

# Comprehensive Program Review Report



## Program Review - Writing Center

### Program Summary

#### 2020-2021

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

**What are the strengths of your area?:** 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 2019-20, 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, MyWOnline, which although not conclusive, supports the continued need for peer writing tutors as imperative to student success as evidenced through student comments:

"Amazing tutor, helped me while still challenging me will come back for every paper."

"Building up my ideas really helped me. I have a better understanding of what I'm writing about."

"First time doing an appointment and I really enjoyed it. It was really helpful and they gave me good suggestion on what to focus on to write a better paper."

"I couldn't have done it without her."

"I should've went to the writing center from the start!"

"overall, the session was great and super helpful in helping with my design project."

"Thank you for having this space for students and staff."

"The writing center is a lot less scary now."

"This session was helpful even though it was online. I thought it was going to be less helpful because of it."

"Thank you! I will recommend the writing center to other students. It was really helpful!" (attach pdf)

##### 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.

Fortunately, 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 2020, we offered Writing Center tutoring online during summer school, with a total of 32 available hours per week.

### 1.3. Usage

In AY 2019-20, the Writing Center has seen a decrease in both students served and individual appointments over AY 2018-19, which can be attributed to COVID-19. This year, we served 1,659 unique students (down from 1,985) for a total of 3,481 appointments (down from 4,830). Our outside-of-English usage has decreased slightly, which we believe can also be attributed to the lack of face to face tutoring; 25% of our appointments addressed a course outside of the English department, compared to 28% the year before. In 2020, we saw a significant decrease in summer usage numbers throughout the District, where we worked with 71 students for a total of 140 sessions, as compared to 125 students and 241 sessions in summer of 2019.

### 1.4 Student Satisfaction

Overall, student satisfaction with our services has remained high. The Motherlode Survey indicates an overall satisfaction rate of 96% with our services. [citation] 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[citation]:

"Arwen was really nice, and they were very patient when I had technology problems."

"Thank you C.O.S.!! Bethany was very nice and helpful!! You guys have a really nice staff and so far, all my experiences have been really good. The staff is all so helpful!!

"Chastity was extremely helpful and answered all my questions, she also prepared me for further assignments."

"DEE is exceptionally gifted with tutoring."

"Joe held one of the best tutoring session I have attended at COS. He was kind, professional, and took care of all my problems I was having for my logics class."

"Jonathan was super helpful and has helped me to achieve one of my goals for college."

"Mallory was great! She had great suggestions! I can't wait to work with her again."

"Mike was very helpful and I will definitely be utilizing the writing center for my next paper."

"Sonoma is a fantastic tutor. I think she's taught me more than my teacher."

See document "Motherlode Survey 2020 - LRC Services.pdf" in Repository UPLOAD PDF QUALITATIVE DATA FROM MYWC and MOTHERLODE SURVEY

### 1.5 Augmented Instruction

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

### 1.6. Staff and Tutors

Throughout AY 2019-2020, 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 as a whole.

## **What improvements are needed?:** What improvements are needed?:

### **2.1. Augmented Instruction, 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 Augmented Instruction tutors has increased substantially. The future of the AI 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 AI tutors in English moving forward is also difficult to predict. If AI 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. This expansion of services would provide our students with continued support despite not enrolling in 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 AI tutors are also 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 AI classes means some tutors who would otherwise have worked more hours, or the Writing Center are working fewer due to their busy schedules. Thus, if AI continues to grow, the Writing Center will need to expand its pool of available tutors, requiring increased recruitment.

### **2.2. Base Budget Augmentation for Hourly Increases**

One of the biggest takeaways from the Student Support Services Satisfaction Survey 2018 for the Writing Center was an increased demand from students for hours outside of our existing schedule. Because of our shared spaces, it is possible for us to add more hours in the evenings in Visalia and Tulare, but we cannot do so with our current budget without sacrificing hours during our established busy times. Because of the above availability limitations, we have been able to pilot evening hours in 2018, but this represents a fluke of budgeting, rather than a systematically supported effort. Initial data suggests that evening availability does serve some students. As a part of our plan to parallel Writing Center availability to LRC open hours, budgetary support for evening tutoring hours is required to sustain this practice.

### **2.3. Leadership and Staff Stability**

#### **2.3.1. Writing Center Leadership**

The Writing Center's internal leadership structure remains unchanged over the last two 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 semesterly course selection meeting. Traditionally, the instructor of the course has also held the position of faculty director and received an eight-hour-per-week overload (on a timesheet), but the directorship 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 warrantor 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. In the past two years, 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. 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.:** 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. We noticed a significant decrease in usage from March 2020 to July 2020 as compared to March 2019 through July 2019 (see ##1.3), as what might be expected in a global pandemic. 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: 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:** 2019 - 2020

**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

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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

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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.

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
<b>District Objective 2.2</b> - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years
<b>District Objective 2.3</b> - 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.
<b>District Objective 3.2</b> - 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
<b>District Objectives</b> - 2.3 - Increase course success and completion rates in pre-transfer English, Math, and English as a Second Language courses annually.
<b>District Objectives</b> - 4.2 -Improve the efficiency, effectiveness and communication of human, physical, technological, and financial resources to advance the District Mission.

## 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:**

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**Implementation Timeline:** 2019 - 2020

**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
<b>District Objective 4.2</b> - Improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening operations of and communication between District departments, divisions, and constituents