

# **Engaging Feedback and Revision**

Libby Miles and Susanmarie Harrington

## **Introduction and Background**

To increase the quality of student writing, we propose supporting more feedback-rich, revision-rich classes. Research (and experience) confirm that individualized writing feedback is essential, but many faculty struggle to provide it. This project teaches faculty: (1) how to give better feedback, and (2) how to coach students on feedback and revision, promoting engagement and better writing. This project facilitates distributing feedback through peer review and instructor comments, providing more quality feedback, from more people, across more time, while managing instructor workload.

Our central funding request is for a site license for Eli Review, a web-based program that supports iterative writing processes: small writing tasks receive targeted feedback, which is evaluated and incorporated into revision plans. FWIL and WID will provide coordinated opportunities for participating faculty to learn about Eli's features, to develop writing activities for courses, and to reflect on and evaluate ways to make use of Eli's data about student performance. One of Eli's developers will visit UVM for a spring public kickoff and a summer training workshop for a FWIL/WID-sponsored faculty learning community. If the pilot succeeds, more instructors will adopt Eli in future semesters.

We chose Eli Review as a common technology for its write-review-revise cycle, in which students submit work, complete reviews, and then apply the reviews to revision plans. Faculty endorse selected student reviews, which allows students to rate each others' reviews for perceived helpfulness, thus building in feedback *about* the feedback. Crucial for faculty learning, Eli provides real-time data that faculty can access (even during class) to show how students are responding to each other, how students' work measures up against instructor-designed criteria, and how students are using feedback. This discrete, evidence-based approach makes writing recursive and feedback easy to manage. Faculty can use Eli's reports to get a sense of which dimensions of writing tasks students are more and less successful at, and what sort of feedback is rated more/less helpful by peers, and what feedback is taken up for revision plans; they can adjust their teaching throughout the semester. Eli Review offers a useful window into student reviewing and revising; instructors can adjust to meet students where they are.

## **Description of the project in the context of the current literature**

The literature confirms what many faculty intuit: interactive writing experiences make a difference for students. First year seminars and writing-intensive courses are among the high-impact practices affecting student engagement and retention (Kuh, 2008). NSSE data about students' writing experiences suggests particular pedagogies, including interaction with peers, affect deep learning (Anderson et al. 2009) as well as promote development of students' practical competencies and general education learning (Anderson et al. 2010). The Harvard Assessment Seminars similarly found that students' peer engagement is vital (Light, n.d.). While many faculty are aware of these impacts, there are barriers to incorporating these practices. The faculty learning community we propose addresses this gap. ELI's data for instructors helps with scaffolding and sequencing, reducing barriers to peer review and revision.

*Useful* feedback is a fundamental component in skill development, although the literature is clear that not all feedback is useful. Successful feedback is *goal-directed*. The most effective feedback is that which provides information about the task, the quality of work, and future direction; cognitive feedback appears more useful in early rounds of response (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Cheng et al. 2015). Such feedback is useful because it guides next actions—which for writers means guiding revision. The NAEP data on K-12 students correlates higher scores to regular opportunities to

participate in revision (Buckley 2012). Yet studies of college writers find that student writers focus “revision” on making sentence-level word substitutions, while experienced writers use revision to shape of arguments and refine thinking (e.g. Sommers 1980). Eli Review supports meaningful revision: through targeted feedback on well-designed writing tasks, students can be expected to make thoughtful, deep revision plans. Eli Review has the capacity to help instructors define writing and revising tasks, and to help students learn to give *useful* feedback.

### **Expected Impact of the Project on Student Engagement, Success, and Retention**

Eli promotes both *collaborative learning* and *reflective and integrative learning*, two key NSSE Engagement Indicators of student retention and success. More specifically, this project will make an impact:

#### *Faculty will*

1. gain meaningful insights into levels of student understanding and their writing, responding, and revising practices.

#### *Students will*

1. engage in substantive peer interactions with writing, responding, and revising.
2. incorporate feedback from other students into their revisions, without waiting for feedback from the instructor.
3. develop a useful meta-language around writing, responding, and revision.

We anticipate broad participation in this pilot, with faculty from varied disciplines:

- GTAs and lecturers teaching ENGS1 (5-8 participants x 22 students/section)
- CAS TAP faculty (3-5 participants x 18 students/section)
- WID-friendly faculty from various colleges in upper division courses (4-7 participants x 15-30 students/section)

In the short term pilot, we project 12-20 faculty participants, impacting a minimum of 220 students across the disciplines and at various levels. If the pilot succeeds, we expect long-term wider adoption of Eli from most FWIL and many WID classes, for a conservative total of 2,500 students yearly. It's low cost (\$25/student for a six-month subscription) makes it easy for faculty to assign Eli in the future.

### **Assessment Plan**

*Assessing Faculty:* ELI Review generates summary reports about usage: tasks, feedback, and revision plans. We will also survey and interview participants to gain qualitative insights into their experiences with productive peer review and task design, and use of real-time analytics for present and future planning.

