentiment echoed by other students as well.

While faculty, staff, and students were already questioning this remedial course sequence, the passage of Texas HB 2223 provided the university with a mandate to replace these classes with something else. The bill requires institutions of higher education to implement "a corequisite model" for developmental coursework, "under which a student concurrently enrolls in a developmental education course and a freshman-level course in the same subject area" in any subject area where the student seems to need remediation (Sec. 51.336 C). In addition to providing a corequisite option to students, institutions of higher education within Texas were also required to ensure that a certain percentage of their students eligible for developmental education were enrolled in a corequisite course: 25% in fall 2018, 50% by 2019, and 75% by 2020.

In the past, U of H-V used scores from the ACT, SAT, as well as from the Texas Success Initiative test (TSI) to determine students' college readiness and ability to register for courses. Students admitted to U of H-V who were TSI incomplete in reading, writing, or mathematics worked with their Student Success Coach (academic advisor and support service for students with less than 45 earned credit hours) or Academic Advisor to become TSI compliant. Historically, students enrolled in one or more support classes to help them become TSI compliant needed

to become TSI complete in reading and/or writing, students concurrently enrolled in ENGL 1301 and NCBO 1001. They needed to pass ENGL 1301 with a "C" or better and earn an "S" in NCBO 1001 to satisfy the TSI requirements. To become TSI complete in mathematics, students concurrently enrolled in MATH 1314 and NCBO 1002. They needed to pass MATH 1314 with a "C" or better and earn an "S" in NCBO 1002 to satisfy the TSI requirements. After the NCBOs were determined ineffective and phased out, students enrolled in either ENGL 1300 or MATH 1300 to satisfy their TSI requirements. They needed to earn a "C" or better in the courses to satisfy the TSI requirements and move on to the college- and entry-level English and math courses. Our 2018 pilot of the corequisite mashup with the first-year seminar emerged from this history, and we attempted to improve upon it.

Literature Review

Educators have been discussing how to fix remedial education since its inception. HB 2223 challenges educators to take a more dramatic approach—to get rid of them altogether because they are not working, they do not count for credit, they waste students' time and money, and they make it more likely that students will not complete their degrees. In support of this approach, Watkins (2017) reported some of the major issues faced by community colleges in regards to remedial students: 60% of students are not college ready; 85% of students that enroll in remedial math do not pass a single college-level math course; community colleges have open enrollment so anyone with a high school diploma or GED can enroll in classes. How then do we make it possible for students who are not college ready to attend college? HB 2223 offers a few suggestions but leaves the major details up to community colleges and universities.

Atkins and Beggs (2017) conducted a study at a mid-west, 4-year university that compared traditional remedial education in mathematics education to a corequisite program. Their primary purpose was to determine if the corequisite model was comparable to the traditional remedial education model. Secondly, they wanted to find out if the corequisite model could reduce risk factors associated with underprepared students. The study yielded promising results, with 78.75% to 90.13% earning a 70 or better in their gateway math course (Atkins & Beggs, 2017, p. 22). Their research documents a corequisite model offering learner-centered, "just-in-time" support for underprepared students enrolled in gateway courses with concurrent enrollment in those courses, which suggests that academic advisors and cross-departmental faculty communication was crucial to building this support network.

Our response to this research and to HB 2223 follows the example set by the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP, n.d.). Pioneered by Adams at the Community College of Baltimore County, ALP emphasizes small classes, destigmatizing remedial coursework, and the emphasis on community building. The discrete features of ALP include the following:
1. ALP students are mainstreamed into ENGL 101 for which they can receive college credit.
2. ALP students are part of a cohort of eight students and one instructor who spend six hours a week together.
3. ENGL 101 serves as a meaningful context for what they are learning in the developmental course.
4. Class size is just eight, changing the instructional environment.
5. The pipeline through which they must travel is shortened from two semesters to one.
6. In the ENGL 101 class, ALP students work with students who are stronger writers and can serve as role models.
7. ALP instructors consciously pay attention to helping ALP students develop successful student behaviors.
8. ALP instructors consciously pay attention to issues from outside the college that may have a negative impact on ALP students (http://alp-deved.org/features-of-alp-success/).

