Comprehensive Program Review Report

Program Review - Writing Center

Program Summary

2021-2022

Prepared by: Erin Alvarez, Writing Center Coordinator, Josh Geist, Writing Center Faculty

What are the strengths of your area?: At its core, the purpose of the Writing Center is first and foremost to help writers. As our Purpose Statement indicates, the goal of our work is "to create empowered, confident writers who feel confident navigating diverse writing tasks." The Writing Center at College of the Sequoias has been serving student writers since 2008, and our commitment and service to those students remains our greatest strength.

1.1 Writing Center Impact on Student Performance

In AY 2020-21, the Writing Center continues to successfully support students across campus, and to be a strong indicator of success in English classes. For technical reasons, our institutional data is unavailable. In its place we provide qualitative and quantitative data from our scheduling system, MyWC Online, which although not conclusive, supports the continued need for peer writing tutors as imperative to student success as evidenced through student comments:

"Everything was well. Will be using the writing services again. Again thank you."

"Getting someone else perspective and opinion helped look into a deeper portion of the topic. Adding a few things here helped fill the gaps and questions I had. Thank You."

"He was very helpful and gave great insight to the direction my paper should go."

"Her comments made me feel like I was on the right path."

"I love you."

"Thank you so much Ms. Ariana, I appreciate your help for supporting me. Thank you!"

"It was a great session where I learned the correct ways to format using MLA style."

"My tutor was very helpful and knowledgeable. She was prepared and had my essay highlighted on main points that needed improvement. She gave great suggestions on how to rework certain parts of my essay as well."

"Oh my goodness!!! It was the session I didn't know I needed! My only regret is not reaching out sooner. Erin is brilliant and really understood my needs and was way more helpful than I could have imagined."

"Stacy was very resourceful and helpful. Good job."

"Josh was very helpful. Now I know the next step to take to polish my essay."

"This was my first time using cos writing center tutor and it was a great success."

1.2.   Availability

The Writing Center is currently open 56 hours per week in Visalia, and 24 hours per week in both Hanford and Tulare. However, since the implementation of shelter-in-place orders by the governor of California and the California Community College Chancellor's Office due to COVID-19 in March of 2020, our face-to-face consultation process has been converted to an online practice, therefore, combining the three campuses into one online location. Forunately, because the Writing Center already offered online consultations, and all tutors were trained in the online consultation process, the transition was smooth with little to no complications. During the summer of 2021, we offered Writing Center tutoring online during summer school, with a total of 32 available hours per week and plan to staff all District locations close to pre-pandemic hours, available staff and tutors.

1.3.   Usage

In AY 2020-21, the Writing Center has seen a significant decrease in both students served and individual appointments over AY 2019-20, which can be attributed to COVID-19. This year, we served 658 unique students (down from 1,695) for a total of 1,262 appointments (down from 3,481). Our outside-of-English usage has increased slightly, which we believe can be attributed to the lack of face to face instruction and the need for tutorial help; 30% of our appointments addressed a course outside of the English department, compared to 25% the year before. In 2021, we saw similar summer usage numbers throughout the District, where we worked with 87 students for a total of 135 sessions, as compared to 71 students and 140 sessions in summer of 2020. [positive attendance records]. When comparing the month of September 2020 (170 appointments and 117 unique users) and September 2021 (152 appointments and 102 unique users), despite the return to campus at a 50% rate, we see a slight decrease in attendance.

1.4   Student Satisfaction

Overall, student satisfaction with our services has remained high. The Motherlode Survey indicates an overall satisfaction rate of 97% with our services. Students continue to highlight the value of working with Writing Center tutors in their written comments. In many student comments this year, students identified the specific tutor that they had worked with and celebrated the tutor's helpfulness, expressing the intent to work with that tutor again in the future. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this is the wide range of tutors singled out in this way when transitioning to remote tutorial services.

