UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Seattle, Washington 98195

RESEARCH REPORT: TA SURVEY ON TEACHING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Spring 2016

Sandra Silberstein, Coordinator of International Student Academic Support, College of Arts & Sciences
Mutallip Aniwar, Research Assistant
Ryan Burt, Academic Support Programs, Center for Learning and Undergraduate Enrichment (CLUE)
Mihaela Giurca, International and English Language Programs (IELP) & Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC)
Katie Malcolm, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

BACKGROUND: 2008-PRESENT

In July 2008 the Provost's English Language Working Group issued the first set of academic recommendations designed to respond to the increasing globalization of the University of Washington. Its report set in motion an institutional focus on "developing an appropriate array of support programs to help all students of whatever language background succeed in their university coursework." In response to increasing numbers of international students and other multilingual (I/M) speakers (the number of international undergraduates has more than tripled since 2008), the university has been in the process of developing a range of support systems. To best understand current needs, in Spring 2015, the College of Arts & Sciences with campus partners surveyed the Seattle campus voting faculty and TAs on the academic needs of I/M students as well as the pedagogical needs of those who teach them. This report summarizes the findings of the TA survey within its six major areas; we include some comparative data from the faculty as well. Because TA responses were particularly fulsome, we include more qualitative responses in the body of this report than we did in the faculty survey. Note that the number of TAs responding to individual questions varied; response rate for each question is indicated in the appendices.

FINDINGS

Part I. Demographics

The survey queried TAs on the Seattle campus who had taught at least one quarter during the 2014 – 2015 academic year; it comprised both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended) questions. Charts and tables summarizing quantitative demographic data appear in Appendix A. In total, 522 TAs responded to the survey. However, the first question, referencing school affiliation, received 560 responses; we assume that TAs affiliated with more than one school elected more than one option. Of the 560 responses about school affiliation, the largest group (approximately a 20% response rate) came from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS, 325), followed by the Colleges of Engineering (61) and the Environment (55), School of Public Health (32), College of Education (22), Foster School of Business (18), College of Built Environments (12), and the iSchool (11).

Just under 60% of respondents (304) reported that they had taught at UW for fewer than two years although there were some who had taught 2-3 years (82) and 3-4 years (58). Eighty survey respondents indicated that they had taught more than 4 years.

Regarding class size, 465 responses (90%) reported a class size of fewer than 30 students while 91 TAs indicated that they teach up to 60 students. A small percentage of TAs (less than 10%) referenced teaching classes of 100 to 200 students; it is not clear whether they taught those classes independently or were participating TAs.

Part II. Course Context: Assessment of Student Learning

This section asked how TAs assess student learning and participation and what role they play in the process, that is, whether they do only grading or also design and develop elements of student assessment. (Quantitative data appears in Appendix B.) In terms of how student learning

is assessed, TA survey results parallel those of the faculty: ***Writing, in various formats and lengths, figures prominently as the most common assessment method.*** Eighty percent (416) of the TAs responding indicated that students in their classes are required to complete some sort of individual writing task, the most common being shorter (286) and longer (181) essays. Within exam genres, those that are more writing intensive (essays and open-ended short-answer questions) received more numerous responses (412) than less writing-heavy options, such as multiple-choice or true/false (301) formats and problem solving (180). Although nearly half of survey respondents (236) reported using group writing assignments to assess student learning, individual writing assignments (416) and exams (488) were far more commonly reported. In every category, save journaling, more TAs reported grading only rather than both developing assessment tools and grading. However, the difference in responses between "I grade only" and "I design and develop" varied greatly depending on the formality and the weight of the assignment. ***Assignments that were more formal and weighted more heavily*** (e.g., long essays, lab reports) ***were more likely to be developed by faculty and graded by TAs, while informal assignments carrying less weight*** (e.g., journals, reflections, self-assessments, short answers) ***were more likely to be both developed and graded by TAs.***

Participation proved another key focus of assessment, although less widely used by TAs than by faculty. While 92% of faculty survey respondents reported assessing participation, this was true of 69% (359) of TAs. TA assessment formats largely parallel those reported by the faculty: whole-class discussions (287), small-group discussions (219), lab activities (152), and online discussion board posts (101).

Part III. Teaching Experience: Benefits and Challenges of Teaching I/M Students

Benefits

❖ *With the increasingly global focus of course content, it's so valuable to have students who can speak from experience and provide an international point of view on topics such as the structure of media markets, press/free speech/the role of government, personal use of social media platforms from an international point of view.*

❖ *I teach a class on wildlife conservation so it is interesting to see perspectives from people in some of the countries we discuss.*

❖ *Because we are working in issues of disability, it's an advantage to us to have people from different cultural backgrounds who have different perspectives, definitions and cultural knowledge around these issues. This both allows us to see the similarities of worldwide perspectives on disability, and better understand our own cultural lenses in a sharpened way.*

❖ *Especially in macroeconomics courses, perspectives on national policies outside of the US--and on peculiar macroeconomic phenomena--are interesting and valuable*

Almost 80% of TA respondents (441) indicated that the presence of I/M students in their classes benefits their teaching (Appendix C), a view amplified by their qualitative comments. Quantitative data, summarized in Table 1 below, show that TAs' views on this issue are nearly identical to those of the faculty.

Table 1. What benefits do international/multilingual students bring to your classes?

	#TA	%TA	#F	%F
Greater variety of perspectives on the course content	358	81%	293	86%
Greater depth in cross-cultural collaborations	198	45%	147	43%
Ability to read and write in other languages	128	29%	113	33%
Greater expertise in course content	87	20%	86	25%
Higher quality of assignments	53	12%	49	14%
Greater in-class participation	54	12%	36	11%
Greater online participation	33	7%	12	4%

**Qualitative responses documented strong appreciation for I/M students' diverse perspectives across a broad range of disciplines.** Specifically mentioned were chemistry, disability studies, economics, education, environmental studies, global health, international politics, nursing, geology, linguistics, and social work. As was the case for the faculty, I/M students' non-US, often non-Western, perspectives were seen to widen the scope of learning and its applications for both classmates and instructors.

❖ *Some of the international students have experienced different landscapes and geology compared to the local Washington students, and they can share those experiences with the class.*

❖ *The benefit of cultural diversity in social work is crucial in order to know that students are well-prepared to work with diverse clients. International students bring an incredibly useful perspective when the rest of the students might assume they all have the same experience or perspective on things.*

❖ *The class I taught had several global health components, so international students brought very valuable insights into designing products for use by other cultures.*

- *I teach classes with a crucial global component and US-based students really benefit from hearing from people who have grown up in other places, and vice versa.*

- *One of the classes was about multicultural issues in nursing. The international students brought unique and invaluable perspectives to the discussions and essays that would otherwise be sorely missed in the course. Our patients are more and more from various backgrounds and the international students [teach us] about the issues that the students will be facing in the real world.*

- *I teach classes with a crucial global component and US-based students really benefit from hearing from people who have grown up in other places, and vice versa.*

- *The benefits from international/multilingual students in the classes I taught and graded (Chemistry) were basically new perspectives.*

Although not reported across disciplines, some, ***particularly TAs in the natural sciences and math, experienced international students as better prepared academically***, especially in terms of quantitative skills.

- *Generally have more background in math and a stronger sense of algebra and simple calculations needed in lab*

- *I have noticed overall that international students are advanced in their technical math skills and also in presentation of their work, which is important to me as a grader. They also usually respond well to criticism and improve when necessary without clashing with me.*

- *International/multilingual students often possess a large array of quantitative skills when tackling engineering problems in the courses where I've been the TA; however, they often had a much more difficult time communicating these results or any necessary critical thinking related to such results in writing.*

Even more than among the faculty, ***a considerable number of TA respondents (over 60) voiced their hesitation and even frustration at being asked to compare I/M students as a group with other students. Some sounded a serious note of caution about making generalizations,*** arguing that I/M students are as diverse as domestic students, that the range of academic skills they demonstrate is similar to their domestic peers:

❖ *For the most part, the international and multilingual students I teach bring great variety in background, technical training, interest in the subject matter, quantitative ability, willingness to ask for help, and level of collaborative skills. However, I find that this variety exists among all students, not just among those who are international (although they do contribute greatly to this diversity), and so I hesitate to check that they bring "greater ____" than other students.*

❖ *I have not found the international students on the whole to be superior or worse than American students. Some are better, some are worse but it seems to average out overall. The courses I teach are in chemistry, there aren't very many distinctions in the way chemistry is taught globally. Most of them have no more familiarity with the subject matter than American students when they enroll at UW.*

❖ *It's hard to make generalizations like this. Across the six sections that I have TA'd, I have had great int'l students that incorporate their unique perspectives. I have had others who have not spoken a word. So they are like all other students, essentially.*

❖ *I have not found there to be a single thing or set of things that international students, as a whole, bring to my classes; rather, as individual students, they bring a wide variety of strengths, weaknesses, and contributions (just like non-international students). Of course, the variety in all these things is even wider for their presence! Thus, I did not (for example) select "higher quality of assignments," because it seems to imply (to me) that as a group, international students perform higher than others; which would be an unjust slur on the many exceptional American students I have had. But I have had extremely talented international students who were well beyond the mean (as well as the reverse), and the classes were certainly much stronger for their presence.*

❖ *There are some difficulties with promoting international/multilingual students' learning, but international/multilingual students vary as much as non-international students with regards to the effort they put forth, their participation, etc.*

Challenges.

