I. Mission

The Jesuit tradition of “cura personalis” recognizes the value of individualized attention to the needs of others. USF’s Writing Center is a place where we nurture each student’s unique gifts and insights for the purpose of helping them develop their writing skills. We meet them not just in the physical space of the Writing Center, but we “meet” them in the psychological space of their own individual circumstances and learning styles. We seek to create a safe learning environment, outside of the regular classroom, to engage students as writers, to help students understand their ideas, and to better articulate those ideas to their audience. Through dialog, we encourage students to reflect on their personal writing process and make better-informed writer’s choices. Writing is a necessary skill both in and out of the academic community. In order to effect change and “succeed as persons and professionals,” students will use writing both as a method of communication and as a method of thinking. The mission of the Writing Center is to provide undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to increase and improve their academic writing skills through one-on-one conferences with consultants who are trained to help them cultivate effective writing, reading, critical thinking, and learning practices.

II. USF Writing Center History

USF’s Writing Center was co-created with USF’s Learning Center in 1993. Together we comprise the Learning and Writing Center. Although we work closely together, we are actually two separate centers run out of two separate departments. The Learning Center is housed under Academic Support Services and is run by Kim Rutledge as director and Kim Harris as assistant director. The Learning Center supplies student-tutors for a variety of subjects at the university and also supports external programs in the San Francisco community, such as America Reads, Families and Youth in Transition, and Project Success. The Writing Center is housed under Arts and Sciences and employs between 20 and 24 faculty “consultants” and one full-time faculty member as director. The Learning Center trains and employs students to run our front desk and take appointments for both centers.

History

The University of San Francisco Writing Center was started in 1993 by Expository Writing Director Melinda Knight and Dean Stanley Nell. Dr. Knight and Dean Nell chose our model for the Writing Center, which employs adjunct faculty writing consultants instead of student peer-tutors. They decided on this model for a couple of reasons: 1. Adjunct faculty would constitute a more stable staff as they would not graduate in four years. 2. As writing teachers, faculty would already be experienced consultants. Thus, training would involve more of an “orientation” rather than extensive training required for student tutors. Our orientations for consultants involve explaining intake protocols and expectations for consultants, introducing them to the front desk staff, informing them of our resources, both on-line and on our shelves, and having a general discussion about our purpose at the university. Mostly, adjunct faculty must learn to take off their “instructor hat” and put on their “consultant hat.” We are not in the Writing Center to tell students what to write or to correct their errors. Instead we function as consultants: educated readers who engage in productive dialog with students about their writing. 3. Students writing at the graduate level require more experienced writing consultants. We see many students from Doctoral and Masters programs in Education and Nursing. Several of our consultants who have experience writing in the social sciences can help these students navigate APA format style as well as understand the organization of a dissertation or thesis, something an undergraduate tutor would not be able to do.

In the early years of the Center, the faculty consultants collaborated to design the manual, articulate our philosophy, establish guidelines for tutoring sessions, and outline protocols for working with the Learning Center. (See Writing Center Manual, attached separately) We researched articles on writing center pedagogy and held weekly meetings where we discussed various aspects of writing center work. We based our model for our philosophy on the currently accepted model of writing center work from Muriel Harris in her 1988 NCTE article:
Writing centers exist in a variety of shapes, sizes, and settings. Typically they are part of a writing program or learning center and serve the entire school, both at the secondary and college levels. Although writing centers may differ in size, specific services, source of staffing, and organizational procedures, they share the following approaches: tutorials are offered in a one-on-one setting; tutors are coaches and collaborators, not teachers; each student’s individual needs are the focus of the tutorial, experimentation and practice are encouraged; writers work on writing from a variety of courses; and writing centers are available for students at all levels of proficiency.

http://writingcenters.org/resources/starting-a-writing-cente/writing-center-concept/

Our Writing Center was established to help USF students negotiate the complexities of thinking and writing. We have labored over the years to present ourselves as much more than simply a remediation or editing center. Our philosophy statement can be found on our website: https://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center/philosophy

Since those early days when the Writing Center started, the original philosophy of our Writing Center services has essentially remained the same, to help students become better writers, but our services have expanded to include a much broader variety of students. We have hired and trained consultants from different fields in order to meet those needs. Our Center was first conceived to assist undergraduate native speakers of English write papers for their courses in the college of Arts and Sciences. It has now expanded its services to include graduate, undergraduate, and international students from all the colleges and schools: Arts and Sciences, Business, Nursing, and Education. We have added Writing Center services in Gleeson library and at four branch campuses -- San Jose, Santa Rosa, Sacramento, and Pleasanton. We also offer telephone conferences for off-campus students. An early data sheet shows a total of 202 conferences for Fall Semester, 1995. We now hold between 1500 and 2000 conferences per semester, serving between 450 and 900 students per semester. (See Data Trends in Appendix I WC Stats.)

History of Staffing
Melinda Knight directed the Writing Center from the time we opened in 1993 until she left the university in 1999. Twelve adjuncts were hired to work 9 hours per week and were paid the equivalent of one 3-unit class. Anne Barrows took over the direction of the Center in 1999. At that time, a “head preceptor” position was created in order assume the day-to-day responsibilities of running the Center, to schedule shifts, chair our Writing Center meetings, and oversee the running of the Center. Also, in 1999, a full-time position as director of the Writing Center and term-faculty was created, with one course release for running the Center.