"Ariana was extremely helpful. She answered all of my questions and gave me some goals to work on for my paper. I liked how she had us just read one paragraph at a time and then talk about it."

"Chastity really did a great job walking me through my questions and helped me develop a plan of action. She was very patient with me as I am very bad with technology. She went above and beyond and helped calm my anxieties about my assignment."

"Erika gave me some great feedback and even a new website to help in the area of my concern!"
"Joe was genuinely so helpful and I feel so much confident with the rest of the semester he helped me out with my philosophy assignment I look forward to getting more tutoring with him!!."

"Jonathan was very helpful and patient; I got good support from him."

"Karina is a person who helps you a lot, I really felt very comfortable and very happy with her, she is a very friendly person and the writing center helps you a lot."

"Mallory was extremely helpful in the session, and all of my major questions were answered. She went above and beyond trying to help figure out the best plan of action."

"Megan was incredibly helpful, kind, and overall an excellent tutor. She gave me wonderful advice and took the time to listen to my concerns. I really appreciate all of her help and she made this a great tutoring experience!."

"Mike was great he gave me good advice on writing my paper I finished the session feeling a lot more confident he referred me to joe since his major is philosophy! I look forward to working with mike for my communications questions!."

"Rory did a great job in addressing my concerns on my drafted paper. The feedback I received was helpful."

1.5   Embedded Tutoring

In the last year, the Writing Center has expanded its unofficial role in Embedded Tutoring in English. As of Spring 2020, of the eight embedded tutors in English classes, six are also serving as Writing Center tutors and receiving ongoing tutor training in English 123-126, in addition to Tutorial Services tutor trainings. The Writing Center continues to connect instructors who need Embedded Tutors with tutors whose schedules and abilities fit their needs.

1.6. Staff and Tutors

Throughout AY 2020-2021, despite remote learning and online tutoring, the Writing Center staff in conjunction with Tutorial Services created and implemented training materials related to best practices in tutoring. In addition, Tutorial Services is starting the process of certifying our tutors through the College Reading & Learning Association to provide a foundation of best practices encompassing basic tutoring guidelines, dealing with difficult students, ethics in online training, campus resource referral skills, modeling tutor habits, and active listening, as well as guest speakers from various campus programs. When these trainings were held face to face, this allowed the four tutorial areas to meet and share skills, and/or information about their specific areas, which in turn provided all tutors with a comprehensive understanding of Tutorial Services.

What improvements are needed?: 2.1.Embedded Tutoring, Staffing, and Increased Demand

As AB 705 has become law, and as accelerated classes become the norm at COS rather than the exception, a demand for Embedded Tutoring has increased substantially. The future of the ET program is currently uncertain (see 3.2 below). Beyond that, because the new English course sequence is highly dependent on hazy placement predictions, the demand for ET tutors in English moving forward is also difficult to predict. If ET continues, and continues to grow, we will need to bolster both recruitment and training for Writing Center tutors. In order to meet the needs of English 1/301 instructors and the limited availability of the Writing Center tutors during daytime hours, it is imperative to recruit embedded tutors outside of the Writing Center tutor pool. In addition, it would be advisable to expand the embedded tutor offerings to not only English 1/301, but to English 1 without support as well, with the hope of expanding this service to all English classes and any other major that has a significant writing component (political science, communications, ethnic studies, nutrition, etc.). This expansion of services would provide our students with continued support, despite not enrolling in or having access to a designated support class.

2.1.1 Availability and Recruitment

As the majority of our English classes are scheduled during the day, and as our ET tutors are also predominantly Writing Center tutors, this has meant that even as our tutoring staff has expanded, tutor availability during some of our busiest hours has contracted significantly. Moreover, the workload from their ET classes means some tutors who would otherwise have worked more hours for the Writing Center are working fewer due to their busy schedules. Thus, if ET continues to grow, the Writing Center will need to expand its pool of available tutors, requiring increased recruitment.

