Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of their Professional Practice

Andrew Mark Abernathy

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TEACHING IN A REMEDIATION NATION:
EXPLORING JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in the Department of Higher Education at the University of Mississippi

By
Andrew M. Abernathy

August 2022
ABSTRACT

Research shows many new college students may be remedial in English language arts or mathematics (Jaggers & Bickerstaff, 2018). For faculty in journalism and mass communication (JMC) fields, teaching struggling student writers can be especially challenging as these students may not have the fundamental knowledge to build applied writing skills upon. Thus, this lack of readiness for collegiate writing poses challenges to not only these students’ academic success, but also their transition into media professions. Embedded remediation—an alternative to traditional, prerequisite remediation—is one strategy that JMC faculty can use to support struggling student writers. This dissertation explores how JMC faculty perceive the concept of embedded remediation using data from three focus groups with a combined sample of 17 participants from 14 U.S. institutions. Little research exists on how embedded remediation can be best used in JMC units at U.S. colleges and universities. Exploring faculty perceptions is valuable to growing this research area as the implementation of embedded remediation strategies would inherently affect the professional practice of JMC faculty.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my teachers, especially those who nonetheless saw potential.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without my loving family, supportive colleagues, and inspiring teachers. I especially want to thank my wife, Lindsey, for her support of me and our family throughout the process. Pursuing a doctorate is demanding and requires sacrifice. Lindsey always helped pick up the slack when the challenge of being a doctoral student, communications manager, adjunct professor, husband, and father all at once was overwhelming. I cannot adequately express my love, gratitude, and affection in words.

I would also like to thank my committee members. Dr. Whitney T. Webb was a supportive and insightful dissertation chair, and I will always be grateful for her support. Dr. Neal Hutchens was a supportive co-chair who helped me design a degree plan that made it possible to finish my doctorate while also making my professional transition from the University of Mississippi to Oklahoma State University. Dr. Alicia Stapp always offered timely and constructive feedback that helped me stay focused and productive. Dr. Amy Wells Dolan also was a great source of support and encouragement throughout this process.

However, my gratitude to Dr. Wells Dolan goes well beyond this dissertation. She took a big chance in hiring me as a communications specialist in 2012 when I was 26 and had never formally held a PR position before. She was also supportive of me in 2016 when I was asked to teach my first class as an adjunct professor at UM. Dr. Wells Dolan also gave me the confidence to apply to this degree program in 2018 when I thought that the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree had long since passed. Thank you for all of this and more, Amy.
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MANUSCRIPT I

INTRODUCTION

We live in a remediation nation. The research paints a clear picture. A recent study from researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College suggests up to two-thirds of community college students and nearly one-third of students entering less-selective four-year institutions in the United States are not prepared for college-level mathematics and/or English language arts (Jaggars & Bickerstaff, 2018). Research also shows this is not a recent phenomenon with some college instructors perceiving a rising number of their students as underprepared for college-level writing in studies from more than a decade ago (Graham & Perin, 2007; Lingwall 2010). However, there is not an abundance of recent research exploring how faculty perceptions may have changed in recent years or how those perceptions may vary by discipline, appointment type, years of experience outside the academe, or years of teaching experience. To help address this gap, this dissertation in practice has specifically explored the perceptions of faculty in the field of journalism and mass communication (JMC) related to the concept of embedded remediation, one form of remediation that contextualizes remedial efforts with the demands of the discipline.

Our remediation nation may have negative impacts on workforce development, too. A recent survey (n = 318) supported by the American Association of College and Universities found only 27% of employers perceived new college graduates as prepared to write in the professional world. The survey also suggested some college students may overestimate their
writing skills as 65% self-identified as “well-prepared” for professional writing (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Our remediation nation is no secret. Many higher education stakeholders, including policymakers and administrators, are working to address the problem. More than 21 states are currently implementing policies to shift educational institutions away from traditional, prerequisite remediation due to research that suggests the practice may be ineffective for many students (Education Commission of the United States, 2018). The dominant trend is a shift toward corequisite remediation, which requires college students to complete developmental courses while simultaneously pursuing for-credit courses, which can support student success prospects by reducing costs and time constraints for students (“The end of the remedial course,” 2019). Tennessee was the first U.S. state to make this change to corequisite remediation in 2015 and other state legislatures have joined in this corequisite trend. In 2017, Texas passed a law requiring corequisite education, using successes in Tennessee and other states as a basis. According to news coverage at the time, more than 54% of Texas community college students were enrolled in remedial courses (“Texas legislature requires colleges to use popular reform approach to remedial education,” 2017).

Still, in some instances, college and university systems are eliminating remedial education entirely and investing more resources into student support. In 2018, the California State University system formally ended remediation while simultaneously continuing the implementation of new academic support services with the goal of increasing graduation rates (Graduation Initiative 2025: Progress Report, 2018). The state’s community college system followed shortly after (“The end of the remedial course,” 2019).
Addressing our remediation nation may require stakeholders to adopt new perspectives on instruction, assessment, and evaluation. And, there are renewed calls to enhance teaching quality and student experiences from inside the academe itself. The American Academy of Arts & Sciences’ (AAA&S) Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education (2017) recently released a report suggesting that improving learning experiences among students should be the top priority in higher education noting quite unfortunately that “efforts to measure college learning and teaching quality are in the infancy” (p. 9). Addressing this call to action from the AAA&S may help shed light on how to develop and implement best practices that can support the success of students. This dissertation endeavors to help start such change.

Defining the problem

This dissertation seeks to address this call to action from the AAA&S and begin a new process of rethinking what it means for faculty to teach well in our remediation nation. This work will examine a defined problem of practice (PoP) which is: To create meaningful new learning opportunities for academically borderline journalism and mass communication students so they may not only persist as college students, but also graduate; join workforce; pursue economic stability; support democratic efficiency; and perhaps experience social mobility, all of which have been argued as the main purposes of American education (Labaree, 1997). For the purpose of this study, academically borderline students are those college students in JMC fields who may struggle to pass coursework due to insufficient writing skills. To make such changes will no doubt impact the professional practice of faculty. Therefore, this dissertation starts this process by drawing insights from faculty perceptions concerning students’ writing abilities, their roles as teaching faculty members, and policies and processes related to remediation as a means to expand the scholarly knowledge in this area. A special consideration will be given to
perceptions of embedded remediation, which incorporates developmental education into existing, credit-granting coursework or curricula and will be defined in more detail in the following sections (Perin, 2011). This dissertation also endeavors to use insights gained from faculty perceptions as a basis for future research that will work toward establishing best practices and curricular models that may benefit future students and faculty alike.

This research will pay attention to faculty perceptions on remediation with a specific focus on those who are employed within academic units (departments, schools, or colleges) accredited by the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication. There is a need to expand and update this body of research as there is not an abundance of recent research available. Lingwall’s (2010) exploratory study from more than a decade ago found in a survey (n = 166) of AEJMC faculty members that perceptions of students’ writing abilities were mediocre at best with an average score of 2.7 on a five-point Likert scale. Furthermore, Lingwall’s study illustrated a philosophical divide among this group of faculty with roughly half of respondents favoring higher standards for student entry or “rigor” and the other half favoring a remediation approach within courses or the overall curriculum. In a subsequent study, Lingwall and Kuehn (2013) explored students’ self-perceptions in a survey (n = 860) across 13 Mid-Atlantic universities that found a wide range of self-efficacy perceptions and called for the development of new teaching/remediation strategies that can be tailored to student needs using both a skills entrance exam for students in communication disciplines, and the use of the Media Writing Self-Perception Scale, which was developed by the scholars.

Given the recent developments in remediation research and policy in higher education, there is need to revisit the perceptions of faculty in JMC fields (which also includes advertising, integrated marketing communication, public relations, and more) as a means of expanding a
body of research that will help identify or establish new best-practices for teachers to support student success. Beyond updating the conversation regarding faculty perceptions of students’ writing abilities, this research explored to what extent these faculty are (or are not) open to and/or able to adapt their professional practice to help remediate fundamental writing skills among borderline students. Furthermore, studying the extent of these perceptions may help reveal elements of effective practice that can be applied to new embedded remediation models or strategies. Thus, this study supports a discipline-based approach to embedded remediation and will be explored more in the following pages. This approach to studying perceptions related to remediation policy on a disciplinary level is justified by two key assertions that are supported by the literature:

1. Most recent efforts made to address and/or reform college-level remediation have largely been cast at the institutional, system, or state level, not the discipline level. Examining this problem at the disciplinary level brings a fresh perspective to those studying the problem.

2. Embedding remedial education efforts into curricula at the disciplinary level may offer distinct advantages for students as writing standards vary drastically by profession, and tying remediation success to students’ professional ambitions may also offer advantages that have not been largely explored in scholarly literature.

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONALITY AND ASSUMPTIONS

As an assistant professor of professional practice at Oklahoma State University’s (OSU) School of Media and Strategic Communications, this dissertation’s PoP is closely related to my everyday life. One of my primary roles at OSU is to teach undergraduate courses in media
writing. To be more specific, my job is to help students learn styles of media writing used by professionals in advertising, journalism, public relations, and more. On a broader level, my job is to help students think more critically about the world and to write more clearly and persuasively during their journey through it. I believe these skills not only help students achieve professional success, but also equip them to be good citizens, and hopefully, good stewards of our democracy.

While I am somewhat new in my role at OSU, I am not new to teaching. For nearly five years, I served as a part-time, adjunct professor at the University of Mississippi’s (UM) School of Journalism and New Media, where I taught courses in integrated marketing communications. During this time, I also worked as a marketing and communications manager at the University. After a few years of teaching, I discovered that while my primary job drained me on most days, my teaching energized me. So when the opportunity to teach full time at OSU came in late 2019, I eagerly accepted the challenge and opportunity.

In my years of teaching, I have observed that active, student-centered teaching methods and experiential learning approaches are often more effective than teacher-centered, lecture-based instruction (similar to what I experienced as a student). My personal belief is that the lecture sometimes fails college students because it often amounts to an abstraction in their minds and, thus, is easy to compartmentalize and push to side. Comparatively, in my experiences, experiential learning is personal and, if done well, transformational. It is for this reason that I suspect I learned more working at my college newspaper than I did in the formal journalism curriculum I completed. Perhaps this is also one of the reasons I chose to study higher education—and not a communications-related field—when I decided to pursue doctoral studies in 2017. For context: As my doctoral studies began, I was an established teacher and communicator. I knew how to write. I had become fairly competent in teaching others how to
write for media careers. But, I did not understand the why behind my successes and failures in the classroom. UM’s Ed.D. program offered a chance to figure this out.

The study of remediation is also personal. As a student, I struggled to hone my writing skills for years. In elementary school, I was diagnosed and labeled with a learning disability, and for years I was isolated from my peers in language arts and mathematics. I believe this experience held me back. The effects lasted for years. It might shock some of my students today if they knew their professor scored a 19 on the ACT and barely survived his introductory reporting class in journalism school. That said, just a few years after earning that lowly ACT score, I graduated from college with a respectable GPA while serving as senior editor at The Daily Mississippian, my college newspaper. The journalism faculty selected me as the “Most Outstanding News-Editorial Student” upon graduation.

Upon much reflection, I believe my intellectual transformations during these years were due to the experiential nature of my time in the Student Media Center, the social implications of belonging to a close-knit group of students who cared about their work and challenged others to perform at a high standard, and my exposure to passionate teachers who genuinely cared about student learning at all levels. These experiences and assumptions have also led me to explore the literature and theories that will help examine this area of research in the following pages. Perhaps my experiences and assumptions also explain why I am curious to explore if discipline-based, experiential approaches to embedded remediation provide a valid way to craft new policies and practices. These personal and professional experiences and assumptions shape my perspective in creating this dissertation. These assumptions also may produce some level of bias that must be acknowledged and checked before and during the analysis of data. Analysis of data will be discussed in more depth in the second manuscript of this dissertation.
In the following sections of this first manuscript, I have built off of the broad research presented in the introduction and the experiences and assumptions presented in the positionality section to construct a review of relevant literature that examines: (a) the definition of remediation, (b) the efficacy considerations of remediation, (c) ethical considerations related to the practice, and (d) theoretical perspectives that challenge the use of purely cognitive models in favor of social models to evaluate student ability and its impact on remediation policy and practice. Following the literature review, I will also construct a conceptual framework to guide inquiry using two key elements: the Teaching-for-Learning (TFL) Model, a method of formative assessment developed to let instructors advance instructional “theories-in-practice” based on the subject matter and student needs, as well as David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), an extension of constructivist theory that contends humans construct knowledge through the cyclical nature of reflecting upon experiences and reshaping future efforts.

Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate

This dissertation is written in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Education degree in higher education at the University of Mississippi, which is affiliated with the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED). CPED’s vision statement is to “prepare educational leaders to become well-equipped scholarly practitioners who provide stewardship of the profession and meet the educational challenges of the 21st century” (Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate, n.d.). Furthermore, CPED promotes three organizing principles to inform scholarly research including: equity, ethics, and social justice. As I am studying the perceptions of college faculty in JMC fields related to embedded remediation as a form of professional teaching practice, I will use this section to connect this topic to CPED’s guiding principles.

Equity
Remedial coursework in American postsecondary education has served a key role in access to academic credentials beyond a high school diploma because it is often used to classify if a student is considered prepared to be academically successful in such pursuits (Maruyama, 2012). Those who are not deemed prepared on a cognitive assessment are often quarantined in non-credit granting courses, even though empirical research suggests students with borderline scores receive little-to-no benefit from the intervention (Boatman & Long, 2018; Kurlander, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018). Data also suggest 50% of students in two-year institutions and 20% of students in four-year institutions enroll in these courses each year (Complete College America, 2012). Furthermore, students of color and low-socioeconomic status are more likely to enroll in remedial coursework (Strayhorn, 2014). Therefore, remediation effectively serves as a sorting instrument that may prevent students, many from underrepresented populations, from gaining access to postsecondary credentials and the associated professional and economic opportunities therein. Empirical research suggests that for some students, remediation effectively reduces their equity in an educational system.

Ethics

Because many traditional remediation courses are non-credit granting and may serve as a prerequisite, remediation may require students to pay more tuition dollars over a longer period of time to earn the same number of credits as their peers, which can not only put students behind schedule, but also may reduce students’ likelihood of persistence and graduation (Boatman & Long, 2018; Kurlander, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018). As remediation has been effectively used as a sorting instrument for college readiness, the practice suggests that institutional leaders largely believe academic performance on cognitive assessments is a key indicator for success or failure despite the fact that research exists to suggest non-academic factors, particularly those
experienced by nontraditional and first-generation students, play a bigger role in attrition, with a minority of students dropping out due to academic failure (Tinto, 1993; Johnson, 2012). Using this data as a lens to view the issue, traditional remediation policies pose an ethical quandary for policy makers and educators alike. If the practice puts more burden on students, may be ineffective for borderline students, and academic success may, in fact, not be the strongest predictor of graduation and/or persistence, the continuation of its traditional form is highly problematic and should be reconsidered.

Social justice

Given the established equity and ethics issues related to traditional remediation policy in the United States, it stands to reason that advancing an industry-wide conversation about overhauling the policies and practices therein is an act of social justice, or in the very least, it is an act in its support. Social justice in education does not have a single definition, but the notions of diversity and inclusion; fairness; recognition of opportunity disparities between groups; and an active anti-bias narrative connect many contemporary definitions (Pijanowski & Brady, 2020). It is this researcher’s hope that by starting this conversation about embedded remediation as a form of professional practice among faculty members in journalism and mass communication fields, there will be opportunities to dispel myths or misconceptions about the practice and advance a student-centered narrative around the design of curricula and pedagogical approaches to teaching. Such changes can be aligned with the aforementioned elements of social justice and thus, present the potential to make positive strides in teaching, learning, and student success in this field.
What is remediation?

In crafting a literature review related to the PoP, it is important to first briefly define remediation as a practice and its variations. Remediation, sometimes called developmental education, is an academic intervention or course designed for students who have been deemed unlikely to succeed academically based on a standardized assessment (Levin & Calcagno, 2008). Ultimately remediation is a means of students achieving college readiness, which has been defined as being able to succeed in credit-granting, entry-level coursework that leads to a degree, certificate, or career-oriented credential (Conley, 2012). The use of freestanding courses—which can be offered as prerequisite or corequisite requirements for high-risk students—has been the traditional vehicle for offering remediation to college students (Baker et al., 2009). One alternative is embedded remediation, which allows the intervention to be integrated directly into coursework within students’ chosen discipline, and may be contextualized within the context of that subject (Perin, 2011). Some argue the embedded approach may address some weaknesses of traditional, prerequisite remediation as students may have lesser interest in the discrete coursework as it does not relate to their personal and professional goals (Cavazos et al., 2010). Alternatively, there are other forms of remediation that have shown positive results in recent years such as summer bridge programs, accelerated coursework, and learning communities (as cited in Relles, 2016).