Perhaps most importantly, especially as it pertains to HB 2223, Adams' work was predicated on the question of mainstreaming students in stimulating college-level work from the get-go. Inquiry itself or engaging with genuinely challenging questions represents the most potentially motivating force in any classroom, and underprepared students can not only do it (provided a little extra support) but they most stand in need of the potential motivation in seeing the application of "skills" in a context that matters (Adams et al., 2009; Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012).

Program Concept

Our solution to the statewide push towards corequisites emerged organically from our institution's needs and history. In order to meet the demands of HB 2223, we decided, in conjunction with key administrators at U of H-V to turn particular sections of the University Seminar (first-year seminar) into the corequisite courses. Though the seminar course at U of H-V has itself evolved through many iterations, its consistent central purpose has been to help to acculturate students to a college environment and connect them to the U of H-V community. Traditionally, the course has included strategies for time management, organization, studying, taking notes, and reading college-level texts. Because of

the academically supportive nature of the course, it made sense to us to convert sections of the seminar course into a corequisite course.

Crucially, this conversion also necessitates a high amount of collaboration between university units—units that would have remained more separate had it not been for the corequisite collaboration. While the main/gateway courses, College Algebra and English Composition, are taught in Arts and Sciences, the seminar courses are taught through the new University College, which houses the student success coaches and the manager of academic support, all of whom teach either a standard university seminar course or a corequisite seminar course. The corequisite courses, as a result, were developed and taught by a team of faculty from Arts and Sciences and staff in the University College (though these staff also have faculty status). Because of the way we structured the corequisite, these groups wound up collaborating closely as we planned our pilot and as we sought to provide "just-in-time" support for the gateway classes. We believe that this structure enabled instructors to fulfill one of the principles of effective corequisite support, as articulated by Adams et al. (2009), namely that instructors "consciously pay attention to issues from outside the college that may have a negative impact" on students. We believe that our model helped instructors become cognizant of their own involvement in the larger university ecology as a result of teaching the corequisite course, in part because it retains some elements of its original seminar function. That is, the corequisite course is not just a support class for the main math or English class. It is also an introduction to the college environment and requires the instructor to work with departments across campus as a result. In this sense, we believe that this structure makes instructors more attuned to the overall ecology of learning while also facilitating more direct teaching of metacognition and success strategies contextualized with academic content.

Part of what we take from this collaboration between academic and student success oriented divisions of the university is that first-year seminars, corequisite support classes, and possibly all academic classes are best when they incorporate attention to both academic and non-cognitive challenges and dimensions of learning, as well as metacognitive strategies for addressing those challenges. Part of why support for at-risk or underprepared students

often falls under the purview of University College is precisely because academic faculty understand what they have to offer students as primarily academic and not significantly enmeshed with students' personal and affective experiences. Given this reality, faculty themselves sometimes express feeling underprepared to effectively help underprepared students. In addition, we find that people with advanced academic degrees either never struggled as students have with academic work, or they have forgotten the experience of not already knowing. For these reasons, in the eyes of our students, there is a gigantic distance between where they are sitting and the instructor standing at the front of the class. In this context, we see the combination of Arts & Sciences faculty and University College staff in our corequisite as one of the advantages of the model. Ideally, we believe, every class would directly address non-cognitive challenges and learning strategies for coping with those challenges, along with academic content. By putting staff who are focused on student success into collaborative conversation with faculty who tend to be more focused on academic content together, the program more effectively works with students to overcome daily obstacles, both academic and personal.

Based on extensive discussion among stakeholders, U of H-V determined that requiring 6 hours of English and/or 6 hours of math, along with a first-year seminar during students' first semester, would be difficult at our institution; a fully realized three-credit corequisite class would take up too much real estate in students' schedules during their first semester. Those who made this argument pushed for a return to the 1-hour NCBO (already attempted at our institution which struck the rest of us as too little support for many of our students). Faced with a choice between a 1-hour support session with no academic credit, versus something more closely approximating the ALP model, we resolved to continue to push for something closer to ALP. We knew that the previous iteration of the non-credit bearing option at U of H-V was poorly attended; in part, because it bore no credit, students viewed it as optional. We also observed its ineffectiveness compared to the required developmental prerequisite classes that replaced it. We wanted to create something that would actually improve on that improvement.

