Jumpstart Overview

Jumpstart Student Learning Outcomes

Through your work in this class, you should begin to do the following things:

1. Develop a **rhetorical understanding** of your learning processes and their consequences: how and why you read, question, and write and the results of those strategies.
2. Develop and **build confidence** in your abilities to create, interpret, and evaluate texts in all types of media.
3. Develop an understanding of the importance of **getting and giving feedback** when reading, researching, and writing.
4. Establish a **sustainable network of people, strategies, and tools**, ones that you are comfortable accessing, that will contribute to your success as a college student doing #1-3.

Building Networks that Work

We all have networks that connect us to a variety of people, places, experiences, and opportunities. They are made of combinations of family, friends, acquaintances, professionals, bosses, classmates, and even strangers. People often think that the primary role of a network is to be supportive. But that word is a tricky one. Support comes in a lot of different shapes and sizes. A network of people, even a small one, can provide an alternative perspective, an outlet for your frustration when you’re stuck and getting nowhere, or a positive reinforcement when you need to...
get started or follow through with a project. They can also be a target for your fears as well as your successes. The way that a network should work is by giving you a reliable and engaging feedback loop. You throw an idea at someone in your network, and he/she listens and throws back a response.

Sustainable and valuable networks frequently emerge over a long period of time. The problem with making a transition--from one class to another, from one school to another, from one house to another, from one city to another--is a problem of connection. Your networks before UTRGV are not necessarily hooked up with the networks and people you'll meet now that you're here. There are at least three very different ways that people cope with that disconnection. One, you can take some time. You have four years to make a degree happen, so maybe it’s normal to expect it to take years to find or build a community. Two, you can find a ready-made community, like a student organization, and you can do what you need to in order to belong to and get along with that group of people. Both of these go on at colleges and universities all the time, and many students find success using them. But we’re going to suggest that we don’t need a lot of time to let a network develop, and we don’t have to shop around for a group with like interests. We have peers and partners and faculty who want you to hit campus on your first day of the fall semester with a network that is flexible, one that grows out of the work and communication you’ll face in your classes every day. Just imagine walking into your first class of the semester with a contact list in your phone--names, numbers, and notes on the questions each person can help you with. At Jumpstart, we want to help you build that contact list this summer, making our partners yours.

**Who Are These Partners?**

**Peers**

Some of your first points of contact are your classmates, and you'll be forming a peer group the first week of Jumpstart that will stay together the entire semester, through the good and even the not-so-good times:). That peer group of 4-5 people will keep you up to date with class if an emergency keeps you out for a day; they will bounce around ideas about what to ask a student intern or teacher about an assignment; they will create a schedule for work outside of class; and, most importantly, they will give you an immediate feedback loop for the work you do in class and the ideas you have each day.

**Teachers**

In Jumpstart, you will also have an opportunity to learn about, and not just from, your teacher. What does your teacher value, how does your teacher design classroom space? Why does your teacher do certain things for the class? These are all details that surround learning, and we want to bring out those details so that we can have more conversations about how classrooms work. We’ll even go further and you’ll learn about your teacher’s colleagues teaching up and down the hallway. Together, this community of teachers has many years of experience working with first-year students. And while we have a variety of backgrounds, interests, and particular strengths that we bring into the classroom, we all have shared goals for this program.

We want to help you understand yourself and your literacy (ability to read and write) as **multimodal**. That means that what we read, research, and write happens in a variety and mix of language forms or modes. Even a print essay has a physical dimension (ink on paper), a visual
The Hauser Communication Research Lab

One of the most emphasized areas of UTRGV’s core curriculum—you know, those first 42 hours that irritate people who want to get on with it—is communication. An emphasis on communication takes up 6 of those core hours with English 1301 and English 1302, but communication is also part of every class in the core. How you listen, how you read and write, and how you share information through language (written and spoken) affects everything you’ll do at UTRGV, and JumpStart is here to give you room to experiment and grow as a communicator, to grow into what we’ll call a sophisticated rhetorician. More on that phrase later. Right now, you have your JumpStart teachers who are experts in areas like rhetoric, composition, and even reading. But you’ll also have access to the staff and technology of the Hauser Communication Research Lab. They can answer questions you have about aspects of effective communication, and they can coach you as you walk through real presentations that make sense in college environments. Their summer hours are: MON-THUR 10am - 2pm, FRI 10am - 1pm.

As you’ll see on the Hauser flyers around campus, students can easily make an appointment by visiting hauserlab.appointy.com. When you visit the site, you can provide basic information to set up a visit to the lab (name, e-mail, contact number, and type/time of appointment). Once you’ve confirmed your appointment on the final page, the Hauser Lab will send you a confirmation email. Twelve hours before your appointment they will also send a reminder email.

To get you used to thinking about and developing your presentations skills, each Jumpstart group will need to have at least one appointment this semester at the Hauser Lab. It will be up to the group to discuss with your teacher what kind of consultation would best suit the group. You could focus on anything from how to present an idea to the class in the middle of discussing an article to designing an oral presentation with visual support in a digital slideshow. Only one student needs to make an appointment for each group. Also the lab is equipped with technology to record
presentations through USB ports. Each group then can receive a recorded copy of their work on USB for later review and a receipt as proof of attendance.

**Embedded Librarians/Research on the Run**

You also have a dedicated group of librarians who have been working with your instructors in classes like this for the last four years, learning about who college students really are, what they respond to, and even what they run away from. We’ll have roving and embedded librarians hanging out with us in class, adding examples and details to the questions you ask, and helping you with projects at the moment you have a concern. Our hope is that, once you have a connection to the library, you’ll be more likely to look up people like Susan, Carl, and Andrew in future semesters to help you when you have a research question. They live to answer questions and see how your interests turn into public projects that have real audiences who act on your words and your discoveries.