Efficacy considerations

One common criticism of postsecondary remediation in the United States is that it may not be effective. In some instances, it may not work at all. Research illustrates this on the state
level in multiple cases in recent years. A recent statistical analysis of educational data from Tennessee’s public four-year and two-year institutions found that for students with borderline scores, remediation had little-to-no effect on academic achievement (Boatman & Long, 2018). In fact, the same study found remedial education had negative effects on some borderline students as they acquired significantly less academic credits (roughly one semester’s worth) by the end of their third year of college. However, it is important to point out that the study did find that students who were well below cut scores did benefit as they were statistically more likely to eventually pass a credit-granting course. This suggests that traditional approaches to remediation may serve some purpose, but is certainly not an effective catch all strategy, especially not for borderline students. This study argues that embedded remediation as a form of professional practice stands to greatly benefit borderline students, especially.

Research by Michal Kurlander (2018) at the University of California at Davis also suggests remedial coursework had little-to-no effect for California students with borderline test scores. In fact, the study found the practice had a long-term negative effect because it decreased students’ probability of graduating. Likewise, a 2018 report from report from the Public Policy Institute of California found the majority of students in the state’s community college system—which admits more than 240,000 new students each year—who attempt traditional, developmental coursework, never go on to complete transfer-level courses in English or mathematics (Rodriguez et al., 2018). The study also found students enrolled with co-requisite remediation, which simultaneously enrolls students in both developmental and credit-granting coursework, experience 30-40% higher throughput rates to transfer-level coursework.
Ethical considerations

Although ethical considerations related to the PoP have been acknowledged in the CPED alignment portion of this manuscript, a deeper examination of these issues is key to better contextualize the study in this literature review. There are numerous ethical concerns to consider when studying remediation policy, and, for the purposes of this study, three specific considerations will be sufficiently explored including: (a) the disproportionate impact on students of color, (b) the negative financial impacts for multiple stakeholder groups, and (c) how the negative impacts of remediation may also clash with education’s greater role in American Democracy as both a public and private good.

Impact on students of color. Research suggests low-income students, a disproportionate amount of whom are students of color, are more likely to be enrolled in remedial coursework and this enrollment may discourage retention, persistence, and graduation (as cited in Dulbaum, 2016). An estimated 20% of students enrolled in four-year institutions are tracked into remedial courses and data suggest only one-third of this group can expect to earn a bachelor’s degree in a six-year window (Complete College America, 2012). A 2012 study found this group to be composed of 39.1% African American students and 20.6% Hispanic students (Complete College America, 2012). When considering data that suggest the national six-year graduation rate for African American (45.9%) and Hispanic (55%) students at four-year institutions is significantly lower compared to White (67.2%) and Asian (71.17%) students (Shapiro et al., 2017), the practice of traditional remediation can be viewed as one contributing factor to an “opportunity gap” between student populations (as cited in Banks & Dohy, 2019).

From this perspective, policy shifts away from traditional remediation—including those toward corequisite, embedded, and alternate forms—promote the long-term success of borderline
students. However, some scholars argue that the total elimination of remedial coursework—as seen in the California State University System—also poses ethical concerns for students who are well below cut scores who may gain some long-term benefit from remedial coursework. As noted by Kurlander (2018):

In a system stretched by increasing enrollment and declining state resources ending remediation may lead some to want to reduce access to students not deemed ready for college-level work. Yet doing so would disproportionately harm students of color and low-income students, who have less access to the opportunities that determine college readiness in the first place. Higher education may not be responsible for the inequities students face in their prior schooling, but colleges and universities cannot ignore these disparities if we are to improve degree attainment and reduce college completion gaps (para. 4).

**Financial implications.** Our remediation nation’s price tag is worth discussion, too. In fact, some researchers estimate the practice costs roughly $7 billion a year across local, state, and federal levels, and students are estimated to carry up to $1 billion of the overall bill (Clayton et al., 2012). Also concerning in this context is the ongoing financial pressures facing higher education institutions. Recent research from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C., found in the wake of the 2008 U.S. recession, state funding for public two- and four-year institutions has not fully recovered (Mitchell et al., 2017). A 2018 report from the Center shows that in 2017, comprehensive funding for public higher education institutions was $9 billion below 2008 levels.
Consumer debt is also a valid consideration given the costs extended to students. As remediation has been proven to increase the time to degree, which increases costs to students, and decreases the probability of graduation in some instances, students are also negatively affected. The U.S. Federal Reserve reported student debt grew to $1.57 trillion in the last quarter of 2018 with an estimated, average burden of more than $33,000, which research suggests could be detrimental to one’s ability to acquire wealth or make major purchases post-college (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2019; Bankrate, 2019). Currently, more than 40 million Americans hold that debt (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). College affordability is a growing concern among U.S. citizens and recent polling from the Pew Research Center found 72% of survey participants support increased investments in public education, which could offset some of this financial pressure on consumers (“Little Public Support for Reductions in Federal Spending,” 2019). Given the proven ineffectiveness of many remedial programs and the significant financial costs, stakeholders have fair reason to ask themselves: To what extent have traditional remediation investments become sunk costs?

Democratic goods. Given the efficacy concerns, disproportionate impacts on student populations, and financial considerations, it is also important to consider the role education plays in American Democracy when considering remediation policy and practices. David Labaree’s (1997) oft-cited essay “Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals” provides a useful lens to discuss these ethical concerns. Labaree argued that in the history of American education there has been a struggle to define its role as purely a public or private good, but that there are three primary goals for education: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. Or in other words, to develop engaged citizens, prepare quality workers, and help people improve their station in life. Addressing the need to rethink writing remediation
(particularly in JMC fields) and perhaps embrace embedded remediation as a form of professional practice among JMC faculty fits well into each of these goals. Reforming remediation as a means of increasing student success may better equip college graduates to develop the critical thinking skills needed to be more informed about public policies and politicians. Likewise, reforming remediation practice speaks to the concerns of job creators cited in the introduction of this manuscript who are dissatisfied with the writing capabilities of recent college graduates (Hart Research Associates, 2015). Finally, research suggests students who are enrolled in remedial courses in the United States are more likely to experience financial struggles or hail from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (as cited in Dulbaum, 2016). Redesigning and rethinking remediation can be a means of increasing students' ability to complete a postsecondary education and this directly enhances their ability to increase social status through gainful employment. Through this lens, reforming remediation practice can be seen as both a public and private good for American Democracy.

**Cognitive vs. social perspectives**

As established with the review of recent empirical studies, remediation is often ineffective for borderline students who fall just short of the proficiency line (Boatman & Long, 2018; Kurlander, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018). However, there are scholarly criticisms that argue the line itself is problematic and more factors should be considered when classifying a student as college ready or remedial. There are two dominant schools of thought in recent research concerning the assessment of readiness for college-level writing: cognitive and social (Duncheon & Tierney, 2014). Purely cognitive assessments cast students as *proficient* or *deficient* in terms of their ability to perform on a specific assessment and assume one’s ability to write and ability to learn how to write can be standardized (Relles, 2016). Comparatively, social
approaches take into account external factors outside of the classroom that may affect how students learn while also conceptualizing writing as a social experience and not necessarily a linear path through stages of cognitive development (as cited in Relles, 2016).

In this researcher’s opinion, social perspectives may provide a valuable perspective in addressing the PoP. While this dissertation does not propose educators abandon cognitive assessments—in fact, it will argue cognitive measures are essential for social efficiency purposes—it does pose the idea that a more effective approach to classifying students as ready or not ready to succeed in postsecondary writing can and should use a more flexible and diverse rubric that combines social and cognitive factors. Furthermore, creating cognitive-social perspectives equips educators with more flexible frameworks to design curricula and this strengthens arguments for both embedded and alternative forms of remediation, particularly in writing. Such a perspective is supported by research from Julia C. Duncheon and William G. Tierney (2014) of the University of Southern California who have addressed this need for a balance between the two perspectives:

We recommend constructing a framework that moves beyond the notion of writing as a set of reified skills by drawing from sociocultural theory. This perspective does not deny the importance of cognitive processes, but situates skills development within the broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape students’ acquisition of academic literacy. (...) ...Reconceptualizing college-ready writing to acknowledge sociocultural contexts [helps understand] educational outcomes as products of a complex web of historical, institutional, and individual influences [and may] illuminate weaknesses in current testing regimes and encourage more localized and flexible approaches to writing assessment (pp. 212-213).
However, first it is important to review and acknowledge a key milestone in cognitive assessment in American education to better understand the proposed balancing act between assessment perspectives. One of the seminal models for cognitive assessment of student learning is Benjamin Bloom’s (1956) cognitive taxonomy of learning. While Bloom and his fellow researchers actually produced three taxonomies of learning—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—the cognitive model has played a defining role in how teachers design and assess student learning for more than 60 years (Fink, 2013). The model contains six stages of learning related to ability to demonstrate a new skill or understanding of an assigned lesson and are arranged in the following order with evaluation being considered the strongest level of learning and knowledge being considered the weakest level:

- **Evaluation (strongest)** - Ability to judge or determine the value or quality of learned material for a given purpose; learning objectives use wording such as *judge, evaluate, estimate, select*, etc.

- **Synthesis** - Ability to compile elements of learned material into a new form; learning objectives use wording such as *compose, produce, design, organize*, etc.

- **Analysis** - Ability to break down learned material into pieces so a structural understanding can be achieved; learning objectives use wording such as *analyze, compare, contrast, classify, investigate*, etc.

- **Application** - Ability to use learned material; learning objectives use wording such as *apply, develop, organize, practice, illustrate*, etc.

- **Comprehension** - Ability to create meaning from material; learning objectives use wording such as *explain, express, interpret, conclude*, etc.
• Knowledge (weakest) - Ability to remember information from learned material; learning objective use wording such as know, identify, define, record, name, etc.

As noted by scholars of teaching and learning, Bloom’s Taxonomy has been a valuable tool for educators that has stood the test of time (Fink, 2013), and the model has been updated since its original 1956 form to address new understanding of knowledge types and cognitive processes (Anderson & Bloom, 2001). While knowledge and the ability to learn may or may not be measurable on a standardized scale, one’s ability to perform skills or use concepts in professional contexts, such as writing for JMC careers, can be roughly standardized in many instances. For example, news stories written in Associated Press style typically must adhere to strict style rules (such as one-sentence, hard news ledes; separate paragraphs for quotes; and attribution styles) as a matter of industry best practice to make editing on a deadline easier. Proficiency in these skills is expected of those entering the workforce. It is for this reason that Bloom’s Taxonomy is a valuable instrument, especially in contexts where students are being developed for professional practice.

However, using cognitive models, such as Bloom’s, as an exclusive means of sorting students into remedial coursework is problematic when considering the inefficacy and ethical concerns related to traditional remediation models. Multiple scholars including Stefani Relles (2016) of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas have argued that remedial writing students should be viewed using social models that considers how students’ experiences outside the classroom impact their ability to learn how to write:

Rather than framing remedial writers as skill deficient, a social perspective assumes remedial writers are under-experienced in executing college literacy tasks because they
are comparatively underexposed to the syntactic structures, vocabulary, and cognitive styles of language as it is practiced in a postsecondary setting. (...) While the traditional perspective assumes remedial writers will benefit from writing instruction, the social perspective suggests they will benefit from writing practice (p. 174).

Such social perspectives may not be a means of effectively replacing cognitive models for assessment for social efficiency reasons. But, this argument does provide a valuable perspective for stakeholders in the creation of future policies and the design of future curricula and learning experiences for students. As noted by Relles, revising our assumptions about remedial students can lead to innovations in teaching and learning that may have a positive impact on student success. One innovation that Relles’ work suggests is the use of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory in a formal remediation setting. The scholar argues that, although it is largely untested, ELT pairs well with social perspective as it captures the intellectual growth of students regardless of success or failure in cognitive assessments. In the following section of this manuscript, I will address Relles theoretical proposal and construct a two-pronged conceptual framework for this dissertation that combines ELT as well the TFL model, which allows for instructor-led, discipline-specific innovations in teaching and learning and may be flexible enough for educators to balance both social and cognitive perspectives in the practice of embedded remediation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework that will inform this study includes two elements: (a) the Teaching-for-Learning (TFL) model and (b) David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT).
These elements will help shape the formal research question of this study and questions used during the data collection. These elements were selected because each will help inform the purpose of the study, which is to explore JMC faculty perceptions related to embedded remediation as a form of professional practice. The TFL model, which allows for discipline-based innovations in teaching and learning, will help examine the issues related to students’ writing abilities and potential pedagogical/andragogical innovations from a perspective that is directly linked to the professional practice of JMC faculty. ELT will help shape both the collection of and understanding of data in a way that seeks to find a balance between cognitive and social perspectives on writing instruction and assessment. The theory also lends itself well to applications in embedded and alternate forms of remediation because it is easily actionable from a teaching perspective. Examples of applications of both elements of this framework will be provided in a way that is applicable to JMC faculty’s professional practice.

The TFL model

The TFL model provides a “systematic and inclusive model for teachers to explore and test teaching and assessment practices in order to ensure learning experiences that enhance the learning of all students” (Conrad, et al., 2011, p. 175). Most notably, the model empowers instructors to be student-centered in their practice and investigate “theories in practice” in a way that encourages instructors to combine their disciplinary knowledge, personal experiences, and situational contexts related to student groups, environments, and course goals. The model is the product of research calling for the prioritization of scholarship related to teaching and learning, an argument made mainstream by researchers such as Ernest Boyer, author of Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate (1990). Boyer believed the scholarship of teaching—along with discovery, integration, and application—should become a new priority in
higher education. Three decades later, the same need for prioritizing quality teaching unfortunately remains a pressing issue in higher education as evidenced by the AAA&S’s recent call for improving undergraduate educational experiences cited in the introduction of this manuscript (Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education, 2017).

The TFL model has six parts including:

1: Identify course-specific challenges
2: Explore and construct a relevant knowledge base
3: Hypothesize and design teaching practices
4: Hypothesize and design learning experiences
5: Implementation and adapt teaching practices
6: Test hypotheses (pp.176-181)

To put the TFL model in perspective, consider the following example. A faculty member in journalism and mass communication may:

1: Identify that students need to better write clear and concise news copy in adherence to AP style by the end of the course. However, drastically varying skill levels of students entering the course may present a challenge to achieving this goal. Likewise, a course design largely based on traditional lectures may not encourage active engagement with developing both applied and fundamental writing skills.

2: Research learning theories and models which may help students learn more effectively, such as the TFL model and ELT.

3: Hypothesize that frequently dividing students into small groups that allow for writing drills, critique, and peer discussions may be more effective in delivering technical
information, which can be tailored for the learners’ needs and abilities.

4: Hypothesize that creating social experiences in small groups might create atmospheres where the students actively engage with peers and instructors and reflect on their work in experiential learning environments, leading to increased achievement and proficiency.

5: Design and implement an intervention pilot utilizing beginning, middle, and end assessments and structured small group work throughout the semester. Compile a dataset of cognitive assessment scores. Engage in formative assessment throughout.

6: Engage in summative assessment. Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention based on descriptive statistics and growth statistics. Gather qualitative feedback from students on their experiences in the intervention to gain a deeper understanding of how the experiences did or did not impact learning.

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**Experiential Learning Theory**

David Kolb (1984) defined learning as the “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 51). Created in 1984, ELT is an evolution of constructivist theory—inspired by the works of Piaget, Dewey, Lewin, and more—that focuses primarily on adult learning. ELT suggests learning occurs through cycles in which students reflect upon experiences and then reshape future efforts. Thus, this theory suggests knowledge is not fixed. It is constantly evolving and being refined by the learner through new experiences. Kolb’s theory suggests there are four phases to the experiential learning process: concrete experience (grasping), reflective observation (transforming), abstract conceptualization (grasping), and active experimentation (transforming). A virtual representation of ELT is seen in figure 1 below.
To put this into context, I will provide an example of what the use of ELT in a JMC writing class might look like in terms of practice. Using an ELT approach can involve requiring students to not only revise their written works after an initial grading to regain a portion of their lost points, but also engage in personal reflection in a short written essay as part of those corrections. Students do not simply make corrections for style and grammar, they must think about why they are making these changes. Students are more incentivized to engage in this reflection because it is linked to their success in the class and perhaps their professional goals. They will now be able to apply their new understanding in future attempts on similar assignments.

In this context, the instructor may require students to continue this process until a substantial level of new understanding has been achieved. It is more work on both the student and the instructor—thus the need to explore faculty perceptions of their professional practice—but it keeps the student engaged and on track to succeed in the course alongside her or his peers. Such practice aligns neatly with ELT and may also provide a form of embedded remediation that benefits all students at all levels of achievement and ability. While there may be an initial quantitative, cognitive assessment of a student’s ability in the form of a numbered
grade, that figure is not fixed and grows with the student’s knowledge and experiences. The creation of reflective essays on corrections also creates a formal qualitative account of how the student has experienced the new learning and is in accordance with balancing both cognitive and social perspectives on learning.

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation explored the perceptions of JMC faculty related to embedded remediation as a form of professional practice. The study takes a particular interest in exploring perceptions that can be applied to developing new models for embedded remediation within the discipline-specific contexts of journalism and mass communication. This research is a basis for starting a research agenda that will look at how instructional practices can be improved in future research to support student success at all levels, but especially for borderline students who may benefit most from embedded remedial instruction. This section describes the study methodology, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and ends with the formation of research questions.

