The Impact of Partnership-Centered, Community-Based Learning on First-Year Students' Academic Research Papers

Ann M. Feldman, **Tom Moss**, **Diane Chin**, **Megan Marie**,
Candice Rai, and **Rebecca Graham**
University of Illinois at Chicago

This article presents a control group study of the influence of a partnership-centered, community-based learning program on students' academic writing. The improved writing of first-year students in the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP), we argue, results from the deeply situated learning that took place in the context of reciprocal, community-based relationships. We also argue that research on the impact of community-based learning should take into account the contemporary university's emerging paradigm of engaged learning and research, which calls for a redefinition of partnership and reciprocity.

Research in a Context of Partnership

Calls for more rigorous research on the impact of service-learning suggest that high-quality, quantitative evidence will persuade universities of service-learning's pedagogical value and thus promote greater acceptance (Bacon, 2001; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Bringle, Philips, & Hudson, 2004; Holland, Gelmon, Furco, & Bringle, 2005; Zlotkowski, 2000). Indeed, for those of us in the university, research characterizes "the kind of thing we do around here."[1] However, "the kind of thing we do around here" is changing in profound ways and this change shapes our study of service-learning classes and programs. To explicate the shifting context in which our research-based assessment occurred, this section outlines the ways that universities are reconstituting knowledge-making activities and reevaluating their roles in metropolitan communities. Considerations of the university's relationship to its community have been present in rhetoric and composition research for some time, and several key studies have built on sophisticated notions of reciprocity and partnership. To further lay the groundwork for the control group study presented in this article—a study that suggests that partnership-centered, community-based learning activities significantly enhance student writing skills—we will briefly introduce the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP). We believe that the opportunity our program gives students to work within reciprocal community partnerships is the key to understanding why our program creates an academic advantage. Therefore, our description of CCLCP will emphasize how rec-

iprocal partnerships have contributed to its development.

Both vernacular and academic sets of knowledge are contributing to new dialogues and unique perspectives that are resulting in radical changes in knowledge production. A transdisciplinary (Gibbons et al. 1994, p. 3) approach to research that is demand-driven, methodologically flexible, entrepreneurial, collaborative, and embedded in complex contexts is emerging. For example, a University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) professor has initiated the Chicago Public Art Group, which partners with "city agencies, private firms, and other organizations to produce community-oriented, site-integrated public artworks in which artists work with architects, designers, and engineers in the early planning stages" (Gude, 2000, p. 2). As part of its ongoing work, the art group seizes on a unique idea for developing a "place," begins by creating a dialogue among all stakeholders, and then continues by conducting research, exploring the site, working collaboratively to create a budget, actually making the space, evaluating its use, and celebrating its presence. This exemplifies how knowledge is produced in its "context of application" (Gibbons et al., p. 3) and must be evaluated for its contribution to that context. The contrast is striking to traditional, university-based disciplinary activity, in which knowledge production responds to internally-driven, scholarly agendas. This reshaping of knowledge-making activities has upset the routine of researchers who raided off-campus communities for data, and of universities that participated in the destruction of thriving communities under the banner of urban renewal

(Muthesius, 2000; Wiewel & Broski, 1999).[2] In currently materializing higher-education contexts, partnership and reciprocity form the basis of participatory research that creates community assets while enriching the knowledge work of the metropolitan university (Walshok, 1995; see also Feldman, manuscript). Holland (2005) predicts that engaged research will become an important measure of "academic quality and prestige." As research activities in higher education don the mantle of engagement, so do teaching and learning, often in the form of service-learning or community-based learning. Further, as Holland (2006) explains, changes in institutional mission also create consequences for teaching and learning. Universities have become interested in attracting students who want to participate as both knowledge workers and productive citizens in the emerging global context. Universities also are interested in improving teaching and learning outcomes, demonstrating accountability, and encouraging both civic-mindedness and professionalism in students (Holland).

Keith (2005) characterizes the challenges of developing service-learning based on an understanding of reciprocity that obviates the "server-served" relationship (p. 13; see also Feldman, 2003). She sees productive opportunities for student learning when reciprocity "emphasizes respectful listening of perspectives and histories, together with community-building and possibly advocacy in an environment that acknowledges difficult emotions and political choices that accompany these tensions on both sides" (p. 15). What is needed, Keith argues, is "to rebuild discursive and public spaces in local communities" (p. 17). In other words, students should do more than participate in direct service at local community-based agencies; they should participate in rethinking with partner agencies not only the quality of their services, but also the political and economic contexts in which services are delivered; and, finally, their roles in policy-making that contributes to change.

In higher education, the agenda outlined above cannot be carried out by individual faculty members and small groups of students; enactment requires an institutional commitment. The faculty member who, with community partners, collaboratively researches ways of providing low-cost housing, planning for lead abatement, evaluating or improving public transportation, identifying community assets, lessening the high-school dropout rate, or strengthening the capacity of not-for-profits, has at hand a ready-made, community-based context in which to introduce students to community-based learning. But if the faculty member's

community-based research is not valued in the institution, neither will be the teaching and learning outgrowths of that scholarship.

Community-based learning that arises from English studies and, in particular, from scholarship in rhetoric and composition, has generated a stream of research that focuses on the importance of reciprocal partnerships for student learning. This research builds on a theoretical predisposition that defines writing, and language use in general, as a consequential, meaning-making activity (Bawarshi, 2003; Crosswhite, 1996; Mailloux, 1995; Petraglia, 2000; Russell, 1995). Reporting on her community-based literacy research, Cushman (1996) writes about the problems of slippery discourse, the challenge of taking into account the perspectives of community members outside the academy, and the seductive nature of academic privilege. Cushman (2002) defines research-based service-learning as an intellectually challenging activity that synthesizes research with both teaching and building community capacity. She supports the argument we want to make: theory-based pedagogical efforts connected to rigorous, ongoing research and, we would add, assessment, have a greater potential to be accepted as "what we do around here." Linda Flower (2002) argues that the knowledge-making "we do around here" can be shifted to the broader landscape "out there." For Flower, notions of reciprocal partnerships bring into focus the competing social, cultural, and literary epistemologies at work when students enter a community. Flower argues for "transformative understanding" as an active, participatory practice that supports students as they move beyond good intentions to understand how one can use language as a form of praxis, that is, informed action (pp. 184-187).