2.2.   Leadership and Staff Stability
2.2.1. Writing Center Leadership

The Writing Center's internal leadership structure remains unchanged over the last six years. While the coordinator and site staff are permanent, classified positions, the instructor of the Writing Center's training course sequence (English 123, 124, 125, and 126) is determined by seniority at a semester course selection meeting. Traditionally, the instructor of the course has also held the position of faculty coordinator and received an eight-hour-per-week overload (on a timesheet), but the faculty coordinator is assigned by the District outside of course selection.

This year, it has become clear that the eight-hour overload for the faculty director does not exist as a line item within the Writing Center budget. In effect, key instructional and academic work--including interviews, assessment, tutor orientation, academic representation on issues affecting Curriculum of the Senate--are being performed by a faculty member with no formal warrant, or do so. Even where the eight-hour overload stipend formally established, the change in the Academic Services Org Chart has meant that it is even somewhat ambiguous which administrator is responsible for assigning that position. It is therefore entirely possible for the Writing Center to have three "leaders": the classified, full-time coordinator; the instructor of the training course; and the director on an overload. The latter two positions could change as frequently as each semester.

In addition, the job of directing the Writing Center is large and continues to grow, outside the COVID-19 limitations. In the years

previous to AY 2020-21, we've increased our student tutor staff from 12 tutors to 22, and it is likely that we will increase the size of our tutor staff again to cover the increased hours as outlined above when students return to campus full-time. In the fall of 2015, the Writing Center had 904 appointments with 489 students; in the spring of 2019, we had 1905 appointments with 891 students. While an overload assignment for a full-time instructor may have been sufficient at one time, it no longer meets the needs of the Writing Center.

2.3.2.   Classified Staff and Reporting Structure

In 2015, the decision was made to create a classified Writing Center Coordinator position, and to re-implement the incorrectly categorized Professional Expert positions as Instructional Specialists for Hanford and Tulare. No Writing Center personnel are represented anywhere in the reporting structure for those positions. As a result, decisions about Writing Center classified personnel have always been untethered from Writing Center pedagogy, practice, data, assessment, and expertise. In the Writing Center, we collect considerable data about student usage, including direct student satisfaction surveys and responses. While we recognize that faculty and classified staff are not managers, and that classified staff are not usually instructional in nature, the Writing Center is one case in which our classified staff have academic roles and responsibilities, and whose work is intrinsically linked to the pedagogy and practice of the Writing Center. As such, we hope that changes can be implemented to the Writing Center reporting structure such that data and expertise concerning staff members' work in the Writing Center have an important role in personnel decisions moving forward.

Describe any external opportunities or challenges.: 3.1. COVID-19 and the Transition to Distance Learning

Despite the ease with which the Writing Center was able to transition to online consultations in Spring 2020, it should be noted that the transition was not as seamless for the COS students who used our face to face services in the District However, we did notice a slight increase in usage from March 2021 to July 2021 (586 appointments, 321 unique users) as compared to March 2020 through July 2020 (311 appointments, 165 unique users (see ##1.3). However, the glaring inequity that came to light during the months following March 2020 were the students who lack access to technology and the ability to use said technology.

We realize that as a program we are not responsible for monitoring equity in terms of technological access, but we are responsible for providing evidence that this inequity exists. Although we cannot offer qualitative evidence from students on their specific experiences with technology, we can provide quantitative data, or the lack thereof, suggesting that this inequity hinders our student's ability to access the services they pay for through tuition dollars.

In an effort to mitigate this inequity, we have removed any restriction to appointment setting, removed the hold on the number of missed appointments that disable the student from making their own appointments in our scheduling system, integrated the Zoom meeting platform into our appointment system to remain consistent with campus-wide tutorial use (Math Lab, Language Center, and General Tutorial all use Zoom for appointments), and have remained student-centered in our practices by training our tutors in providing appropriate referrals to community and campus resources.