The director's responsibilities include the following:

- Hire and supervise consultants. The director observes sessions and discusses the interaction with the consultant. (See Appendix II for observation form.) We sometimes have email discussions of Writing Center issues during the semester when consultants don’t have time to get together for a face-to-face meeting. We also have a Survey Monkey survey (now it’s Qualtrics) and other assessment tools. (See Sections III and V.)
- Schedule consultants for each semester and for finals week, which is a separate schedule.
- Tally hours for the semester and send PAF forms to payroll.
- Schedule substitutes when consultants are out and keep track of all extra hours and hours to be made up.
- Maintain Writing Center website for students http://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center and Canvas site for https://usfca.instructure.com/courses/1140450
- Order supplies and resources when needed.
- Promote the Writing Center. This part includes participating in orientation fairs and activities, conducting information sessions for students and faculty, designing and posting flyers, conducting writing workshops, and answering questions from students and faculty.
- Communicate with students, faculty, and staff about any issues concerning the center.
- Oversee Writing Center for Credit, a one-unit course for using the Writing Center. Meet each student and distribute logs, syllabi and explain the requirements of the course. Turn in grades at the end of the semester. Answer questions as needed. Collect qualitative data from students who finish the course. (See Appendix III WCFC syllabus and Appendix IV WCFC letters.)
- Help Set Writing Center policy: For example set guidelines and protocols for conferences, telephone conferences, consultants in the library, and Writing Center for Credit students.
- Oversee branch campus liaison.

Changes in Staffing
In order to meet the more diverse needs of our students, we now employ between 20-24 Writing Center consultants each semester with expertise in writing across the curriculum. Originally all our consultants were recruited from the Expository Writing Adjuncts. Although our consultants vary somewhat from semester to semester, we now hire consultants with expertise in teaching English as a Second Language, Sociology, Public Speaking, Law, Education, History, and English, in addition to Rhetoric (See Appendix V Consultant Specializations.) Last year, we added another position, branch campus liaison, to hire and oversee the consultants at the branch campuses.

Additions to Writing Center Services
Distance Conferencing
As part of our philosophy, our Writing Center conferences are collaborations between the writer and the consultant, so therefore, we have decided against asynchronous conferencing. However, in order to accommodate those students who cannot come in for a conference, we offer real-time telephone conferences. We tried using other face-to-face conference formats such as Skype and Big Blue Button, but we found them unnecessarily complicated and unpredictable. Ultimately, we need to see the paper more than we need to see the student. For distance conferences, students make an appointment, email their papers to the front desk, and call in at their appointed time. Students can also upload papers to Google Docs for their phone appointments, which is good for content feedback but not very good for format feedback. However, for content feedback, both the consultant and the student can see changes made to the paper in real time.

Writing Center for Credit
Writing Center for Credit awards one non-graded credit to those students to use the Writing Center on a regular basis. (See Appendix III for Syllabus.) Although correlation does not prove causation, a 10-year study of mean scores from students who completed the course showed a .54 grade improvement over mean scores of students who did not complete the course and a .25 improvement in mean scores over the general incoming freshmen population for their writing classes (See Appendix VI for WCFC study published in Sound Instruction: Writing Center Theory and Practice.) The data give us some quantitative information about student success, but their letters of self-evaluation provide qualitative data as well. (See Appendix IV, WCFC letters.) Below is a description of the course given to students.

The Writing Center at USF is open to all students for twenty-five-minute appointments to work one-on-one with a writing consultant. Each Writing Center session is designed to focus on one or two writing issues, which students should implement into their writing and then return with a revised draft for more feedback. Because our research has shown that student writing improves when students use the Writing Center on a regular basis, Writing Center for Credit offers one unit, non-graded, elective credit for working with a Writing Center consultant two times per week over the course of the semester. Students bring in work they are writing for other classes and keep a log of their appointments. At the end of the semester, students submit logs and a letter of self-evaluation for credit. Students find that they become more motivated to work on their writing and begin projects sooner if they know they are going to get credit. Also, students often feel comfortable developing a working relationship with one or more Writing Center consultants over the course of the semester.
If students do not have enough appointments to get credit, a no-fault grade of no credit (N/C) is given. Both credit and no-credit grades have no effect on students’ GPA. The times and days of the appointments are up to the student. We are open 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Thursday and until 5:00 PM on Friday. The Writing Center is located in 215 Cowell. We also have drop-in hours in the library from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM Monday through Thursday. Our appointment number is 422-6713. Please email Leslie Dennen (dennenl@usfca.edu) if you have any other questions regarding the Writing Center or Writing Center for Credit.

APA Workshops
We have offered a series of APA workshops in the past because Education students and Nursing students often need help in writing and formatting citations APA style. They weren’t that well attended, though. I think low attendance might be caused by the difficulty in finding a time when everyone can come. I also think that learning about something like APA in the abstract doesn’t hold much meaning until one needs to implement that knowledge into one’s own writing. In a workshop or class, students can become familiar with the manual and at least know how to look up information in the future when they need it, but I found, both from my own experience in learning APA and from working with students, hypothetical exercises from other people’s work has limited transferability to the students’ own work. Our website has two short videos explaining some in-text citation rules for both MLA and APA that students may find useful.