Through analyzing a series of case studies, Deans (2000) illustrates how student writing can move from decontextualized classroom activities to participatory activity that contributes to real-world change. His three models for community-based writing—*writing for* the community, *writing about* the community, and *writing with* the community—provided the framework for the wide range of writing students do in the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP). Much of the writing in typical service-learning courses constitutes what Deans calls "writing about" the community: students have an experience in the field and return to classroom to process and critique that experience in writing. Deans' case study of Bruce Herzberg's two-semester sequence of writing courses at Bentley College describes a version of "writing about" informed by Herzberg's dual commitment to social justice and to preparing students to comprehend and produce academic discourse. Herzberg's focus, Deans writes, is on critical peda-

gogy; he encourages students to critique "dominant social institutions (particularly schools) and dominant attitudes (particularly the ubiquitous American faith in individualism and meritocracy)" (p. 91). During Herzberg's second-semester course, students produce lengthy research-based papers about important social issues that are intended for an academic audience and, particularly, for the teacher (Deans, p. 97).

Service-learning's standard rationale for "writing about" is that learning occurs through a cyclical pattern of experience in the community followed by written reflection produced in the classroom (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 7, pp. 175-176). In classes such as Herzberg's, "writing about" encourages students to explicate and support thoughtful critique in carefully-constructed academic arguments, but when students are asked to use writing *only* as a way of recording and/or expressing their personal reactions to experience, they may not come to understand and appreciate writing's rhetorical power to give shape to situations and influence outcomes. In such cases, students easily misperceive writing as a mere conduit for carrying reports of experience to the teacher. We argue that writing does not reflect experience or feelings about experience as might a mirror; rather, writing is a tool for making meaning in social contexts. This premise has guided the CCLCP's emphasis on involving students in reciprocal partnerships to produce writing for partner organizations.

Program Design

The Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP) offers incoming UIC students the opportunity to add to their undergraduate work a dimension of civic participation through the study of writing, rhetoric, and urban issues.[3] CCLCP develops reciprocal partnerships with not-for-profit organizations during a curriculum planning process that focuses on meeting partner organizations' needs for research assistance and for written documents in diverse genres. In the current pilot program, students are earning a certificate and qualifying for paid, community-based internships by taking five classes (one each semester). Each class includes fieldwork that requires students to apply and/or to test classroom learning in the context of projects undertaken with and for partner not-for-profit organizations. During 2004-05, the first year of the three-year pilot program, two semester-long writing courses provided a foundation in rhetorical analysis and argument. Students designed and wrote documents during fieldwork experience with local non-profits such as Gads Hill Center, The Resurrection Project, and Changing Worlds. During the second year of the pilot, 2005-06, students took two courses in UIC's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, and worked on related research-based writing projects during fieldwork with nonprofit partners, including planning organizations such as the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, and the Metro Chicago Information Center. The final course in the sequence, "English 375: Rhetoric and Public Life," to be offered in Fall 2006, requires a capstone project, collaboratively designed by a student and a community partner of the student's choice, and implemented by the student to the partner's specifications. Students who earn the CCLCP certificate may apply for paid internships with the program's student-centered CityWorks Center, which will open in January 2007. Interns with CCLCP certificates will be very well-prepared to extend their work with community partners at local sites.[4]

Student learning in the CCLCP depends on writing activity that is carried out, at least in part, in the context of reciprocal partnerships. Reciprocity, for CCLCP, refers to the complex relationships developed among the program staff, faculty, students, and the not-for-profit organizations that partner with CCLCP for the purpose of producing written documents needed by the organization. This relationship exemplifies a "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998), defined as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDerMott, & Snyder, 2002; p. 34; see Keith, 2005, for a useful discussion of reciprocity). For instance, a student working to produce a fact sheet for Gads Hill Center, a venerable social service organization and CCLCP partner, must become immersed in many aspects of the agency to design and produce the document. Such work transcends the "writing for" category in that it is reciprocal. In the process of working together to define needs and problem-solve, students and partners establish deep and ongoing relationships in which all participants contribute to social capital. These relationships cannot be characterized as simple information exchanges; rather, the exchanges that transpire in a community of practice build knowledge in the context of a joint, collaborative venture fueled by the understanding that reciprocity depends on consequential, long-term social relationships. Communities of practice, like the ones we hope to create for CCLCP students, provide what Vygotskian learning theorists call a "zone of proximal development'" in which "social relations provide a motive and a context for apply-

ing and acquiring knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990, p. 326). CCLCP students learn in situated contexts how writing works, and then can transfer that knowledge to other contexts in which they find themselves writing.

Our commitment to developing reciprocal partnerships influenced not only the design of the CCLCP but also our plans for assessment and research. It took months to lay the groundwork for CCLCP by developing partnerships with not-for-profit community organizations based on each partner organization's needs for specific research and/or written documents. Throughout this process, we worked closely with UIC's Great Cities Neighborhoods Initiative, which has a track record of creating and maintaining successful community-university partnerships. With CCLCP community partners as co-teachers, we collaboratively designed projects for students, who, immersed in the work of their organizations would go on to plan, design, and produce (mostly research-based) documents, needed by their community partner organizations. While classroom lessons concerned rhetoric, genre, effective writing, argumentation, and documented research, as well as urban theory and issues, students' lessons in the field invited a rich sense of participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

What impact did the CCLCP students' immersion in reciprocal community partnerships have on their writing? The next part of this article traces the design of an assessment matrix that crystallized student learning goals, guided syllabus development, and focused program evaluation on student learning outcomes. Our student learning outcomes matrix proved heuristic; questions it posed led to further questions about whether students' participation in the language activities of community-based partners would have an impact on the students' *academic* writing. That question inspired the research we report in this article. Because CCLCP grew out of an established, university-wide, first-year writing program we had both the access and the set of writing criteria we needed to design a study comparing CCLCP students' academic research papers to the papers of a control group of students who did not participate in a community-based learning experience.