Though U of H-V was not able to offer all aspects of the ALP model, we were able to create a

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corequisite inspired by some of ALP's key tenets, each of which, we believe, offers potential for improvement on the previously existing developmental courses that our corequisite replaced. We created a fully realized, credit-bearing, content-rich, academic corequisite course. We also combined the function of corequisite support with that of our freshman seminar. Finally, students deemed underprepared would now receive just-in-time support in the new corequisite seminar for the college-level work assigned in their gateway core courses.

If the focus of the old University Seminar was to provide a road map for navigating life on campus, with an emphasis on study skills, or "life hacks," linking such a class with an academic gateway course effectively provided a meaningful context for those life hacks. Adams et al. (2009) argued a similar point when they explain the power of linking corequisite remediation to a gateway course; students can more readily and more actively engage with corequisite coursework when those can immediately and obviously be applied in a college-level course, as opposed to teaching such skills in a "basic skills" vacuum. If demonstrating the immediate connection between one set of skills and another arena of a student's life helps with motivation, according to the same principle, we believe that the "life hacks" for navigating college, which provide the focus of the freshman seminar, and the content of English or math gateway courses provide an immediate context for one another. In other words, the freshman seminar's "life hacks" for college life can be more effectively taught when contextualized with meaningful academic work.

Above all, the program elucidated for us the various non-cognitive challenges our students face and how these "life" factors affect their performance in the classroom. Our previous attempts at remedial coursework were founded on the assumption that our students struggled with content and that they needed more time to learn basic skills. That supposition may be true to an extent, but our pilot and our limited assessments so far support the growing consensus that non-cognitive factors play at least as decisive a role in student success as academic knowledge (Adams et al., 2009). As we move forward, changes to the corequisite curriculum will include an even greater emphasis on non-cognitive aspects of learning, or what some people in the university call success strategy acquisition.

Pilot

Our corequisite pilot designated a few sections of our first-year seminar courses as English satellite seminars and a few as math satellite seminars, replacing one hundred percent of our developmental math and English courses in the fall of 2018. We also still offer our standard first-year seminar to students who are not identified as needing corequisite support. Incoming freshmen whose scores indicated that they were not TSI-complete in reading or writing were strongly encouraged to enroll in an English satellite seminar and to enroll in the math satellite if their math scores were below the cut off. Those students would get credit for their first-year seminar requirement and, if they passed the gateway course, would become TSI-complete in that area. If a student was incomplete in both math and English, students were encouraged to take the English satellite seminar in the fall, based on the idea that reading and writing are more mission-critical to overall college success, and would take a math-focused corequisite seminar in the spring, which would differ entirely in its content, insofar as it would be focused on math.

In our fall 2018 pilot, 73 incoming freshmen were placed into English corequisite seminars in the fall, 60 were placed in math corequisite seminars, and 118 were placed in traditional, non-corequisite seminars. There were five English corequisite seminars and four math corequisite seminars in the fall. In some cases, the same instructor taught both the corequisite and the gateway course, and in some cases one instructor taught the gateway course and another taught the corequisite. Most of the corequisite sections were taught by tenure-track faculty in the fall, while two were taught by credentialed staff housed in the Student Success Center; we suspect that this mixture of collaborating stakeholders laid the groundwork for building a stronger program.