❖ *Many multilingual students do not appear comfortable participating verbally in class or sections. This makes it difficult to generate and assess participation. In addition, assessing written work is sometimes difficult due to language difficulties.*

❖ *[I/M] students would often not participate in whole class discussion, but will in small groups; they write with spelling and grammar mistakes, should we hold them to a different standard than other students or not?*

Faculty and TAs report strikingly similar challenges in teaching I/M students;

responses often match within a few percentage points. Table 2 shows that the top six challenges

reported are parallel in ranking. While ***participation ranked first for both groups,*** response rates

show the greatest difference: listed by 70% of the faculty and 57% of TAs, possibly reflecting the fact that more TAs teach smaller discussion sections.

Table 2. Do you experience any pedagogical challenges in teaching international/multilingual students? If so, which?

	# TA	%TA	# F	%F
Generating participation in class	292	57%	228	70%
Assessing writing	258	50%	188	51%
Explaining course content	248	48%	138	38%
Communicating course policies and deadlines	162	32%	109	30%
Assessing participation	159	31%	99	27%
Fostering collaboration	146	29%	64	17%
Designing assignments	51	10%	53	14%
No challenges that are different from teaching other students	87	17%	44	12%
Generating participation online	25	5%	24	7%

**Both TA and faculty survey responses tie relative difficulty in generating participation among I/M students to language proficiency and lack of familiarity with new educational and cultural expectations.** Similar to faculty responses, 95% of TAs report that they do not have any problem generating online participation. More TA qualitative responses express understanding of the challenges inherent in operating in one's second language and emphasize student lack of confidence as a potential factor contributing to student silence.

❖ _Often multilingual students are less confident about speaking up in class._

❖ _Cultural differences can discourage students from participating in in-class discussions. The language barrier often requires explanations to be repeated or restated. Designing exam and homework questions is made very difficult by the need to keep the problem introduction terse enough to be understandable and able to be read quickly, even by multilingual students._

❖ *Mostly this is a problem with students who still are not comfortable with English, they seem to struggle with how to express themselves, which can drive down class participation, and make them less likely to ask questions.*

❖ *I can't imagine trying to participate in class discussions in a second language, so I think it's understandable that that is challenging.*

Some qualitative comments also captured the ***challenges of distinguishing language proficiency from content knowledge.***

❖ *It can be challenging to assess students' comprehension if they are still developing their written and verbal English fluency.*

❖ *For students whose first language is not English it is hard to discern whether or not their participation in class and writing is hindered by language abilities or otherwise*

A total of 212 qualitative responses touch on some aspect of language proficiency. Some of these responses flag relatively minor issues, while others report serious communication barriers. A few comments are quite negative with respect to language proficiency issues that some felt should have been dealt with before students enrolled in their classes. A related theme is a perceived lack of resources to help students with their language proficiency.

❖ *Their low proficiency and confidence in English results in some issues in understanding and communicating. Those issues are not insurmountable but still challenging.*

❖ *If English is not their first language, they oftentimes have to work at comprehension of the scientific jargon that they would not have encountered during their English language studies.*

❖ *These issues are particularly applicable to students with poor English skills. It's not the internationality that's the challenge, but the failure to understand written and spoken English.*

❖ *It has frequently been difficult to grade international students against others because in many cases their English skills are not strong and they are only getting a small portion of what is said in class or in the readings. This is not true of all international students, but a large percentage seem to be significantly unprepared for college level work that involves listening and writing in English.*

❖ *Having barely adequate competency in English does not bode well for communication and comprehension of either course material or course expectations and policies - also makes it hard to assess mastery over the substantive course material when they are not able to communicate effectively in English. I have observed tremendous variation in English proficiency in "multilingual" students, ranging from near native speaker ability to almost none..*

Tied to negative assessments is the call for more support:

❖ *I do not think there is much I can do, there should be more support for ESL students on campus to improve their English, and a higher threshold should be applied in admitting students in the first place. Some students have serious difficulty understanding class material, and because I teach social sciences, reading/comprehension is a big part of it. . . . There should be continued support for these students throughout their education on campus. They also have serious difficulty in writing, [such] that sometimes I cannot figure out what they are saying, even if they have the most brilliant ideas. Thus, they also need to be provided extra writing support, perhaps an opportunity to work on their writing with a different centre before submitting the final draft to us. The Odegaard and political science writing centres do not provide any support on helping students with basic grammar, neither should they be put in such a position. Also, these ESL students are usually coming from different countries, and go through a very difficult period emotionally adjusting to life in the US, which provides another challenge for them in succeeding in classes. We most certainly need more support on campus, if UW is committed to admitting more international students.*

❖ *There isn't much one TA can do to alter those students' learning trajectory for the better. That will require the UW to adopt systemic supports. . . .*

Issues of fairness emerge as well, suggesting the need for departmental policies and TA mentoring.

❖ *...while I make myself available to help, when it comes to grading I cannot hold ESL students to a different expectations or grade them differently from native English speakers because that is unfair.*

❖ *[Proficiency] presents challenges of holding students to a double standard when fluent English speakers are expected to write with clarity and competence, but holding English language learners to the same standard would result in regularly marginally passing grades.*

❖ *It can sometimes be difficult to separate grammar and spelling when grading, which we do as a matter of course, because holding ESL students to the same grammatical standards as native English speakers seems inappropriate as long as it is clear they are grasping and engaging with the course material.*

❖ *Assessing writing is brutal. Knowing whether a lack of clarity is because of a language issue or a lack of comprehension is virtually impossible. Balancing fairness and compassion... How do you do that?*

Comments also focused on differences in educational norms and expectations, including different assumptions about the proper roles of teachers and students. Similar to faculty observations, TAs report that it is difficult for some students to understand the North American academic system, for example, that final grades depend on more than final exam results; 133

respondents (26%) report that it is a challenge for I/M students to understand course policies and deadlines.

❖ *It depends on the student, but I think the biggest challenge comes in terms of expectations they may have for me as a teacher.*

❖ *[Challenges in] explaining grading system*

❖ *Have to inform about deadline multiple times.*

❖ *Expectations around grades and appropriate ways to challenge grading of assignments.*

❖ *Some international students are not comfortable with the class discussion format used in America….*

❖ *I'm not sure if a reluctance to share in class, a tendency to sit in the back of the classroom, and a tendency to converse with other international students is language based or an outcome of cultural norms.*

❖ *Often, social reticence is culturally determined. . . . Thus some students seem less willing to speak freely in class discussions, unless explicitly called upon by the instructor....*

❖ *I'd like to be able to point them to subject-specific writing practice. I'd also like for there to be an 'academic expectations' introduction for students on topics like how to approach professors and TAs, how to ask for help, and on defining plagiarism*

❖ *The plagiarism issue is difficult and somewhat common. In general, I have run into difficulties making sure they understand what is due and when it is due and what my expectations are.*

❖ *This of course depends on how much exposure students have to English and American research university norms, but I expect that limitations with English influence all aspects of the classroom experience. Plagiarism standards, specifically, seem to be quite different in the US than many other countries, so this is something to emphasize, I think.*

    Plagiarism is frequently mentioned in the context of I/M students' unfamiliarity with US academic norms and conventions. Some responses attribute this to language proficiency, particularly lack of proficiency in writing, while others relate this to a lack of knowledge of (and exposure to) Western educational norms. The tone of the majority of these comments is not accusatory, noting that plagiarism is not unique to I/M students, although it can be easier to identify in second language writing. The two most common instances of plagiarism seem to be I/M students' use of others' work without proper citation (187 responses, 36%) and what is seen as excessive collaboration with peers (139 responses, 27%), often from students of the same national or linguistic background. While more comments express sympathy and understanding, some reflect real frustration with this and consider it "cheating."