Assessment Matrix for Student Learning Outcomes

Developing assessment matrices offered an important opportunity to translate CCLCP's conceptual framework into clearly articulated, measurable goals. Our matrices, modeled on work by Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan (2001), address three areas: student learning, faculty development, and community partnership. Because this article focuses on the impact of reciprocal partnerships on student learning, we will confine our discussion to the student learning outcomes matrix (see Table 1). The task of identifying specific learning goals and asking how we might know whether they had been met began early and continued simultaneously with syllabus development during the summer before CCLCP's inaugural semester. Designing the learning outcomes matrix turned out to be a challenging, recursive process that tested our ability to translate theory into instructional activities that would support student achievement of CCLCP learning goals.

The first column in CCLCP's 2004-2005 matrix for student learning, labeled "We want to know...", presents our program's core concepts. The left side of that column categorizes the core concepts into the four main strands of CCLCP: rhetoric and academics, community-based writing and research, civic engagement, and leadership. The right side frames our core concepts as a series of questions. The task of posing these questions demanded that a baggy set of theoretical beliefs be written as testable questions, research questions, if you will. The exercise brings home, especially to writing teachers, the rhetoric at work in articulating learning goals for students. The second column, labeled "And we will know by...", asks for key indicators of student accomplishment. The third column identifies sources of data. Each instructional activity planned for CCLCP's writing classes would be tested against the learning goals identified in the assessment matrix and the goals would be shared with students so they would understand what we expected them to learn.

In the previous section, we sketched the ways in which our community-based learning project built on an institution-wide commitment to engaged scholarship and on discipline-specific notions about how reciprocal partnerships enhance writing instruction. Learning goals for CCLCP students came alive through writing projects with real-world impact. The projects were shaped by ongoing reciprocal relationships with community partners and enacted lessons about how language functions rhetorically in particular contexts. All this happened because of a question we asked ourselves about our matrix's first two conceptual categories, rhetoric and academics, and community-based writing and research. This key question was, "But how will we know whether students apply their rhetorical lessons in community-based contexts?" As we realized, the answer to that question lay in

Feldman et al.

Table 1
Assessment Matrix for Student Learning Outcomes

We want to know...(Core Concepts)		And we will know by ... (Key Indicators)	Method
Rhetoric and Academics	How do students apply the rhetorical dimensions of situation, genre, language and consequences in the context of their work with at community agencies?	Articulation and application of rhetoric to specific situations.	Analysis of cover letters, field notes, other student writing; student focus group.
	How does writing and learning in this program facilitate writing and learning in other university classes?	Articulation of how students' understanding of rhetoric has facilitated writing and learning in other university classes.	Course surveys; student focus group; field notes, and other student writing.
Community-based writing and research	How effectively are the documents created for the community partners?	Feedback from community partners. Feedback from faculty. Student self-evaluation of changes in writing skills.	Community partner focus group; faculty interviews; analysis of field notes, student surveys, and other student writing
	How do students apply communication methods and skills to conduct research within various discourse communities?	Feedback from community partners. Feedback from faculty. Student self-evaluation of changes in research skills.	Student focus group; student surveys; analysis of field notes and other student writing.
	How do students adjust their communication styles to enable them to function optimally in both complex community-based and university-based situations?	Perceived change in ability to identify communication problems. Feedback from faculty. Feedback from community partners .	Student focus group; analysis of field notes and other student writing; faculty interviews; community partner focus group.
Civic Engagement	How do students value civic engagement for its impact on society at large?	Articulation of knowledge about community and public issues. Recognition of changes or possibilities for change in public life as a result of their actions. Understanding of community strengths, problems, resources. Identification of community assets and needs.	Analysis of research papers; student focus group.
	How do students integrate their civic engagement activities with their academic, career and personal goals?	Choice of a major that enables students to pursue civic engagement activities. Career decisions that enable students to pursue civic engagement activities. Extra-curricular activities that enable students to pursue civic engagement activities.	Student surveys; student focus group.
Leadership	How does participation in this program shape students' understanding of leadership?	Articulation of a dynamic definition of leadership that includes examples. Articulation of how leadership skills have been demonstrated by community partners.	Student focus group; community partner focus group.
	How does participation in this program shape students' ability to lead?	Sense of responsibility for solving problems and taking ownership of projects. Ability to collaborate with others and facilitate teamwork.	Faculty interviews; community partner focus group; student focus group.

our examination of the brochures and fact sheets first-semester CCLCP students produced for community partners; these documents demonstrate the extent to which classroom learning was enacted in a community context.

The learning outcomes matrix also poses the question, "How do students adjust their communication styles to enable them to function optimally in both complex community-based and university-based situations?" This question led us to examine students' ability to accomplish both community-based writing for their partner organizations—the kind of writing they attempted when producing brochures and fact sheets in their first-semester writing course—and written academic discourse. We looked for evidence of competent academic writing in the research papers produced in English 161, the second-semester writing course required of all UIC undergraduates, including those enrolled in CCLCP.