Method

This study used qualitative data collected via focus groups conducted by the researcher. The focus group methodology was used because of its strengths to allow “participants to express multiple perspectives on a similar experience, such as the implementation of a new policy” (Glesne, 2016, p.123). Furthermore, focus groups allow for debate among participants that is often facilitated by focusing exercises led by the researcher (Bloor and Wood, 2016), which was beneficial in the execution of this study. Given these strengths, elements of this study’s conceptual framework were utilized in shaping questions and in the overall design of the focus
group. Exploring such perceptions sheds light on possibilities for designing new teaching strategies and models for JMC writing.

Participants

The researcher coordinated with academic leadership (chairs, deans, directors, heads, etc.) from JMC units (departments, schools, colleges) at U.S. universities to recruit focus group participants. Accepted participants were faculty at any rank who teach undergraduate students at an institution accredited by the Association for Education Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). Not all journalism and mass communication units are accredited by the AEJMC, but focusing on this group was beneficial to the study as accreditation is a mark that the unit is committed to producing quality graduates to work in media fields. A range of faculty types were necessary to effectively measure faculty perceptions. For the purpose of analysis, this study population was broken down into three groups to see if differences in perceptions by appointment type were observable in the final analysis:

Group 1: Adjunct faculty (all ranks) - Full-time or part-time faculty who are paid per course and are usually hired by semester. Individuals may or may not have an outside professional or university administrative role.

Group 2: Teaching faculty (all ranks) - Faculty with renewable contracts whose appointment focuses on teaching and service. Individuals may or not be full-time employees. Individuals may or may not also have an administrative role.

Group 3: Tenure-stream faculty (all ranks) - Faculty who hold tenure at his/her/their institution or are employed with the prospect of earning tenure. Appointment focuses on teaching, research, and service. Individuals may or may not have an administrative role.
Data collection

This study included three semi-structured focus groups designed and conducted by the researcher. A semi-structured nature of inquiry allowed for the researcher to develop probing questions during data collection process with the research focus in mind (Glesne, 2016). As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), in qualitative research, the researcher serves as an instrument in data collection. Thus, I have processed the data and organized it into categories and themes.

Because participants were spread out geographically and because of safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus groups were conducted via Zoom and were recorded. Hand-written field notes and observations were recorded during this process. These focus groups were designed to explore how faculty: (a) perceive their undergraduate students’ writing abilities and the need to implement remedial efforts; (b) perceive their role and responsibilities related to remediation efforts; (c) perceive the feasibility of embedded remediation as a form of professional practice and any barriers that this may pose; and (d) perceive their own willingness to embrace new strategies and/or models of teaching that may support the PoP. Demographic data, including data related to appointment type, institution type, and extent of teaching experience were collected prior to the focus groups as part of the consent form process to give context to the focus group sample. As an incentive, participants were given a $25 Amazon gift card, which was delivered digitally after each group. Funds for the gift cards were provided by the researcher’s employer, Oklahoma State University.
**Data analysis**

This study sought to answer a research question using qualitative data collected from focus groups that was put through a thematic coding process. MaxQDA software was used throughout the coding process to sort and organize codes into categories and themes. Data concerning (d) the willingness to embrace specific teaching strategies and/or elements of embedded remediation models was also collected. During focus groups, participants were asked to respond to these strategies or techniques as positive, negative, neutral, or abstention. The researcher asked probing questions in response to these positive/neutral/negative reactions to render richer qualitative data. While this data is quantifiable, the analysis was largely qualitative given the methodology and sample size.

**Ethical considerations**

To establish a high standard of efficacy and ethics, this study was submitted to the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval supports the need to protect the wellbeing and rights of those who participate in this study.

**Research question**

This study explored the perceptions of JMC faculty perceptions related to embedded remediation as a form of professional practice. The research addressed the following question:

RQ: To what extent, if at all, do faculty in journalism and mass communication feel they are willing to embrace embedded remediation strategies in their professional practice as educators?

**SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT ONE**

Based on the research presented in this manuscript, a new study of JMC faculty perceptions related to embedded remediation as a form of professional practice, was conducted.
This first manuscript has (a) defined a problem of practice; (b) established the need to study it further; (c) provided an overview of recent policy trends related to remediation in the United States; (d) defined key terms related to remediation policy; (e) connected this subject to CPED’s framework of ethics, equity, and social justice; and (f) established that social and cognitive perspectives are the two dominant schools of thought on evaluating student success while provided a means of balancing these perspectives in this research. Furthermore, this manuscript built a foundation for a study that uses a conceptual framework that utilizes the TFL model and ELT to inform the design of focus groups for data collection and how data is analyzed. Following approval on this first manuscript by the dissertation committee and the University of Mississippi’s IRB, data was collected from the study population using focus groups that were designed as part of the IRB approval process in summer 2021 and were conducted in fall 2021.
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A concerning number of students who enter postsecondary education today—approximately two-thirds of community college students and one-third of students at some four-year institutions—can be classified as remedial in either mathematics or English language arts (Jaggars & Bickerstaff, 2018). In Manuscript One, I identified how the presence of underprepared students presents an important PoP to higher education stakeholders: To create meaningful new learning opportunities for academically borderline students so they may not only persist as college students, but also graduate; join workforce; pursue economic stability; support democratic efficiency; and perhaps experience social mobility, all of which have been argued as the main purposes of American education (Labaree, 1997). One approach to addressing this problem of practice is embedded remediation, which simultaneously provides students with credit-granting coursework and developmental educational efforts in a way that is contextualized within the discipline itself (Perin, 2011). Such contextualization may allow students to view remedial education goals alongside their professional ambitions.

This research asserts that, to faculty, embedded remediation is not only a strategic form of course and/or curricula design, but also an act of professional practice. Due to the nature of embedded remediation itself, models of such practice will vary by discipline and by institution and affect the instructional practice of faculty who teach undergraduate students. One such population is faculty members who teach in JMC fields at U.S. colleges and universities. This
dissertation explored how those perceptions related to the concept of embedded remediation as a form of professional practice from a sample of these faculty. Researchers have not deeply explored the perceptions of these faculty in relation to embedded remediation. Existing studies that explore faculty perceptions of either their role as educators and/or the abilities of their students are few and need updating (Lingwall, 2010; Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013). The following research question guided this study:

RQ: To what extent, if at all, do faculty in journalism and mass communication feel they are willing to embrace embedded remediation strategies in their professional practice as educators?

This second manuscript provides an overview of research design, recruitment, data collection, and present data itself. Analysis of data is in the third and final manuscript of this dissertation.

**Research Design**

To address the research question, qualitative inquiry with focus groups was used. Group interviews are valuable to answering the research question. As noted by Glesne (2016), this methodology allows the researcher to observe “debate among the participants themselves perhaps fascinated by focusing exercises” (p. 123). As a method, the focus group is different in nature from the one-on-one interview, which is often used in qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology or ethnography. During in-depth interviews, researchers serve as the investigator who controls the dynamics of the data collection process. During a focus group, the researcher must take on the role of the facilitator or the moderator in the process (Nyumba et al., 2017). Thus, the researcher has a perimeter view in a focus group, rather than a co-equal position in a one-on-one interview (Nyumba et al., 2017; Bloor et. al, 2001; Johnson, 1996). If focus group
participants are to purposefully consider the use of embedded remediation in their everyday teaching practice, then conversations among peers are needed to shape policy and practice. Being able to observe how faculty speak about the subject and respond to their peers’ ideas and experiences is valuable is understanding to what extent, if at all, members of this population are open to embracing embedded remediation in their professional practice.

Recruitment and Data Collection

Approval to conduct Zoom-based focus groups was obtained from the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board in August 2021 (see Appendix A). The focus groups were conducted via Zoom due to safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. To recruit participants, personalized emails were sent to 77 JMC academic unit heads at colleges and universities across the United States asking that a recruitment email be forwarded to faculty within their units. The email provided IRB-approved documents that explained the purpose of the study, research design, and methodology to prevent potential concerns with safety and malicious solicitation (see Appendix B). The initial plan for recruitment was to identify three AEJMC-accredited institutions with sufficient interest to host focus groups. Interest in participation was geographically widespread. However, interest was not sufficiently concentrated to conduct focus groups with faculty specifically from three sites. Thus, IRB approval was obtained to facilitate three blended focus groups with faculty from multiple institutions in September 2021 (see Appendix C).

This recruitment process resulted in a purposeful, self-selected sample with 17 participants from 14 colleges or universities who participated in one of three focus groups in September (No. 1 and 2) or November (No. 3) 2021, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. Purposeful, criteria-based sampling is often used in qualitative research as it allows the
researcher to draw data from participants who are informed and experienced with the research problem (Mills & Gay, 2019). Additional recruitment was required in October to conduct the third group. Two participants in the final group were selected using convenience sampling and is noted as a limitation in the third manuscript. A third focus group was necessary to ensure saturation and for the triangulation of themes in the data during the coding process. Saturation is important in qualitative research as it helps the researcher identify when new data no longer reveals new insights, and triangulation is important as it provides a justification for the formation of themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Data Presentation**

This section includes: (a) researcher trustworthiness; (b) focus group questions; (c) overall study sample; (d) the individual focus group samples with participant sketches; and (e) detailed summaries of focus groups. Summaries are presented in the order that the focus groups were conducted. A description of the researcher’s thematic coding process is included following the focus group summaries. An in-depth analysis of themes has been conducted in Manuscript Three. The data presented in this manuscript have been edited for clarity, accuracy, and anonymity for participants.

**Researcher trustworthiness**

As a qualitative researcher, I served as the instrument for data collection and my presence must be acknowledged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is important to establish (a) my credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. To establish credibility of this study, I engaged in peer debriefing with my dissertation chair and triangulation of data from the three focus groups. To establish transferability, I collected detailed data using both planned and
probing questions during focus groups and my written notes. To ensure dependability, I created a document trail that an external auditor could use to recreate the research project. The focus groups were recorded via video and audio. Each focus group session was transcribed. As I moved through the process I archived my documents, notes, transcripts, recordings, and other materials using a secure Cloud-based storage client, with detailed descriptions of how data were collected and utilized. Finally, in addition to the triangulation strategy mentioned above, I built data confirmability by practicing reflexivity. Reflexive activity is an important part of the qualitative research process as it helps the researcher engage in critical reflection on all variables at play throughout the research process (Glesne, 2016). I did this through note taking during and after reviewing video footage of each focus group, writing memos during the coding process, and after peer debriefing sessions.

Focus group questions

Questions were reviewed by UM IRB prior to data collection and were asked in the same order during the process. Each focus group was conducted using the same script and set of prompts (see Appendix D). The five prompts included:

1. A 60-second reflection period where, after explaining the purpose of the study and defining embedded remediation for participants, each of the participants was asked to consider and write down their initial thoughts about the subject so that they could elect to share with the group.

2. Do you think you have a responsibility as an educator to help borderline students in developing their basic writing skills?
3. Is having some sort of embedded remediation for students’ writing skills something that is needed in your unit?

4. If your unit embraced a policy of embedded remediation, how feasible would this be for you to do this as an educator?

5. A period of reflection where the participants were asked to consider and rate their reactions as positive, neutral, or negative to proposed elements of an embedded remediation model including: (a) a revision and reflection process for students, (b) an entry exam for majors, and (c) a co-instructor who focuses on remediation alongside the course content.

A semi-structured focus group design with four to eight participants in each allowed for the interviewer to ask probing questions based on the participants responses to prompts with the purpose of the study in mind and observe how participants discuss the subject of embedded remediation and interact with their faculty peers. Probes are important to the data collection process as it allows the researcher to gain richer explanation, description, and evaluation of the meaning of participants words (Glesne, 2016). Prior to participating in a focus group, participants completed a consent form that explained the purpose of the study; risks and benefits; confidentiality agreement; costs and payments (a $25 Amazon gift card); and asked for demographic details relating to the participants’ faculty appointment type, years of teaching experience, and average yearly teaching load (see Appendix E).

Overall study sample

The composition of the overall study sample included 17 participants: eight (47.1%) tenure-stream faculty (tenured or tenure track), six (35.3%) adjunct faculty, and three (17.6%)
instructional faculty. Combined, the sample of faculty reported more than 194 years of teaching experience and reported serving as instructor of record for an estimated 84 courses per year on average. Participation from faculty in each of these groups was important to the research design to ensure multiple perspectives on embedded remediation as a form of professional practice were represented. The inclusion of adjunct and teaching faculty is important to the purpose of the study. The amount of influence this group has on policy related to curriculum design and teaching practice may be limited and may vary by institution. However, non-tenure track faculty currently comprise the majority of faculty appointments in higher education today and conduct the majority of teaching (American Educational Research Association, 2013). Faculty who do not teach undergraduate students were excluded from participation in the focus group as they do not have teacher-student relationships with academically borderline students in journalism and mass communication fields.

**Focus group summaries**

**Focus group 1**

Eight faculty members representing eight colleges or universities participated in the first focus group. The composition of the group included three (37.5%) tenure-stream faculty, two (25%) adjunct faculty, and three (37.5) instructional faculty. The group members represent a reported 98 years of teaching experience and together they report serving as instructor of record for an estimated 38 courses per year on average. The discussion prompts and responses revealed demographic data that could be used to identify the participants. Thus, pseudonyms have been assigned to ensure anonymity. A brief description of each participant is listed below:
- **Olivia**, a visiting assistant professor from an urban public university in the Midsouth. On average, she teaches seven courses per year and has one year of teaching experience.

- **Amelia**, a senior lecturer from a flagship university in the Midsouth. On average, she teaches nine courses per year and has 15 years of teaching experience.

- **Debbie**, a lecturer from a major land-grant university in the Midwest. On average, she teaches eight courses per year and has eight years of teaching experience.

- **Mary**, a full professor from a major land-grant university in the Southeast. On average, she teaches six courses per year and has 30 years of teaching experience.

- **Sarah**, a full professor and the dean of graduate studies at a private college in the Midwest. On average, she teaches two courses per year and has 16 years of teaching experience.

- **Laura**, an adjunct professor and retired corporate communications executive, who works for both an urban public university and a private urban university in the south-central United States. On average, she teaches two courses per year and has 18 years of teaching experience.

- **Monica**, a TV news producer and adjunct professor at an urban public university in the south-central United States. On average, she teaches one course per year and has three years of teaching experience.

- **Tim**, a tenure-track assistant professor at a flagship university in the Southeast. On average, he teaches three courses per year and has seven years of teaching experience.

**Prompt 1: Personal reflections on embedded remediation**
This prompt drew a number of responses that demonstrated a perceived awareness of (a) current students with insufficient writing skills, (b) specific areas of needs, (c) concerns about students readiness for the workforce, and (d) personal experiences with students and with university resources, such as writing centers. Laura, an adjunct professor, noted that she felt embedded remediation “should be mandatory” and “proper use of grammar and punctuation and spelling is seriously lacking. (...) The world demands it. If we are prepping students to be successful outside of the academic setting, they need to know how to speak and write intelligently and correctly” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 61).

Olivia, a visiting professor, echoed this sentiment while also stating a preference for embedded remediation as a freestanding gateway course:

It is very needed. I’d also like to see our department provide resources that could be used as a remedial tool in all of our journalism classes. Right now, we have a focus on just teaching AP format, (...) but I don’t think our students have a great grasp of subject-verb agreement, punctuation, etc. (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 67).

Other faculty shared personal experiences. Mary, a tenured professor, mentioned that many students who attend her university come from rural areas and this may be connected to students’ struggles with syntax and grammar, and this can make transitioning to the professional world challenging for some:

Early in my career, I started out teaching basic English because I was waiting to break into my real career. (...) But, where I am from, it’s a rural area, a lot of times it all boils down to people not being able to use irregular verbs correctly. Part of that is because—and I am not the specialist in this—but a lot of times because you are not in the
environment where you can hear the King’s English spoken on a consistent basis, it affects you when you leave and go into the professional world (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 65).

Tim, a tenure-track assistant professor, noted that a number of his students lack the writing skills that should be acquired in high school, while also citing his own educational experiences as a high school student, which were lacking in such instruction:

I have noticed (...) that students weren’t necessarily taught the proper skills in high school. And, I am thinking about my own experience, too. Obviously it’s been quite some time since I was in high school. But, even I don’t remember learning proper writing skills (...). (...) I understand that students aren’t getting exposure to what they need to know early on and it’s affecting them later in life, especially in our classrooms. For example, I had students turn in papers a couple of weeks ago and I had one student put an emoji in their paper, and so I just kind of laughed at it. I enjoyed it in the moment. But, it is definitely not appropriate for what I would expect (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 75).

Sarah, a tenured professor and graduate school dean, acknowledged a problem with students’ writing skills but also mentioned that outsourcing struggling student writers to institutional resources, such as writing centers, can also have challenges for students in journalism and mass communications programs because these resources do not always address the specific grammar and syntax skills student struggle with:

We are struck by how [writing centers] teach it at our institution. We have been repeatedly told, ‘Well, (...) we're more concerned about idea formation,’ which I think is

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all well and good, but suggesting that the tools and the mechanics are something that aren’t really necessarily stressed, I personally find abhorrent (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 79).

**Prompt 2: Responsibility to borderline students**

This prompt sparked a conversation among participants that primarily focused on (a) student motivation, (b) the outside factors that might affect student motivation, and (c) stepping in to offer extra support for students when needed. Monica, an adjunct professor, expressed that if borderline students in her classes exhibit motivation, she’s willing to provide extra help: “I help those who help themselves. If they're in my class and they're really trying hard, [I say], ‘maybe we should do a one-on-one,’ you know? Have a virtual session afterward? (...) If they're taking initiative, I'm 100% in it” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 83).