Writing Workshops for classes
The Writing Center offers writing workshops for individual classes on request. We are asked to give one or two workshops per semester. If these workshops are run by consultants, they are paid for their time. The director does not receive extra pay for providing workshops. We give writing workshops for Student Success classes and ESL Student Success classes every semester. Other classes ask us on a case-by-case basis to have a writing consultant come and discuss some aspect of writing, such as APA formatting, research tools, and other writing strategies. These class visits also provide an opportunity to promote the Center. Some classes we have visited include: a session on coming up with topic ideas for Jacqueline Francis’ Freshman Seminar “Seeing Multicultural San Francisco: The World in a Cup,” an introduction to writing in the disciplines for the Master’s in Museum Studies program, writing workshops for Jacqueline Francis’ Art History classes, and a presentation in the library by Brittney Bouc for Academic Integrity Week: “Bad Writers Steal; Great Writers ‘Borrow’: A Guide To Using Outside Sources.” Unfortunately, since adjuncts are now limited to the total hours they can work at USF, we don’t promote our workshops as much as we used to.

Gleeson Library
Writing Center in the Library
We have a drop-in consultant in the library Monday through Thursday from 1-4. This person is available to help students with whatever writing needs they have. We can help students navigate library databases and give feedback on formatting citations and integrating sources into their writing. We can also help them with research questions and other writing concerns. The consultant in the library is a useful resource for students particularly peak periods in the semester when the appointments in 215 Cowell are booked.

Writing Center at the Branch Campuses
Last year, the Writing Center has offered 4 hours per week of Writing Center services in our branch campuses, Santa Rosa, Sacramento, San Jose, and Pleasanton. We also created a new position, Writing Center Branch Liaison, for an adjunct faculty member to oversee the consultants at those centers.
What were the main recommendations of the previous program review? How did the Unit and institutional administration respond to the earlier findings and recommendations? What changed after the last program review?

The Writing Center has not had a formal review, but in 2013, the reviewers for the Rhetoric and Language Department made a recommendation for more resources for working with ESL students.

In response to their recommendation, we have made an effort to recruit more adjunct faculty from the AEM program. I have asked Doreen Ewart, Chair of the AEM Department and Jonathan Hunt to serve on our informal Writing Center Advisory Board. I asked Doreen because she chairs the AEM Program, and I asked Jonathan because of his experience with the Stanford Writing Center and his research on feedback. At our Writing Center workshops, we have had speakers, such as Tom Merrell from Academic Support Services and Doreen Ewart from AEM come to discuss working with various types of students over the years, such as non-traditional students, students with disabilities, second-language learners, and others. We also have several resource books for working with second-language learners on our resource shelves, and information and links on our Canvas course. For our Fall 2015 Writing Center workshop, Professor Ewart, came to inform us about the latest research in working with second-language learners. She supplied us with current articles on working with second-language learners, accessible to consultants on our CANVAS course.

https://usfca.instructure.com/courses/1140450/modules

III. Administrative/Service Unit goals
List the goals that will allow the Unit to fulfill its mission. Please provide a curriculum map aligning the University Mission, Unit goals, and the services provided.

The following goals are taken from the Learning Center self-assessment report, and they apply to the Writing Center as well.

Goal 1. assist students in reaching their learning potential
Goal 2. promote awareness of University expectations and opportunities
Goal 3. nurture the development of students’ confidence as learners
Goal 4. encourage students to take ownership for their educational experiences
Goal 5. support learning needs of students at all skill levels and with all learning styles

Adapted from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Center Curriculum Map</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desired Goal</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Goal 1: Assist students in reaching their learning potential | • Revision skills  
• Editing skills  
• Organization skills  
• Development skills | Writing Center conferences are individualized to help each student. Writing Center consultants must provide feedback relevant the student needs at the time the student is able to use it. For this |
reason, our goal is to provide feedback on one or two issues at a time so that the student is able to integrate that information into the paper at each stage of the writing process. As a result of working with the Writing Center, students should improve their learning potential as developing writers. This goal is addressed by questions 3 and 4 in our WC feedback survey.

| Goal 2: Promote awareness of University expectations for academic writing | • Academic writing skills  
• Awareness of appropriate format and style for a specific audience  
• Awareness of different discipline-specific writing requirements  
• Integrating outside materials into a text appropriately  
• Using appropriate academic voice | The Writing Center helps students enter academic conversation. We help students understand how to express ideas in the appropriate academic voice, integrate outside materials into their work, and critically assess ideas and information for their papers according to the specific genre in which they are writing. As a result of using our services, students should become aware of the university expectations for writing in the academic and civic spheres. This goal is addressed by questions 3 and 4 in our feedback survey. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Goal 3: Nurture the development of students’ confidence as learners | • Revision skills  
• Self awareness of writing process  
• Engaging in productive dialog about the writing process | As students learn to engage in productive dialog, practice recursive drafting, gain feedback and implement revision, they become more confident learners in navigating the complexities of academic writing. As a result of using our services, students should become more confident writers. This goal is addressed by questions 3, 4 and 5. |
| Goal 4: Encourage students to take ownership for their educational experiences | • Understanding assignment sheets  
• Self-assessment of writing task  
• Articulation of specific writing goal for a session | When a student comes into the Writing Center, part of our intake process is to teach students how to get the most out of their Writing Center session. We want students to maintain agency over their own work. As a result of using our services, students should learn how to understand writing assignments, evaluate their writing process, and articulate their writing goals for the session. This goal is addressed by our intake questions. Please describe your assignment and What would you like to focus on today? |
| Goal 5: Support learning needs of students at all skill levels and | • Self-awareness of learning style | The Writing Center assists students at every level of writing |
varying learning styles