Math Engagement and Self-Efficacy

If the premise of the original first-year seminar at U of H-V was that academic learning has a concrete, real-world application, that concrete application was made vivid in the math corequisite seminar taught by one of the authors. Her corequisite seminar supports the gateway algebra class, providing just-in-time support for that class, as well as "life hacks" for student success at the college level. She also prioritizes student motivation and has observed high levels of student engagement with one assignment in particular. The assignment unfolded in three steps. First, students attended two library visits to learn how to research and produce an annotated bibliography. Students also researched their major and their careers. Next, students created an office building model based on their research on careers/major. Students spent no more than $10 on materials. The space could not be more than 2000 square feet, and it could not be either a rectangle or a square. The space had to include one gender-neutral bathroom, or two gender-specific bathrooms. The model had to include a reception area, and it had to be built to scale. Finally, a math report was required with a rationale for the design choices and an explanation

of the math involved accompanied with a blueprint. This assignment demonstrates math's real-world application and incorporates some of the specific math skills that one of the authors is already reviewing early in the semester, including fractions and the concept of scale, multiplication and division, and calculating the area of triangles, circles, or composite shapes.

One of the authors also engages a variety of methods in the math corequisite for the specific purpose of building students' self-efficacy in math. Self-efficacy broadly refers to both metacognitive awareness, enabling a student to repeat a success or transfer their learning in another context, and self-confidence (Roick & Ringeisen, 2016). Using write-to-learn strategies for building self-efficacy, the instructor asks students to reflect on and explain the math involved in their projects as well as their design choices. She hopes that through writing, students will consolidate their learning, take ownership of their own choices within the learning process, and become more aware of their own efficacy. She recalls one particularly successful project in which two highly engaged business students building code restrictions and required permit restrictions and their write up of the project included those as part of their calculations. Students working on these projects are also generally partnered with students in other sections of the math corequisite, which means that they cannot do the collaborative work that is required to complete the project in class, which forces them to engage strategically with time management, make connections across the university, and take professional/planning initiative with someone they did not already know.

In response to her observations of student needs, the most recent iteration of the course turned one of the author's previous emphasis on metacognition and self-efficacy (and not just mathematical content) into a tool for increasing student motivation. This version of the course included the same essential three-step assignment described above, but students researched playgrounds and playground safety, and she required students to write their reports for the benefit of local school officials. In future semesters, that instructor plans to use the same structure, but will focus the initial step on the question, "Why is math important?" As she puts it, "We've all sat in math class and wondered, 'When am I going to use this?'

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In this assignment, the student will answer that question themselves." We believe this assignment represents the promise of combining the corequisite with the freshman-seminar: when various areas of learning are engaged, or when various spaces at the university or outside it are meaningfully connected, learning becomes three-dimensional, or feels more relevant and real. By the same logic, we also contend that student success strategies, which provide the focus of the standard first-year seminar at our school, are more effectively engaged by being contextualized with academic content.

As part of emphasizing metacognition, self-efficacy and student success strategies as integral to math instruction, one of the authors also weighs "process work" very heavily into her grading. In her math corequisite, if the students simply do all of the assignments and attend class, they will certainly pass. In explaining her curriculum choices, she emphasizes metacognitive reflection, or reflection on one's own thinking and learning. Upwards of 25% of the assigned points in the course involve reflection on thinking and study practices. Clearly, thinking about thinking in order to heighten metacognitive self-efficacy fits the mission of the traditional freshman seminar, whose focus is supposed to be study skills—the reflection assignments in the math corequisite invite students to examine and potentially adjust their own thinking processes, their choices in terms of time management, their learning process, and their emotions. Yet these written reflection assignments also incorporate mathematical content, making metacognition, or awareness of what one is doing in order to better learn from one's own trial-and-error, central to a student's success in a math class. Given the serious emotional, financial and personal challenges faced by so many of our students, we believe that incorporating written reflection on students' own learning processes also enables instructors to connect with the non-cognitive and affective dimensions of students' lives; reflective metacognition not only provides students with a therapeutic habit of directly addressing disruptive emotion, but also helps make the personal dimensions of students' lives visible to instructors. We believe these non-cognitive dimensions of students' lives represent the make-or-break issue for students who are underprepared, and therefore need to be addressed in the math corequisite class.