While some expressed concern that motivation is sometimes lacking among borderline students, other faculty expressed a more holistic view of struggling students and considered other elements that might affect their academics. Sarah noted that:

I think we have to be careful about interpreting students' responses. In some cases, it's not that they're not motivated or interested in improving, it's just there are barriers for them to participate. Maybe they're working a couple of extra jobs. Maybe they're at home taking care of grandma, especially during COVID times. So I think we need to be sensitive to the many reasons students may not act to improve, but actually are motivated or interested in doing so. And that, to me, comes back to what support systems you have in place at any institution, and it should go well beyond [the department] (Focus Group Transcripts 1, Pos. 91).
Amelia expanded upon Sarah’s comment and made note of moments when she feels the responsibility to step in as a teacher and help:

Sometimes those borderline students, it's not just that their writing skills aren't on par, (...). They're not coming to class on a regular basis. (...) Sometimes you do learn that they are working 35-40 hours a week or there's problems at home. Sometimes they share. Sometimes they don't. And, I will say (...) ‘you can rewrite it. Let's go over this together. Let's look at what you did wrong and how you can improve it.’ (...) And some, it’s just like they didn't even look at what I told them to do. You know, it was very, very straightforward. And they just turn it in again. And it's still got maybe even more mistakes now. (...) Some definitely take the feedback and some just don't really improve
(Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 92).

Tim also noted that, from his perspective, many borderline students do not understand the resources available to them outside of the department, while echoing previous sentiments about the perception among some journalism and mass communications faculty that writing centers lack support for writing mechanics:

I think students forget that we have a writing center on campus with dedicated faculty, exemplary students who can help with these skills. (...) So I started offering extra credit if students took their paper for my class and got it edited. Now [the writing center doesn’t] do proofreading, but they help with argument structure and grammatical issues, as well
(Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 109)
Prompt 3: Need for embedded remediation

This prompt brought little response from the group. Laura affirmed the need based on previous statements. Tim also affirmed his earlier statements regarding student writing while adding concerns about workforce development: “It's very clear that they're not going to get hired if they can't write properly. And you know, we hear through the grapevine that certain employers, you know, weren't happy with the crop of students they got as interns because they couldn't write a press release well” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 96).

Prompt 4: Feasibility of embedded remediation

The realities of teaching came into conversation during the fourth prompt. While Laura, an adjunct professor, noted that embedded remediation is something “I'm already doing it. It is not part of the required curriculum for the course I teach, but I add it throughout the semester because of the need” (Focus Group Transcripts 1, Pos. 98), Amelia, a senior lecturer who teaches a at least four courses per semester, noted that:

There just isn't time to do it, I mean, we do some of it, but it's just adding one more thing. It gets into the issue of, well, we have this introduction to journalism class. Maybe they need to do some more of it there. So it's not just one class changing; it's multiple classes. (...) [Our school has] plans to create a standalone course that addresses it. But that takes…those of you on this call probably know…getting a new class approved, (...) It takes a year or two years. It has to go through all these committees (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 100).
Debbie, a lecturer, noted that her department has a freestanding gateway course that addresses fundamental writing skills, and there is still an awareness of struggling student writers throughout the curriculum. She thinks faculty should focus more attention on students’ writing skills throughout college curricula and worries when she hears faculty dismissing it:

I think we need to have more consistency across the board in terms of keeping grammar and style at the forefront of the rest of our classes and making sure that it's not just a one-class experience (...). One thing I've heard that is really concerning from teachers, [is that] (...) they've stopped assigning papers as much or they've stopped grading them. You know, they've stopped pointing out grammar issues in their paper unless that's the point of the assignment. And I know it's hard, but I think we still need to. That's what we're here for (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 112).

**Prompt 5: Reaction to potential models**

In closing the focus group, participants were asked to react to potential elements of embedded remediation models as it might appear in JMC schools. Participants were asked to use the chat function in Zoom to express their reaction as positive, neutral, negative, or abstention. Following the reactions, the researcher asked probing questions to explore the reactions.

**Revision and reflection process for students.** All faculty expressed a positive reaction to the concept of requiring students to revise multiple drafts of their work, with Debbie and Moncia typing that they already require this. Mary typed that large classes, such as those with 75 students, should be excluded. After the researcher probed into the positive reactions, the participants expressed their reactions in further detail. Mary noted that:
I just think the feedback is great. I remember being a reporting student (...) and I would get my papers back, and that would be the end of it. Some years later, when I came back as an instructor, they started, when they would grade an assignment, they'd sit down with the student and talk to them. I thought, *I wish they had done that with me* (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 126).

Amelia added to Mary’s sentiment noting that: “When I give really detailed feedback, I have a really positive reaction from my students, even if it's not doing multiple drafts of an assignment, which I sometimes do (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 128). Debbie explained how multiple drafts are built into her assignments:

I have my students turn in a rough draft and everyone gets (...) 20 points for turning in a rough draft, and then [they complete the] final draft. So I edit [the rough draft], but I don't grade it. You know, everybody gets points, but I dig into that. And then when they turn in the final, they have the choice to either make more changes or not. [Students] have the opportunity to workshop it with me further, if they want to try to publish it, which is the goal (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 131).

**Entry exam for majors.** Debbie and Amelia expressed a positive response whereas Tim responded neutral. Olivia was split and typed that it was positive for assessment, but negative for students. Mary reacted negatively. The researcher probed into the negative reaction. Mary responded: “I think what really caught me was when you added the exception that if they missed it by a point, they'd have to go find another major. I don't think I would be that strict on just one
exam because. I don't think exams always show your potential and your talent” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 137).

Upon reflection, Amelia reconsidered her initial positive position on an entrance exam:

“Our college enrollment is down, so they want us to build up numbers. (...) And I get that. But we need the numbers right now. I mean, I think in journalism especially numbers are down not just at our place, our institutions, but others. So I think a lot of the administration folks would say, no, you can't do that, (...) we need the numbers. In theory, I like the idea because I think, well, yeah, maybe this isn't the right major for you. And we can help you find something different and that could work (Focus Group Transcripts 1, Pos. 139).

**Co-instructor focusing on embedded remediation.** All participants reacted positively with the exception of Monica, who reacted negatively, but had to leave the focus group before final questions from the researcher due to time demands.¹ Tim noted the value of this strategy would depend on the class. Olivia typed that this would be a good role for a graduate assistant. Sarah added that she was unsure how such a model would be financially possible.

After probing into the positive reactions, it became clear that for some, the initial perception of a co-instructor focused on embedded remediation was a graduate assistant. Amelia said any help would be welcome to her:

Sometimes I tell people how many classes I teach and they say, ‘Oh, don't you have TA?’ I say, ‘No, I don't have one!’ But, I can (...) [see] a graduate student to do this. It would

¹ Sufficient interaction with the group and information had been collected from this participant prior to her leaving the group. However, the researcher was unable to ask probes into her negative reaction.
just be someone else looking over things, helping out doing some of that heavy lifting. So yeah, I would welcome it (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 142).

Olivia echoed this sentiment saying:

I think it's positive from the standpoint of this being [a graduate assistant]. (...) I think a lot of times when you do have that extra person they're used for (...) grading or just help with (...) research, whereas I think that [departmental] resources should directly benefit the students. So when you are in a situation where your school has funding for things like graduate assistants and TAs, I think that making them as more hands-on in the classroom would be overall more beneficial to the school (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 146)

Mary expressed that she liked the idea because writing centers often do not understand journalistic writing:

Yeah, I thought it was a good idea, if it could be, if it could be carried out because we were earlier talking about having a student go to a [writing center] to get help. But if a lot of times when they go to the [writing center], you know, the lab may be saying yes, put the comma there. But in journalism, we don't do the comma. And so the person that's working alongside of us, it is hoped that they would know more about our journalistic style rules, and the student would feel like they're still, you know, working toward journalism (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 143).
Focus group 2

Five faculty members representing four different universities participated in the second focus group. The composition of the group included four (80%) tenure-stream faculty and one (20%) adjunct faculty member. The group members represent a reported 44 years of teaching experience and together they report serving as instructor of record for an estimated 30 courses per year on average. The discussion prompts and responses revealed demographic data that could be used to identify the participants. Thus, pseudonyms have been assigned to ensure anonymity.

A brief description of each participant is listed below:

- **Julia**, a full professor and associate dean at a private university in the Midwest. On average, she teaches four courses per year and has 13 years of teaching experience.
- **Ben**, a full professor from an urban public university in the south-central United States. On average, he teaches 10 courses per year and has 14 years of teaching experience.
- **Heather**, a tenure-track assistant professor from a mid-sized public university in the rural Southeast. On average, she teaches 11 courses per year and has 15 years of teaching experience.
- **Beth**, a tenure-track assistant professor from a flagship university in the Mid-south. On average, she teaches four courses per year and has five years of teaching experience.
- **Harmony**, an adjunct professor and university administrator at a public urban university. On average, she teaches one course per year and has two years of teaching experience.
Prompt 1: Reflection on embedded remediation

This prompt drew a number of responses that demonstrated a perceived awareness of (a) current students with insufficient writing skills, (b) specific areas of need, and (c) working theories on why students struggle. Heather, a tenure-track assistant professor, expressed that her institution tries to implement embedded remediation in gateway courses and connected it to supporting international students: “I do feel this is mandatory for students to take, and everyone has to take this in our journalism undergrad degrees [and] for PR or advertising (...). And, we find this also very helpful because we have a ton of international students and them taking” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 165). Harmony, an adjunct professor, noted that she tries to incorporate fundamental grammar and syntax lessons into her undergraduate media writing courses as a necessity and connected her efforts to supporting first-generation students: “And, I do that because some students, although they may be at the college level, (...) are first-generation college students and many just may have missed some of the strategies in high school. So I do it” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 167).

Beth, a tenure-track assistant professor, expanded upon these comments noting that she not only sees struggling students, but also feels it is getting worse:

I have seen over the several years I've taught classes (...) that there's more and more need to remediate a lot of [students’ writing skills], and students are coming in needing a lot of work and focus on (...) their basic grammar and spelling. And, I'm sure there's lots of different reasons for that. And it's something, too, that even once they've taken that introductory course, that there's still a lot of remediation happening even up into the
upper level courses. (...) Some of my students have told me it is COVID related. So trying to learn those things in a hybrid or online class last year was difficult for them. So I think that's a factor as well, but we don't have a separate kind of remediation course. But I could see, particularly with the trends I'm seeing in the journalism courses, some value for that (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 169).

Julia, a tenured professor and associate dean, conferred similar sentiments on her students’ writing skills and expressed concern for the social dynamics this may play among students while also connecting it to workforce concerns:

I'm teaching [our] capstone [and students’ writing skills] affects their teammates' perceptions of them when they do group projects (...). And, then I think that makes them feel self-conscious about it. Fear of reaching out for tutoring services or going to the writing center or writing workshop and things like that. So, you know, there's a lot packaged in there if they've missed it for whatever reason, and we can try to incorporate modules and things, but there is a need for them to be professionally prepared (...) (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 171)

**Prompt 2: Responsibility to borderline students**

This prompt drew comments demonstrating (a) the degree to which faculty feel they should help students, (b) thoughts on outsourcing borderline students to writing centers, and (c) workforce development concerns. Julia expressed a strong sense of responsibility toward her students and institution:
We're only as good as our name. And so of course, I feel responsible if they're in my class and they're graduating from my university (...). Employers expect a certain level of competence, and even if they are a C or D, it's my job to bring them up to where they need to be to be successful (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 175).

Heather, expressed a sense of responsibility while also wanted to advocate for outsourcing her struggling students to the campus writing center:

Yes, I do feel the responsibility, but at the end of the day, I feel there's just so much I can help the student or participate in that. So I definitely ask students who I feel could need the help. I ask them to visit the (...) writing center. And that's a designated center, which has free services to help students who need their services and they go into details. They are available in the evenings, they're available late hours, available on weekends, and so they can give the student more time that maybe I could (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 179).

**Prompt 3: Need for embedded remediation**

This prompt sparked commentary that allowed many of the participants to revisit their initial thoughts about embedded remediation and connect it with concerns about recruitment and logistics. Julia noted that as an associate dean she has attended campus-wide meetings about under preparedness among students throughout the university. In contrast, Heather did not feel there is a need to support embedded remediation at her institution again citing the writing center:

And I would have to say no just for my department because I know that we have the writing center, which can be more thorough with the students than we could in a course.
And that's why I feel just if we didn't have the writing center, I would have said yes, we do need a strategy, but because we do have it, I would think it's not needed for my institution (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 186).

Ben, a tenured professor, expressed that while there is a need to help student writers at his university, he views it as a problem of student motivation:

The biggest challenge is student motivation. Many of my, I say about a third of my students as a rough estimate, don't have the motivation they should. They don't belong there. They don't. They're just there to get a grade with the least amount of effort. And, so that's the biggest challenge. If it could be something that's really dynamic as it were and motivates (...) the students to bring (...) themselves up to standards. I think that's the biggest challenge, not to be critical of this (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 193).

Beth took this opportunity to explore the fact that despite the need, there may be logistical challenges to effective embedded remediation strategies and wonders what effect it would have on recruitment and retention:

One of the big challenges would be kind of standardizing that course to an extent so that it did include this element getting faculty, you know, excited and interested in teaching (...) it. I could see value in it being a standalone type course, but of course, that would mean the whole process of proposing a new course, adjusting the curriculum, getting faculty to teach it, you know, which that's a pretty onerous process. So I see the value in it, but there's definitely some cultural challenges. You know, the other thing too is, you
know, we're in a program where we're really trying to get students excited about (...) our major (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 195).

In response, Julia suggested one method might be to develop external modules through organizations like the nonprofit Poynter Institute to support struggling student writers in journalism and mass communication programs.

**Prompt 4: Feasibility of embedded remediation**

This prompt brought concerns from participants regarding (a) student motivation, (b) faculty fatigue, and (c) curriculum concerns. Ben echoed his earlier thoughts on student motivation. Heather brought up her thoughts on how embedded remediation may increase the demands on faculty and again connects her argument back to the writing center. Beth built on Heather’s comment noting that building a consistent course for embedded remediation may be problematic at an institution the size of hers:

There used to be a kind of a large lecture that all the students attended, and they went to the labs. But now it's just the labs. And there's, you know, a standard syllabus that's distributed that we can use, but not everybody does. And so it's not completely consistent across the sections and each instructor kind of approaches it in a different way. So one of the big challenges would be kind of standardizing that course (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 195).

**Prompt 5: Reaction to potential models**

In closing the focus group, participants were asked to react to potential elements of embedded remediation models as it might appear in schools of journalism and mass
communication. Participants were asked to use the chat function in Zoom to express their reaction as positive, neutral, negative, or abstention. Following the reactions, the researcher asked probing questions to explore the reactions.

**Revision and reflection process for students.** One participant was neutral, and four participants expressed a positive view of this aspect. After a probing question by the researcher, Harmony expressed this is reflective of how she already teaches: “[Part of my] writing assignment also includes a reflection. It includes one or two drafts before the final. And, that's basically to improve their writing and look at where they need support” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 203). Beth expressed that she feels there is pedagogical value in reflections, not just multiple drafts as students may not understand why certain corrections are being made: “I don't know that there's always that understanding of why that change is being made or they're just, you know, trying to get more points on the next draft. So, I think reflection would be a good way of making sure there's understanding happening there (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 207). Ben again connected revision and reflection to his perspectives on student motivation:

I provide each student the opportunity to review their assignment with me before it's submitted for grade, and there's no limit to that—could be one time, two times three times. Only about 30-40% of the students take advantage of that opportunity (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 208).

Julia explained her reaction was neutral as her program requires a high number of deliverables from students during coursework and multiple drafts might become unmanageable:

I was neutral on this one, but only because I was moving to the upright operationalisation of it in our news writing class and in our writing class that I teach. They write 14 things,
14 articles, 14 stories. And, so that becomes a really quick turn every week. And, so if we did draft after draft, after draft and then a reflection, they’d get caught up in the length of it (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 210).

**Entry exam for majors.** This prompt drew one neutral from Beth, and four negative reactions from the other participants. Ben expressed his reaction was negative because “we wouldn’t get that many students in our program or department if we did that, to be honest” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 216). Harmony added that a single test isn’t a good criterion for deciding on who can be a student: “The exam for me probably should be more of giving us a better understanding of where that student may be, but not so much to prevent the student from pursuing the degree altogether” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 217). No other participants volunteered further explanation.

**Co-instructor focusing on embedded remediation.** This prompt drew three positive, one negative response from Ben, and one neutral response from Harmony. Heather typed it was a great idea and Julia typed that while positive she has no idea how to fund this in today’s higher education environment. The researcher probed into Harmony’s neutral response first. She explains that it feels logistically problematic: “For example, with my own class, if you're teaching a subject and you only have an hour, (...) how that would work with two instructors?” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 225).