- Self-advocacy for assistance in pursuing a writing project
- Competency, from English language learners to Doctoral candidates. We also work with Academic Support services to help students with disabilities. As a result of using our services, students should increase their awareness of their writing process, become more knowledgeable about the choices they make as writers, and develop ways to improve as writers. This goal is addressed by questions 3, 4 and 5 on our WC feedback survey.

These goals are assessed in general by student feedback on our Writing Center survey. Empirical data for actual writing improvement is difficult to obtain. Writing grades for students who took Writing Center for Credit were correlated with writing grades for the incoming freshman class in the Writing Center for Credit study. This study may indicate improvement of student writing for those students who worked with us on a regular basis over the course of a semester. In addition, students write a letter of self-reflection about their writing process for Writing Center for Credit. These letters of self-reflection can also be considered a measure of goals 1-5. (See Appendix IV.)

**How do these goals facilitate the Unit’s overarching mission geared toward supporting student learning, development and/or academic success?**

In order to succeed at the university, students need to become critical readers, thinkers, and writers. These skills do not occur in a vacuum but rather take place over time and in dialog with others. USF’s Writing Center provides faculty consultants to first, act as educated readers. We provide feedback on students’ ideas and the delivery of those ideas, not to tell them what to do, but help them do what they want to do. Our intake questions, help the student focus on goals for the session and help us understand what the student’s project involves. We function as a second set of eyes to reflect back to the student what message is being delivered in the text. Second, we promote awareness of university expectations by providing information about how students can write in appropriate academic style and format. Students reach their learning potential when they begin to ask and answer their own questions. We encourage students to take ownership for their educational experiences while at the same time, providing them with specific tools with which to do so. Our Writing Center feedback questions are designed to give us information about how students perceive their Writing Center sessions. Our Canvas course shell supplies consultants with resources for writing across the curriculum.  

[https://usfca.instructure.com/courses/1140450](https://usfca.instructure.com/courses/1140450)

Our Website also gives students useful resources.  

[https://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center](https://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center)

**IV Quality Assurance**

**What services/products does the Unit provide? Whom do they serve?**

Our center provides one-on-one feedback for USF students to help them develop as writers. We see students at every level from freshmen to graduate students. We serve all the colleges at USF: Arts and Sciences, Nursing, Business, and Education, as well as the branch campuses in Pleasanton, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and on-line students.
How does the Unit learn about the needs of those served and obtain feedback regarding service delivery?

Please see below for our method of obtaining student feedback on our services. As far as learning about the needs of student writers, since each person, each assignment, and each appointment is different, we assess the needs of the particular student at the time of the conference. We used to have students fill out a paper intake form that asked the student to explain the assignment and explain, specifically, what the student would like to focus on in the session. In efforts to save paper, we no longer have a paper intake form, but those questions are asked part of our protocols when students come in. Part of our job is to educate students to be aware of their own writing process. We train them how to use us best, which means they need to articulate what they are trying to accomplish in the paper and what type of feedback would be most helpful for them at that point in its development. When students are able to do this, we are better able to meet those needs.

How does the Unit know it is meeting the stakeholder’s needs?

Our Writing Center CANVAS course shell consultants has announcements, resources, and links for consultants, but because writing center sessions are personally tailored to the individual assignment and student, it is difficult to assess writing center work using any one instrument. We have several quality assurance protocols, both qualitative and quantitative by which we can gather information about our students’ experience.

Survey Monkey (Now Qualtrics)
Survey Monkey gives every student an opportunity to provide feedback on his or her session. This instrument is linked to our website. Students are asked to fill out the survey for each appointment both by the front desk and in an email following their appointment. Our survey responses have been overwhelmingly positive. The most frequent suggestion is “more time,” which is understandable from the student’s point of view. We have addressed this need by allowing consultants to approve an additional half-hour session if necessary. The survey also allows for students to make comments on their appointments. (See Appendix VII Survey Monkey.) In addition to quantitative feedback, we also elicit qualitative data to better understand students’ learning experiences in the form of self-evaluation letters and focus groups.

