



Take-Aways from spring 2008, fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009 “W” Analyses

### **Overall Analysis of W Rubrics (all terms) and Analysis of Students who Repeat the W:**

#### ***Component and Recommendation Scores:***

- Portfolios earned the lowest scores on the style component and highest scores on support and thesis.
- Most students (at least 55%) received an average score of a 4 or 5 on each component.
- On average, about 72% of students earned a pass or strong pass from their readers.
- Approximately 6% of students (n=44) received a no w recommendation.
- Faculty predictions of W success were similar to actual outcomes.

#### ***Demographic Findings:***

- There were no significant differences in component or recommendation scores between white and non-white students.
- There were no significant differences in outcomes between non-white and white students.
- All students who took the W as seniors earned the W.
- Students pursuing a B.A. degree earned significantly lower style scores than B.S. students.

#### ***Predictors of Success:***

- Component and recommendation scores were most strongly positively correlated with high school GPA and SAT Critical Reading scores.
- Saint Mary's cumulative GPA is significantly positively correlated with recommendation and component scores.
- Students who earned their W earned higher grades in their W course than those who did not earn their W.
- SAT critical reading and high school GPA was most strongly correlated with success in the W. Nearly 1 in 5 students in the bottom quartile of SAT Critical Reading failed to earn their W while more than 97% of students in the top quartile of SAT Critical Reading earned their W.

#### ***Repeaters and Outcomes Following Semester in which Students Took “W”:***

- Students who did not earn the W and repeated a W course demonstrated improvement in all rubric component areas and the recommendation score in their second course.
- Most students (78.6%) who take a second W course after failing to earn it the first time, earn the W in their second attempt.
- Cumulative Saint Mary's GPA remained stable in the semesters following the W for both those who earned the W and those who did not as did the gap in GPA between the two groups.
- Results were generally stable across the four semesters.

### **Success in W by Course (all terms):**

- Students taking the 103/104W course had lower high school GPAs and SAT scores than students taking all other W courses.
- Students in 103/104W courses received lower style scores than students in all other courses.
- Students who took the 109W course were more likely to earn their W (93.9%) than students enrolling in all other W courses.
- Only a third of students who fall below the current cut-point that advising uses to encourage students to enroll in the 103/104W actually enroll in the 103/104W course.
- Students who fall below this recommended cut-point do not experience greater success in the 103/104W course compared to those who enroll in the one semester writing course.
- Students with scores below the cut-point in the 103/104W course earned lower development scores than students in other course types.
- The current cut-point recommendation captures approximately 16% of students not earning their W. A new cut-point was developed using variables highly predictive of success (SAT critical reading <490 and/or HS GPA <3.38) which captures 67% of students not earning their W. This revised cut-point identifies a greater number of students in general than the previous cut-point.
- Students who fell below this revised cut-point were most successful when they enrolled in the one semester 109W course (89.0% earned the W) and less successful when enrolled in the non-english one semester course (76.9% earned the W).

### **Borderline and No W Comparative Analysis (All Terms):**

- Students who received a No W recommendation from both of their readers were highly unlikely to earn their W (only 9.1% earned the W). However, for those students with a split recommendation of No W and borderline, the success rate climbed to 59.1%.
- Nearly all students who earned at least one recommendation of pass (96%) earned their W.
- There were no significant differences between white and non-white students with regard to reader recommendations.
- Students who earned at least one recommendation of pass had notably higher test scores and HS GPAs compared to those with borderline or no w recommendations.
- Students who did not earn their W in spring 2009 had lower term GPAs than those students who earned their W in both spring 09 and fall 09 semesters regardless of reader recommendation.
- Greater improvement in GPAs was seen in semesters following the initial W course among students who received a borderline recommendation than those who received a no W recommendation.
- Very little difference was seen in retention rates between borderline and pass students. However, borderline students who did not receive the W had higher retention rates than those borderline students who received the W.
- Students who received a No W recommendation had lower retention rates than all other recommendation categories. Lower rates were seen in those students who were not recommended to receive their W and then did not earn the W.

### **No W Content Analysis (All Terms):**

- Students who did not earn their W received comments regarding their thesis that suggested an overall lack of clarity. This included comments about the thesis being vague, not well defined, and confusing. Other readers noted that the theses lacked maturity.
- Development comments left for students who did not earn their W centered on issues of flow and lack of transitions. Readers noted that main ideas were not connected to their theses, and paragraphs did not seem connected to one another. There were also comments about poor organization and an overall lack of purpose in development.
- Support comments focused on the students' inability to provide context to the evidence presented. Readers seem to desire more thorough and insightful evidence.
- Readers expressed concern for students' incorrect use of grammar, awkward sentence construction, and overall lack of clarity.
- Readers most commonly noted that students were misusing commas in the mechanics section. Readers noted that students needed help with grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice. The lack of these core skills affected the overall feel and flow of the writing.

### **Consistency in Reader Evaluations (Fall 2009):**

- Significant variation in reader scoring on recommendation and component areas did not exist based on reader type pairings.
- The Super-Reader/Super-Reader pairing provided lower component and recommendation scores on average compared to other reader pairings.