The instructor's dual role at the university as both a success coach and as a corequisite instructor makes this point particularly vivid to us. As one of the designers and instructors of the corequisite, her role as success coach has influenced her approach to conceptualizing the corequisite. The success coaches at U of H-V use an invasive advising approach, which means that they actively seek out students who are struggling, sometimes knocking on dorm room doors, and generally providing proactive, and relatively intimate intervention in students' choices and lives. The role of the success coach is primarily to get students registered and on track to get their degrees, from the moment they walk in the door, but the role also blurs the line between counseling and advising. To us, this point goes back to the concept outlined by Adams et al. (2009) in their description of ALP's key tenets, that instructors pay attention to issues from outside the parameters of academic content. This same concept was also echoed in a remarkable written suggestion made by one of our students. He wrote:

> I been thinking [sic] and I wonder how students would perform if they had a mandatory class that teaches them mental health. I would like a required elective that helps all students with negativity. Negativity spreads doubt and it's contagious.

This student's comment goes further than the language used by Adams et al. (2009) or most educators when we talk about corequisites. Even though we have not gone so far as to frame our corequisite as a required course in mental health, the thrust of this student's concept speaks to an intangible element of what Adams has formalized in his articulation of corequisite support. We have combined the ethic of care inherent in the role of success coach with academic course work. This approach is widely supported by an emerging body of research which places students' non-cognitive challenges at the center of their chances for success in the academy (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014).

English Engagement and Self-Efficacy

If the math corequisite seminar takes advantage of synergy between academic learning and the non-cognitive coping skills essential to learning those skills, the English corequisite also embraces potential synergy between reading and writing instruction and the mission of the first-year seminar. Like the traditional first-year seminar at U of H-V the English corequisite seminar focuses on orienting students to university life, but with a reading and writing focus. The course teaches both college-readiness and reading and writing through a rhetorical lens, an approach described in composition and basic writing literature as "rhetorical

adaptability" (Negretti, 2012). Similarly, in the pages of this journal, Threadgill and Paulson (2018) explored the teaching of "rhetorical situation" as a powerful tool for "disciplinary literacy," or for helping students to understand the need to adapt their mindsets or approaches to reading and writing in various contexts or disciplines. According to the authors, teaching a context-sensitive approach to reading and writing at the university not only advances students' abilities to navigate the university and its many conventions, but also helps to build the metacognitive, strategic, self-monitoring, self-aware habits required for student success at the college level. In other words, heightened awareness of a text's author, audience and the overall context not only advances students' reading and writing, but functions as a metacognitive survival kit for college. Thus, if we are teaching reading and writing as processes, we are not only teaching academic content, but also metacognitive strategies for effective learning and thinking. In that sense, we are also potentially teaching students to transfer their learning between contexts and to adapt their approaches to learning for a variety of learning spaces, on and off campus (Carillo, 2016; Hassel & Giordano, 2009; Threadgill & Paulson, 2018; Wilson & Conyers, 2016). Thus, we contend that rhetorical reading and writing represent a particularly appropriate element of first-year seminar coursework.

The Use of Grading Contracts

As part of directly engaging the non-cognitive dimensions of learning, including self-efficacy and metacognition, the instructor's emphasis on process work in her math corequisite also played a defining role in the English corequisite: the faculty and staff who taught our 2018 corequisite pilot were chosen because they tended to embrace an ethic of care and, as part of that care, four out of five of the English corequisite instructors used a grading system similar to Thurmond's, in which brainstorming and reflection, along with other low-stakes writing, played a decisive role in determining whether or not students passed the corequisite section.

This emphasis on process work led the manager of academic support to use grading contracts in his sections of the English corequisite courses. In essence, grading contracts are agreements between instructors and students that outline the required activities for a particular grade. As Elbow (1996) stated, "A contract says, 'If you do x, y, and z, you can count on such and such grade" (p. 2). This "default grade" can be a B or C, depending on a course's requirements or an instructor's preference, but what's most important is the emphasis of labor and behavior. Elbow posited that using grading contracts allows him to "specify activities and behaviors that will lead to learning" (p. 2) rather than relying on grades to assess learning.