❖ *The plagiarism issue has come up but I believe this has more to do with norms at the institutions they attended previously than with multilingual challenges.*

❖ *Different perspectives on who "owns" writing may also make plagiarism a difficult concept.*

❖ *Plagiarism can be misinterpreted by many instructors, as international students are learning dominant academic conventions. I also think that many instructors do not realize that international students have high stakes (visa expiration, etc) set by their home countries.*

"Plagiarism" can mean different things to different students, and so the challenge has been to approach the topic in ways that deconstruct its connotations (associations with criminality) and to also explain that it can have consequences.

❖ *Plagiarism is a consistent cultural difference between U.S.-born and international students. There is a steep learning curve.*

❖ *Plagiarism is the biggest issue. I think they do it as often as other students, but it's easier to catch ESL students due to the language errors that are transferred between students who cheated.*

❖ *A more clear introduction to the cultural differences around "intellectual property" in the US and citation—it seems unfair to expect students to all learn this on their own through experience.*

❖ *I think that international students need a more detailed explanation of cultural differences and expectations at an American institution. They are often times not aware of the differences especially when it comes to plagiarism and advocating for their own learning.*

❖ *For example, plagiarism is a huge problem with the international students in our courses. Writing assignments are frequently full of cut-and-paste from websites, failure to cite, and lack of references. I recognize the challenge of writing in a second language, and have worked to integrate information on the course expectations regarding plagiarism via multiple channels (i.e. lecture, ppt slides, Canvas, personal meetings during office hours, pre-review assignments, etc.), provide access to the university writing resources, and provide opportunities to re-submit assignments. Unfortunately, I feel these are often ignored.*

The following comment shows how collaboration can devolve into student conduct issues:

❖ *Plaigarism is a huge problem, particularly for international students in all of the classes I have TAed. Student have copied from others in class, students have done complete assignments for others in class (including but not limited to quizzes), and shared entire documents with others leading to two identical assignments being submitted.*

Part IV. Pedagogical Changes

In this section (Appendix D), survey respondents were asked which of the following four aspects of their courses they changed as a result of the increasing number of I/M students: course content, presentation style, class activities, course materials and resources.

A significant majority of TAs reported that they did not change their course content (81%) or class activities (76%). Their qualitative comments indicate that they do not have the authority to do so; course content is determined by the faculty.

Other reasons TAs gave for not changing course content included not seeing an increase in international students in their classes or that their classes were already designed with diverse students in mind. While not changing the content, ***TAs report spending more time explaining***

course content, giving extra help on homework, and making an effort to communicate course

policies and expectations to I/M students.

- ❖ *my writing assignments already aim to allow for a variety of engagements*
- ❖ *designed with Int'l students in mind*
- ❖ *The content is the same, sometimes more time needs to be spent on clarification.*
- ❖ *I take more time to explain things to international students that might not have as deep of a vocabulary as U.S. students*
- ❖ *Took extra time to meet with students*

When TAs do report making changes, this often involves ***adding more international***

perspectives or replacing readings that are either too difficult for I/M students or contain heavy

cultural references.

- ❖ *Reduced use of texts that English language learners find to be obstacles*
- ❖ *less reading or divide responsibility for readings among students*
- ❖ *Removed longer or more difficult texts, and replaced them with some shorter background-establishing readings.*
- ❖ *I have added course content to include the perspective of international students, including comparative studies*
- ❖ *More international examples/comparisons and attempts to not be so US-centric*
- ❖ *try to bring in examples from relevant cultures*

The vast majority (378) of survey respondents (76%) stated that they had not changed class

activities. But for those who had, ***increased use of group activities, particularly small groups,***

seems to be the most common way of generating more participation, promoting collaboration,

and encouraging I/M and domestic students to work together.

- ❖ *More small group discussions, opportunity to do extra assignments to compensate for little/no class participation*
- ❖ *group work to generate ideas and to induce participation from some international students. also the individual presentations help them to practice English and have a clear and often fascinating voice in front of the class.*
- ❖ *Purposefully mixing US students and International students*

- ❖ *I haven't changed the activities themselves, but have adapted my requirements of getting students to work [in groups of peers with different linguistic backgrounds], instead letting multilingual students work with their peers of similar language.*

- ❖ *Count group participation as well as whole class participation*

- ❖ *Less big discussion*

In terms of the resources TAs offer students, results are similar to the faculty's. ***Support for writing-related tasks is the most frequently mentioned change in the resources offered*** by TAs as in response to the increased number of I/M students in their classes. They often report providing more in-class resources to help students with writing. They also recommend campus writing centers while pointing out that this recommendation is not limited to international students.

- ❖ *more writing help like peer review and in-class work*

- ❖ *I draw more attention to the writing resources that I offer through Canvas. I spend more time discussing writing in our workshops and I approach these students and offer extra help.*

- ❖ *Now when I offer guidance to writing papers, I offer basic paper writing guides, guides on proper citation, guides on proper use of outside sources and many, many office hours*

- ❖ *I offer a re-grade policy for written assignments if the student takes the assignment to the writing center, regardless of nativity*

- ❖ *I open up the option for them to turn in drafts.*

- ❖ *I encourage students to take advantage of resources like the writing center or to enroll in the supplementary writing courses that coincide with the course. I try to direct them to resources where they can develop their English skills.*

- ❖ *I strongly emphasize the use of writing centers and outside sources of help with writing*

- ❖ *I think both native and non-native speakers can benefit from writing resources. I thus make it a point to point students to them throughout the quarter.*

Time is another important resource TAs provide. They report meeting with students individually, especially when I/M students have a hard time fully grasping the assignments. TAs also report posting more lecture notes, course readings, and videos online. Again they emphasize that these resources are beneficial for domestic students as well.

- ❖ *I am available during office hours to help decode assignments, as I would be with any student. The only difference is the questions being asked.*

- *As a TA, I would say that most of the "changes" are related to how I spend my time in office hours and grading (which I consider to be an important resource in itself) ... Instead of engaging with the concepts of the course, I've spent a lot of time helping bring foreign students up to speed on background knowledge that is assumed in the class, or helping them to understand the expectations for the assignments, or trying to understand their writing.*

- *I generally make myself highly available.*

- *I strongly encourage visits to my office hours and extra office hours, and this resource has been particularly utilized by international students (often resulting in more office hours).*

- *I always make sure to post my materials online so that students can look back on them in another way. Again, this is useful for monolingual students as well.*

- *More written materials and summaries of key points of class discussions, videos*

- *making sure to have powerpoints online for ease of notetaking*

- *Digital documentation and publication of teacher-generated class discussion notes, projection of discussion notes during class*

Forty-four per cent of survey respondents (221) described changing their presentation style

(the most frequently reported pedagogical change). The majority of the qualitative comments focus on two accommodations: changing classroom delivery and using more visual aids: 73 respondents mentioned making greater efforts to speak more clearly and slowly. Comments also referenced using more pictures, graphics, and slides as well as writing more notes on the board. Also mentioned were taking advantage of multiple platforms (in class, office hours, online) to reach students.

- *Greatly simplifying language used, conducting lessons at a slower pace, attempting to engage students in in-class discussion in order to asses if they have understood the concepts presented*

- *Focus on enunciation, brevity, pauses, and pace in speaking. My discussion and laboratory sections involve a lot of speaking with students.*

- *Making sure ...to reiterate those concepts that involve a lot of difficult vocabulary*

- *I make an effort to reduce my tendency towards idiomatic speech.*

- *Avoiding jargon, using simpler words if they will still get the message across*

- *Avoid American-centric jokes and cultural references*

- *I generally try to avoid rote and often archaic phrases when explaining physics concepts, but these can generally mislead any students and are a bad practice in general.*

- *.More written materials, ...providing videos so students can re-watch*

- *Writing equations, notes, and other main concepts up on the whiteboard/chalkboard and leaving it up as long as possible*

- ❖ *More visual and hands-on demos as opposed to explaining verbally in lab*
- ❖ *I write a LOT more on the board.*
- ❖ *I try to use a lot of graphics and arrows to supplement spoken ideas.*
- ❖ *more summary text on slides*
- ❖ *I try to use more pictures*

Part V. Instructional Support

When asked about confidence in their teaching effectiveness with I/M students (Appendix E), ***225 (44%) survey respondents reported being confident or very confident, and 221 (43%) somewhat confident.*** Only 5% of TAs indicated that they are not confident, exactly the same percentage as faculty in this category. Qualitative comments referenced three sources of confidence: TA's personal background, their past experience in working with diverse students, and devotion to all students' learning regardless of background. ***A number of TAs reported understanding and sympathizing with the difficulties of I/M students because they themselves are international students.*** Others reported that they had worked in culturally and linguistically diverse environments previously, gaining experiences that bolstered confidence. And still others reported being committed to promoting all students' learning, arguing that I/M students do not perform differently from other students when provided the resources to succeed. The volume of comments documenting insight and commitment is impressive. A sample follows.