Question for Research

Our study investigated not only whether CCLCP students could competently generate an extended academic argument based on inquiry, but whether students' community-based learning experience had an impact on the quality of their end-of-semester research papers. Our First-Year Writing Program has established evaluation criteria for these research papers, so a panel of readers was able to refer to the same standard criteria when rating all the papers in a mixed sample of papers written by students in CCLCP's community-based learning version of English 161 and papers produced by a control group of students in traditional English 161 courses. We then compared the average scores of each group. We argued above that in addition to responding to calls for more rigorous research design, service-learning scholars should contemplate how to design research that captures the complexity of partnership-centered, community-based learning. The study presented here aims to test the effect of writing experiences situated in the context of reciprocal partnerships with not-for-profit organizations.

Both the CCLCP students and control group students were enrolled during the same semester, Spring 2005, in sections of English 161. It is important to note that the conceptual framework was the same for both classes. English 161 requires all students to participate in academic culture by conducting guided research, posing questions about important issues, and developing an argument in response to positions taken by others. We want students in this course to see themselves as participants in a consequential investigation, and to

position themselves within an ongoing conversation about the topic of their research. Each English 161 instructor develops a particular thematic inquiry and students may choose a class that suits their interests, although, of course, many students choose classes that best fit their schedules. Typical fields of inquiry for English 161 include immigration, community development, animal rights, gentrification, globalization, education, or issues centering on race or ethnicity, class, and gender. During the first half of the semester, students in traditional English 161 classes read about the class's broad topic in a variety of disciplinary and vernacular genres, and produce short papers demonstrating mastery of summary, synthesis, and analysis. Although English 161 students may explore their own communities or communities neighboring UIC by conducting interviews and examining archival materials, more typically their research is drawn from academic journals, scholarly books, and other material available though research libraries.

Classroom activities in the CCLCP section of English 161 paralleled activities in the traditional sections. However, a key difference occurred in the projects produced in the first part of the semester. CCLCP students completed community-based writing projects that responded to needs identified by their partner organizations, such as portions of annual reports, press kits, brochures, Web content, and feature stories. CCLCP students learned about summary, synthesis, and analysis by applying these skills to analyzing both documents produced by their partner organizations and academic readings on rhetoric and urban issues. Because CCLCP students learned to apply the skills of summary, synthesis, and analysis from the perspective of their community partners, students came to understand exigence and what it means to respond rhetorically to a real-world situation. Summary, synthesis, and analysis were no longer decontextualized intellectual strategies, but practices taken up in response to an organization's need to achieve usually concrete ends.

From the beginning of the semester, just as in traditional English 161 classes, CCLCP students began to contemplate their research paper topics. Most students consulted with their community partners and chose an issue related to their partner organization's work. A few students chose to write about service-learning itself, with a focus on the pedagogy of the CCLCP. About midway through the semester, instruction in both the CCLCP and traditional sections of English 161 turned to the origination of a research proposal. From that point, instruction increasingly focused on academic

inquiry and development of an argument-based, documented investigation that would result in a 10-to-12-page research paper. For the past ten years or so, UIC's First-Year Writing Program has relied on a criterion-based evaluation rubric for the research paper, developed collaboratively by members of the teaching staff. The rubric (see Table 2) identifies key course features that define program-wide instruction and evaluation. These criteria stem, at least in part, from the First-Year Writing Program's commitment to engaged scholarship. The work expected of first-year writing students parallels—in a broad, conceptual way—the scholarly work of faculty who investigate significant issues in their own disciplinary contexts. As such, the features of the rubric emphasize the contextual, participatory features of research, and our program's attempts to bring students into dialogue with authors and stakeholders concerned about the issue under study. Thus, our research paper evaluation rubric draws on the broad intellectual framework of engagement and sets the same goals for both traditional and CCLCP students. "Engagement," throughout the First-Year Writing Program, refers broadly to engagement with textual voices that have something to say about important civic and/or social issues. Instruction in CCLCP, we claim, with its strong focus on reciprocal partnership, adds an extra dimension and thereby offers a qualitatively different experience of engagement.

With the introduction of these specific evaluation criteria, we can fine-tune our research question. We were able to ask to what degree, on average, each set of papers adhered to each of the five research paper criteria established by our First-Year Writing Program.

Research Design

We began by constructing a control group of research papers to compare to CCLCP papers. A pool of 70 English 161 students was chosen from the universe of 1,864 students enrolled in traditional English 161 classes during Spring Semester 2005. None of the 70 students had been in classes taught by any of the four readers involved in this study. This pool was not constituted at random: CCLCP students had been recruited and admitted to the program based on ACT English subscores of 22 or more, so the traditional-course pool was matched to the CCLCP group on the basis of that score and also for gender and ethnicity. This strategy helped establish a viable control group, albeit not a perfect one. We were unable to control for variables such as previous service-learning experience, interest in community issues or volunteerism, high school preparation, second-language influence, prior instruction and quality of instruction in college composition, socioeconomic status, and year in college. We also were unable to control for the fact that CCLCP students had applied to partic-

Table 2

Evaluation Criteria for English 161 Research Papers

Evaluation Criterion	Description
Taking a position	The writer articulates a position or thesis that contributes to a significant public conversation. The position relates to key themes discussed in the class materials and work. The writer attends to the consequences of his or her position, its personal relevance, and the potential or real public impact.
Developing arguments in context	The writer understands that arguments emerge from important public and academic conversations in which participants respond to each other as if in dialogue. They question claims, ask questions about evidence, consider the appropriateness of the evidence, qualify their assertions, and respond to counter claims.
Using sources effectively	The writer identifies and reviews appropriate source material relevant to his or her position, characterizes the sources' arguments, discusses disciplinary methods and approaches, provides historical context, critiques the sources, and considers the sources' perspectives.
Engaging intellectual strategies	The writer demonstrates the ability to engage in a dialogue of ideas with the sources used in the paper. The work is enhanced by the ability to summarize, synthesize, and analyze. In addition, writers demonstrate how appropriate paraphrasing and quoting contribute to this dialogue of ideas.
Using language appropriately	The writer makes grammar and stylistic choices appropriate to the audience and purpose. The writer also cites sources appropriately, integrating the cited material into the writer's work.