Inoue (2019) asserts something similar: "Learning contracts are designed to help learners achieve particular learning outcomes, not grades" (p. 63). Given that we were working with students who need extra support for their main English class, we found it prudent to shift away from grading every single assignment students were asked to do. Instead, by focusing on labor, students were encouraged to take risks without worrying about their final grade in the class. Additionally, "learning contracts promote student responsibility, agency, and control in mostly self-governed, learning processes, with an attention to what that process is meant to achieve or produce" (Inoue, 2019, p. 65). This also helps to de-emphasize what Dweck et al. (2014) has called a fixed mindset and helps to foster a growth mindset among students. That is, with a grading contract that focuses on activities related to learning rather than measuring the quality of the work, students understand that developing facility with writing often requires multiple attempts, rather than being perfect from the beginning.

There are also other reasons for using a grading contract specifically at an HSI. Inoue (2019) indicated the importance of giving students, particularly students of color, full access to the entire range of grades in the class, something that is not possible in a traditionally graded classroom. He asserted,

> Because the teacher's judgments of quality are what determines whether any draft is acceptable or not in the system, some students may still not be able to achieve a high grade, even if they desire to and are willing to work extra hard. (p. 68)

He contended that traditionally graded classrooms lock students from non-dominant discourses out of the highest grades available in the class ipso facto, regardless of a student's motivation and willingness to do well. While we do not argue that grading contracts can be effective in all classes and in all subjects, their use in the English corequisite classes seems necessary to create the fairest assessment possible, to emphasize success strategies, and to help students develop confidence to succeed in a college environment.

An Ecosystem of Learning

Combining the first-year seminar with the corequisite proves particularly promising for addressing non-cognitive issues as part of a larger U of H-V ecosystem. For instance, the Success Coaches use academic success referrals (ASR) as a form of early alert for students falling behind in their coursework. Faculty in the corequisite and main courses may submit an ASR to alert a success coach that a student has missed several classes or has not completed homework, or seems to be falling asleep in class, among a myriad of other things. While the ASR is geared around academic success, faculty may cite non-academic reasons for alerting the success coach. From there, the coach will reach out to the student through phone calls, e-mails, and text messages. However, if these modes of communication do not elicit a response, the success coaches will go as far as to visit the student's residence hall room (although this tactic is rarely used at U of H-V Most students respond to the text messages). After getting the student to schedule a meeting with them, the success coach will discuss the topics in the ASR, ask the students about any underlying causes, and present strategies to resolve the issue.

Besides the ASR process, the implementation of the corequisite courses has necessitated stronger collaborations administratively between the University College and the School of Arts and Sciences. This has especially been the case with the pairing of certain main courses and their satellite corequisite courses. In the ALP model, the main class and the support class are taught by the same person, and the main class contains roughly half or fewer students who are underprepared for college. At U of H-V, a perfect linking like this proved challenging to achieve due to scheduling issues, resource shortages, and the fact that the two courses are housed in different departments. Instead, our corequisite and main courses were taught by different faculty, and the corequisite instructors may have students from multiple English 1301 courses (although, some paired instructors had the same 25 students in both courses). The math corequisite courses were organized in a similar way, though both College Algebra and the corequisite courses are much larger than those in English. While this type of structuring made scaling the program to 100% of underprepared students possible in the first year, it also resulted in less communication between paired instructors than would be ideal.

Success

We were gratified to hear students describing corequisite as a place where they feel like they belong. One student remarked of the instructor's class in particular, "You created a family." Another pair commented in an end-of-semester reflection,

...we also contend that student success strategies, which provide the focus of the standard first-year seminar at our school, are more effectively engaged by being contextualized with academic content.

"This class was our home away from home." But beyond that crucial affective dimension, there were also signals from some students that they did in fact transfer some of the learning that took place in the corequisite seminar to other courses. In this unprompted account, one student describes how his corequisite class was helping him in his English gateway course:

> In my freshmen seminar class with an instructor, she talked about the different ways where you can put an argument and have backup towards your argument. What she talked about helped me on this writing project by putting an idea I was against about immigrants and having backup towards those ideas.... The words will make the backup more interesting and it will help people understand why they should not be against something or someone without knowing the reason why someone looks, acts, dresses, moves or does something. That instructor's information helped me a lot with this writing process with the information she talked about.