Overall SAO Achievement:
Changes Based on SAO Achievement:
Outcome cycle evaluation:
Overall SLO Achievement:
Changes Based on SLO Achievement:

Action: 2021-2022 Increase attendance at all sites

Increase use of writing center services at Hanford, Tulare, Visalia and online through increased visibility on campus, including marketing and outreach.

Leave Blank:
Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022
Leave Blank:
Leave Blank:
Identify related course/program outcomes: District Objective 3.1 Reduce equity gaps in course success rates across all departments by 40% from 2021-2025
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Erin Alvarez, Writing Center Coordinator, Angela Sanchez, Dean, Educational Support Services
Rationale (With supporting data): Students who use writing center services see more success in their courses. By increasing

attendance and use of the writing center services, more students will be more successful in their classes.

Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Action: 2019 - Explore opportunities for faculty involvement in Writing Center

The Writing Center will seek out new ways to involve faculty across campus.

Leave Blank:
Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022
Leave Blank:
Leave Blank:
Identify related course/program outcomes:
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Erin Alvarez, Writing Center Coordinator; Josh Geist, Writing Center Faculty Director

Rationale (With supporting data): The Writing Center has a long history of involving faculty in various capacities. Since the reorganization of Academic Services in 2018, faculty involvement has significantly decreased for a number of reasons. In addition to the reformation of the Writing Center Steering Committee, we wish to explore mechanisms for more equitable faculty opportunities in the Writing Center. Ideally, this would include funding faculty in a manner equitable to and commensurate with the Math Lab, which would mean eliminating the faculty budget line item from the Writing Center budget, shifting to paying faculty for hourly work from the overload budget (as it is in the Math Lab, and as it was in the Writing Center in years past).

In addition, we would like to explore opportunities to reach out and involve other stakeholders across campus in Writing Center decisionmaking.

Priority: Low
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021
District Objective 4.2 - Improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening operations of and communication between District departments, divisions, and constituents

Action: 2016-19 - Streamline Writing Center Leadership

The Writing Center will reduce redundancy, create leadership stability, and increase efficiency by revising its leadership structure.

Leave Blank: Essential for Operation
Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022
Leave Blank: 08/01/2018
Leave Blank:
Identify related course/program outcomes: District Objectives 2.3, 4.2
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Josh Geist, Writing Center Director
Rationale (With supporting data): 1. While a request for a split-time faculty coordinator was made as part of our 2015-2016 Program Review, it was not funded. A request for a position under the Learning Assistance designation was made as a part of our 2016-2017 Program Review, but in Instructional Council we were asked to begin the process in Curriculum. The Learning Assistance designation was approved by the Curriculum Committee on Wednesday, October 3, 2018.

2. Faculty leadership is common and desirable in writing centers around the world. The International Writing Centers Association's "Position Statement on Two-Year College Writing Centers" notes that while "writing center administrators should be tenure-stream or continuing contract salaried employees, depending on local context," the Association prefers that "they

have faculty status with a minimum of 50% release from their teaching responsibilities per semester to oversee the writing center." Many of our local Writing Centers, including Fresno City College and Fresno State, are helmed by faculty coordinators.

3. Our institution includes two similar positions that might be considered precedent positions for this assignment: Distance Education Coordinator and Curriculum Coordinator. A job description for a Writing Center Coordinator might be modeled on those positions.

4. As a program, the Writing Center is significant. It includes five individual courses, one certificate program, and is considered a unit for program review. Given that each of these entities requires qualified assessment, faculty leadership is appropriate.

5. As we've grown to serve more students and locations, our current faculty director's responsibilities and load have grown beyond what can reasonably be accomplished on top of a full-time faculty teaching schedule.

6. Our current full-time classified coordinator position is funded through Student Success and not permanently; the Writing Center's leadership needs to be institutionalized.