WCFC Letters
Writing Center for Credit (explained in the History Section) requires students to submit letters of self-evaluation using their papers as examples of how their writing has progressed over the course of the semester and also to give us feedback on their writing center sessions. These letters are valuable for a couple of reasons: 1. They get students to self-review, which helps them to remember and understand what they’ve learned. 2. They give us a little bit of insight about students’ learning process and their use of the Center. 3. Since students who submit these letters have used our services on a regular basis over the course of the semester, we feel they have a better perspective from which to give feedback. (See Appendix IV, sample WCFC letters.)
Focus Group
Because much of our effectiveness is dependent on student perceptions and expectations, we wanted to find out more about the Writing Center experience from students. The focus group conducted in December 2011 gave us an even closer snapshot of how students thought and felt about their Writing Center experience. We invited any student who had used the Writing Center more than 10 times to participate. We ended up with 4 students, whom I talked with for an hour. I was hoping to see that students realized that we can provide much more feedback than just grammar help. I knew that most of our student say they need help with "grammar," often because they don't know how to articulate what type of help they need. I was hoping that students who came back multiple times would learn more about the rhetorical choices available to them and not just grammar correction. We didn’t exactly get the feedback I was looking for, but I did get some valuable information about how students found out about us, how they felt coming to us for the first time, why they came to us, and what they expected to get once they did come to us. As a result of our focus group, I shared the results with our Writing Center staff, and we discussed ways to help students feel more welcome when they came to us for their sessions and ways to explain how we can help them with pre-editing writing issues like content and organization. (See Appendix VIII, Focus Group transcript.) There is a difficulty, however, in recruiting students to participate. Several focus group attempts have been canceled due to the lack of available students. Focus groups are a great way to get specific information on students’ experiences. The Writing Center welcomes feedback about how we can promote this type of assessment more.

What are the Unit’s planning, decision-making, and evaluation processes?
Writing Center consultants sometimes collaborate on an answer to a problem. Sometimes, we collaborate with the Learning Center staff or specialists in other departments, depending on the situation and who is involved. For example, some years ago, graduate students requested hour appointments because they said they needed more time for longer projects. So we decided that was a legitimate request, and we changed our policy to allow longer appointments for graduate students. However, in practice, we saw many graduate students, particularly international students, booking an hour-long appointment for a 2-page assignment. As a result, we were addressing everything in the paper and these long sessions were turning into “fix-it” sessions for ESL papers instead of strategy sessions for graduate-level work. Our half-hour policy was designed specifically to address one or two writing issues per session, and to give students some tools or strategies to take away from the session to continue working on the paper. Eventually, graduate time began to take over the center and undergraduates were having trouble booking appointments. In 2005, we spent more time with graduate students than with undergrads (see graph below.) In addition, undergraduate students with long papers and international students were requesting longer appointments. In consultation with Dean Fung, we came up with a policy that allows any student to have an hour-long appointment, based on the project, not on the status of the student. That way, if a consultant feels that a student would benefit from an hour appointment, then the consultant tells the front desk that the student can book an hour for the following appointment.

Percentage of Appointment Time Used by Graduate and Undergraduate Students

In another case, a couple Writing Center consultants alerted me to a student who was not behaving appropriately during his appointments. I consulted with Kim Harris and Kim Rutledge, who informed me that the Learning Center was also having problems with this particular student. After contacting the Office
of Student Conduct and speaking to a counselor familiar with this student, Kim Harris and I set up an appointment and met with the student to discuss what types of behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate in working with us. We then set up a policy and a contract for him to continue working with our services.

In a third case, we were working with a student with vision impairment. I consulted with the Writing Center consultants who had had appointments with him and listened to their concerns. Then I met with the disability specialist in Academic Support to write up a protocol for working with this student, which I distributed to the WC staff.

Decisions are made according to the need that arises. We consult with the person most appropriate to the situation.

**How do stakeholders learn about and access the services/products provided by the Unit?**

The Writing Center partners with the Learning Center in all the orientation activities at the beginning of the semester: tabling with the Learning Center for Dons Fest, Full-time and Adjunct-Faculty Orientations, and International Student Orientations. We also give presentations at program orientations, such as Museum Studies and MA Public and Urban Affairs. The Learning Center and Academic Support Services promote our services through Open House campaigns; advertisements on the USF Calendar and Phoenix, an online campus newspaper for students; signage in the residence halls; and referrals from CASA, SDS, and other academic departments. The Learning Center staff also tables in the cafeteria during peak periods. We post flyers on the electronic billboards across campus and we visit classrooms and offer workshops by request. In addition, our Writing Center website has information about making appointments, what to expect, and our philosophy. [https://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center](https://myusf.usfca.edu/student-life/lwc/writing-center)

Our website also provides links for writing resources and access to three editing programs.

**How do the Administrative/Services Units compare with peer institutions in terms of structure, responsibilities, size and budget? Specify the criteria by which these institutions were selected for comparison.**

These writing centers were chosen because they represent a variety of writing center models at institutions in the Bay Area.

Santa Clara University, another Jesuit school, has a slightly smaller student body than USF, with 5500 undergraduates and 3500 graduate students. Their writing center occupies a 400-415 square foot space with an additional 20 square feet in the library. They also have one faculty director position with a course release like we do. They are on the quarter system instead of the semester system. This past year, they had about 1700 appointments with 639 unique clients. They employ about 25 student tutors and are a stand-alone center, not connected with other types of centers.

Stanford is a much larger campus than USF with 7000 undergraduates and 9000 graduates students. Their Writing Center is housed in its own building, about 2000 square feet. Their staff includes 6 full- time
employees, all staff, no faculty: 1 full-time director (who teaches the required tutor training course as unpaid overload), 1 almost full-time associate director (7/8th of a position—she teaches one course per year in the writing program), 1 full-time administrative manager, 1 full-time administrative associate, 1 full-time tutor manager, 1 full-time post-baccalaureate position in student marketing. They employ about 110 student tutors (grad and undergrad) plus 30 lecturers who tutor 4 hours per week as part of their appointment. Their center combines speaking and writing help. Last year, they held about 11000 tutoring sessions.