ipate in the program and that the CCLCP cohort had "bonded" by studying writing together the previous semester. For the research study, we decided that roughly 50 percent of the papers from CCLCP cohort of 33 students would be reviewed, so 16 CCLCP papers were randomly selected for review. Sixteen control group papers were then randomly selected from the pool of 70 drawn from traditional English 161 classes. To prepare for the review, all identifying marks were removed from all the papers. Four English 161 instructors were employed to review the papers; three were graduate teaching assistants and one a teaching adjunct. Before teaching writing at UIC, the teaching assistants completed a semester-long graduate course on first-year writing pedagogy about the conceptual framework that drives writing instruction at UIC, designed syllabi for the courses they would teach, and practiced grading research papers using our program-wide evaluation criteria (see Table 2). The fourth reader, a full-time lecturer, had prepared to teach writing at UIC by attending intensive training sessions and developing detailed syllabi that were reviewed and approved by the First-Year Writing Program administration staff. While the instructors chosen to review papers for this study had significant and relevant training and experience, they had no connection to courses comprised by the CCLCP.

The readers met over three consecutive days in mid-August 2005. A portion of the first day was spent preparing to score the papers. First, the readers discussed each evaluation criterion to come to a shared definition. Next, they participated in a calibration exercise, individually reading a sample paper and rating it on a scale of one through five on each of the five criteria. The group then discussed the scores. This exercise was intended to help readers develop a common understanding of how to apply the standards against which papers were to be scored. After this calibration exercise and throughout the next two days, each reader read each of the 32 papers, scoring each paper on each of the five criteria in the evaluation rubric. This criterion-based scoring method was introduced into writing assessment by Lloyd-Jones in his essay "Primary Trait Scoring" (1977), and is described by Bizzell (1987) in her discussion of later work by noted composition scholars Faigley, Cherry, Jolliffe, and Skinner (1985). As Bizzell explains, primary trait scoring "focuses on a set of criteria derived from the kind of task posed" to students (p. 580). This approach, Bizzell notes, provides much more information than other methods, but is extremely labor-intensive.

During the three-day reading process two issues emerged. First, even though the 32 papers to be read were presented as a single, mixed sample, meaning they were not grouped by origin, early in the reading process readers noticed that they were dealing with two distinct sets of papers. Specifically, they observed that in one set of papers the research topics were much more clearly defined than in the other. (The clearly defined topics, as it turned out, emerged from the CCLCP papers.) Despite this observation, the readers were encouraged to continue applying the evaluation criteria to every paper, as they had been trained to do. A second, unanticipated, question arose about grading. Even through the evaluation criteria are used in every English 161 class, instructors frequently use them holistically, as a guide to assigning a single composite grade to each paper. Further discussion helped clarify that the readers should not imagine that they were scoring papers holistically, in the interest of arriving at a grade. Accordingly, they were instructed to use the full range of scores, one through five, to denote the degree to which a paper fulfilled each separate criterion.

Results

In this study we asked to what degree, on average, each of the two sets of research papers—from the CCLCP class and from the traditional group-adhered to each of the five evaluation criteria for English 161. We found a statistically significant difference in each average primary trait score between the papers produced by CCLCP students and those written by students in traditional classes (see Table 3). This finding suggests that CCLCP students' partnership-centered, community-based learning activities contributed to the relatively greater academic success of their final research papers. Inter-rater reliability, however, remains problematic in writing-related research on learning, and we are considering measures to strengthen this feature of future studies.

Research Paper Review

On each of the five criteria, the average score assigned to research papers written by CCLCP students in English 161 exceeded the average score earned by papers written by students in traditional English 161 classes. Table 1 displays the mean raw score and level of significance for each set of papers on each of the five criteria, along with the F score (analysis of variance) on each criterion. The differences are not slight, yielding F-scores ranging from 20.70 to 35.88. Despite the difficulty with inter-rater reliability, discussed below, the robust level of difference between the CCLCP students' papers and the traditional student papers suggest that the CCLCP students' community-based learn-

Feldman et al.

Table 3
*Differences between Community-based and Traditional Writing Courses on
Five Primary Evaluation Criteria*

Criterion	n	Mean	F score	Sig. (*p*<.05)
Developing Arguments in Context				
CCLCP	16	3.73	35.88	.000
Traditional	16	2.42		.000
Engaging Intellectual Strategies				
CCLCP	16	3.72	34.61	.000
Traditional	16	2.39		.000
Using Sources Effectively				
CCLCP	16	3.67	28.78	.000
Traditional	16	2.52		.000
Taking a Position				
CCLCP	16	3.81	22.39	.000
Traditional	16	2.56		.000
Using Language Appropriately				
CCLCP	16	3.92	20.70	.000
Traditional	16	3.09		.000

ing experience contributed to their successful acquisition of an academic skill that will have long-lasting impact on their work in a wide variety of academic and professional contexts.

The contrast between the two sets of papers was so striking that we may assert that the decisive difference was CCLCP students' engagement in reciprocal partnerships developed with CCLCP partner organizations. As we argue above, reciprocal relationships result from complex, long-term associations that produce social capital through purposeful collaboration. The CCLCP experience differs from those service-learning activities in which students assist a partner organizations' service consumers and then return to the classroom to use writing to reflect on the experience. Much of the CCLCP students' writing occurred in the "context of application" (Gibbons, et al. 1994, p. 3) and thus emerged from the exigency of a particular situation. Situated learning activities based on the reciprocal relationships enabled by CCLCP added another layer to the typical English 161 experience. Presumably, students in all sections of English 161 study and write about consequential civic and/or social issues. Students in traditional classes even may venture into communities to gather first-hand information through interviews or obtain primary-source documents. However, as noted by the readers who participated in this study, CCLCP student writers' strong sense of involvement with the issues they investigated helped those students construct cogent, well-supported arguments for clearly articulated positions on "their" issues.