- ❖ *I'm an international student myself, so sometimes I can understand the international students better.*
- ❖ *I am myself an international student. In a sense, some international students prefer having an international TA. For example, in office hours they may want to ask questions in their first language. (Of course English is used in all public/formal occasions.)*
- ❖ *Basically I am confident, because I am an international student. I know what international students may not understand and how international students react when they have questions.*
- ❖ *I'm an international and multilingual student myself and have attended courses in four languages at three universities. I understand the challenges multilingual students face but I also believe that, having gained admittance to UW, the vast majority of us do not need special accommodation beyond what would be offered to any struggling student.*

- *English is not my first language so I am well aware of the challenges that studying in a foreign language, culture and academic setting represent. I always encourage my students and work personally with them as much as I can to help them with their struggles.*

- *I am an international student myself. The process of adapting to the new environment could be challenging at the beginning, but UW has been doing very well on helping them succeed.*

- *I am a multilingual student for whom English is a second language. I can relate to many of the challenges that international students face. However, in my experience teaching [language], I noticed that international/multilingual students actually have an advantage over English/monolingual students.*

- *I am an international student myself, so I often allocate time even outside of office hours to meet with students and motivate them to ask questions, clarify content and get answers to questions about grad school, etc*

- *I have been working with international/multilingual students for some time now. I may not have mastered approaching such audiences, but I do feel I have the necessary experience to "know what to do" when a problem arises.*

- *Generally I'm quite confident in my ability to promote all students' learning, both US and international.*

- *I often receive feedback from my international/multilingual students that I've made a huge difference in their learning, both by being so available and supportive and by giving so much feedback on work.*

- *My level of confidence is high, having taught for years in an open access, diverse institution.*

- *I am a trained social worker with work experience in linguistically, culturally, and socially diverse settings. I speak several languages well or fluently and I am an international student myself.*

- *I have worked successfully with international students in the past and they have at times been among my best students. My main problem is finding ways to offer them the extra help they need without going over on hours as a graduate student. I often read 2-3 drafts for my international students, when normally reading drafts is optional. This is time-consuming and cuts into my 220 hours, but I also really want to help students who genuinely want to learn.*

- *I check in with students periodically to give them the opportunity to let me know whether or not they are understanding and to let me know the questions or concerns they might have. And, not only for international/multilingual students' benefit, I return to concepts or strategies throughout the quarter, and I review old material before introducing new material. I believe knowing that I am truly interested in them as my students and repeating ideas to make sure they are understood help promote my students' learning.*

- *My courses are student-centered and collaborative, without a great deal of direct instruction. Students have opportunities to process information at their own pace, even though we move through a great deal of text.*

- *I make sure all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed.*

- *Sometimes, international students are extremely capable and hard working yet struggle because they do not have access to all of the support they need from instructors. I am happy to give them that support, but if I have more than 1 or 2 international students in a class, my ability to provide that support wanes rapidly.*

17

Those who expressed a lack of confidence often attribute this concern to three factors: students' academic language proficiency, a lack of time and resources to help I/M students, and a lack of TA training. ***The quantitative data indicated that 362 (70%) survey respondents had not received formal training in teaching I/M students prior to teaching.*** Some TAs requested specific training to help them meet the needs of this population.

❖ *I do my best and spend far more time working with international students both in class and during office hours. The problem is that if the underlying issue for the student is his or her ability in English, then there is not that much that I can do since I am not a language instructor.*

❖ *I find the language barrier to be very difficult with many of my international students, who lack fundamental vocabulary and comprehension required to succeed in college-level courses. I am more than happy to help students who struggle with course content, but I also do not believe it should be the responsibility of the instructor to make up for students' inability to communicate effectively in English.*

❖ *Some of the students in my class have such a poor grasp of the English language that I am unable to overcome some barriers.*

❖ *Although I am able to assess my international/multilingual students' learning adequately, I have concerns about their English writing proficiency, do not feel I have sufficient time to address their needs in this area, and worry that this aspect of their communication will present a barrier to entry into the American job market in our field.*

❖ *I really do not know what to do sometimes. I know that they are being challenged but the most I can do is sit with them and work things out and I just don't have enough time to help them adequately enough.*

❖ *As a TA, it is difficult to provide the level of support many international/multilingual students require in terms of developing English proficiency (both in reading comprehension and especially writing) while simultaneously managing grading and teaching for 60+ students a quarter. One or the other might be feasible, but not both at the same time.*

❖ *I have done it successfully in the past, but in the future we will have to consider whether to compromise some course requirements and standards we hold our students to. Also - this is time consuming and a drain on TA's already limited resources. This should be resolved institutionally and not through making TA's work more.*

❖ *I feel these students need a lot of writing help - more than I have the time to supply.*

❖ *Time constraints. If there is more time for both the students and myself to meet and discuss outside of class, I would be able to provide more assistance.*

❖ *I would really appreciate more specific training on what some struggles that int'l students face and how I can help.*

❖ *I don't feel like I have very many effective tools to address the needs of international students in particular.*

❖ *I don't know how to assess student learning for international / multilingual students.*

- ❖ *I don't feel I have any resources to guide me in tailoring my teaching to ensure it is inclusive for international students as well as domestic students.*

- ❖ *More than anything, they're just regular college kids! But I would really like some resources about how to best overcome the unique challenges we both face as students and teachers. I'd like to learn some actual best practices.*

- ❖ *I think that TAs would benefit from quite a bit more training on how best to support and evaluate international students, especially in the social sciences. I often fear as though I am not doing the best I can to support these students, but I do not have the tools or resources to be more proactive or attentive.*

- ❖ *I have not received any tools from the university that would help me with this. ...I often feel like I don't know when students are hiding lack of understanding of course material behind a lack of understanding of English or if students' lack of understanding of English has gotten in the way of demonstrating their understanding.*

- ❖ *. . . no one asks international and multilingual students what they WANT from college, we just try to impose our goals onto them and reverse-engineering ways to get our desires met. . . .*

In seeking support for teaching I/M students, TAs rely most on their peers (237), supervisors and/or professors within their departments (214), and their students (179). When asked to indicate which campus support centers they have consulted, ***95 survey respondents indicated that they have consulted or collaborated with at least one from a provided list, with the Odegaard Writing and Resource Center (OWRC, 39) and the Center for Teaching and Leaning (CTL, 33) receiving the most responses. More TAs (111) indicated that they have consulted online*** resources and books rather than units on campus. Some reported that they were not aware of these resources and called for better promotion of these centers and their functions. Others indicated that they do not have enough time to consult these units or believed that they could not meet their needs.

- ❖ *I wasn't aware of most of these resources. I think they should be made more visible.*

- ❖ *Students need to be made more aware of the resources available to them as well. Many of my students have been unaware of campus programming.*

- ❖ *To be honest, the demands placed upon UW TAs as is don't really leave much time to actively seek out any kind of additional training. I know this is somewhat touchy at the moment but, it is what it is.*

- ❖ *How can a grad student have the time to seek out these additional resources??*

- ❖ *I spend a lot of time referring students to outside writing resources, but do not have sufficient time to devote to intensive consultation or collaborating with them.*
- ❖ *Also work as a tutor at Psychology writing center. We are not equipped to teach English grammar but this is a big issue that we see every day.*

Asked what kinds of additional support would be useful for their teaching, 355 TAs elected some kind of in-person support; 213 survey respondents suggested departmental workshops; and 150 selected small-group consultations. Each of the next four possibilities – individual consultations, dedicated studios for I/M students, campus-wide workshops, and disciplinary introduction courses – received about 90 responses. One hundred and eleven TAs requested a recommended resource list of books and relevant scholarship on teaching I/M students to study on their own. Ninety-eight respondents expressed that all is well, and no additional support is needed.

While some TAs reported being too overburdened by program requirements and teaching load to consider additional support, others indicated that they would welcome more training on teaching I/M students. A few mentioned that a better way to resolve the constraints on their already busy schedules would be to provide some sort of incentive or compensation for the training time.