Saint Mary's College in Moraga, California has about 2700 undergraduates and 1400 graduate students. Their Writing Center occupies about 1000 square feet. They have one full-time faculty administrative director, a two-thirds faculty associate director, and a two-thirds staff administrative assistant. They employ about 20 grad and undergraduate writing tutors, and they have about 500 writing consultations per semester. They also hold weekly writing circles and workshops.

Santa Rosa Junior College has two campuses, Santa Rosa and Petaluma. They hire adjunct faculty as consultants like we do. Santa Rosa has about 20,000 students and Petaluma about 9000, but these are both commuter schools, so most of these students do not live on campus. Santa Rose employs 18 instructors and 7 Instructional Assistants (BA required). Petaluma has 10 instructors and 2 Instructional Assistants. Their campuses have an independent tutorial center in the library.

By comparison to the above institutions, USF’s Writing Center has 2 rooms inside 215 Cowell, the Learning Center: one room is about 56 square feet and the other is about 100 square feet. We also have a designated table in the library for one consultant 12 hours per week. We have one full-time director with one course release and about 20 adjunct writing consultants, and one campus liaison person with 1 unit non-teaching assignment (37.5 hours) compensation. Occasionally we hire qualified non-faculty tutors as well. We do, of course, benefit from the Learning Center staff, who run our front desk and appointment lines for us. We also collaborate on promotional events, and they supply much of our Learning and Writing Center flyers, pens, bookmarks, and other promotional materials.

It would be difficult to make a comparison of staff to student ratio between these schools and USF because the job categories are very different—some have staff, some have faculty, some have a combination of both. However, we can compare allocation of resources in terms of space. The chart below shows the total number of students at 3 of the above schools and how much space is allocated per student for their Writing Centers compared to USF. (Data on Santa Rosa and Petaluma was not available.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th># students</th>
<th>Tot. Sq Ft</th>
<th>Sq Ft/Student</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>16000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s</td>
<td>4100</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USF</td>
<td>10701</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V Budget and Expenditures
Please see Appendix IX for WC salaries for 2012-2014. In addition to consultant salaries, we also have 2 university computers, which are paid for by the university and various writing books and manuals, which are paid for through Rhetoric and Language petty cash account.

VI. ASSESSMENT: IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Provide a summary of how critical administrative processes and/or the services are assessed or evaluated in the Unit, and the results of those evaluations.

Preceptor Observations
Direct conference observations by the director or peers can be a useful tool to generate discussion about what worked well in that session, provide any suggestions for consultants, and answer any questions consultants might have. The observations are designed to check basic writing center protocols, such as greeting the student and asking the student for direction on the session, and to see if the student gets clear feedback on what he or she asks for. However, there are multiple ways a session can proceed. (See Appendix II for observation form.)

Student Feedback: We also ask for student feedback on Qualtrics and through focus groups and letters. Please see section IV for more explanation on types of student feedback.

Writing Center for Credit Study: See Section I for an explanation of WCFC study and Appendices VI and IV for study and letters.

List the number of students using the services provided during the most recent academic year, and the Unit’s role in tracking their success upon completion of the service.

According to TutorTrac, our appointment system, we served 858 individual students, not counting the library or branch campuses in Spring Semester, 2015. Summer 2015, we recorded a total of 31 students session I and 55 students session II. Last Fall 2014, our records show a total of 992 individuals were served, not counting the library or branch campuses. Please see Appendix I for appointment data for the last 6 years and data trends over those years.

VII. GUIDE FOR THE FUTURE

What are the Unit’s strengths? What examples of long-term excellence, recent accomplishment, or improvement characterize the Unit’s recent history? In what ways could the Unit be considered a leader in its field?

The Writing Center’s Strengths

The Writing Center has demonstrated long-term excellence by continuing to serve the increasingly diverse needs of USF students by on-campus conferences, distance conferences, consultants in the branches, classroom workshops, and Writing Center for
Credit. We are continuing to advance the university’s core values of “advancing learning as a humanizing social activity” and “supporting investment in …respecting individual learning styles and creating an environment conducive to learning.” Our strengths include our consultants’ expertise, which spans a broad range of skill-sets in addition to composition skills; our willingness to meet students where they are developmentally and initiate the conversation from their point of view; and to help provide the resources students need to become better writers, whether those resources are material or psychological. We assist graduate students with Masters and Doctoral theses as well as undergraduate students with papers from a variety of different classes. Our data show a continuing increase in writing center conferences from when we started, gradually leveling out to about 2000 conferences per semester.

What are the Unit’s weaknesses? Where could the Unit improve most? What challenges or obstacles make it difficult to overcome these weaknesses? What further challenges does the faculty foresee in the coming years?