*Assessing Students:* Whereas NSSE depends on self-reporting, our project looks directly at student practices and products. Eli's summary reports will provide usage data on the quantity and type of student interactions, the quantity of suggestions included on revision plans, and the presence and frequency of revisions. In addition, we will conduct qualitative analysis of their interactions: do students incorporate student feedback into their revisions? What meta-language about writing, responding, and revising do they use, and how does that meta-language change over time?

## References

- Anderson P., Gonyea R., Anson, C, and Paine, C. (2009). *Using results from the Consortium on the Study of Writing in College*. Webinar handout. National Survey of Student Engagement. Retrieved September 14, 2015 from [http://nsse.iub.edu/webinars/TuesdayswithNSSE/2009\\_09\\_22\\_UsingResultsCSWC/Webinar%20Handout%20from%20WPA%202009.pdf](http://nsse.iub.edu/webinars/TuesdayswithNSSE/2009_09_22_UsingResultsCSWC/Webinar%20Handout%20from%20WPA%202009.pdf).
- Buckley, J. National Assessment of Educational Progress NAEP 2011 Writing Assessment [http://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/commissioner/remarks2012/09\\_14\\_2012.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/commissioner/remarks2012/09_14_2012.asp)
- Cheng, K, Liang, J and Chin-Chung T. Examining the role of feedback messages in undergraduate students' writing performance during an online peer assessment activity. *The internet and higher education* 25(April 2015): 78-84.
- Gonyea, R., Laird, T N, and Anderson, P. How writing contributes to learning and how institutions can increase that contribution: Lessons from NSSE and FSSE. Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American College and Universities. 22 January 2010. Washington DC <http://cpr.indiana.edu/uploads/AACU2010WritingNSSEFSSE.pdf>
- Kuh, G. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. (AAC&U, 2008)
- Light, R. "Strengthening Colleges and Universities" <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ffp0604.pdf>

## Budget and Justification

<i>Activity</i>	<i>EPI Funds Requested</i>	<i>FWIL/WID Cost Share</i>	<i>Eli Review Cost Share</i>
<b>Spring 2016 Kickoff and Public Lecture*</b>	airfare/ ground transport 750	housing 290	
	catering 300		
<b>August 2-day Training**</b>	50% catering 225	50% catering 225	airfare/ ground transport 1500
			trainers' time 3000
			housing 435
<b>Fall 2016 site licenses</b> (up to 400 students @\$25/student)	10,000		
<b>Faculty Learning Community Meetings</b> (once a month)		catering & materials 500	
<b>Post-pilot follow up assessment</b>		materials 50	
	Total EPI Request 11275	Total FWIL/WID 1065	Total ELI 4935

\*Kickoff will feature Jeff Grabill, Director of Research and Faculty Development at ELI and Professor of Rhetoric and Professional Writing, Michigan State University. A public lecture will publicize the project and serve as one recruiting venue. Grabill will have working meetings with small groups of interested faculty/Tas, and possible classroom visits as appropriate. **We plan to apply for Burack Lecture support for the public event. If that application is successful we would reduce the amount of grant funds requested.**

\*\*This 2-day program, held the week before classes, will offer practical training in how to use Eli Review, and pedagogical support for the creation/adaptation of writing tasks and plans for peer review. Because of the scope of this project, Eli Review is willing to provide training for UVM participants.

\*\*\* if student participation in Fall does not exceed available site licenses, we can repeat the program in Spring 2017

**Sustainability:** If faculty and student responses are positive, this project can become self-sustaining. Students will bear the cost of ELI Review in the future (its subscription fee is far less than most textbooks. The point of the pilot is to see if the added cost to students is worth it. FWIL and WID are well-positioned to provide ongoing support for faculty through regular programming; faculty cohort groups and the topic of peer review are frequent offerings already.



30 September 2015

Engaged Practices Innovation Grant Program  
c/o Brian Reed, Associate Provost  
Waterman Hall

To the EPI Grant Review Committee:

I am pleased to support the grant application submitted by Professors Miles and Harrington. Their project, "Engaging Feedback and Revision," promises to create change on two levels: in classrooms, more students will be writing, reading, and revising—and in giving faculty research-based understandings of what constitutes effective feedback and how students can be taught to deliver that feedback. On both levels, the resulting change should enable faculty to use their time more productively, and as such it represents an exciting opportunity for the campus. The project has good prospects for remaining viable even after the pilot grant-funded period ends. The software in question is inexpensive for students—much cheaper than the price of many textbooks—and the FWIL and WID offices already are in position to offer programming to support faculty interested in peer review and feedback.

Looking ahead in terms of faculty workload, I can confirm that Professors Miles and Harrington will be able to carry out the project as described. Professor Harrington will be on sabbatical in Fall 2016, but this is no barrier to the project's implementation. She will be fully available to participate in the set up, recruitment, and Spring 2016 planning; her sabbatical affords her research time which can be partly devoted to literature reviews which will support the project's assessment as well as her own scholarly advancement. When she returns from sabbatical in Spring 2016 she will join the pilot assessment and a second phase of implementation if needed, and the FWIL/WID program resources will support Professor Miles as she coordinates the faculty cohort meetings in the Fall.

I look forward to the implementation of this project.

Sincerely,

Valerie Rohy  
Professor and Chair