Ben explained his negative reaction and connected with past negative experiences with co-instructing and wanting to protect a sense of autonomy in the classroom:
I like to do things the way I want. I like to teach the set, the topics that I want and the way I want, and I don't like any interference from anybody. I was a support professor, and it was miserable. (...) I told the department chair (...) “I'd rather sit here and starve to death than work as a support professor as underneath that professor again.” If you have to, as it were strong personalities, it just just sets up a clash and it becomes like a instead of a collegial. I think in theory, it's very nice, but in practice, from my experience and all the other professors here or otherwise might have a different thought on it  (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 228).

Those who reacted positively, connected the idea with opportunities for graduate assistants. Heather again connected her position to the campus writing center. It is possible Ben’s comments made her reconsider her position: “I got excited with the idea (...) I guess I didn't think of it as a co-instructor. I may have thought of it as something, as a teaching assistant and to have again, since we have the resources of the (...) writing center” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 230). Julia remained positive on the idea, but brought her perspective as an associate dean:

I probably considered it more as an administrator than a teacher. But, I mean, it sounds amazing, as everyone has said. I mean, I think we all know we need more support in this area and we need it for students. But I mean, the reality is how that gets done could be at odds with lots of different constraints, whether it's who's going to do that in the classroom, but then also, who's going to fund it? (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 232).

Ben rejoined the conversation and stated that he would be OK with a graduate assistant doing the work. Beth also supported this idea while citing her experiences as a graduate student:
A model I had at the university where I did my Ph.D. work; they actually did have a grammar exam in place and an AP exam that the students had to take to continue in the major. Students had several opportunities to do it, and those exams were embedded in the introductory news writing course. So it did seem to work fairly well, although I do have some concerns with the testing to make sure those skills are there because not all students test well and there's lots of things to consider. But that course also had a graduate assistant who was a master’s student who was a really, really experienced journalist, and he was always available to help the students study for the grammar exam, the AP exam, he did reviews, he created quizzes, he created study guides, and he was a constant resource for those students to ensure they did really well in those exams. In addition to what we worked with them on in the classroom (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 235).

Focus group 3

Four faculty members representing three different universities participated in the third focus group. The composition of the group included one (25%) tenure-stream faculty member and three (25%) adjunct faculty members. The group members represent a reported 47 years of teaching experience and together they report serving as instructor of record for an estimated 16 courses per year on average. The discussion prompts and responses revealed demographic data that could be used to identify the participants. Thus, pseudonyms have been assigned to ensure anonymity. A brief description of each participant is listed below:

- **Martin**, an adjunct professor and communications professional at a public, mid-sized university in the Southeast. On average, he teaches four courses per year and has 20 years of teaching experience.
Leslie, an adjunct professor and graphic design professional at a flagship university in the Southeast. On average, she teaches four courses per year and has eight years of teaching experience.

Trisha, a tenured associate professor from a flagship university in New England. On average, she teaches 11 courses per year and has 15 years of teaching experience.

Miranda, an adjunct professor and public relations professional from a flagship university in the Southeast. On average, she teaches three courses per year and has five years of teaching experience.

Prompt 1: Reflection on embedded remediation

This prompt drew responses that demonstrated (a) an awareness of students who struggle with their fundamental writing skills, (b) specific problems and (b) an uncertainty of the concept of embedded remediation. Trisha, a tenured associate professor, noted that she was unsure as to how the concept would affect her professional practice as she primarily doesn’t teach undergraduate writing courses. Leslie, an adjunct professor, expressed similar sentiment as a faculty member who primarily teaches media design, but did note a discrepancy in students’ writing abilities:

My class isn't so much focused on writing (...). But I do see [their writing skills] in their rationales. The honors college students seem to come in with really good writing skills, but the, you know, the rank and file college students don't. I'm staggered at the lack of ability to write, and I hear some of my colleagues talking about the lack and the frustration of, you know, the irritative process to get them to write and rewrite and edit.
and follow the prompts and things like that. So, it seems to me that (...) there needs to be something more to alleviate the imbalance in the skill level that I see with within my own students (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 258).

Martin, an adjunct professor, noted that he sees a need, too. But, he teaches large classes and does not feel like embedded remediation has a place in his classroom: “My perspective is that the gap is such that you really need to keep it outside, you know, of your regular class. Otherwise, it becomes such a huge effort from both the student and the professor that distracts from the goal of the class (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 260). Miranda, also an adjunct professor, noted that she teaches undergraduate media writing courses and affirmed the need for embedded remediation and thinks it should be a gateway course:

It is almost impossible to teach AP style when you're still having to go back and and fix grammar and punctuation and (...) tell them how to separate things into paragraphs or plural versus possessive. I mean, these are things that I see all the time, and it's almost like this group of students growing up digitally. It's almost like they want to write the way they text or something like that. So, I think as far as embedded remediation goes, I think a freestanding course or at least making the first portion of an intro to writing course would be extremely beneficial. However, I would also like to see that reiterated throughout the advanced courses as well, because all of these students, they've taken English and grammar courses to get to this point, but clearly didn't retain the information (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 262).

Prompt 2: Responsibility to borderline students
This prompt drew comments that demonstrated the participants’ perspectives on (a) student motivation and (b) workforce development concerns for borderline students. Miranda noted that she feels a personal responsibility that is linked to students’ employment prospects:

I do feel like it's my responsibility to teach instead of just pushing the information out there and hoping that they get it. (...) I've taken it on myself to try to guide them and spend a little extra time working with them so that they can get the information that they need in order to either advance to the next course or, you know, be successful in their profession (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 264).

Leslie agreed with Miranda and cited student motivation as key for her responsibility to students, and noted specific areas of concern. To help meet this need, she has made individualized videos to help students improve their assignments while teaching remotely during COVID-19:

I agree with [Miranda], I if I see a willingness in those students that they are actually putting forth some effort and it they are listening and trying, at least then I am willing to work with them. We work on resume projects. So, there's a lot of very basic subject-verb agreement and writing in complete sentences [issues]. (...) And, I think that for those borderline students, you know, if they're, if they're willing then I am to help, I will. After COVID, I've adapted using video feedback for a lot of them so I can spend a solid 10 minutes saying, here are the things I see that need improvement and here's how you improve them. And, I get a much better response (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 266).
In contrast, Martin suggested that given that his classes do not focus on writing, he feels that stepping in to support struggling student writers is outside of his responsibility:

So you're writing papers, you're writing, you know, discussions, you're writing other things. [Correcting their writing skills] would be just like, you know, expecting me to teach them how to use the computer to do all of those things. So, in that sense, (...) I have overlooked a lot of the writing quality to try to see if they got the essence of the concepts. So, I have not engaged much in that regard in the past. As a journalist, I would tell you that, you know, I, I just, you know, would not be able to work with the students at that level (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 270).

Both Miranda and Trisha suggested that they relate to Martin’s position, noting that embedded remediation doesn’t seem to fit into large classes. Trisha notes that: “My largest class is 240 people. So unfortunately, no, I can't really [help] with that level. And then also, I usually have to send them somewhere else, if [their work] is problematic” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 276).

**Prompt 3: Need for embedded remediation**

This prompt brought discussion on (a) sending struggling student writers to campus writing centers, and (b) a need for more rigor in curricula. Miranda and Leslie, who teach at the same university, pointed out the problematic nature of sending their students to the campus writing center. Leslie noted that: “I'm very familiar with the writing center situation. It's nice, but it's not exactly tailored to the journalism, marketing programs that we have…AP style writing or
the prompts that people have to follow to deal with, (...) It's just not well suited” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 281).

When asked about his perspective on the need for embedded remediation, Martin cited his experience as a journalism student in his home country and compares his experience in the United States to those at home. He feels curricula work better than there are rigorous standards and too many U.S. universities advance students who are not prepared for professional practice:

In [home country], if you are going to be a journalist or working in any communications field, you have at least two semesters of writing. So where there is, you know, a lot of, you know, tests and other people helping you and you have to produce a lot and in different styles. (...) And you finish those classes with, you know, the skill, you know, [how] to do it. I do not see that in the American universities that I have, you know, taught. (...) [In home country], you are supposed to come into that class already with that skill. And if you don't, a lot of times they refer you back and then say, OK, you go back to that class until you have it and you're not going to graduate until you have it. So it's a different kind of approach where I think a lot of that, especially in the U.S. academic role, you just graduate, right? You just pass on from class to class to class. And by the time you're finished, you realize that, Oh, I still don't have math and writing skills, but I'm already starting my career. And, it's too late (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 284).

**Prompt 4: Feasibility of embedded remediation**

This prompt drew discussion that revisited much of the participants previous statements. Trisha, reaffirmed embedded remediation isn’t possible in classes with hundreds of students. Miranda agreed but noted that for a strategy to be effective in a smaller class size it needs to be clearly defined by a unit’s administration: “If there are concrete steps to take…like, OK, if a
student is doing this, then, you know, maybe incorporate this. (...) Maybe it could be an experimental thing, like it might be a good separate research component to look at how to implement something like that (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 296). Martin, expressed that he feels, even in small classes, technological resources might be beneficial.

**Prompt 5: Reaction to potential models**

In closing the focus group, participants were asked to react to potential elements of embedded remediation models as it might appear in schools of journalism and mass communication. Participants were asked to use the chat function in Zoom to express their reaction as positive, neutral, negative, or abstention. Following the reactions, the researcher asked probing questions to explore the reactions.

**Revision and reflection process for students.** This prompt drew one positive reaction from Trisha, neutral reactions from Miranda and Leslie, and a negative response from Martin. Upon probing into Martin’s negative reaction, he explained that his reaction was negative again due to the size of his classes. Multiple drafts is not feasible with hundreds of students. The researcher probed into Trisha’s positive reaction. She noted that this is something that she already incorporates into her teaching practice:

I think I was the only one who said positive to that, and it's again assuming the resources are there. But again, in our courses, they do have to do that. They go through one draft. But one thing that they have to do is that kind of reflection cover letter, and that's something that I really love having used it where they have to say, What do I think is working? What did I really honestly not spend that much time on? What do I need help
with? Things like that. And, so then I can read their paper in context and actually really helpful to give them feedback (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 305).

Miranda expressed her reaction was neutral because while she sees the value, it needs to be consistent among faculty: “There are some faculty in my department that allow [students] to correct drafts and return stuff in, and I'm not one of them. So then I feel like when they're taking my class, the first draft they turn in is kind of trash because they think that they're going to get an opportunity to fix it (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 311). Leslie pointed out that she sees the value in this for student writers, but as a design instructor she doesn’t see as much application.

**Entry exam for majors.** This prompt brought two negative reactions from Trisha and Martin and two neutral responses from Leslie and Miranda. The researcher probed into the negative comments first. Martin explained that he doesn’t feel this is compatible with the university systems he has been exposed to. However, he did also revisit his calls for more rigor:

[An entry exam is] not something that would work in the current, you know, university environment (...) where you have to get those students through. And, the university would never accept that kind of filtering. And, I think that it would be, you know, very frustrating for the students. I know of doctors, they had to go through five, six, seven tests before they were able to get through medical school. And, you know, they really wanted to be a doctor and they know that they had to pass the test. I don't know that we are at that level of requirement (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 327).

Trisha explain her negative reaction was based in her skepticism of standardized tests:
I just have a resistance to adding more testing and sort of more, I guess, testing-based hurdles. I know just right now we're having discussions generally about things like SATs and GREs. (...) If one student is a point under, then is it really as black and white as saying they are not good enough? (...) I just feel hesitant to kind of make that the borderline (...) (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 329).

Miranda explained her neutral reaction was not based on her ideal, she would love an entry exam, but rather the realities of her students’ abilities:

It would be nicer to have [an entry exam]. It would be nice to have academic standards to get into the program. However, I'm very aware that I teach in a state that's at the bottom of education and serving the population whose public education system is already pretty terrible. (...) So, I'd like to have higher academic standards, but I'm also very aware of where I am (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 331).

Co-instructor focusing on embedded remediation. This prompt brought all positive reactions. Martin typed the idea was a dream and explained his reaction further:

I think everybody would consider that an ideal situation, right? And that's why I may call it a dream because you know, if they barely have money to pay us, I don't think they have money to pay for another person to help the students (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 335).

Leslie agreed with Martin. She’s all for having the extra help but does not think it is likely to happen. Trisha and Miranda also agreed that it seems unlikely to happen. Miranda noted: “Help would always be fantastic, but I also know I'm an adjunct, so I would be the very,
very, very last person to get assistance if that were the case (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 341).

Coding

Using transcripts and MaxQDA software, data were put through a thematic coding process. The first round of coding rendered 174 codes. From the initial analysis, it is clear that the participants generally perceive that there is a problem with students’ fundamental writing skills when they arrive in their classrooms, but there is no clear consensus about what should be done, how to do it, or who should do it. In the next coding phase, the researcher divided codes into 10 categories, which are listed below from most codes to least:

1. **Outsourcing** (37), makes reference to using an outside resource to help struggling student writers, e.g. campus writing center, professional organizations, or computer softwares

2. **Awareness of the problem** (28), acknowledges students’ writing skills are not sufficient for their college courses; they may acknowledge the problem getting worse; they may acknowledge a negative impact on workforce development

3. **Curriculum concerns** (22), references how embedded remediation may or may not fit into an existing curriculum

4. **Tactics** (20), references a specific instructional practice a participant uses in his/her/their classroom

5. **Concerning perceptions of students** (15), references to how faculty view their students as struggling writers and/or students
6. **Specific problem** (14), references to individual writing skill deficiencies, e.g. subject-verb agreement or spelling errors

7. **Enrollment concerns** (13), references to how embedded remediation strategies may affect enrollment at his/her/their institution

8. **Freestanding course** (9), references that favor embedded remediation as a discrete course

9. **Within existing course** (9), references that favor embedded remediation within existing credit-granting courses as a necessary teaching strategy

10. **Borderline students** (7), references about students that specifically mention borderline performance

A final round of coding sorted categories into four themes using triangulation among the three sessions as justification:

1. **Growing concerns**, data supporting the argument that many faculty are increasingly concerned with students’ writing skills and may believe that the problem is getting worse.

2. **Externalizing remediation**, data supporting that some faculty feel students should seek out external sources of support in improving their writing skills, even if they view those external sources—e.g., writing centers—as insufficient. This data supports the idea that some faculty, who may or may not express a responsibility toward their struggling student writers, are not receptive to embedded remediation.

3. **Institutional challenges**, data supporting the perception that making meaningful institutional change to support embedded remediation at scale would be difficult to accomplish due to processes, curricula concerns, enrollment concerns, and/or faculty culture.
4. **Taking action**, data supporting the argument that many faculty, who may or may not be conceptually aware of embedded remediation, are already exhibiting professional practices that are compatible with the concept. This data supports the idea that some faculty are receptive to the idea of adapting their professional practice to support struggling student writers and in some ways are already doing it.

**SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT TWO**

In Manuscript Two, I presented qualitative data from focus groups designed to address my research question. The methodology, researcher trustworthiness, focus groups questions, recruitment, and study sample were explained. Key takeaways from these focus groups were revealed by using quotes from and written summaries of participants’ responses to focus group questions and each others’ responses to questions. Using MaxQDA software, data were organized into codes, categories, and themes. In Manuscript Three, themes will be explored by analyzing specific examples of the data using the study’s conceptual framework, which includes (a) the Teaching for Learning Model and (b) Experiential Learning Theory. This analysis will allow the researcher to address the research question and make recommendations for professional practice and future research. Limitations of the data and study have also been included in the final manuscript.
MANUSCRIPT III
DATA ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research shows many students who enter some postsecondary institutions in recent years can be classified as remedial in English language arts and/or mathematics (Jaggers & Bickerstaff, 2018). Research concerning faculty perceptions of students’ writing abilities shows that this is not a new issue with many faculty expressing concerns that students’ writing skills are not only insufficient for collegiate writing, but perhaps worsening (Graham & Perin, 2007; Lingwall 2010). For faculty who teach undergraduate students in journalism and mass communication (JMC) fields, this under preparedness can be professionally challenging, especially for faculty who teach media writing courses that necessitate a foundational understanding of grammar and syntax. This under preparedness for collegiate success in writing, particularly among borderline students, presents a problem of professional practice (PoP), which is: to create meaningful new learning opportunities for academically borderline students so they may not only persist as college students, but also graduate, join the workforce, pursue economic stability, support democratic efficiency, and perhaps experience upward social mobility.

This dissertation in practice addressed this PoP by exploring the perceptions from a sample of JMC faculty gathered via focus groups in fall 2021. Data collected related to the practice of embedded remediation, one proposed strategy to addressing underprepared collegiate student writers in JMC fields. Embedded remediation, for the purpose of this research, is defined as the incorporation of a remedial intervention directly into coursework within students’ chosen
discipline, so that it may be contextualized within the context of that subject (Perin, 2011). This research supports arguments within scholarly literature that an embedded approach may be more beneficial to borderline students than traditional, prerequisite remediation as it links remedial efforts with students’ personal, educational, and professional goals (Cavazos et al., 2010).

In Manuscript One, the PoP was defined and explored through the review of literature related to contemporary practice, policy, and trends concerning remediation in American higher education. A conceptual framework consisting of the Teaching for Learning Model and Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory was introduced. The first manuscript concluded with the proposed research question:

RQ: To what extent, if at all, do faculty in journalism and mass communication feel they are willing to embrace embedded remediation strategies in their professional practice as educators?