Staffing is becoming increasingly difficult. Because of recent limitations on adjunct hours (because of the Obama-care initiative) some of our most experienced consultants are no longer able to work as many hours as they used to. When needed, qualified contract consultants are hired by HR Options, which is more expensive to the university and more cumbersome. Each contract staff member needs to be re-hired each semester, which requires more paperwork and is more time-consuming than hiring faculty. In addition, they have to be reissued a USF email and ID so that they can be put into our TutorTrac system and access our Writing Center Canvas course. We may need to consider a different model for staffing in the future in order to expand our services to help all USF students. Perhaps a hybrid model using some graduate student tutors and some faculty consultants could be considered. Also, as mentioned above, if we increased our Writing Center staff, we would need more space. A plan was mentioned several years ago to move both the Learning and Writing Center to a shared space in Gleeson Library. If we moved both Centers to a larger space in the library, this might be a good move as we would be more centrally located on campus and be able to serve more students.

Another related challenge we face is the request for satellite writing centers or “designated tutors” for individual schools and programs, particularly in Education and Business. Requests for specialized tutors, however, fragment the center. Making one person available for a single population makes that person unavailable to tutor other students. The Center on the USF campus offers 106 hours of tutoring per week for any USF student in any class or program. If we made one person available for 5 hours or 10 hours per week for a special group, how can we ensure that those particular students would be able to see that particular consultant during that specific time? In addition, some students have learning and writing needs that go beyond what the traditional writing center conference can achieve. For example, international students writing at the graduate level need editing services for Masters and Doctoral theses and other graduate-level work. The Writing Center welcomes any suggestions from the committee about how to address specific writing needs for individual schools, programs, and students.

The branch campus consultants, though appreciated by some, appear to be underutilized at all of the campuses. The consultants at the branches are paid for 54-56 hours per semester for tutoring. For Spring Semester 2015, the least utilized was Sacramento reporting 10 appointments (that’s 5 hours). The most utilized was Santa Rosa at 28 appointments (14 hours). In addition to paying each consultant for about 40-50 hours of
unused tutoring time, USF is also paying 37.5 hours per semester for a liaison position charged with overseeing the branch campuses. Since branch campus students can call our center in San Francisco any time from their jobs or their homes, they may not be taking advantage of the on-site tutor in the branch campus as much as we’d like. These students are commuter students, so sometimes it’s difficult for them to come to campus at times other than during their class times, especially in San Jose, where parking seems to be a problem for students. We’ve even had requests for branch campus students to be able to make phone conferences. Considering the expressed need for an on-site consultant in the branches, phone consultations in the branches seems to defeat the purpose of having someone on-site in the first place. On the other hand, some professors really appreciated the service. I received this email from a professor at our Santa Rosa Campus:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to extend my thanks and appreciation to [Dr. Churchill] for the tutoring she performed with the MFT program students at the Santa Rosa Campus. I teach Research and Methods class for the MFT program at the Santa Rosa campus and have done so for several years. The final paper of the class is a literature review in APA format. The students are often challenged by this project because they are either unfamiliar with the APA format, or have not written this type of paper for several years. In the past, the Santa Rosa campus has not had a tutor on site to help the MFT students in this class and the students have expressed frustration.

[Dr. Churchill] was a wonderful asset and was very helpful to the students. She introduced herself to the class on short notice and I referred several students to her for help with their papers. A number of students remarked about how helpful she was and how their paper benefited from her knowledgeable assistance. As an instructor, the papers I received were more accurate and complete from the students that sought her guidance. [Dr. Churchill's] work freed up my time in class to address more in-depth topics and the students that needed more individualized help received it in tutoring.

I would like to express thanks to the administration for providing [Dr. Churchill] to the Santa Rosa MFT students as a resource. Writing tutoring (particularly in the Research and Methods class) is a very important to the master's level students and the students' improved work was reflected in [Dr. Churchill’s] guidance. I would also like to extend my thanks for [Dr. Churchill's] professionalism and quality instruction.

Sincerely,
Kristine Bartlett, PsyD

Outreach and Promotion of the Center

Although the Writing Center is represented at many or the orientation activities at the beginning of the semester, there is still room to improve our public relations with the university community.

One of our consultants, Roberta D'Alois, had the following suggestion:

My thoughts center around student expectations and how that impacts quality assurance. Many of the international students, for example have hopes and expectations that tutors will go through their essays and correct all the mistakes. This also can be an expectation of their instructors, but when students are disappointed, I think it reflects poorly on the writing center even though students are made aware of the roles tutors play. I don't know how often writing center tutors visit classrooms, but I know at SF State, tutors from the equivalent organizations often visit classrooms at several key points during the semester,
letting students know about what services they can access. So perhaps more frequent 
communication with the classes most impacted by incorrect expectations might be of help.

I agree with Roberta that the Writing Center could benefit from more personal outreach to classes. 
However, if we were to promote the writing center in the classrooms more, the consultants would need to 
be paid for their time.

**What changes have occurred in administrative processes and/or services provided 
over the past five years that have influenced the Unit’s view of its role in the 
University and the field?**

**Challenges**
Our original purpose was to serve students in a way that actively engaged them in a 
dialog about their writing process in all its complexities and provided substantive 
feedback for global as well as local revision. However, because of the increasing 
diversity of our students, especially at the graduate level, there has been an increasing 
need for editing services. Traditionally, modern writing centers have eschewed being 
“editing centers” in order provide feedback on higher level writing concerns, such as 
clarity, support, organization, and style. To help students learn to edit, our policy up until 
now has been to assist students in locating and correcting sentence-level errors, but not to 
edit for them. An argument can be made that at the undergraduate level, particularly 
though not exclusively for second-language learners, writing center work should assist 
students in learning how to edit their own papers because they are still in the process of 
learning to write in academic English. However, we are seeing a greater number of 
international students at the graduate level, who are not here to learn English, but to get 
an advanced degree in something else, for example, Economics. For these students, 
spending an hour discussing verb forms in one paragraph of a 30-page thesis, just doesn’t 
make sense. An increasing number of students need someone to edit their work for them.

