

APRIL 28, 2025

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Everyone needs an extra hand.

**Mr. Kendall Sewell**

## IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Thank you, Mr. Sewell, for your willingness  
to share and collaborate!



## Changing the Narrative

Students have greater needs than they did 10, 20, 30 years ago in higher education, and there are many reasons for that: changes in high school curriculum and expectations, interruptions in learning from Covid, societal shifts with social media, the prevalence of technologies, and shifting views of the role of higher education. All of these contribute to the need of further support, particularly for our freshman. As a response to our students' needs, English 0903 changed last year from a pre-requisite no credit course to the credit-bearing English 1004 Writing Studies with Lab. Mr. Kendall Sewell, last year, collaborated with Mr. Caleb Dempsey-Richardson to align the new ENGL 1004 course with ENGL 1013 thereby alleviating any stigma associated with a remedial course and creating vertical alignment between courses. The additional lab component means that students have more repeated one-on-one opportunities with an instructor to improve their writing and understand that writing is a process, not a simple checkmark.

## How has the lab component been implemented?

Students have the option of either coming to scheduled office hours in a small group with the instructor or attend hours in the Writing Center. Both spaces allow for additional support and provides a safe space to ask questions. The decision for small groups in the office removes any intimidation that might be present during a one-on-one session with an instructor and allows other students to learn from many of the same questions that they may have. The new Writing Center has a bright open space that is comfortable for students. Consultants know when to expect students, and that attendance is tracked through email communication with the consultants and the instructor since that is part of the grade.

One of the pleasant surprises is the way many of the student athletes have responded. The team sportsmanship helps hold each other accountable for attendance. Mr. Sewell tells that many times the students will text each other to remind them of their appointments and get themselves down to the office.

## What is the role of active learning in the course?

Mr. Sewell approaches the this course like a high school or community college, focusing on what knowledge and skills students need to be successful in future writing courses and in other disciplines. With that in mind, active learning and collaboration are used in conjunction with individual output. Many of the courses begin early in the morning, so kinesthetic movement is part of the day by walking around. He incorporates different student grouping to challenge students to work with alternative viewpoints. This provides Mr. Sewell the chance to observe students as he circulates. During a peer review, he uses a technique called “Speed dating” where he distributes guides with specific parts of a paper to review. He gives students a short time with each person, calls time, then has students rotate to the next portion. This increases adrenaline and adds a game-like aspect to the task. Other in-class activities could include a Kahoot or a Jeopardy game for terminology. The final paper is a culminating reflection paper, requiring students to carefully consider their development during the course. This process encourages students to characterize their development and progress, reflect on the research process (including scholarly sources), explain the impact of certain readings detailing why they resonate, and provide a concluding takeaway statement. All of which deepen a student’s grasp of writing.

## How have your students responded to the course change?

Students are actively more engaged. Stigma is removed. 1004 has greater overlap with 1013, so students see that they are learning what their peers are learning. Additionally, the format allows for greater looping and more low stakes writing. Mr. Sewell notes, “Part of what low stakes writing is, to me, that in the moment, the freedom to write on that page before they get to the higher stakes stuff (allows students to) get to a different idea that will manifest”.

## What are the qualitative and quantitative results seen?

Overall, there is greater attendance and engagement in the courses. The lab component creates the opportunity for more and higher quality revisions and deeper gains. Dr. Michael Seale shows that the change in ENGL 0903, a pass/fail course, went from a 30% NC/W (no credit/withdrawal) to a 23.2% DFW with ENGL 1004. That is a significant change for a single semester.