- ❖ *Sometimes it's difficult to know what support I will find useful. Sometimes I don't even know that there is an area I can improve in until someone else points it out. Thus, I think a diversified support base is important, although I have usually found most things that are truly "campus-wide" are often too dilute to be of much practical use to me as an individual in a specific class. That said, I think that a "campus-wide" event can also be of use to some people...and maybe a "campus-wide event" would contribute to more interdisciplinary sharing.*
- ❖ *Departmental training is always useful.*
- ❖ *More for-credit classes, CTL classes fill up too quickly. There's a huge demand for some sort of teaching practicum.*
- ❖ *blog type with basic info and case studies*
- ❖ *I'm not aware that teaching international students is an issue; they are usually delightful to work with. Nevertheless, department teaching workshops would be useful. The only formal teaching training I received was at the beginning of grad school 5 years ago. I'd benefit from a refresher.*
- ❖ *Support would likely not be used in my department unless it requires a minimal time commitment. We aren't really given a lot of time to focus on teaching issues*

- ❖ *I would love to do these things, but my time is completely full. I'm sorry.*

- ❖ *Paid training or nothing at all*

- ❖ *I think training would be incredibly beneficial, especially considering that international students pay nearly twice the tuition....but the issue is that TA's and pre-doctoral instructors are already struggling to get everything done on time. Many advanced grad students become like adjuncts. In other words, training would not work without stipends or some other compensation for TAs.*

As among the faculty, there were those who stressed that resources should be directed to the students themselves, particularly resources that help with language proficiency. Also, as was the case with some faculty, there were comments arguing that the university should have a better language screening mechanism in place.

- ❖ *Support should be provided to the students, not the TAs*

- ❖ *I think trainings are great but many TAs are already quite taxed for time. I think more resources need to be offered for international students to get help on understanding what their assignments are asking for and they also need writing resources where people will actually read their assignments and give them feedback. As of now, I've been told that the writing center won't actually read and edit students' assignments. Many of the students are really struggling with their writing and need one-on-one help.*

- ❖ *Really the best support would be a set of measures to ensure that students enter the classes I teach with a decent command of English, and writing in particular. That is not just a problem with international students and English language learners, it is even a problem with some native speakers! I don't want to sound too peevish about this; I am sympathetic to foreign students, and I know that I would have a hard time learning in one of my non-native languages. For that reason, the place where resources should be directed is at the students, not at teaching TAs to cope with them.*

- ❖ *. . . . I am sensitive to the extra hurdles for ESL students and I make it clear that I am willing to help with course material. But many of the problems . . . require a designated English class to address, which I cannot provide. All of the solutions you have provided for support are simply patches to get them through a class, not actual long-term solutions. . . .*

- ❖ *I believe that the University should do far more to ensure that incoming students have sufficient English comprehension to succeed in college-level courses. Also, I think that the University should focus its resources on opportunities for international students to improve their English speaking and comprehension, rather than placing the burden on instructors to find a way to accommodate students who simply do not speak English well enough to get by in college classes.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

As was the case with the faculty survey, there continue to be robust calls for support for students and those who teach them.

❖ *I am sensitive to the extra hurdles for ESL students and I make it clear that I am willing to help with course material. But many of the problems stem from a systemic misunderstanding or poor comprehension of the English language that would require a designated English class to address, which I cannot provide. All of the solutions you have provided for support are simply patches to get them through a class, not actual long-term solutions.*

❖ *I think. . writing centers need to be willing to provide detailed feedback on students' written assignments, not just general guidance.*

❖ *None of these address the problem of grammar/spelling which many students still have.*

❖ *I think that international students need a more detailed explanation of cultural differences and expectations at an American institution. They are often times not aware of the differences especially when it comes to plagiarism and advocating for their own learning.*

❖ *I'd like to be able to point them to subject-specific writing practice. I'd also like for there to be a 'academic expectations' introduction for students on topics like how to approach professors and TAs, how to ask for help, and on defining plagiarism*

One recurring theme is the call for language support. A campus center of language teaching expertise is the International and English Language Programs (IELP). Students who enter the university with documented insufficient English language skills are required to take Academic English Program classes in the IELP. While these earn credit, they are not covered by UW tuition. This makes it difficult for TAs and faculty to recommend these classes (or other formats the programs might develop) to students not required to take them; it further discourages students from self-selecting this support (although some do). The first recommendation below echoes the Provost's Working Group 2012 report. The next two grow out of the current surveys.

Academic English Program (AEP) courses should be funded so that these are included in tuition, not as an add-on expense. Given the increasing English language proficiency scores of recent admits, only a small number of students are required to take AEP courses. We do not believe that credit-bearing courses that are part of our support network for matriculated students should require extra fees. **In addition, the expertise at the AEP should be harnessed to help address language issues across student careers.**

Writing Centers and other venues need to have the bandwidth to address language issues specific to I/M students. One theme of the qualitative comments is an appreciation for writing centers for what they do (help students understand assignments, clarify ideas, and develop effective organization), but a frustration in what they cannot currently do: support language-related problems.

Undergraduate Classes and Workshops that address plagiarism, class participation, and US academic language and culture need to be developed. Workshops on topics such as prospectus and dissertation writing, delivering the research paper should be developed for graduate students. We are not specifying which units would be best equipped to offer these. As a result of the academic coordination position that Professor Silberstein currently holds, working groups are currently meeting to explore how to best deploy academic resources to meet these needs.

TA SUPPORT

❖ *I think that TAs would benefit from quite a bit more training on how best to support and evaluate international students. . . . I often fear as though I am not doing the best I can to support these students, but I do not have the tools or resources to be more proactive or attentive.*

❖ *I think training would be incredibly beneficial, especially considering that international students pay nearly twice the tuition*

❖ *More for-credit classes, CTL classes fill up too quickly. There's a huge demand for some sort of teaching practicum.*

❖ *blog type with basic info and case studies*

❖ *I'm not aware that teaching international students is an issue; they are usually delightful to work with. Nevertheless, department teaching workshops would be useful. The only formal teaching training I received was at the beginning of grad school 5 years ago. I'd benefit from a refresher*

❖ *I wasn't aware of most of these resources. I think they should be made more visible.*

TAs should be supported through orientations and other support formats. The quantitative data indicate that 362 (70%) survey respondents did not receive any formal training in teaching I/M students prior to teaching. TAs simultaneously express a desire for more support while signaling concerns about their already overburdened schedules. Effective pedagogical support should save TAs time on their teaching in the long run. Comments indicate that departmental training or customized sessions by CTL would better meet TA needs than campus-wide events.

Campus resources should be more visible. This request was made by both TAs and faculty. Support works best when those receiving it make conscious choices based on a full understanding of what is available. We are pleased that this winter saw the launching of a new webpage providing an overview of information about teaching international and multilingual students at UW (http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/teaching-im-students/). A working group will be extending its coverage and visibility.

INFORMATION SHARING

A working group is currently synthesizing quantitative data on the demographics, screening, and performance of our international students. Some faculty and TA comments suggest misapprehensions about the qualifications and performance of international students. Relevant institutional data should be made available.
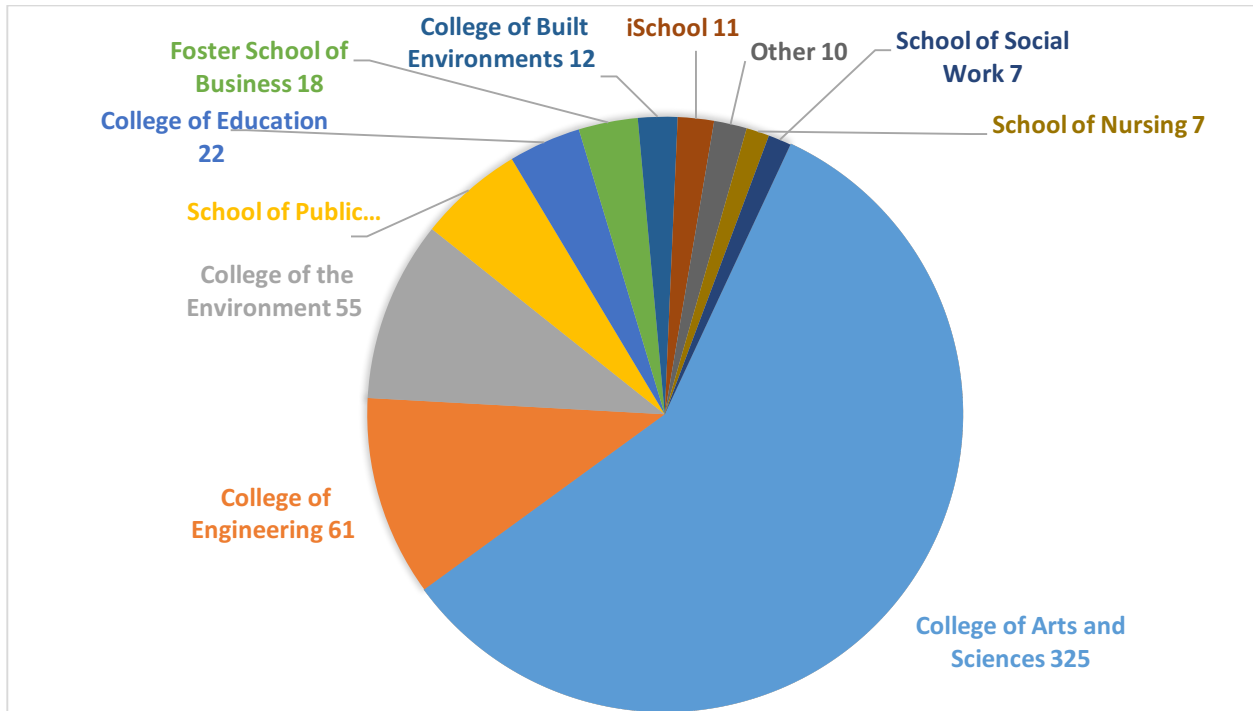
Demographics

Q1. In which schools and department(s) / program(s) do you teach? Check all that apply.