7. A faculty coordinatorship that replaces the current faculty director and classified coordinator is less expensive than existing structures and contributes to the FON.

Please see "Rationale--Writing Center" in the document repository.
Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Resources Description

Faculty- New/Replacement - Learning Assistance - Writing Center Faculty Coordinator (Active)
Why is this resource required for this action?: 1. External Factors

1.1. Professional Organization Support. The International Writing Centers Association's Position Statement on Two-Year College Writing Centers states that "writing center administrators should be tenure-stream or continuing contract salaried employees, depending on local context. It is preferable that they have faculty status with a minimum of 50% release from their teaching responsibilities per semester to oversee the writing center."

1.2. Title 5 Supported Structures. According to Title 5, to collect apportionment for tutoring, a learning center must be supervised by a person with "the minimum qualifications to teach any master's level discipline in which learning assistance or tutoring is provided" (§58170b, §53415). To support this, the Chancellor's Office has an approved faculty discipline/area named "Learning Assistance or Learning Skills Coordinators or Instructors, and Tutoring Coordinators." Faculty in this area must have a master's degree in compliance with Title 5 §53415 as noted above.

1.3. Categorical Funding. At present, the full-time classified Writing Center Coordinator is funded out of Student Equity. If those funds are reallocated, the Writing Center will cease to function.

1.4. AB 705. With the signing of AB 705, COS is moving toward a co-requisite model for English 1. We anticipate an increased demand for Augmented Instruction tutors, who will require training and support.

2. Internal Factors

2.1. Assessment Responsibilities. As a PR unit, the Writing Center is responsible for managing the assessment of its Service Area Outcomes, but also of an academic program (the Writing Center Consultancy Certificate), and five academic courses (Engl 123-126 and 400).

2.2. Course Selection. Writing Center tutor training is currently handled in Engl 123-126, which are subject to course selection within the English department. This makes consistency in Writing Center pedagogy and practice difficult to build.

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2.3. Faculty Overload. Any faculty serving as Writing Center Director takes on those responsibilities in addition to an already full instructional load. On-the-job observation and support of tutors, assessment work, program development, and other such responsibilities should be part of a faculty member's workload. Moreover, the current support is in the form of unfunded hourly work. No special line item for the Writing Center Faculty Director exists, so even the funding hourly work is tenuous at best.

2.4. Division of Responsibilities. At present, responsibility and authority over Writing Center policy, practice, and pedagogy rest in three different positions: Writing Center Coordinator (a FT classified position), Writing Center Director (an hourly faculty position assigned by admin), and instructor for 123-126. There is no guarantee these three people will share a vision for the Writing Center.

2.5 Program Review. As is obvious from the existence of this document, the Writing Center is its own Program Review Unit. No faculty are formally attached to that unit, nor are there any faculty in Educational Support Services outside of the library. This Program Review is being prepared by a classified staff member working out of class and a faculty member from another Division working as a volunteer. As we have said in the Writing Center for some long while now, this needs to be part of a faculty member's load.

For more information, please see "Rationale - Writing Center Faculty Director" in the document repository.
Notes (optional):
Cost of Request (Nothing will be funded over the amount listed.): 100000
Related Documents:
Comprehensive Assessment Cycle.pdf
Rationale - Writing Center Faculty Coordinator.pdf

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021
District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years
District Objective 2.3 - By 2021, increase the percentage of students who complete transfer-level English by 15 percentage points and transfer-level math by 10 percentage point with their first year.
District Objective 3.2 - By 2021, increase the percentage of students in targeted groups who complete transfer-level English (by 10 percentage points) and transfer-level math (by 5 percentage points) within their first year

District Objectives: 2015-2018
District Objectives - 2.3 - Increase course success and completion rates in pre-transfer English, Math, and English as a Second Language courses annually.
District Objectives - 4.2 -Improve the efficiency, effectiveness and communication of human, physical, technological, and financial resources to advance the District Mission.