SUCCESS STORY WITH ACHIEVE
JENNIFER DUNCAN

INSTRUCTOR:
Jennifer Duncan

INSTITUTION:
Georgia State University Perimeter College

PRODUCT IN USE:
Achieve Writer's Help for Hacker

Course Details

Course:
Composition II

Format:
Online

How many weeks long is the course?
14 weeks

How often does it meet?
No synchronous meetings

How many students take it?
20-25 students per section - I typically teach 3-4 sections per semester.

What are the student demographics?
Since this is a gen ed level course, most students take it to fulfill a gen ed course requirement, but none are English majors.

Implementation

What do you assign in Achieve?
Students use Achieve as their primary textbook so I assign e-book pages for reading, LearningCurve adaptive quizzes, and video quizzes so that students have the opportunity to actively engage with the course rather than simply reading. I assign 3 diagnostics and the 3 related study plans (Reading Skills, Reading Strategies, and Punctuation, Style, & Mechanics). I use the Writing Assignments builder, but I create my own prompts. This semester, I'm also using the Goal Setting and Reflection surveys from the "innovation lab."

How does it fit into your syllabus?
Achieve supports my student learning outcomes especially training students to reflect on what contributes to their writing process and to evaluate their own work and the work of others.

What percentage of the grade is Achieve?
All of the graded work is submitted via Achieve. Grade categories include surveys (5%), diagnostics & study plans (10%), weekly assignments (15%), and writing assignments (70%).

Why did you decide to use Achieve?
The diagnostics and the writing tools are the primary reasons I use Achieve. The multi-draft writing assignment structure, including the use of peer review, is the most effective online tool for guiding students through the writing process that I've used.

Results

What are you seeing / hearing from students about Achieve? Survey results or overall course grades?
Students benefit from the multi-draft writing assignments though they still struggle with how to truly revise their work between drafts.

What do you think of Achieve? How has it changed your teaching?
The diagnostics allow students the opportunity for remediation on their own level without my taking course time to teach the skills that they should have brought into the course. In the past, students wouldn't be given formal tools to do this; I'd just expect them to build their skills via the tutoring center or other resources they found on their own. The other major change to my teaching is that I now use more multi-draft essays. Because it's easier to asses multiple drafts, I can focus more on the process rather than just the product. This allows me to give students more opportunity for feedback and to really stress the importance of writing process over writing product.

Lessons Learned

How is it going?
I keep using Achieve because the product keeps improving, and I find it easier to guide students through the writing process using the tools it provides. This semester, students feel more confident in the product which increases their positive feelings about the course in general.

What will you do differently next time?
I'm still trying to figure out the best way to weigh the various components in terms of grading. I'm confident that their writing should be the majority of their grade, but I'm still toying with how much credit to give for diagnostics, the weekly assignment, and the checkpoints. There are so many tools available, but it's important to balance the number of assignments students do each week. How much keeps them engaged and how much is too much?

What's better now that you are using Achieve?
I feel that I give students more actionable feedback that is more clearly tied to specific points in their essay. With draft goals, I can do this more quickly than before because it keeps me and my students focused on what's expected in each draft.

How do you think this will impact higher education going forward?
For many students and instructors, the global pandemic forced their first encounter with online classes, and I suspect that most courses will contain some online component in the future. As such, instructors need effective tools to teach online writing in a way that is easy for them and usable for students.