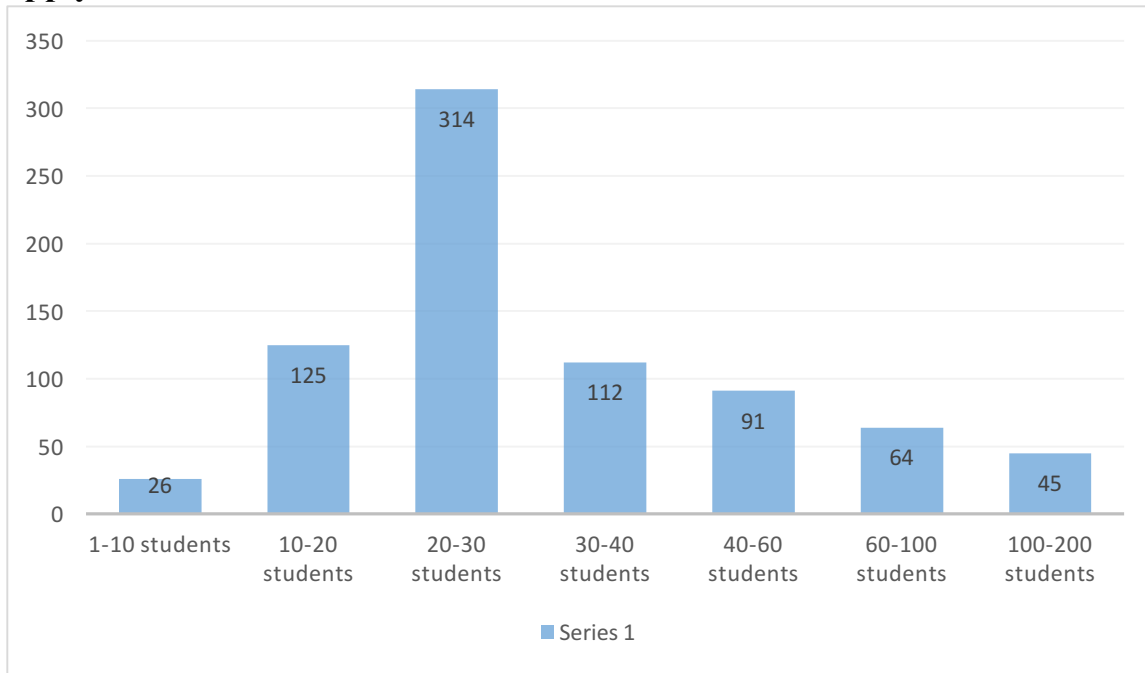College of Built Environments 12
iSchool 11
Other 10
School of Social Work 7
Foster School of Business 18
College of Education 22
School of Nursing 7
School of Public...
College of the Environment 55
College of Engineering 61
College of Arts and Sciences 325

Q2. For how many years have you worked as a TA at UW?

teaching experience at UW

Bar chart showing teaching experience at UW:
- Less than a year: 174
- 1-2 years: 130
- 2-3 years: 82
- 3-4 years: 58
- more than 4 years: 80
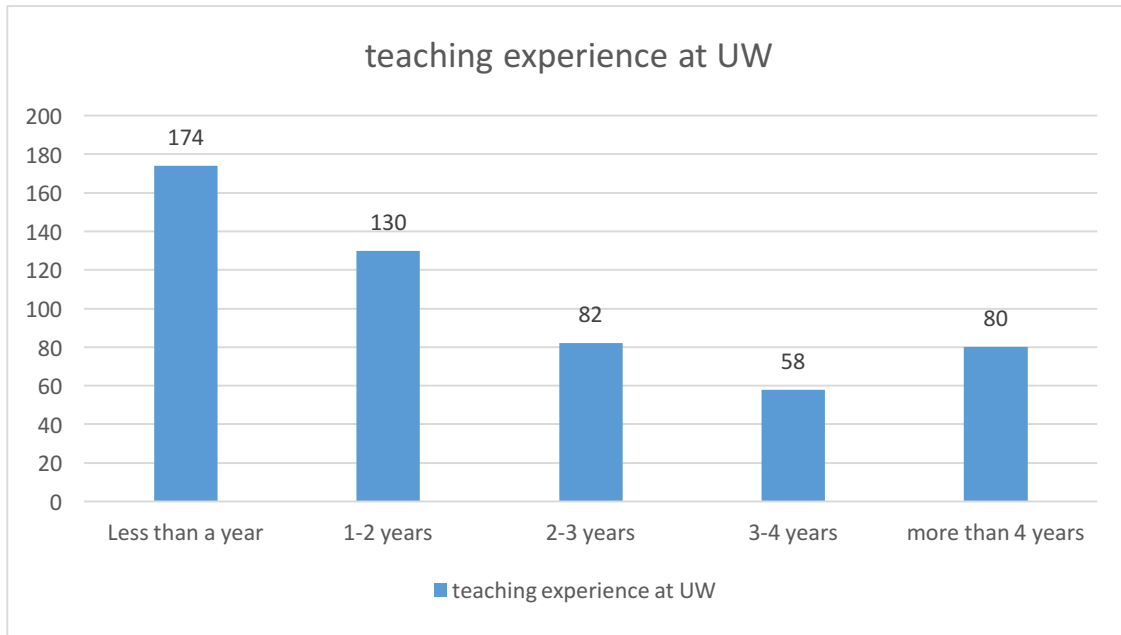
Total responses (N): 520   Did not respond: 2

Q3. What is the usual size of the classes and/or sections _you_ teach? Check all that apply.

Bar chart (Series 1):
- 1-10 students: 26
- 10-20 students: 125
- 20-30 students: 314
- 30-40 students: 112
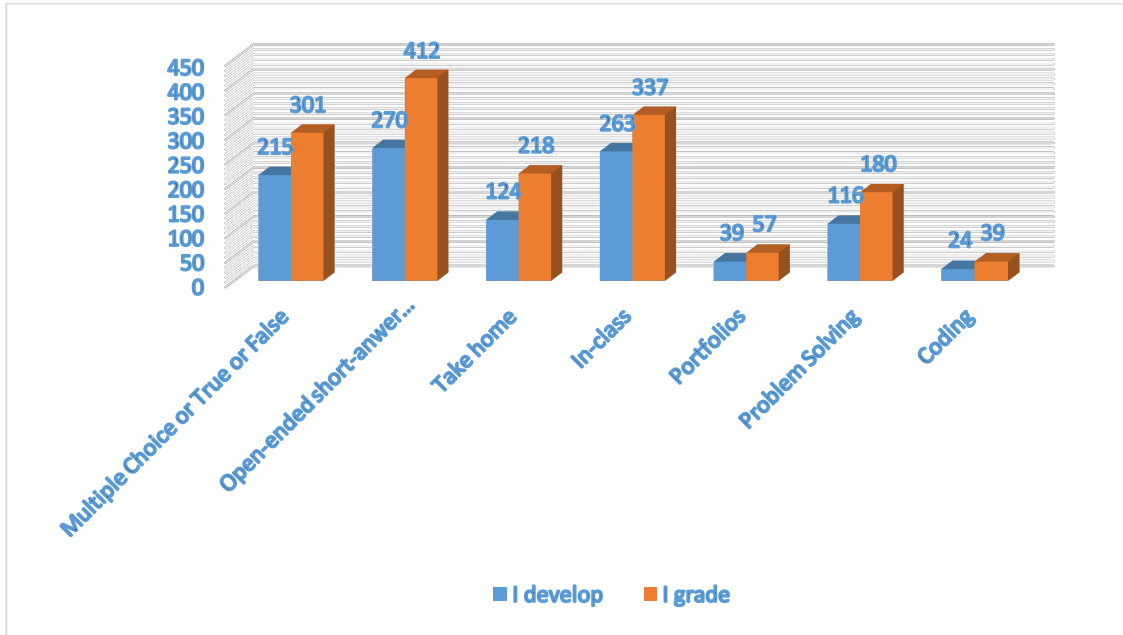- 40-60 students: 91
- 60-100 students: 64
- 100-200 students: 45

Total responses (N): 522   Did not respond: 0

APPENDIX B

Q4. Which of the following items do you develop and/or grade for your classes and/or sections?