Inter-rater Reliability

We expected the calibration exercise used with the raters to produce an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability (Shohamy, Gordon, & Kraemer, 1992, p. 31), but inter-rater reliability was lower than we'd hoped, and inconsistent across primary trait categories (ranging from .050 to .4159). The alphas were calculated using Krippendorf's alpha, a test that measures inter-rater agreement while accounting for error related to chance (see Table 4).

We compensated for low inter-rater reliability to some extent by averaging raters' scores (Hartman, 1982). There are other strategies as well: Wurr (2002), in a study of the impact of service-learning on writing skill, used fewer raters and employed an adjacency adjustment to achieve higher reliability by considering adjacent scores to be in agreement. In addition, in Wurr's study, when raters' scores were two or more points apart, the paper was submitted to a third reader's evaluation, and the three ratings were then averaged (p. 53). The low level of inter-rater reliability achieved in our study underlines the axiom that reader interpretation is both an important and hard-to-control variable, contributing to the great difficulty of assessing writing quality in any context. Some researchers argue that it is not only problematic, but also unrealistic to expect qualitative studies to meet the standards of inter-

Table 4
Inter-rater Reliability Alphas using Krippendorf's Alpha

	CCLCP	Traditional
Taking a position	.1977	.4159
Developing arguments in context	.0770	.2643
Using sources effectively	.0505	.1722
Engaging intellectual strategies	.0774	.3809
Using language appropriately	.1123	.1302

rater reliability used in quantitative studies (Harris, Pryor, & Adams, 1997). In "Can There Be Validity Without Reliability?" Moss (1994) challenges the assumption that a rigid notion of reliability is essential to assessment by advocating that we broaden our sometimes too-narrow psychometric understanding of reliability to include consideration of the broader context in which knowledge is being created. Nevertheless, we are seeking defensible methodological modifications, such as those used by Wurr, that might boost the inter-rate reliability of our next comparative study of writing quality.

Discussion

This study examines an elemental artifact of university student writing, the academic research paper, to draw conclusions about the impact of a partnership-centered, community-based learning experience. These data, 32 academic research papers, offered a way to study comparable writing products across different instructional settings. A wide variety of additional data exists that may, upon analysis, tell us more about CCLCP students' experience. For example, CCLCP students wrote field notes about their experiences, produced project cover letters for their teachers, filled out surveys, participated in focus groups, designed and produced documents for and with their community partners, and wrote argumentative essays about what they had learned. As CCLCP moves ahead, these data are being explored as suggested by our assessment matrix.

The research papers, themselves, reveal some features of what CCLCP students learned. The readers were called back together several weeks after the scoring exercise to "gloss," that is, to interpret, their scores on a pair of research papers. This follow-up conversation was intended to illuminate what qualities, precisely, distinguished the CCLCP papers from those produced by students in traditional classes. It is important to note that each of the two papers selected for discussion scored as average in respect to its group. The CCLCP stu-

dent's paper critiques his/her community partner's use of statistics in its public relations documents, representing an atypical case of a student who was not "on board" with the agency's approach to publicizing its mission. The student paper from the traditional English 161class focuses on the Holocaust. We do not have further information on the broad inquiry of the course because identifying marks were removed for anonymity's sake. For the same reason, we will refer to the community agency considered in the CCLCP paper as the "not-for-profit" (NFP). We include in Table 5 representative readers' comments relative to the first two research paper evaluation criteria. For each of these two criteria, we indicate the subject paper's average score and a typical response from one of our four readers. Beneath the reader's response, we include a section from the student text that exemplifies the rationale for the comment.

In commenting on *Criterion 1: Taking a Position*, a reader points out that the CCLCP paper makes an arguable claim and answers the "so what?" question, announcing why it matters if the writer's community partner misuses statistics in its public relations documents. The student paper from the traditional class proposes that the Holocaust teaches a lesson that is "needed to be learned and remembered," but never actually pursues or supports that claim. A reader points out, in discussing *Criterion 2: Developing Arguments in Context*, that the CCLCP paper guides the reader by establishing a meta-structure that the reader can track. The reader also points out that the writer needs to include more counter-arguments. (The counter-argument, or "naysayer" voice, is a challenging dialogic move that identifies what others might say about the writer's argument.) Students who learn in real-world contexts in which issues are in constant play will be more likely to recognize arguments and counter-arguments when applying classroom lessons in actual communities of practice. The student paper from the traditional class, unable to marshal supporting evidence, is trapped, if you will, by a personal story that she cannot connect to

Feldman et al.

