CHALLENGES

- **Time-consuming to include detailed, personalized comments**, along with basic feedback on structure and grammar.

- **Students are reluctant to provide honest critique to peers** in person or when anonymity is not possible.

- **Inconvenient to use a separate tool to check originality** and another for corrections; better to have it all in one place.

SOLUTIONS

- Kirszner, Laurie G. and Stephen R. Mandell: **The Wadsworth Pocket Handbook**; Enhanced InSite

RESULTS

- **Enhanced InSite (InSite) online grading** functionality helps Amy move through basic essay grading tasks quickly, leaving more time for personalized feedback and coaching.

- **PeerMark feature enables anonymous peer reviews**, making it possible for students to provide and receive open, honest feedback on their work.

- **The Originality Checker flags potential source issues**, using the same online copy that is used for grading and peer reviews. There is no need to import and store the document two or more times.

Amy L. Montz, PhD.

Assistant Professor of English — University of Southern Indiana

Improving Outcomes and Engagement in Freshman Composition with Enhanced InSite

Professor Amy L. Montz has been teaching English courses for over fourteen years and has been in her current role at the University of Southern Indiana (USI) in Evansville, Indiana for the past three years. In addition to the first- and second-semester English Composition courses, she teaches 18th and 19th-Century British Literature and education-focused courses to students who are enrolled in the English Teaching program. Amy especially enjoys working with freshman and sophomores, helping them build their skills and knowledge in critical thinking, critical writing, and the tenets of argument. One of her biggest challenges is convincing students that mastery of these skills will help them achieve better grades in nearly every college-level subject area and help them achieve success in their current and future careers. "Students often think of courses, especially those in the arts and humanities areas, as being insulated, separate from all of the other courses that they are taking. 21st-century students want to know how and where each topic will be useful in their everyday lives."

Amy has been using Enhanced InSite (InSite) for the past four years. At USI, she uses it in conjunction with *The Wadsworth Pocket Handbook* from Cengage Learning. She has found that the features in InSite have enabled her to spend more time providing personalized feedback to students and to increase participation rates and quality of peer reviews.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPANTS

USI serves a diverse student population — recent high school graduates who live on campus and attend school full-time, older working and unemployed adults who are taking classes part-time, and former members of the armed forces, returning to school to earn degrees. She maintains online and in-person office hours in order to serve the scheduling needs of her students, but teaches most of her classes in a traditional campus-based setting. The only exception is a few online English 201 sections during the summer session. Amy is also working on a plan to offer blended course offerings in the future.

THE CHALLENGES

Overall, Amy's biggest challenge is building and maintaining learner engagement, especially with an audience that is quite diverse in terms of age and lifestyle. During class time, she needs to keep the participation rate high, encourage peer-to-peer discussions, and keep the material relevant. When creating lists of topics for research papers and arguments, one of her biggest challenges is identifying topics that her class participants will enjoy writing about. "In order to effectively write an argument, a student needs to be passionate about the subject area — either for or against it." Amy often creates a theme for each semester. In the case of a "monster" theme, all of the writing assignments

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for the semester must revolve around a monster theme, whatever each student's definition of "monster" happens to be for a given assignment — monsters past or present, whether person, place, thing, or idea.

When Amy was grading written assignments in the past — manually — she often found herself repeating the same basic comments, leaving her little time for more personalized feedback. In the case of peer reviews, which she considers to be effective in terms of helping students improve the quality of their arguments and their writing assignments, she found that students often had a difficult time being completely honest when the reviews took place in a live setting.

THE RESULTS

The online grading feature in InSite enables Amy to review written assignments more quickly and easily, allowing her to focus more time on specific comments that are designed to help each student take his or her writing to the next level. As a result, she has observed dramatic improvements in the quality of each student's work. Amy also likes the level of detail provided in the Originality Checker, powered by Turnitin, and considers it to be a better way to assess the originality of each student's work than some of the tools that she has used in the past. More often than not, problems in this area can be resolved by teaching students to cite their sources correctly. Students have told her that they really like the Personal Tutor section and the Resources for Writers, InSite features that help them improve their skills at any hour of the night or day, whenever they happen to be doing coursework.

Amy has observed that the level of participation and the quality of comments in peer reviews has increased since her students started taking advantage of the online, anonymous evaluation features in the PeerMark section of InSite. "The PeerMark feature in Enhanced InSite has contributed to increased student engagement, making it easier for students to honestly critique the work of their peers."

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Evansville, Indiana

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