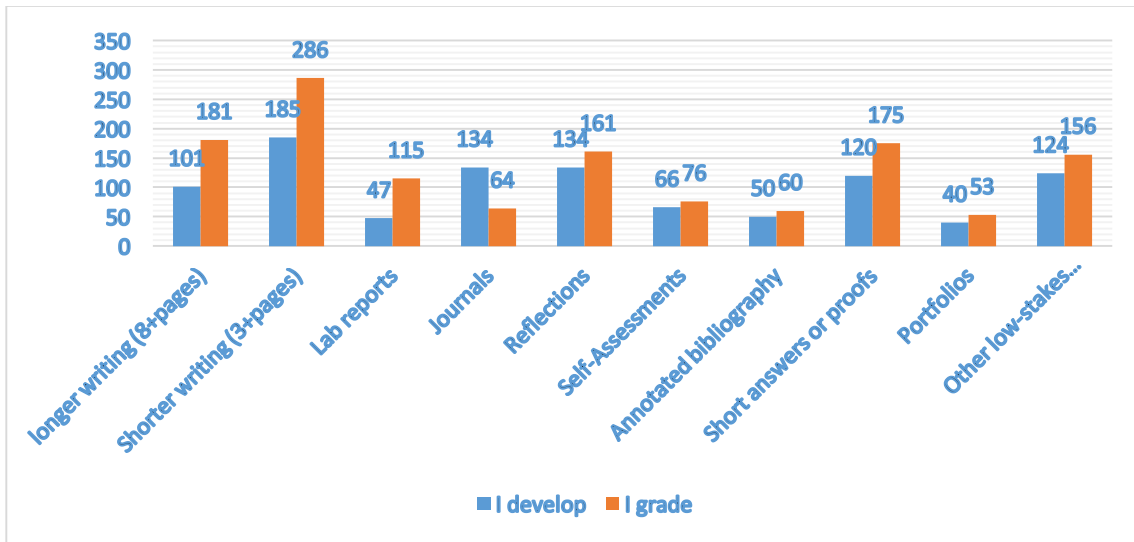**Quizzes, Midterms, and Exams**

Total responses (I design and develop): 378   Did not respond: 144

Total responses (I grade): 488   Did not respond: 34

Individual Writing Assignments
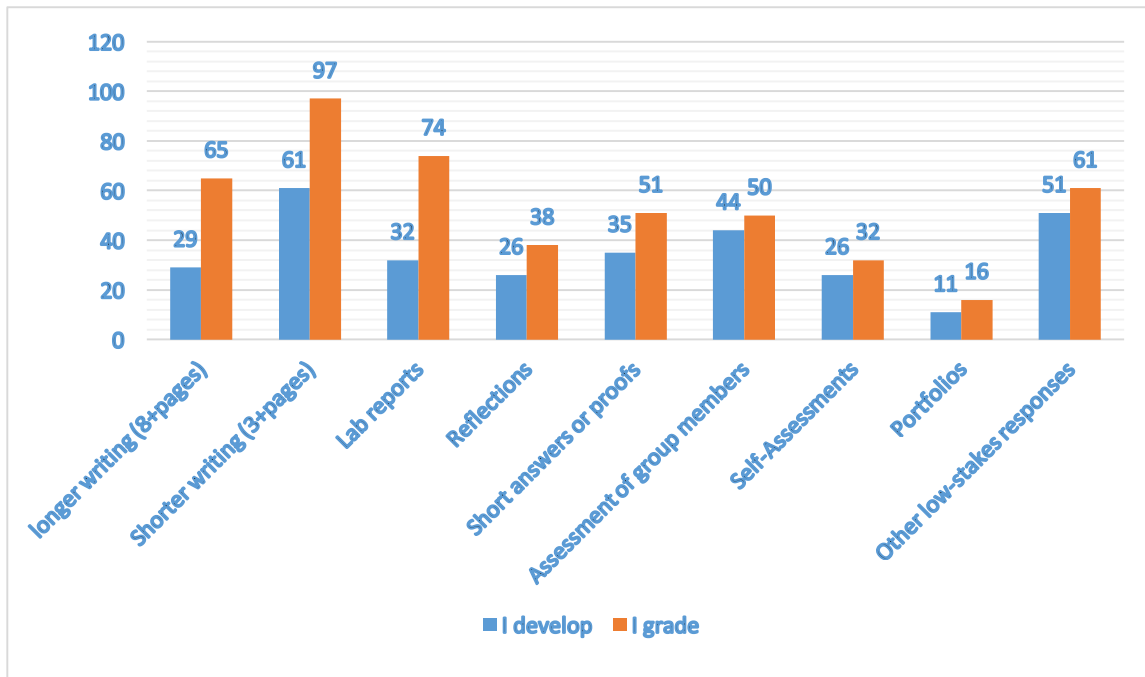

Total responses (I design and develop): 298   Did not respond: 224

Total responses (I grade): 416   Did not respond: 106
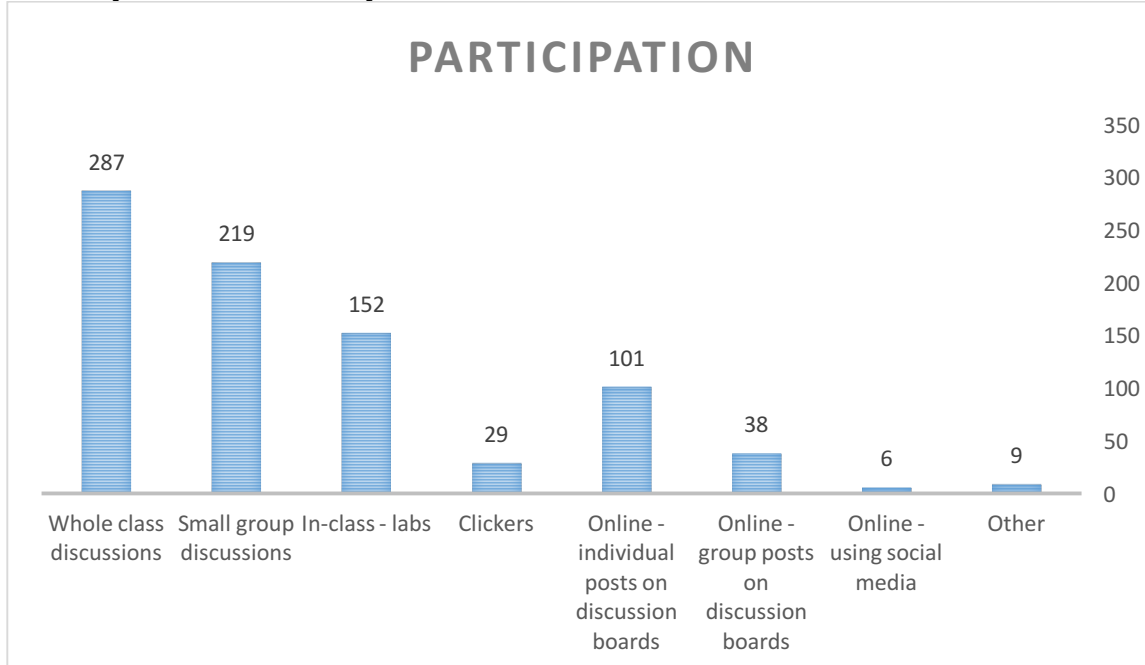
27

Group Writing Assignments

Total responses (I design and develop):161   Did not respond: 361

Total responses (I grade):236   Did not respond: 286

Participation Graded by TAs

Total responses (N): 359   Did not respond: 163

Teaching Experience: Benefits and Challenges in Teaching I/M Students

Q5. What benefits do international/multilingual students bring to your classes?

	Frequency	Percentage
Greater variety of perspectives on the course content	358	81 %
Greater depth in cross-cultural collaborations	198	45%
Ability to read and write in other languages	128	29 %
Greater quantitative background	90	21 %
Greater expertise in course content	87	20 %
Greater in-class participation	54	12%
Higher quality of assignments	53	12 %
Greater online participation	33	7%
Other	24	6 %

Total responses (N): 441   Did not respond: 81

Q6. Do you experience any pedagogical challenges in teaching international/multilingual students? If so, which?