Table 5
Comparison of Two Average Research Papers

Traditional Paper "Remembering the Holocaust"	CCLCP Paper "Interpreting Statistics: A Rhetorical Analysis of the NFP's Marketing Documents"
Criterion 1: Taking a Position: The writer articulates a position or thesis that contributes to a significant public conversation. The position relates to key themes discussed in the class materials and work. The writer attends to the consequences of his or her position, its personal relevance, and the potential or real public impact.	
Mean Score: 2.56 "Remembering the Holocaust" *Reader's comments:* …no one will disagree with it… lessons "need to be learned and remembered" not discussed in paper. *From the paper:* "The American tragedy of September 11 has made us aware that a single deed can obliterate from the face of the earth the civilization that has been built over the centuries, and that ordinary bacteria (such as anthrax) can strike fear into a population of millions. The tragedy of the Holocaust should be one of the biggest lessons that needed to be learned and remembered."	Mean Score: 3.81 "Interpreting Statistics" *Reader's comments* …clearly arguable thesis… joins a conversation…potentially relevant for the reader. *From the paper:* "To the point, the NFP displays vague results, incorrect statistics, and dismisses important information in their documents. As a result, the public may make less than a knowledgeable decision about whether they want to work with the agency. The goal of this analysis is to demonstrate the government funded agencies should not misinform the public about the effect of the work they complete because they are taking money from the state."
Criterion 2: Developing Arguments in Context: The writer understands that arguments emerge from important public and academic conversations in which participants respond to each other as if in dialogue. They question claims, ask questions about evidence, consider the appropriateness of the evidence, qualify their assertions, and respond to counter claims.	
Mean Score: 2.42 "Remembering the Holocaust" *Reader's comments:* "…glut of narrative because it isn't used in service to the argument, although narrative certainly could. . .Because the thesis isn't very powerful, the writer doesn't show how it might not be simplistic…" *From the paper:* "I have written a few essays on the Holocaust over the years. When the opportunity arises for me to write about history, the Holocaust automatically comes to mind."	Mean Score: 3.73 "Interpreting Statistics" *Reader's comments:* "Intro established a problem, it told how it was going to talk about the problem. Every topic sentence had its own part of the introduction. . . around page 5 ... a very, very sophisticated rhetorical analysis... didn't bring in enough counterarguments, but argument is clearly extended through the paper." *From the paper:* "NFP uses false statistics as a means of manipulating the public to believe in the work that they do on local economic development."

an ongoing, public conversation. His/her class, we surmise, did not provide him/her with the reciprocal relationships within which an argument might come to life as a vibrant response within a community of practice. We wish to offer several caveats here: First, our argument for participant-centered, community-based learning should not be taken as an argument that such learning never can happen in courses confined to classrooms. We do not wish to create a false binary between on-campus and off-campus locations for learning. Rather, as Deans (in press) puts it, we wish to focus on the activity undertaken in any particular location. Along these same lines, our critical comments about the student paper on the Holocaust should not suggest that this

topic could not be successfully handled as a contribution to any of a variety of ongoing discussions.

Concluding Remarks

Much work remains to be done. Even so, this research project can be seen as the first layer of excavation into a site replete with rich resources for gauging and understanding the impact of partnership-centered, community-based learning. The next iteration of CCLCP will allow us to conduct a similar study with a more diverse group of service-learning students than those participating in the current pilot program. And, because we plan to include in the next iteration both a fall and a spring semester English 161 class, we'll be able to com-

pare two groups of research papers without the possible interference of a "cohort effect." We plan to review our options for achieving higher inter-rater reliability as well. As students proceed through the four courses that will be comprised by future versions of the CCLCP, we will be able to dig deeply into the questions suggested by our assessment matrix in search of the means to further characterize student learning.

As important, we are eager to explore the challenging questions posed by our assessment matrices about community partner and academic faculty outcomes. Many questions exist about the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the CCLCP program for not-for-profit, community-based organizations. Likewise, as more faculty become involved, we'd like to explore the link between our faculty's engaged research with partner organizations and participant-centered, community-based learning for undergraduates. Digging even deeper into our site, we can ask questions about the institutional home of CCLCP. Ever cognizant of UIC's shifting history of community relations—sometimes ironically, sometimes fittingly enacted on the actual site of Jane Addam's Hull House—we wish to explore the institutional change precipitated by the CCLCP, the first undergraduate program devoted to community-based learning on a campus that, since 1993, has carried out its engagement activities through its Great Cities program of faculty research and scholarship, research centers, economic development, and neighborhood initiatives.

The student learning outcomes we report in this article depend on the reciprocal partnerships developed as part of the founding conception of the CCLCP. We argue that the learning that transpired for CCLCP students, writing, as they did, in complex social spaces driven by real-world exigency contributed to the more cogent arguments found in their research papers. This finding has had an institutional impact at UIC. It signals to other faculty and administrators that partnership-centered, community-based learning, and research into its outcomes is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing around here.

Notes

[1] This phrase, "the kind of thing we do around here" and variations of it, such as "what we do around here" have been used to characterize the traditional work of academic departments. Notably, literary scholar and public intellectual Stanley Fish used the term to name the kind of work that should be done in English departments (Fish, 1995/1999; see also Olson, 2002).

[2] Most universities that have been present in urban neighborhoods do not come to these new understandings from a pristine past. UIC, like other urban universities, has had a complex and sometimes contentious historical relationship with its surrounding neighborhoods and efforts at engagement must overcome these historical difficulties.

[3] The Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP) pilot is funded by a three-year grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Serve America program, with an equal match from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Institutional Review Board permission was sought and awarded for research on this project under protocol 2004-0361, "Civic Leadership and Service." CCLCP's pilot has been generously supported by UIC Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Lon Kaufman, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences Christopher Comer, English Department Head Walter Benn Michaels, Dean of Urban Planning and Public Affairs Robin Hambleton, Great Cities Institute Director David Perry, and UIC Neighborhoods Initiative Associate Director Atanacio Gonzales.

[4] Future iterations of the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program will include four courses instead of five. We learned through experience that students should complete the course sequence during their first two undergraduate years, creating more opportunity for their involvement with the soon-to-be implemented CityWorks Center.

References

Bacon, N. (2001). Setting the course for service-learning research. *Reflections on Community-Based Writing*, *2*(1), 1-7.

Bawarshi, A. S. (2003). *Genre and the invention of the writer: Reconsidering the place of invention in composition*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Bizzell, P. (1987). What can we know, what must we do, what may we hope: Writing assessment. *College English*, *49*(5), 575-584.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2000). Meaningful measurement of theory-based service-learning outcomes: Making the case with quantitative research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Special Issue, 68-75.

Bringle, R. G., Philips, M.A.& Hudson, M. (2004). *The measure of service learning: Research scales to assess student experiences*. Washington, D.C. American Psychological Association.