Manuscript Two started the process of answering this research question by (a) identifying focus group as an appropriate methodology for inquiry; (b) designing a focus group to collect data, (c) obtaining approval from the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board to conduct focus groups; (d) recruiting a sample of 17 JMC faculty members from 14 universities to participate in a series of three Zoom-based focus groups conducted in September (groups one and two) and November 2021; (e) establishing my research reliability, (f) summarizing the data collected from each focus group, and (g) putting that data through a thematic coding process, which resulted in four major themes:

1. Growing concerns, data supporting the argument that many faculty are increasingly concerned with students’ writing skills and may believe that the problem is getting worse.
2. **Externalizing remediation**, data supporting that some faculty feel students should seek out external sources of support in improving their writing skills, even if they view those external sources—e.g., writing centers—as insufficient. This data supports the idea that some faculty, who may or may not express a responsibility toward their struggling student writers, are not receptive to embedded remediation.

3. **Institutional challenges**, data supporting the perception that making meaningful institutional change to support embedded remediation at scale would be difficult to accomplish due to processes, curricula concerns, enrollment concerns, and/or faculty culture.

4. **Taking action**, data supporting the argument that many faculty, who may or may not be conceptually aware of embedded remediation, are already exhibiting professional practices that are compatible with the concept. This data supports the idea that some faculty are receptive to the idea of adapting their professional practice to support struggling student writers and in some ways are already doing it.

This third and final manuscript allowed the researcher to show the triangulation of data within themes and analyze these four themes. During this analysis, the researcher drew insights into how faculty perceptions related to their teaching may or may not be compatible with embedded remediation and make suggestions for professional practice and for future scholarly research. Limitations of the study have been noted prior to the conclusion of the manuscript.

**Conceptual Framework**

Before analyzing the four themes drawn from focus group data, it is important to briefly revisit the study’s conceptual framework defined in Manuscript One—The Teaching for Learning (TFL) Model and David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). These elements were selected because each present college educators with actionable steps they can take to
access, reflect upon, and improve their professional practice as educators. A brief description of both elements follows.

**The TFL Model**

The TFL model is a “systematic and inclusive model for teachers to explore and test teaching and assessment practices in order to ensure learning experiences that enhance the learning of all students” (Conrad et al., 2011, p. 175). The student-centered model encourages instructors to create and investigate “theories in practice,” which combines their disciplinary knowledge, experiences, and teaching and learning contexts concerning students’ abilities; teaching environments and/or modalities; and course goals.

The TFL model has six parts including:

1: Identify course-specific challenges
2: Explore and construct a relevant knowledge base
3: Hypothesize and design teaching practices
4: Hypothesize and design learning experiences
5: Implementation and adapt teaching practices
6: Test hypotheses (pp.176-181)

**Experiential Learning Theory**

Published in 1984 by David Kold, ELT defines learning as the “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 51). ELT focuses primarily on adult learning and is inspired by constructivist theory, building upon the works of Piaget, Dewey, Lewin, and more. ELT proposed that learning occurs through cycles in which students
purposefully reflect upon experience and then reshape future attempts to learn a skill of concept. Thus, ELT posits that knowledge is not fixed. Rather it evolves and is refined by the learner through reflection and new experiences. The ELT model proposes that there are four phases to the experiential learning process: concrete experience (grasping), reflective observation (transforming), abstract conceptualization (grasping), and active experimentation (transforming). A virtual representation of ELT is seen in figure 1 below.

*Figure 1 Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory*

The conceptual framework was used in development of focus group interview questions/prompts and was taken into consideration during the collection of data, e.g. the use of probing questions during focus groups. The table below shows the connections between the individual prompt/question and the conceptual framework.

*Table 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Framework Connection</th>
<th>Focus Group Question/Prompt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELT:</strong> This connects directly with ELT as by electing to participate in the study, the instructors are purposeful learners themselves and we asked to grasp and transform their own knowledge of themselves as teachers and</td>
<td>A 60-second reflection period where, after explaining the purpose of the study and defining embedded remediation for participants,</td>
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their students as learners.

**TFL:** This also connects directly with the TFL model as it starts the process of the educators considering steps 1-4.

each participant was asked to consider and write down their initial thoughts about embedded remediation so they could elect to share with the group.

**TFL:** This links to the TFL model by asking the participant to consider contexts of their employment as educators and course/institutional goals.

Do you think you have a *responsibility* as an educator to help borderline students in developing their basic writing skills?

**TFL:** Again, this links to the TFL model by asking the participant to consider contexts of their employment as educators and course/institutional goals.

Is having some sort of embedded remediation for students’ writing skills something that is *needed* in your unit?

**TFL:** Again, this links to the TFL model by asking the participant to consider contexts of their employment as educators and course/institutional goals.

If your unit embraced a policy of embedded remediation, how feasible would this be for you to do this as an educator?

**ELT:** This connects directly with ELT as it asked them to reflect on their past experiences and consider future efforts as participants in the study and element A of an embedded remediation model, connects directly to Kolb’s model and learning.

A period of reflection where the participants were asked to consider and rate their reactions as positive, neutral, or negative to proposed elements of an embedded remediation model including: (a) a revision and reflection process for students, (b) an entry exam for majors, and (c) a co-instructor who focuses on remediation alongside the course content.

**TFL:** This also connects directly with the TFL model as elements B and C relate to steps 3-6 of the TFL model.
**Data Interpretation**

*Theme 1: Growing Concerns*

Throughout the three focus groups, a theme of growing concerns regarding students’ insufficient, and perhaps declining, writing skills was expressed and discussed among participants. The table below uses a select sample of qualitative data to illustrate triangulation and connects the theme to categories and to codes. Manuscript Two provided more in-depth discussion on participant responses. An analysis of each theme through the study’s conceptual framework accompanies each data table. Manuscript Two provided more in-depth discussion on participant responses.

*Table 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participant Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of the Problem</td>
<td>“I think at [our university] and our communication school, there is consistent awareness of the problem. I think, as others have said, working [embedded remediation] into the curriculum sometimes is the challenge because we already have full curricula for all of our classes. There are things we have to teach for the class. And, so to add something else to some classes may be more difficult than adding it to others.” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 108). - <strong>Laura, adjunct professor</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I just sat in a meeting about this. University wide, we are looking (...) at student self-reported competencies in different areas. And, so I almost think the question is kind of tough because if kids are self-selecting to be in the J School or the comm unit, then they...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81
probably already have a proclivity to some of these things that we're teaching, you know? And, so, university wide, we certainly are way ahead of other university-going students, at least the ones that are here, and they're self-appointed confidence in writing. But, the fact that we're still seeing some signals of not preparedness for issues with the preparedness makes me a little worried for the rest of campus (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 184).  

*Julia, associate dean and tenured professor*

“The honors college students seem to come in with really good writing skills, but the, you know, the rank and file college students don't. I'm staggered at the lack of ability to write, and I hear some of my colleagues talking about [this] and the frustration of, you know, the irritating process to get them to write and rewrite and edit and follow the prompts and things like that. So it seems to me that (...) there needs to be something more to alleviate the imbalance in the skill level that I see with my own students” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 258).  

*Leslie, adjunct professor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerning Perceptions of Students</th>
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<td>“I don't think every student cares, unfortunately. I think it's a sad reality is that some students are OK getting a C. And don't care about improving their work, so I often, you know, have deadlines in the syllabus where students can submit a rough draft to get really detailed feedback and then use that feedback to improve for the final draft of the project or paper. And, I only see a handful of students take advantage of that. Unfortunately, there are a lot of students who just, you know, say, ‘Cs, get degrees’ and just don't care about the feedback. And so instead of providing a ton of detailed feedback, what I did for my summer class was that I put when you submit your paper, please let me know if, if check off. If you want detailed feedback, check off if you want moderate feedback or check off if</td>
</tr>
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</table>
you want no feedback at all. And so that helped me plan my time for grading because the students who really wanted the detailed feedback, I could allow time to do that versus the students who maybe don't care or, you know, aren't interested in it.” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 130) - **Tim, tenure track assistant professor**

“The biggest challenge is student motivation. Many of my, I say about a third of my students as a rough estimate, don't have the motivation they should. They don't belong there. They don't. They're just there to get a grade with the least amount of effort. And, so that's the biggest challenge. If it could be something that (...) helps motivates (...) to bring them up (...) to standards. I think that's the biggest challenge” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 193). - **Ben, tenured professor**

“It would be nice to have [higher] academic standards to get into the program. However, I'm very aware that I teach in a state that's at the bottom of education and servicing the population whose public education system is already pretty terrible. And then, this is one more hurdle that makes it even harder. And my current perception is it seems that [name of major] program is sort of the catch all for people that decide to change their majors to something less difficult” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 331) - **Miranda, adjunct professor**

| Specific Problems | “So I will help those and I have helped even people who have graduated (...) from college. (...) If they're open to it, I'll offer some tips on (...) how to use verbs correctly. And, (...) I'll just tell students that it is very important for them to know how to speak and write correctly. Because No. 1, you're from [state |
name]. We already have stereotypes about being in the [region] and being from a rural state, so we have to deal with that. And, that's all the more reason.” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 89). -Mary, tenured professor

“I do see a few [students who] may not have a good grasp of the basics. And, what I do is, (...) look and see what strategies I can discuss within my class and within the subject matter that may help them. (...) I go to the next class and share strategies [and say something like], Hey, if you write like this and Maybe you want to write shorter sentences [and] Make sure you have subject-verb agreement, or Know how not to end [with a] preposition” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 181) -Harmony, adjunct professor

“It is almost impossible to teach AP style when you're still having to go back and fix grammar and punctuation and [tell] them how to kind of separate things into paragraphs or plural versus possessive (...). I mean, these are things that I see all the time, and it's, it's almost like (...) this group of students growing up digitally. It's almost like they want to write the way they text or something like that. So I think as far as embedded remediation goes, I think a freestanding course or at least making the first portion of an intro to writing course would be extremely beneficial. However, I would also like to see that reiterated throughout the advanced courses as well, because all of these students, they've taken English and grammar courses to get to this point, but clearly didn't retain the information. (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 262) -Miranda, adjunct professor

Borderline Students

“Sometimes those borderline students, it's not just that their writing skills aren't on par, you know, it's the news quizzes that I give, and they're never really getting the answers right.
They're not coming to class on a regular basis. We have attendance issues and sometimes you do learn that they are working 35-40 hours a week or there's problems at home. Sometimes they share. Sometimes they don't” (Focus Group Transcripts 1, Pos. 92). -Amelia, senior lecturer

“We have some students that come in ready and gung-ho to do journalism and some that are still trying to figure it out and aren't sure. And, I think there are more of them that are in that [borderline] camp. And so I, you know, want to encourage them (...) and to figure out ways to (...) help them get engaged in the profession and figure out where their skills and passions are. And, sometimes that means you're helping them (...) get the grammar [and] spelling, all those things, in place so they can succeed” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 178). -Beth, tenure track assistant professor

“More recently, I have overlooked a lot of, you know, the writing quality to just see if they got the essence of the concepts. So, I have not engaged much (...). As a journalist, I would tell you that I (...) would not be able to work with the students at that level. So in a lot of cases, at least back in [home country name], the students just don't advance if they don't have the skills. So if they are on that remedial level, they are sent back because you are expected to be able to get out of that discipline with the ability to get into a newspaper or magazine and start writing (...). So if you're not at that level, it's basically the responsibility of the professor to just revert you back and not let you advance. But it's not typically the responsibility of the usual, you know, faculty to engage in teaching people how to write. That is usually sent back to another, you know, group that, you know, prepares the students before they get to to college” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 270)
The above data triangulation supports the theme that faculty are deeply concerned about their students’ writing skills and suggests they may spend considerable time thinking about this issue, particularly when it comes to naming specific problems in students' writing skills. They are also concerned about themselves and their colleagues in terms of their abilities and willingness to continually help borderline students. Despite their concerns, these data suggest many faculty may not feel there is a realistic remedy to the problem of underprepared collegiate writers. However, the level of concern for students' writing abilities, and in many cases an expressed willingness to help, might also be an opportunity for faculty and academic administrators to develop their own embedded remediation models for students in journalism and mass communication fields using the TFL model and ELT. Based on the researcher’s observations, in groups of faculty of many ranks and categories, many of whom do not know each other, there was often a sense of camaraderie over their common struggles to support borderline students and a need to express these struggles openly. Because of TFL’s focus on situational contexts and course and/or institutional goals and its compatibility with actionable theories of teaching and learning like ELT, particularly in phases 2-5, this awareness and concern could be mobilized through professional development efforts, which are discussed in the recommendations section of this manuscript.

**Theme 2: Externalizing remediation**

Throughout the three focus groups, a theme of externalizing remedial education effort arose among some faculty. These data show how the concept of embedded remediation may not be compatible with some faculty perceptions of their professional practice or that they would
prefer to be able to send students to external sources of support in addition to their class. The table below uses a select sample of qualitative data to illustrate triangulation and connects the theme to categories and to codes. Manuscript Two provided more in-depth discussion on participant responses.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participant Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing</td>
<td>“One thing I’ve heard that is really concerning is that teachers [have] stopped assigning papers as much or they've stopped grading them. You know, they've stopped pointing out grammar issues in their paper unless that's the point of the assignment. And, I know it's hard, but I think we still need to. That's what we're here for. (...) I have either incentivized or required students to take their papers to the writing center before they turn it in. And I've seen I think that does help and just encouraging them that that's there” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 112) -Debbie, lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes, I do feel the responsibility, but at the end of the day, I feel there's just so much I can help the student or participate in that. So I definitely ask students who I feel could need the help… I ask them to visit with the [university name] writing center. And that's a designated center, which has free services to help students who need their services and they go into details. They are available in the evenings, they're available late hours, available on weekends, and so they can give the student more time than maybe I could (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 179). -Heather, tenure track assistant professor</td>
</tr>
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</table>
|                | “My perspective is that the gap is such that 87
you really need to keep it outside, you know, your regular class. Otherwise, it becomes such a huge effort from both the student and the professor that distracts from the goal of the class. So, you know, I'm not sure if it is something that I would (...) desire, you know, from my classes, at least. And (...) nowadays there are a lot of online tools, right? You know, Grammarly and things like that, that really help you improve your writing if you're actively using it. (...) And, I'm not sure if universities have, you know, embraced some of that as a way of (...) providing free access, you know, to some of those tools or things like that to help the students, which that's how I'm reading your definition of embedded. You know, it's learning as you go (...) rather than, you know, pause everything, go learn this and then come back to the other classes, which would be my preferred option. And I think a lot of other professors probably think like that, right?” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 260). -Martin, adjunct professor

Curriculum Concerns

“That's an interesting question, because we have a course called Media Style and Grammar, but it is an online course, and, to make a long story short, it turns out that it's (...) not very helpful. We dropped it for our curriculum, but other programs still count on it for their programs. So we keep it on the books so that they can use it. And, our director, he monitors the course. We don't have anything to do with it. So...(.) we just learned that that's not the way to go. It didn't help. It was a thing where you go online and you check the right answers, no interaction with a person. So, but, it's still there for somebody [who] needs a one-hour credit.” (Focus Group Transcripts 1, Pos. 111). -Mary, tenured professor

“So our kind of news writing intro class, there's multiple sections or labs of it. There
used to be a (...) large lecture that all the students attended and they went to the labs. But now, it's just the labs. And there's, you know, a standard syllabus that's distributed that we can use, but not everybody does. And so it's not completely consistent (...) across the sections and each instructor kind of approaches it in a different way. So one of the big challenges would be (...) standardizing that [embedded remediation] course (...) I could see value in it being a standalone type course, but of course, that would mean the whole process of proposing a new course, adjusting the curriculum, getting faculty to teach it, you know, which that's a pretty onerous process” (Focus Group Transcripts 2, Pos. 195). -Beth, tenure track assistant professor

“Yeah, I was also thinking about the contents of my courses, and so one—like we were just saying about class size—is 240 people. So unfortunately, no, I can't really go through [their writing skills] with that level. And then also, I usually have to send them somewhere else, if it is problematic. But at least I agree that at least if there is the effort there and I feel like, oh, it's just the writing, that's kind of problematic, I would at least maybe say, Hey, we have these writing resources or, you know, look towards other tools” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 277). -Trisha, tenured associate professor

The above data triangulation supports the theme of externalizing remediation efforts. Two key ideas seemed to drive this theme: (a) the challenges of fitting embedded remediation into existing and often cumbersome curricula and (b) the existence of a campus writing center. Curricular concerns vary by institutions, but are valid—especially concerns about creating busy and unmanageable curricula, which runs contrary to the benefits of embedded remediation as it
seeks to advance borderline students within their chosen field of study with contextualized support. However, while creating freestanding embedded remediation courses may not always be possible for some institutions or may take longer than desired to accomplish, the use of the TFL model and ELT in instructors' everyday practice may help mitigate this issue. Advancing support for embedded remediation may require communicating this dualistic view of the practice as both a way of teaching and a way of designing curricula that may or may not be concurrent.