We contend that when instructors and students are able to see relevant connections between classes, and when otherwise separate divisions of the university are able to collaborate in the name of student success, students benefit.

Challenges

Though we believe in the pedagogical tenets of our model, which contextualizes metacognition and success strategy acquisition with academic content by combining the first-year seminar with the corequisite, some aspects of implementation proved to be a challenge. The first challenge that we experienced in implementing this model has had to do with the logistics of linking the corequisite seminars to the gateway courses. Teaching load issues prevented Arts & Sciences faculty from teaching both the gateway courses and the corequisite seminar. That limitation drove us to forge collaborations between University College staff and Arts and Sciences faculty. But then the challenge became keeping the size of the corequisites low while still integrating underprepared students (without stigmatizing them). During our first semester pilot, our efforts to accomplish these goals required the registrar to create confusing, unsustainable fixes for registration purposes. Since then we have reverted to larger class sizes, with as many as 25 students in each section. In math, we have gateway courses consisting entirely of students who have also been placed in the corequisite seminar, which creates a one-to-one cohort: the same group of students in gateway math also meets in the corequisite seminar for *just-in-time* support for that class. The English

corequisite seminar, by contrast, contains a mixed group of students coming from multiple core English sections. The advantage is that those students are not stigmatized in their English core classes, but the instructor of the English corequisite seminar cannot provide "just-in-time" support for the English gateway course.

The second clear challenge that we have faced in implementing this model has had to do with the fact that many of our incoming freshmen were TSI incomplete in math and in at least one English area. Our solution in this scenario was to require students to take the English corequisite seminar in their first semester and to take the math corequisite seminar in the spring. Our rationale is that the freshman seminar content (focused on metacognition or student success strategies) could bear repeating and would not be identical to what they experienced in the fall semester English corequisite anyway since it would have been contextualized with English content.

Discussion

Particularly in light of the fact that our program does not actually de-stigmatize students for having been placed in obviously marked developmental courses, we are resolved in the future to de-emphasize TSI test scores in placing students and potentially to move closer to directed self-placement. Additionally, in light of preliminary assessment findings, we hope to strengthen instruction in both math and English with a renewed focus on addressing two pivotal issues impacting our students' success. First, we hope to assess and come to a more fine-grained understanding of what impacts student motivation. If our courses feature *process work* prominently in students' course grades (such that attending class and turning in work means they will pass) what, then accounts for the students who still do not pass our corequisite classes? Second, based on a survey (described below) completed by students in English corequisite sections, we hope to assess/track the influence of something we are calling *metacognitive initiative* as well as the corequisite's potential for developing it. Though our survey was based on an admittedly small sample size, we are intrigued by its results. It asked, "Do you use any 'life hacks' [sic] for tackling a challenging reading assignments?" And it asked the same question related to writing. The students who described strategies of some kind did better during their first year of college, even if the strategies they described were eccentric or seemed like they might be counter-productive. All of these refer to students in the spring of 2019, following the first fall semester of our pilot, as indicated in Figure 1.

STRATEGIES	**NON-STRATEGIES**
Average cumulative GPA when...	Average cumulative GPA when...

Enrolled in composition II: 2.78	Enrolled in composition II: 2.10
Enrolled in algebra: 2.53	Enrolled in algebra: 1.85

Overall cumulative GPA of strategies: 2.44	Overall cumulative GPA of non-strategies: 1.85

Figure 1. Strategies and non-strategies.