**Student Interns**

Adding to that sense of real-time support is a team of student interns who have first-hand experiences in writing and reading intensive classes at UTRGV. These students have a diverse range of majors and interests, but they are well-equipped to with you as mentors for the reading, questioning, and writing you’ll need to do well to excel in your college classes. Each of our interns will be attending one or two Jumpstart classes and working with you outside of class during face to face and online conferencing sessions. Their background and interest in mentoring is going to serve all of us well as we work on developing our strengths and reforming our weaknesses as communicators and knowledge makers. The interns are available with support from The Learning Center at UTRGV, and they will be having conference times outside of class at The Learning Center and online. You should find out your Intern’s schedule as soon as possible and start taking advantage of their availability and feedback . . . about Jumpstart, about your work, about your other classes, and about any questions you have regarding UTRGV. If they can’t answer your questions, they’ll hook you up with someone on campus who can.

**Why All This Support?**

Research on student success and all of our experiences as teachers support one of our core beliefs: as students and learners, we don’t believe that you’re missing much of anything. Maybe you don’t do well on tests, maybe you registered late, maybe English and/or math classes didn’t engage you, maybe, maybe, maybe. There are many reasons why college placement tests keep students out of their first classes in rhetoric and composition and math. The fact is that learning is hard, and we can’t explain every situation where it does or doesn’t happen. We don’t have direct access to the brain yet, but we do know about some important patterns. All the support we’ve built into Jumpstart is what any successful college student would collect over time. The difference with Jumpstart is that we want your access to be now. While we’re at it, we want to give you an immersive college experience that will challenge you to develop your learning strategies and challenge us as teachers to be more responsive to your needs as they emerge. Life doesn’t take a time out for us to catch up, so we have to learn to respond quickly, we have to build stamina for the work college requires, and we have to know the right person to ask when we are faced with challenging questions.
Whenever learning is happening, there are questions. We may be confused and asking simple questions like *What?* on day one. But by the end of Jumpstart, the goal is to be more aware of our learning processes and to be asking *What are we going to do next?*

From this point forward, then, the Jumpstart team wants you to think of yourself as a reader, a researcher, and a writer. They may not be identities you are comfortable with, but the truth is that you’ve made it through a lot of classes and a lot of life already. Those years made you communicate, theorize about, and read a lot of information. So it’s time to own those processes and see what more we can do with them moving forward to this fall at UTRGV. Every one of us will have something important to contribute to our discussions, and we are looking forward to talking with you, helping you, and learning from you. It is important to all of us at Jumpstart that you feel comfortable sharing your ideas, even when they’re different from others in the class (yes, even your teacher’s ideas).

Because our specific experiences with writing and teaching writing, we know that you can learn a great deal from reading and responding to each others’ work. The networks you form will be an integral component of the class. You will often work in groups, reading each other’s writing and commenting on it, sharing ideas about readings, and explaining how you pursue questions. This work is designed to give each of you an opportunity to get a fresh pair of eyes, to get feedback and response from others who may not see the same things you do or respond to the words in the ways that you had expected. We know you’ll take this work seriously and give your peers attention and respect. Everyone benefits from constructive feedback and from talking through their ideas, so this will hopefully be a part of the course that you will come to appreciate and even enjoy.

This course isn’t designed to make you a perfect college student in five weeks. It is designed to help you become more reflective and thoughtful about your reading, research, and writing, about why you do these things, and about how you can do them differently depending on the learning situation. What we hope to do in Jumpstart, and in the Writing Program at UTRGV that you will join in the fall, is to give you some strategies for dealing with reading, research, and writing. We also want to give you some opportunities to experiment with those strategies and to take some risks in an environment that is encouraging, constructively critical, and ultimately helpful. Hopefully, you’ll end up finding that this work in communication can be a way of understanding yourselves and others, of sharing ideas in meaningful ways that can have tangible effects on your lives both as an individual and as a part of pre-existing and emerging networks that will support you in the future.

**Netiquette**

Netiquette is internet etiquette, or a set of expectations that describe appropriate behaviors when interacting online. It is important to understand that you will be held to the exact same standards of students taking a face-to-face course. In fact, for 100% online courses, your online classroom behavior may be the only interaction you have with your faculty and classmates, therefore making your netiquette even more important. Remember, you only get to make a first impression once, irrespective of the course delivery method.

**Be courteous.**

You only get one chance for an online first impression. Make it count. Do not say or do anything in an online classroom that you would not do in a face-to-face classroom. This includes not “YELLING” (typing in all caps), not “flaming” (attacking someone, such as insults and name-calling), and/or not dominating the discussion.

**Be a good classmate.**
Remember your own role as a student. Follow your instructor’s directions at all times. Be authentic and collaborative with fellow students. Be aware of cyberbullying and make every attempt to eliminate it. Appreciate the diversity and different communication styles of your peers. Remember, since this class is online, you may have classmates from all over the world.

**Be professional.**

Proofread your own writing for spelling, grammar, and punctuation to prevent miscommunication. Avoid slang, sarcasm, or emotionally-charged writing, as tone can be difficult to translate online. Profanity and offensive language will not be tolerated. Do not use abbreviations (2mor0, 2T, B@U) or emoticons in your online class unless your professor approves and supports such writing styles.