What is perhaps most notable about faculty perspectives on writing centers is how it was observed among both faculty who openly supported the concept of embedded remediation and those who were openly critical of the concept. Lingwall’s (2010) groups of rigor and remediation faculty were easily identifiable from the sample. Multiple faculty supported or expressed a positive association with embedded remediation as part of their professional practice, and subsequently expressed how they want to send students to external sources of help. It is important to note that many faculty who expressed support for writing centers teach large classes, which makes remedial teaching efforts very difficult as a lone educator. Externalizing remedial efforts runs contrary to the concept of embedded remediation. However, this research does not argue that embedded and external resources cannot work symbiotically. Rather this research argues embedded remediation is an additional approach to support borderline students. Another notable observation is that many faculty continued to express a desire to send their students to external writing centers or labs after expressing that those sources do not provide the type of support their students need, e.g. grammar or AP style support. Thus, demand exists, even if there are problems with the current execution.

These data suggest embedded remediation may not be popular among all faculty, especially those who teach large classes. It also supports that among many faculty there is a
demand for a quality writing center opportunity for students. However, this demand may also present opportunities that are discussed in the recommendations for practice and research.

**Theme 3: Institutional Challenges**

Throughout the three focus groups, a theme of institutional challenges arose. These data show how the concept of embedded remediation may face hurdles in terms of navigating bureaucratic systems and institutional norms. The table below uses a select sample of qualitative data to illustrate triangulation and connects the theme to categories and to codes. Manuscript Two provided more in-depth discussion on participant responses.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participant Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Concerns</td>
<td>“I think as others have said, working it into the curriculum sometimes is the challenge because we already have full curricula for all of our classes. There are things we have to teach for the class. And so to add something else to some classes may be more difficult than adding it to others (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 108)” -Monica, adjunct professor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“This sounds amazing, as everyone has said. I mean, I think we all know we need more support in this area and we need it for students. But I mean, the reality is how that gets done could be at odds with lots of different constraints, whether it's who's going to do that in the classroom, but then also, who's going to fund it? So…” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 232). -Julia, associate dean and tenured professor</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Concerns</th>
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<tr>
<td>“I can say right away that that would be incredibly challenging in our department. We currently...we are just finally getting more faculty members, but we have about 20 faculty members and 900 majors and so we have just huge classes all over the place. And we do have TAs, but no. So I don't know that that would be very feasible for us, to be honest, at least not at this point” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 289). - <em>Trisha, tenured associate professor</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Our college enrollment is down, so they want us to build up numbers. And I think someone said, Well, could they retake [their entrance exam] or whatever? And I get that. But we need the numbers right now. I mean, I think...journalism, especially numbers are down not just at our place, our institutions, but others, so I think a lot of the administration folks would say, <em>no, you can’t do that, we need that, we need the numbers</em>. In theory, I like the idea [of an entrance exam] because I think, well, <em>yeah, maybe this isn’t the right major for you. And we can help you find something different and that could work</em>. (...) I could see it working, but I could also see it not working” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 139). - <em>Amelia, senior lecturer</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well, I think we wouldn't get that many students in our program or department if we [had an entrance exam], to be honest. So I think that's why mine's a negative reaction” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 216). - <em>Ben, tenured professor</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think that by and large, what I've seen over the last eight years is the economic aspects of running a university and not wanting to turn students away and letting people just, you know, as long as they passed the class, they can get a degree and get on out there. It's...”</td>
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more of…I personally would prefer to see them have some pride in the difficult aspects of really doing it well” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 321). -Leslie, adjunct professor

The above data triangulation supports the theme of institutional challenges. This theme is driven by two main ideas: (a) that curricula may not be flexible enough to support embedded remediation and (b) that some elements of embedded remediation models, particularly the use of internal instruments to measure a student’s readiness to advance within that major after an embedded remediation intervention, may hurt enrollment. The challenges related curricula were discussed in the analysis of externalizing remediation efforts, but it is important to note that this also supports the theme of institutional challenges.

The concerns about enrollment, retention, and its relation with embedded remediation was a frequent point of discussion among faculty. While on one hand, many faculty want to see their students gain proficiency in writing, on the other hand there is a undertone of fear that reaching this goal may drive students away from their major or their institution. Many participants expressed that even though students are opting into a writing-oriented major, many do not like to write, or perhaps, do not like to write in the highly structured and formal formats JMC curricula require. In the last prompt of each focus group, faculty were asked to respond to multiple elements that might be part of an embedded remediation model. While there was strong support for many elements that directly connect with ELT and the TFL model, such as a revision and reflection process for student writers, there was great apprehension to models with high stakes measurement in the form of an entrance exam for majors. These data support that making changes required for some forms of embedded remediation may be difficult to fit into curricula
and that some faculty lack confidence in some of their students. If they were forced to measure
and set a bar for majors as part of an embedded remediation model, they fear their numbers
would dwindle as would the institutional supports tied to enrollment and retention. Ways to
address this concern are in the recommendations section of this manuscript.

Theme 4: Taking Action

Throughout the three focus groups, a theme of taking action arose among some faculty.
These data show how some faculty, whether they are familiar with the concept or not, are, in
fact, already implementing their own forms of embedded remediation in their professional
practice or are, at least, favorably open to the concept. The table below uses a select sample of
qualitative data to illustrate triangulation and connects the theme to categories and to codes.
Manuscript Two provided more in-depth discussion on participant responses.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participant Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
<td>“I've gotten (...) a really positive reaction from my students, even if it's not doing multiple drafts of an assignment, which I do sometimes do, or I'll offer extra credit if they'll redo it and take my notes into consideration, that's something I've tried before. But even just offering really detailed feedback in their comments, (...) they'll tell me, ‘Thank you for showing me what actually went wrong instead of just assigning me a grade, because now I know how to improve.’ So overall, I think that the students appreciate that detailed feedback. And so, in terms of giving them alternate, you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freestanding Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>“We have a three-hour course that all students within the journalism department need to take, and so we already have it in our class. I think that (...) we need to have more consistency across the board in terms of keeping grammar and style at the forefront of the rest of our classes and making sure that it's not just a one one-class experience” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 112). *-Debbie,</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| know, the ability to do multiple drafts, I think it is a good thing because for the ones that are willing to learn, it gives them that opportunity to see where it went wrong and have that chance to fix it” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 128). *-Olivia, visiting assistant professor |

| “I can see the value in that. I think in some cases, (...) I'm kind of giving that feedback and they're just making the change. And I don't know that there's always that understanding of why that changes being made or they're just, you know, trying to get more points on the next draft. So I think reflection would be a good way of kind of making sure there's understanding happening there. So yeah, definitely positive” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 207). *-Beth, tenure track assistant professor |

| “Yeah, so it's basically a cover paper that lets them kind of be honest about what the work they've put in and what they think is good and not, and often they're actually quite critical already in that first draft. And, I like it because they seem to recognize often where they actually are a little bit weak. So it's I don't get it thinking, *Oh, they assume this is great work*, (...) I just like I like that context a lot. (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 307) *-Trisha, tenured associate professor |

<p>| “We have a three-hour course that all students within the journalism department need to take, and so we already have it in our class. I think that (...) we need to have more consistency across the board in terms of keeping grammar and style at the forefront of the rest of our classes and making sure that it's not just a one one-class experience” (Focus Group Transcript 1, Pos. 112). *-Debbie, |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>lecturer</th>
<th>“But having some kind of embedded option related to journalism and media writing, I think could be valuable and something that, you know, maybe it's a precursor to the multimedia writing course that they need to do some of these basics before getting into, you know, learning how to write a lead and, you know, those types of things” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 185). -Beth, tenure track assistant professor</th>
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<td>-Miranda, adjunct professor</td>
<td>“I mean, a gateway course would be great, because then I wouldn't have to go back and focus on grammar, I could just focus on the promotional aspect of the writing, so it would allow me to ideally make them more advanced when they leave my class in what they're able to do as far as, like the professional work itself, instead of having to focus on grammar and spelling and things like that (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 317).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Existing Course</td>
<td>“I feel like I'm already adding a lot of (...) remedial things already in my class to one of those being ethical journalism, which I teach in my first class, as well. So it's like a lot of them don't even realize what the difference is between local TV and national TV. I mean, there's a lot of things like that. You're trying to get that foundation and basics and before even getting started with the forward thinking concepts in your class, right? What you're talking about and what the whole class is about. So there's a lot (...) of gauging where your students are whenever they come to the class. And again, (...) they should probably already know a lot of these things. And I just, you know, I try to just assume, you know it until you tell me you don't, or I realize that whenever you turn in a paper, I'm like, ‘OK, well, let's go and readdress this.’” (Focus Group Transcript 96)</td>
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| Group Transcript 1, Pos. 101. | -**Monica, adjunct professor**  
| - | "But there's just some stigma attached with going [to a writing center or] kind of raising your hand and asking for that support. And so embedding in my course (...) something that could help students with these skills, I think, would be great. I would be able to track if they've actually completed that work and then hopefully be able to talk with them about the value of that. So that, to me, would be a really great resource. And if there is one, I love tips for where to get it” (Focus Group Transcript 2, Pos. 196).  
| - | -**Julia, tenured professor and associate dean**  
| - | "If they're, if they're willing than I am to to help, I will. After COVID, I've adapted using video feedback for a lot of them so I can spend a solid 10 minutes saying, here are the things I see that need improvement and here's how you improve them. And I get a much better response when I when I have more individual capability, I can't necessarily do it during class time, but I can” (Focus Group Transcript 3, Pos. 266).  
| - | -**Leslie, adjunct professor**  
| | The above data triangulation supports the theme of *taking action* and is driven by two key factors: (a) sharing tactics from their own teaching practice and (b) noting that their current curriculum already has coursework that does or could serve the function of embedded remediation support. Many shared tactics such as multiple drafts of work with revisions and/or reflections, fit well within a TFL-ELT framework and these shared experiences suggest that even though they may not have formally considered the concept, many faculty, particularly faculty who teach smaller, writing-based courses, are already practicing key elements of embedded
remediation models. This combined with existing coursework that may also support embedded remediation suggest that within many journalism and mass communication units, there may already be curricular and personnel infrastructure to start building embedded remediation programs based on a TFL-ELT framework that supports specific needs of programs, courses, and students. While there is a strong awareness of struggling student writers among faculty in these programs, there is not strong awareness of embedded remediation as a concept, even if it may work with some elements of current practice and curricula. Suggestions for how to address this through future practice and research are in the next portion of this manuscript.

**Recommendations for Practice and Future Research**

Based on the data analysis, there are three recommendations for future research and two recommendations for practice.

**Recommendations for future research**

1. There are potentially more themes to be discovered in this body of research that could be identified through future research. While there was not enough data to triangulate into categories and themes, there were perspectives expressed concerning financial support for faculty, faculty autonomy, and faculty fatigue that could be examined in depth in future research. Understanding faculty perceptions related to these issues could advance the research related to embedded remediation in journalism and mass communication schools.
2. Writing centers are a source of both frustration and curiosity for JMC faculty who participated in this study. Many faculty are simultaneously frustrated that their students are hesitant to go to such centers and they are frustrated at the disconnect between center offerings and student needs. Experimental research to test how students interact with and respond to embedded writing centers in JMC schools would be a worthy pursuit that would meet faculty demand and help advance a new model of embedded remediation. If proven effective, investments in tailored, writing center support for JMC students could be argued.

3. There was widespread hesitation to high-stakes embedded remediation model that provide both intervention and measurement with a cut score related to enrollment and retention and with student wellbeing. However, such models do exist at multiple institutions across the United States. Conducting a multiple case study that looks at how these programs operate would be beneficial in affirming or challenging these perceptions. It is also possible that such high-stakes interventions have an effect on how borderline students perceive themselves as students, and a phenomenological study into those effects would also be valuable in future research.

**Recommendations for practice**

1. There is a lack of awareness of embedded remediation and how it could affect the practice of faculty and support borderline students. Developing professional development training centered around this concept and its theoretical and practical underpinnings for JMC faculty, particularly those who teach media writing courses, could benefit the profession. Partnering
with nonprofit groups that serve industry, such as Poynter, could be a viable avenue to pursue this.

2. In this researcher’s opinion, while implementing an effective embedded remediation strategy—whether that be as an individual educator redesigning his/her/their existing course; or as a group of faculty debating a freestanding course for a curriculum; or as an administrator overseeing an experimental embedded center—we must simultaneously consider both cognitive and social perspectives on student learning. With a broad range of metrics and considerations, more holistic models can be set that satisfy both the rigor and remediation mindsets within JMC faculty cultures. Setting a high bar for JMC students is important to the future of the profession. But deeming students as either proficient or deficient without considering growth and persistence, does not fully assess students as it doesn’t consider the value of their experiences, and thus it doesn’t always show the value of the embedded intervention.

For example, at the researcher’s home institution, Oklahoma State University, a high-stakes embedded remediation model is used. Students who fail to pass the Language Proficiency Exam (LPE) by at least 75% must change majors. Students have only two chances during a gateway writing course. The LPE instrument is a 40-question, multiple choice exam. There is no written element of the test, which ultimately tries to measure writing skills. This represents a cognitive approach to student readiness. However, a cognitive-social approach would maintain the LPE and the 75% bar, but acknowledge that because such an instrument is flawed (some students may pass with guessed answers, and there is no evidence of actual writing abilities), policies should be amended. More attempts should be allowed for students who are close to passing the test, especially for those
students who show significant growth during their first two attempts. A written portion could be added and assessed by two unbiased graders in the event of a student with a borderline score. Variables such as growth and writing abilities, could be added to LPE scores and ultimately combined to create better assessment.

**Limitations**

This study endeavored to draw insights from the perspectives of faculty in journalism and mass communication fields to explore if and how these perceptions are or are not compatible with the concept of embedded remediation for teaching collegiate media writing skills. The study used a purposeful sample of 17 faculty from 14 U.S. institutions. There are three limitations which should be noted.

First, while sufficient data were collected to reach saturation and triangulate data to support themes, additional focus groups would be beneficial as there are at least 480 journalism and mass communication programs nationwide—roughly 115 of which are accredited by the Association for Journalism & Mass Communication—and a roughly estimated 7,000 full-time faculty and 5,000 adjunct or part-time faculty who teaching in these courses (Knight Foundation, N.D.). A larger sample would be beneficial to grasping a better understanding of how professoriate members in journalism and mass communication perceive their roles as educators as it relates to embedded remediation.

Second, to form the third focus group, which included four participants, the researcher invited two participants who met the purposeful criteria, but with whom he had a professional relationship with. Thus, the sample in the third group included two participants who were conveniently selected in addition to the two who were recruited through solicitations to academic
unit heads. The third focus group was necessary for triangulation of data and research protocols dictated that each group contain at least four participants.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the nature of data collection for this study. Due to the global pandemic, travel and in-person focus group facilitation posed health concerns. Rather than conducting in-person focus groups at three sites, three blended focus groups were conducted via Zoom. This approach did allow for a larger sample of accredited institutions to be represented in the study—roughly 12.17%. The lack of a consistent focus group environment for all participants could have affected data collection, as some may have been distracted by other individuals, intermittent internet connection, and other factors. However, protocols were taken during the recruitment and data collection processes to encourage participants to participate in a neutral, comfortable environment.

Conclusion

To what extent, if at all, are faculty in journalism and mass communication willing to embrace embedded remediation strategies as part of their professional practice as educators? In some cases they are already doing it to some extent. And in other cases, especially in the case of large classes, there is not sufficient support or incentive to do it, such strategies may be difficult to use. Embedded remediation is just one approach to supporting borderline JMC students and advancing the conversation among faculty members is key to understanding its viability. Conducting future research to see how this approach may effect change within student populations and/or affect student development is also important to this evolving area of research.
The nature of embedded remediation depends largely on the contexts of the institution and the students. However, to gain a localized understanding, this question depends on at least three important variables:

1. **Awareness**: Knowledge of the concept is generally low among faculty who participated in the focus groups. However, many faculty, particularly those who teach smaller writing seminars, may be open to embracing this concept, if awareness and knowledge are increased across the field.

2. **Class size**: While the type of appointment (adjunct, teaching, tenure stream) did not reveal itself to be a major indicator of how faculty may feel about embedded remediation, the class size of the courses taught did. Faculty with large courses generally reacted negatively to the concept and found the idea to be burdensome.

3. **Support**: For journalism and mass communication faculty to help provide embedded remediation for their students, institutional support is needed. In many instances, taking such measures means additional work for faculty who might experience faculty fatigue, or whose appointment necessitates they spend less time on student learning and more on scholarly research. Making the support of borderline students through embedded remediation part of the culture and mission of units of journalism and mass communication is key to its success.

Hotty Toddy and Go Pokes!
List of References


Focus Group Transcript 1, September 17, 2021

Focus Group Transcript 2, September 17, 2021

Focus Group Transcript 3, November 17, 2021


Appendix
Appendix A

IRB Exempt Determination of 22x-024

Fri, Aug 6, 2021 at 9:47 AM

To: ANDREW ABERNATHY <amaberna@po.olemiss.edu>
Cc: Whitney Thompson Webb <whitth@olemiss.edu>

PI:

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, “Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of their Professional Practice” (Protocol #22x-024), has been determined as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). You may proceed with your research.

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi’s human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethical principles in The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:

• You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.

• Any changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes.

• You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.

• If research is to be conducted during class, the PI must email the instructor and ask if they wish to see the protocol materials (surveys, interview questions, etc.) prior to research beginning.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the IRB at irb@olemiss.edu.