	Frequency	Percentage
Generating participation in class	292	57%
Assessing writing	258	50%
Explaining course content	248	48%
Communicating course policies and deadlines	162	32%
Assessing participation	159	31%
Fostering collaboration	146	29%
No challenges that are different from teaching other students	85	17%
Designing assignments	51	10%
Generating participation online	25	5%
Other	21	4%

Total responses (N): 513   Did not respond: 9

APPENDIX D

Pedagogical Changes

Q8. Have you made any changes to your course content as a result of the increasing number of international/multilingual students in your classes?

Q9. Have you made any changes to your lectures or presentation style as a result of the increasing number of international/multilingual students in your classes?

Q10. Have you made any changes to your class activities as a result of the increasing number of international/multilingual students in your classes?

Q11. Have you made any changes to the course materials and resources you offer students as a result of the increasing number of international/multilingual students in your classes?

Changed the following aspect of their course as a result of the increasing number of I/M students	Yes	No	Other
Course content	90 (18%)	409 (81%)	7 (1%)
Class activities	112 (22%)	378 (76%)	8 (2%)
The course materials and resources TAs offer students	135 (27%)	357 (71%)	7 (1%)
Presentation style	221 (44%)	277 (55%)	4 (1%)

APPENDIX E

Instructional Support

Q12. What is your level of confidence in your ability to effectively promote your international/multilingual students' learning?

	0 - Not at all confident	1	2	3 - Somewhat confident	4	Very confident
Frequency	8	18	46	221	150	75
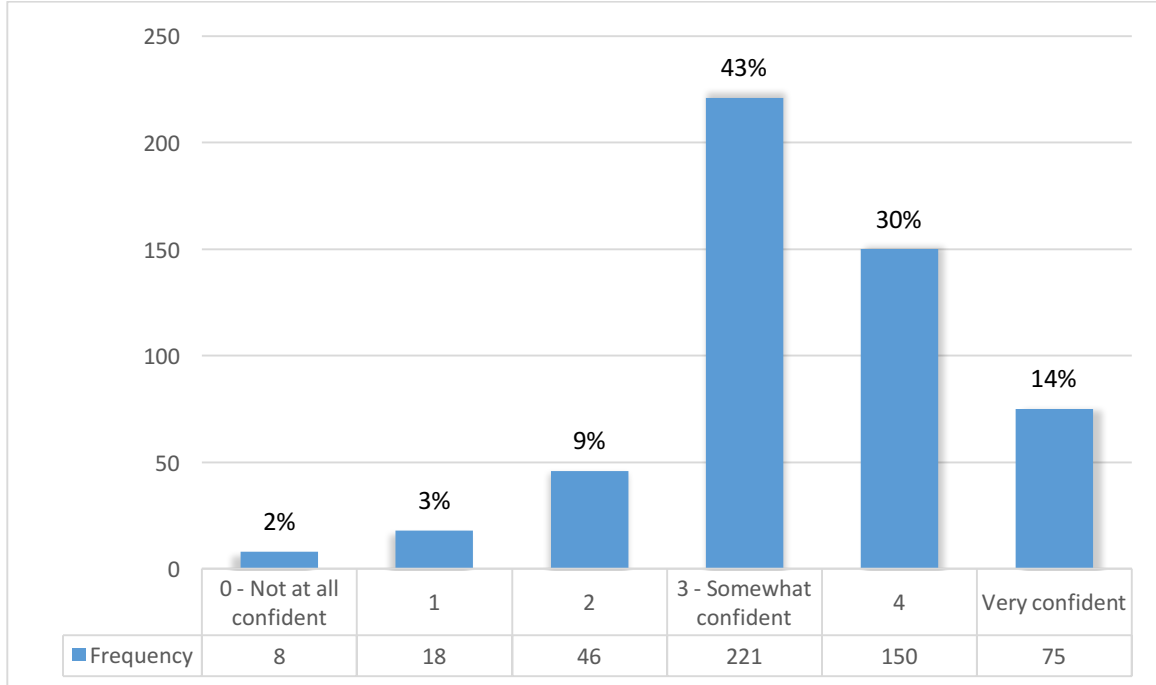
Total responses (N): 518   Did not respond: 4

Q13. Have you received any formal training in teaching international/multilingual students? If so, from where?

	Frequency	Percentage
No, I have not received any formal training	362	70%
Other or explain	64	12%
Yes, from the UW TA/RA conference in September	59	11%
Yes, from a TA orientation in my department	57	11%
Yes, from supervisors and/or professors	48	9%
Yes, from a pedagogy course offered in my department	31	6%
Yes, from mentor TAs	27	5%
Yes, from a pedagogy course offered in another department (please explain)	23	5%

Total responses (N): 517   Did not respond: 5

Q14. Have you sought out help for teaching international/multilingual students in any of the following ways?

Asking For Ideas and Support:

31

	Frequency	Percentage
Asking for ideas or support from peers in my department	237	63%
Asking for ideas or support from supervisors and/or professors in my department	214	57%
Gathering feedback from students	179	48%
Asking for ideas or support from mentor TAs	138	37%
Asking for ideas or support from peers outside of my department	72	19%
Asking for ideas or support from UW advisors or other staff	43	12%
Asking for ideas or support from faculty outside of my department	26	7%

Total responses (N): 376   Did not respond: 146

Consulting or collaborating with other campus partners:

	Frequency	Percentage
Consulting with OWRC on writing assignments	39	41 %
Consulting with someone in the CTL	33	35%
Consulting or collaborating with disciplinary writing centers	16	17%
Other or explain	16	17 %
Consulting with someone in UW-IT for technology resources	12	13%
Collaborating with the CLUE	10	11 %
Requesting an IWP instructor teaching links to my course	5	5 %
Collaborating with another campus study center (please explain below)	4	4 %
Consulting with someone in the Center for Engineering Learning & Teaching	2	2%

Total responses (N): 95   Did not respond: 427

Other:

	Frequency	Percentage
Consulting online resources	94	85%
Consulting books or articles on teaching	55	50%

Total responses (N): 111   Did not respond: 411

Q15. What kinds of additional support for teaching international/multilingual students would be useful for you?

In-person Support

	Frequency	Percentage
Department or disciplinary workshops	213	60%
Small group consultations for self-selected groups facing similar issues	150	42%
Individual consultations	99	28%
Dedicated studios or sections for multilingual students in large classes	93	26%
Campus-wide workshops or events	91	26%
Disciplinary introduction courses for students accepted into your major	91	26%
Cross-campus facilitated conversations or learning communities	90	25 %
Other forms of in-person support	10	3%

Total Responses (N): 355   Did not respond: 167

Online or Hybrid Support

	Frequency	Percentage
Recommended resource list with books and relevant scholarship	111	51%
Small group consultations, for self-selected groups facing similar issues	96	44%
Individual consultations	87	40%
Cross-campus facilitated conversations or learning communities	56	26%
Other forms of online or hybrid support	7	3%

Total Responses (N): 218   Did not respond: 304

None/NA

	Frequency	Percentage
No support needed – all is well	98	91%
Other	11	10%

Total Responses (N): 108   Did not respond: 414

Student Support

Q16. What types of learning support have you promoted for your international/multilingual students?

Office Hours

	Frequency	Percentage
Your office hours	462	99%
Your professor's office hours	249	53%

Total Responses (N): 468   Did not respond: 54list

Resources

	Frequency	Percentage
Additional online/AV resources	116	77%
Panopto or other lecture capture tools	66	44%

Total Responses (N): 150   Did not respond: 372

Campus Partners

	Frequency	Percentage
One-to-one tutoring sessions at OWRC	145	58%
One-to-one drop-in tutoring sessions at the CLUE Writing Center	123	49%
UW libraries	89	35 %
One-to-one drop-in tutoring sessions at other departmental writing centers	65	26%
Subject specific tutoring at other campus study and tutoring centers, such as CLUE, math, and physics	53	21%
Other or explain	48	19%
Academic English support course (ENGL 102 – 105)	45	18%
Targeted Learning Communities at OWRC	21	8%
Taking the IWP writing course linked to my large lecture	18	7%

Cultural conversation groups at the FIUTS or CLUE	15	6%
Self-study at the Language Learning Center	12	5%
University learning skills course (GEN ST 101)	11	4%
Additional classes	1	4%

Total Responses (N): 252   Did not respond: 270

None/NA

	Frequency	Percentage
I have not promoted any additional learning for my international/multilingual students	57	90%
Option, please explain	7	11 %

Total Responses (N): 64   Did not respond: 458