Crosswhite, J. (1996). *The rhetoric of reason: Writing and the attractions of argument*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cushman, E. (1996). The rhetorician as an agent of social change. *College Composition and Communication*, *47*, 7-28.

Cushman, E. (2002). Sustainable service learning programs. *College Composition and Communication*, *54*, 40-65.

Deans, T. (2000). *Writing partnerships: Service-learning in composition*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Deans, T. (in press). Shifting locations, genres, and motives: An activity theory analysis of service-learning writing pedagogies. In C. Keller & C. Weisser, Eds. *The Locations of Composition*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E. Jr. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Faigley, L., Cherry, R. D., Joliffe, D. A., & Skinner, A. M. (1985). *Assessing writers' knowledge and processes of composing*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Feldman, A. M. (2003). Teaching writing in a context of partnership. In B. McComiskey & C. Ryan (Eds.), *City comp: Identities, spaces, practices* (pp. 203-215). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Feldman. A. M. (2006). *Making writing matter: Redesigning first-year composition for the engaged university*. Book-length manuscript under review.

Fish, S. (1999). *Professional correctness: Literary studies and political change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1995).

Flower, L. (2002). Intercultural inquiry and the transformation of service. *College English*, *65*, 181-201.

Gelmon, S. B., Holland, B. A., Driscoll, A., Spring, A., & Kerrigan, S. (2001). *Assessing service-learning and civic engagement: Principles and techniques*. Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.

Gude, O. (Ed.) (2000). Placemaking in Chicago. *Newsmagazine*, *7*(1), 1-16

Harris, J., Pryor, J. & Adams, S. (1997). *The challenge of intercoder agreement in qualitative inquiry*. Retrieved March 8, 2006 from http://emissary.ots.utexas.edu/emissary/publications/intercoder-agreement.pdf.

Hartman, D. P. (1982). Assessing the dependability of observational data. In D. P. Hartman (Ed.), *Using observers to study behavior* (pp. 51-66). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Holland, B. A. (2005, July). *Scholarship and mission in the 21st century university: The role of engagement*. Speech presented for the Australian universities quality agency forum, Sydney, Australia.

Holland, B. A. (2006, February 16). *The role of engagement: Research and teaching in the 21st century*. Speech presented to faculty members of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Holland, B. A., Gelmon, S.B., Furco, A., & Bringle, R. (2005, October). *Beyond anecdote: Bringing rigor to service-learning research*. Speech presented to the International Service-Learning Conference, East Lansing, MI.

Howard, J. P. F., Gelmon, S., & Giles, D. E. Jr. (2000). From yesterday to tomorrow: Strategic directions for service-learning research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Special Issue, 5-10.

Keith, N. Z. (2005). Community service learning in the face of globalization: Rethinking theory and practice. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *11*(2), 5-24.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lloyd-Jones, R. (1977). Primary trait scoring. In C. Cooper, & L. Odell (Eds.), *Evaluating writing: Describing, measuring, judging* (pp. 33-66). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Mailloux, S. (1995). Introduction: Sophistry and rhetorical pragmatism. In S. Mailloux (Ed.), *Rhetoric, sophistry, pragmatism* (pp. 1-31). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moll, L.C. & Greenberg, J.B. (1990). Creating zones of possibility. In L. C. Moll (Ed.) *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 319-348). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moss, P. A. (1994). Can there be validity without reliability? *Educational Researcher*, *23*(2), 5-12.

Muthesius, S. (2000). *The postwar university: Utopianist campus and college*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Olson, G. (2002). *Justifying belief: Stanley Fish and the work of rhetoric*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Petraglia, J. (2000). Shaping sophisticates: Implications of the rhetorical turn for rhetorical education. In M. D. Goggin (Ed.), *Inventing a discipline: Rhetoric scholarship in honor of Richard E. Young* (pp. 80-104). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Russell, D. (1995). Activity theory and writing instruction. In J. Petraglia (Ed.), *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 51-77). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shohamy, E., Gordon, C. M., & Kraemer, R. (1992). The effect of raters' background and training on the reliability of direct writing tests. *The Modern Language Journal*, *76*(1), 27-33.

Walshock, M. L. (1995). *Knowledge without boundaries: What America's research universities can do for the economy, the workplace, and the community*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Wiewel, W. & Broski, D. (1999). The great cities institute: Dilemmas of implementing the urban land grant mission. *Metropolitan Universities*, *10*, 29-38.

Wurr, A. (2002). Text-based measures of service-learning writing quality. *Reflections on Community-Based Writing*, *2*(2), 41-56.

Zlotkowski, E. (2000). Service-learning research in the disciplines. *The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Special Issue, 61-67.

Authors

ANN M. FELDMAN is associate professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) where she studies socio-cognitive approaches to learning, genre theory, and writing in the disciplines and directs UIC's First-Year Writing Program and the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program.

TOM MOSS, associate director of the UIC First-Year Writing Program and assessment liaison for CCLCP, is a graduate student in the Department of Communication.

DIANE CHIN, a Ph.D. candidate in English Studies at UIC, is full-time assistant director of CCLCP; her dissertation (in progress) is a rhetorical analysis of advocacy for and resistance to service-learning in higher education.

MEGAN MARIE, a Ph.D. student in English Studies at UIC, is planning a dissertation on the rhetoric of "service" in postmodernity; a former CCLCP instructor, she now teaches at Malcolm X College, one of the Chicago City Colleges.

CANDICE S. RAI, a Ph. D. candidate in English Studies at UIC, is writing a dissertation on democratic theory and the rhetoric of advocacy in the public sphere and teaching in CCLCP.

REBECCA GRAHAM, a second-year English Studies M.A. student at the UIC, has an interest in composition, rhetoric, and community-based learning, as well as Renaissance and Romantic literature.