IRB Administrative Office
Research Integrity and Compliance
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
The University of Mississippi

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=6df01e47&view=pt&rsn=md&shl=0&permthid=thread-f8s3A17079355897888043070&comp=env-f8s3A17079355897888043070&ui=2&ik=6df01e47&view=pt&rsn=md&shl=0&permthid=thread-f8s3A17079355897888043070&comp=env-f8s3A17079355897888043070&ui=2&ik=6df01e47&view=pt&rsn=md&shl=0&permthid=thread-f8s3A17079355897888043070&comp=env-f8s3A17079355897888043070
Appendix B

Hello,

I am Andrew Abernathy, a doctoral candidate in higher education at the University of Mississippi. I am reaching out to ask your help in recruiting faculty in your academic unit to participate in a focus group that will help with my dissertation research. The working title of the research project is Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of their Professional Practice. This research has been approved by UM’s Institutional Review Board.

I hope to recruit a group of 6-10 faculty (of all appointment types; including adjuncts) from your institution to explore their perceptions to the concept of embedded remediation of students writing skills. All faculty who participate in the focus group will be given a $25 Amazon gift card.

During this focus group, participants will be asked to share their perceptions concerning the concept of Embedded Remediation (ER) of fundamental writing skills. For the purpose of this research, ER is defined as the incorporation of fundamental writing skills instruction (e.g., punctuation, pronoun use, subject-verb agreement) into individual courses or as a freestanding credit-granting courses that are a required part of a curriculum.

ER is not to be thought of as a means of replacing any existing institutional infrastructure related to remediation or developmental education, but as an additional strategy that university faculty and administrators might explore as a means of serving a need among the student body.

Who is eligible?
All faculty who teach undergraduate students within your unit (department/school/college). All faculty, including adjunct and instructional faculty, are encouraged.

What’s in it for me?
1. All participants will receive a digital, $25 Amazon gift card within 24 hours of participating in the focus group.
2. The chance to reflect on your professional practice as an educator and your role in helping students.

How and when will I participate?
I am conducting 45-60 minute focus groups later this month via Zoom. There will be a Google Form gathering names of those interested and availability. If there is sufficient interest, confirmations emails will be sent to individuals. Note there must be a minimum of six available for the focus group to make. All you need to participate is access to a computer, reliable internet access, and a private space (such as a home or business office).

If you are interested, please fill out this Google Form at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS-erABQpm8PySm883_jV3V7TtReFUMe5mJa25iQ2Q/viewform?usp=sf_link.

Sincerely,
Andrew M. Abernathy
Doctoral Candidate
University of Mississippi
anaberna@g.uolmiss.edu
Appendix C

Request to Amend an IRB Protocol

TITLE: Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of their Professional Practice

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Andrew M. Abernathy

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22x-024 ORIG. APPROVAL DATE: Aug. 5, 2021

1. Amendment type* (check all that apply):
   - Revision to currently approved protocol – Attach protocol with incorporated changes
   - Revision to currently approved consent form – Attach consent form with incorporated changes
   - Revision to/ addition of survey or other instrument – Attach survey/instrument
   - Add study site – Attach relevant documents
   - Other (e.g., advertisement) – Attach relevant documents
   *For personnel additions/deletions, please use the personnel amendment form

2. Effect on risks (check one):
   - This amendment does not increase risks to participants enrolled in the study.
   - This amendment does increase risks to participants enrolled in the study (provide Department Chair’s email for cc of approval notice: [ ])

3. Identify amendment request(s) and justification(s) by item or page number:
   Instead of interviewing faculty at three separate institutions via Zoom, I will interview a blended group of faculty from multiple institutions at once via Zoom. There will still be three focus groups.

4. Is the PI a student?
   - No
   - Yes (provide Advisor’s email for cc of approval notice: [ ])

   By checking this box, I certify that the information provided in the amendment is complete and correct. As Principal Investigator, I have the responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of the human participants, conduct of the research, and the ethical performance of the project. DATE: 9/2/21

   The amendment form, revised protocol, consent form, and/or other documents with changes incorporated and listed above (and highlighted where possible) should be sent via email only to irb@olemiss.edu. Include the protocol number in the subject line of your email.

For IRB office use only:

☑ APPROVED: This signifies notification of IRB APPROVAL of the amendment described above.

Miranda Core
IRB REVIEWER 9-7-21

AMENDMENT 1
Appendix D

Focus Group Guide

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for joining me today. As mentioned in the consent forms that you have all filled out prior to this focus group, I am interested in faculty perceptions related to the concept of embedded remediation, which I may sometimes refer to as “ER.” For the purpose of this research, we will define ER as the incorporation of fundamental writing skills instruction (e.g., punctuation, pronoun use, subject-verb agreement) into individual courses or as a freestanding credit-granting courses that are a required part of a curriculum. This is not to be thought of as a means of replacing any existing institutional infrastructure related to remediation or developmental education, but as an additional strategy that university faculty and administrators might explore as a means of serving a need among the student body. It has also been argued that ER could be effective to some students because you are tying this developmental education effort to students’ professional ambitions.

This will be a semi-structured interview process. I have four main questions prepared for you today. You are encouraged to explore your thoughts about ER as a concept throughout this process. As mentioned in the consent form, your identity and the name of your institution will be kept anonymous. If I use a quote from you, it will be used with a pseudonym. You are one of three samples of faculty across the country that I am interviewing. So please, feel free to express your honest opinion throughout this process.

1. To start off, I have requested that each of you to have a piece of paper and something to write with today. I want us to take 60 seconds and just write your thoughts about the concept of embedded remediation as it relates to your professional practice as an educator of undergraduates. This will not be collected. This is just a reference document to help you become grounded in your thoughts. It can be full sentences, or just words or phrases. But take the next 60 seconds and just write. After 60 seconds I will randomly call on you to share your thoughts. Are there any questions before we begin?

2. I want to dig a little deeper into ER within your individual courses. Do you think you have a responsibility as an educator to help borderline students in developing their basic writing skills?

3. Next, I would like to talk about need. Is having some sort of embedded remediation for students’ writing skills something that is needed in your unit? By unit I mean your college, school, or department.

4. Next, I would like to talk about feasibility. If your unit embraced a policy of ER…(Meaning that an emphasis was placed on faculty to actively and systematically identify and helping students with borderline writing skills either in your individual
courses or as a freestanding part of the curriculum). How feasible would this be for you to do this as an educator? (probe for possible challenges; support needs)

5. In the last part of this focus group, I want to ask you to think about specific elements of what an embedded remediation model might look like in an undergraduate classroom in your field. When I describe this to you, I want you to use the chat box here in Zoom and rate your reaction as positive, negative, or neutral. You can just write the word positive, negative, or neutral in the chat box. After you answer, we will explore your thoughts.

   How would you feel about requiring students to both correct their work through multiple drafts AND requiring them to write reflective statements about their learning process as part of those corrections? This means you will have to review multiple drafts of work.

   How would you feel about a gateway course that grants academic credit toward students’ major, but primarily focuses on fundamental writing skills (e.g. commas, pronouns, etc.), with media writing only being a secondary focus.

   How would you feel about having an entry exam into study within your unit. This would be a writing skills exam that students must pass to advance into a major? If a student falls even one point below the cut score she or he must change majors.

   How would you feel about incorporating a co-instructor who specializes in identifying students with writing skill deficiencies and working with this person throughout the semester?
Appendix E

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of their Professional Practice

Investigator
Andrew M. Abernathy, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education
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(662) 915-7906, whitdt@olemiss.edu

INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ONLY IF YOU ARE COLLECTING DATA EXCLUSIVELY FROM ADULTS
☐ By checking this box I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

Description
The researcher is interested in exploring to what extent, if at all, faculty within academic units accredited by the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC) perceive they are willing to embrace embedded remediation strategies in their professional practice as educators. This study will use focus groups to gather data from faculty at three colleges or universities to explore these perceptions. For the purposes of this study, embedded remediation (ER) will be defined as the incorporation of fundamental writing skills instruction (e.g., punctuation, pronoun use, subject-verb agreement) into individual courses or as a freestanding credit-granting courses that are a required part of a curriculum. ER is not to be thought of as a means of replacing any existing institutional infrastructure related to remediation or developmental education, but as an additional strategy that university faculty and administrators might explore as a means of serving a need among the student body.

Cost and Payments
The focus group will last approximately 45-60 minutes. There is no cost associated with participating in this study. A $25 Amazon gift card will be offered to participants as an incentive.

Risks and Benefits
During the interview, the questions will require you to reflect upon your personal experiences in as an educator who teaches undergraduate students in an academic unit that is accredited by the AEJMC. Disclosing and/or recalling challenging experiences might be uncomfortable. Questions may also lead to critical reflections of your institution, curriculum, faculty, and/or students, possibly leading to negative thoughts. Questions may also encourage self-awareness and a greater understanding of how you perceive yourself and your role as an educator.

Confidentiality
The focus groups will be video-recorded and transcribed using a transcription service or manually by the researcher. Any identifying information will be removed from any files after you have reviewed your interview transcript. Data will be securely stored, and only the researcher and faculty sponsor/advisor will have access to the records. Electronic records will be password protected, and any hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office. The researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you in the dissertation text or any sort of publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym, a fake name, that will identify you in quoted comments used in the study and in publication. The researcher will not reveal your real name nor the name of your institution. A pseudonym will be assigned to data collected on all participants to ensure confidentiality.

Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) – the committee responsible for reviewing the ethics of, approving, and monitoring all research with humans – have authority to access all records. However, the IRB will request identifiers only when necessary.

**Right to Withdraw**
Your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, please inform the researcher (Andrew M. Abernathy) of your decision. Whether or not you participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with the Department of Higher Education or with the University, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Personal Information**
What best describes your faculty appointment?

☐ Tenured
☐ Tenure-track
☐ Non-tenure-track
☐ Visiting
☐ Adjunct

What is your title? ________________________

How many years of teaching experience do you have? _____

On average, how many undergraduate courses do you teach per academic year? _____

**IRB Approval***must be included as written***
This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or irb@olemiss.edu.

**Statement of Consent**
I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey/interview I consent to participate in the study.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative Date

________________________________________
Printed name of Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative
Andrew M. Abernathy
CURRICULUM VITAE

Office: 311 Paul Miller Building, Stillwater, Okla., 74074
Email: andrew.abernathy@okstate.edu - Cell: 662-769-3739

SUMMARY
Experienced college instructor dedicated to helping students build critical thinking skills through problem-based learning. Teaches media writing, market research, media planning, and more. Brings 13+ years media and strategic communications experience to the classroom.

EDUCATION
Ed.D. in Higher Education, University of Mississippi, 2022

M.A. in Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Mississippi, 2010
Thesis: High Tension, Deep South: Southern Identity, the Student Press, and the Integration Story at the University of Georgia, University of Mississippi, and University of Alabama, 1961-63. Defended Nov. 11, 2010

B.A. in English and Journalism, University of Mississippi, 2008
Most Outstanding News/Editorial Student Award
Senior News Editor at The Daily Mississippian

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS
Assistant Professor of Professional Practice
Oklahoma State University - School of Media & Strategic Communications
August 2020 - Present
Teach courses in journalism, mass communication, and strategic communication. Serve on college- and school-level committees. Mentor students. Nominated for the 2022 Arts & Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award.

Adjunct Instructional Assistant Professor
University of Mississippi - School of Journalism and New Media
January 2016 - May 2020

Taught courses in Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). Participated in curriculum, planning, and textbook meetings. Mentor students. Consistently rated among top IMC faculty in student evaluations.

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RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Accepted manuscripts

Manuscripts in preparation
Abernathy, A. M. (Expected 2022). Teaching in a Remediation Nation: Exploring Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Perceptions of Their Professional Practice

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GRANT ACTIVITY

CAS summer funding proposal - Developed summer salary proposal to conduct phenomenological study on the effects of high stakes embedded remediation on borderline media and strategic communication students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Submitted on Jan. 26, 2022.

Pre-proposal for seed grant - Helped develop $100,000 seed grant pre-proposal for Rural Renewal Initiative. Pre-proposal will include developing a new curriculum to help rural youth improve health media literacy. Submitted on Jan. 18, 2022. Collaborators: Rosemary Avance, Asya Cooley*, Skye Cooley, and Juwon Hwang

Proposal for funding - Collaborated on $199,000 proposal to Carnegie Foundation to fund study aimed at developing a curriculum for media literacy using physiological coherence monitoring and training. Submitted Nov. 4, 2021. Collaborators: Asya Cooley, Skye Cooley*
COURSES TAUGHT

Oklahoma State University

MC 2003 - Media Style & Structure*
MMJ 4433 - Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines
SC 4013 - Advertising Media & Markets*
SC 4493 - Advanced Public Relations Writing
SC 4520 - Long-Form Writing in Strategic Communications*+

University of Mississippi

IMC 205 - Writing for Integrated Marketing Communications*
IMC 390 - Advanced Writing for Integrated Marketing Communications
IMC 404 - IMC Research Methods

*Taught online and face-to-face  
+Created new course

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Manager of Marketing & Communications  
University of Mississippi - School of Education  
July 2017 - Present

Directed strategic communications for academic unit. Managed $60,000+ annual marketing budget. Oversaw ad campaigns. Served on Dean’s Administrative Leadership Council. Pitched stories to media. Conducted market research, including surveys and focus groups. Designed marketing and communications plans. Established school-wide brand standards. Winner of two Southern Public Relations Federation Lantern Awards.

Communications Specialist  
University of Mississippi  
February 2012 - July 2017

Focused primarily on generating earned media for UM School of Education. Wrote and pitched stories to the media. Established Education Edge alumni magazine, monthly e-newsletter, Education Minute social media series, and more.

Associate Editor  
PMQ, Inc.
May 2009 - February 2012


Freelance Writing and Editing
Self-Employed
May 2008 - February 2012

Provided copywriting and editorial services for 20+ clients. Select jobs include: Researcher and copywriter for Baptist Memorial Hospital's 2009 north Mississippi testimonial ad campaign; Contributing Writer for Military Officer; Contributing Writer for At Home Tennessee; Copywriter for University of Mississippi Brand Services.

Graduate Assistant for Communications
University of Mississippi
May 2008 - May 2009

Wrote news releases for UM’s Office of Media & Public Relations and Division of Outreach. Fact-checked newsletters, advertisements and promotional materials. Created press kit materials for the 2008 presidential debate hosted by UM.

Editorial Intern
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
Summer 2007

Read and critiqued manuscripts and queries for Senior Editor Kathy Pories and Executive Editor Chuck Adams. Maintained correspondence with unsolicited writers.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Southern Public Relations Federation
Public Relations Association of Mississippi
College Public Relations Association of Mississippi

SELECT JOURNALISTIC PUBLICATIONS

Abernathy, A. (2018). Why what she thinks really matters: Leslie Westbrook and
understanding the art and science of connecting with customers and how that knowledge shapes the future. *Meek School.*


Abernathy, A. (2011). A time to rebuild: In the aftermath of a devastating tornado, some Joplin, Missouri, pizzeria owners rebuild, while others consider cutting their losses. *PMQ.*


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CERTIFICATIONS

- CAS Online Development course, Oklahoma State University
- Adjunct Instructor Certificate, Poynter News University
- Google AdWords Certification
- Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Basic Course. ID: 48125879
- eLearning Training Course (eTC), University of Mississippi

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UNIVERSITY SERVICE (OSU)

**Extra-Curricular**

- Co-adviser, Public Relations Student Society of America, November 2020 to present

**Standing Committee Memberships**

- Member, Curriculum Committee, College of Arts & Sciences, August 2020 to present
- Member, Student Services and Extension Committee, School of Media and Strategic Communications, August 2020 to present
Honors Contracts Supervised

- Breck Gillespie, Advertising Media & Markets, fall 2021
- Meghan Weeks, Advertising Media & Markets, fall 2021
- Brianna Rhone, Advanced PR Writing, fall 2020

Honors Theses/Creative Components

- Co-director, Meghan Weeks, TBD, expected December 2022
- Second Reader, Breck Gillespie, “Facebook and U.S. Presidential Elections,” December 2021

UNIVERSITY SERVICE (UM)

Committee Memberships

- Dean’s Administrative Leadership Council, UM School of Education, February 2012 to August 2020
- Technology Committee, UM School of Education, September 2014 to August 2020
- Planning Committee, UM C3 Summit, Summer 2019
- Co-chair, Marketing Affinity Group, University Marketing & Communications, Spring 2020

Search Committee Memberships

- UM Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction, Program Coordinator Search, Spring 2019
- UM School of Business Administration, Manager of Marketing & Communications Search, Fall 2015
- UM School of Education, Development Officer Search, Spring 2014

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer
Westwood Elementary Running Club
Spring 2022

Board of Directors
Team 36
August 2018-August 2020
Served on fundraising and communications committees of 501c(3) nonprofit dedicated to helping children in rural communities improve ACT performance. Designed marketing and communication strategies for organization.

Acting President
Community Green Neighborhood Association
Fall 2017-March 2020
Coordinated community events. Maintained budget. Took meeting minutes.
Board of Governors/Past President/Past Treasurer
Jefferson Place Garden Homeowners Association
Fall 2013-Present
Oversaw $45,000 annual budget. Maintained financial records. Collected bids and negotiated with contractors.