On one hand, we cannot draw a causal connection between the strategies and the success. For instance, we were fascinated to see that those who reported using reading and writing strategies were higher grade earners in both English and math. This could mean that the more self-consciously strategic students were simply disposed to be better at school across the board, and the same thing that made them better at school also made them the kind of person who would be able to recite elements of strategies or teacher talk from high school. At the same time, we are intrigued by the association between having some strategies and higher GPA, and we think it is worth exploring further. We were particularly interested to see that even students whose reading/writing strategies did not seem like strong strategies did better. Just to name one example, one student informed us that she routinely uses the HELP strategy to write a paper, which she explained means incorporating "History, Economy, Language and Process" into her papers. When I asked for further clarification, this student said that the acronym helps her come up with ideas for papers and sometimes she structures her papers with sections to match. Certainly, to a writing teacher, this student's strategy appears idiosyncratic, yet we find it remarkable that along with the other strategic students, this student's GPA was significantly higher than the average GPA for students who declined to identify themselves as using any reading or writing strategies. To us, this suggests that taking the initiative to implement strategies at all matters a great deal—maybe even more than the wisdom of the strategy itself.

Conclusion

On the one hand, we have described our response to the Texas mandate to institute corequisites as rooted in a particular place with its own institutional history. For instance, for us, the high percentage of minority students at our HSI school demanded that we carefully consider the emerging literature on grading contracts and antiracist writing assessment as part of our considerations in developing the English portion of the first-year seminar/corequisite. Other structuring elements of our local context drove us to use specialized sections of the first-year seminar as the corequisite and that choice effectively placed math, English and success coaches into close collaboration with one another. That cross-pollination fruitfully encouraged all of us to place a primary emphasis upon process work and metacognitive reflection as a part of scaffolding learning for gateway courses. It also meant that we found more blurred lines between counseling and teaching than are expected in our non-corequisite classes. Yet at the same time, perhaps our story of developing a unique corequisite model, whose uniqueness derives precisely from responding to local needs and institutional histories while also fulfilling the state mandate, itself suggests methods for other contexts. Fundamentally, the lesson of the corequisite or our implementation of it is one of radical sharing or sharing of responsibility for underprepared students across all divisions.

Developing and teaching the corequisite demanded high involvement of faculty and staff with students, and with each other, through an ethic of care. As we see it, this process effectively extended already existing ecosystems of support unique to our institutional context. The fact that staff who are responsible for providing student success services were involved in teaching and developing the courses along with the academic faculty and vice versa—combined with the smallness of our school—meant that a close knit team of people, people who affectively engage with student success, shaped the program. This ethic of care boils down not only to affectation but also a willingness to engage students' non-cognitive needs. Given our online mission, many faculty actually live elsewhere, so they cannot participate in meeting-intensive collaborations or are not available to students outside of their office hours. The people who developed and shaped the corequisite by contrast, tend to be the faculty and staff who live locally and make themselves available to students. Because part of an ecosystem is place and space, the students feel more connected to the faculty who live here. We also found that the learning ecologies of the writing and reading program extended to students' performances and practices in the math classes, and vice versa. Additionally, the math and English instructors influence each other and have become increasingly interconnected. The same is true of the corequisite seminar courses and their paired core/gateway courses. The effect has been to create a support network that goes beyond classrooms, beyond advising, and extends all across campus. Because of extensive collaborative links between us, we forget

that we are distinct departments, which seems to create a tighter safety-net for struggling students. For instance, as a success coach and collaborator on the math corequisite seminar, the instructor finds herself reaching out to the math faculty member who teaches algebra, sometimes going back and forth via text message at midnight, in order to figure out why a student is struggling. In this sense, the learning ecosystem involves us in a way that would not occur in traditional courses.

When Adams et al. (2009) called for mainstreaming of students normally placed in remedial courses, he critiqued "isolating" those students. That isolation sometimes takes the form of outsourcing support for those students, from the perspective of faculty who feel underprepared to help underprepared students. In our experience, outsourcing support for underprepared students conduces to institutional "silo-ing," where certain divisions are designated as responsible for student success initiatives and certain divisions are less so. Our model resists those divisions. Thus, in the same sense in which there is Writing Across the Curriculum, perhaps our model can be understood as metacognition across the curriculum, or Success Strategies Across the Curriculum. In our model, everyone is responsible for everything.

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