The questions that we need to consider are as follows: 1. Is USF responsible for 
providing students with editing services or should we provide a list of editors for hire? 2. 
If the university were to provide editors, would that services be provided by Writing 
Center? Last, if we were to provide editing services, who would be eligible? If these 
services were made available, everyone would want them. Our Center feels that since 
derggraduates are here to learn to write well as part of their undergraduate education, 
providing editing services for undergraduate students would, in some ways, undermine 
that goal.

One way we have addressed the editing question this semester is through on-line editing 
programs, not to replace, but to augment student conferences. This semester, we are 
offering students three online editing programs through our website. Grammarly 
addresses basic grammar and punctuation. WriteLab and Writers Diet give feedback on 
higher level editing: word choice, syntax, conciseness, and style. Ideally, students can 
upload their papers to these programs and get some initial feedback before they come to 
their Writing Center session.
Report from the Branch Campuses: Below is the Writing Center report from Roxann Schmidt, liaison to the Branch Campuses.

Description of Tutoring at Extension Campuses
A pilot program of tutoring at USF’s extension campuses of Pleasanton, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Sacramento started in March of 2014. This pilot resulted from students’ and faculty’s expressed desire to have writing assistance available to them without having to travel to the main campus of USF. To this end, the USF Writing Center hired writing consultants for each extension campus. During the fall and spring semesters, writing consultants tutored for 4 hours each week.

Quality Assurance
Upon arrival at the tutoring session, students fill out a sign-in form that provides information on their name, major, and the courses they are taking. These forms are collected and assessed by the Branch Campus Liaison and the Writing Center Director. At the end of every session, writing consultants encourage students to submit anonymous feedback on line via Survey Monkey for the writing session.

Currently, all of our tutors teach or have taught writing courses for USF. The faculty have backgrounds in Rhetoric and Composition and have tutored previously for the Writing Center on the main campus or elsewhere. They are given additional training in policies and procedures when hired and receive ongoing support from the Branch Campus Liaison during the semester.

In order to ensure that these writing consultants provide exceptional focus and guidance to USF students, the Branch Campus Liaison observes and evaluates tutoring sessions periodically.

Particulars of Each Campus
Each extension campus has its own unique features; therefore, they will be addressed individually.

Pleasanton Campus
The Pleasanton campus has a room reserved for tutoring sessions. This room has a desk, bookshelf, and a phone. The location of the room is not easy for students to find; however, it is connected to the faculty lounge, which is a logical place. While most tutoring sessions are conducted simply using a desk and the student’s own hard copy of the writing assignment, occasionally there is a need to look up information on the computer. (One example might be current APA usage that is not covered in the APA manual.) Since the computer is in the adjacent faculty lounge in an open space where instructors meet with students, it is not always practical or convenient to use this computer. It would be advantageous to have a computer in this room.

San Jose Campus
The San Jose campus has a designated office for the tutor with a desk, phone, and computer. The office is located near the main front desk, so it is in a well-trafficked area. The only complaint that the writing consultant of this campus received was with the parking. Students reported to him that they were reluctant to attend tutoring sessions outside of class days because parking was difficult to find and also expensive. Students preferred to come to tutoring before class sessions.

Santa Rosa Campus
The Santa Rosa campus is a smaller campus than the San Jose or the Pleasanton campus. The writing consultant has MLA and APA handbooks, but there is not a consistent office where students can meet with the writing consultant. For example, this semester the writing consultant will be tutoring in different classrooms. The writing consultant should have a consistent meeting space.

Sacramento Campus
The Sacramento campus does not have a designated office or room for the tutor. Instead, the writing consultant shares a table at the library. Unfortunately, the library shares an incomplete wall with a classroom; therefore, there is no sound protection. Last semester, there was a class scheduled during the tutoring hours, and the professor complained that the writing consultant’s discussion with students
distracted his class. The professor also complained if other students were talking in the library (sometimes students worked on group projects in this space). This writing consultant quit at the end of the semester, I think this space arrangement was one reason for her leaving. We have since hired another writing consultant. I recommend that the new writing consultant have a designated room with a desk, computer, and phone.

Survey results
A survey was sent to all students at the branch campuses in April of 2015, which is a little over a year from when the pilot program started.

The survey indicated that a large percentage of students (82.22%) were aware of tutoring resources at their campus, which we consider a success. A little over 23% of all the students had used tutoring at their campus, whereas more than 32% expressed an interest in tutoring. This nine percent difference represents an opportunity for us to reach out to more students.

Advertising
In order to reach out to more students, the Branch Campus Liaison has made fliers and sent these to the office managers for each extension campus. The office managers distribute the fliers to faculty and students as well as to post the fliers throughout their campus.

Writing consultants are conducting short class presentations at each of the extension campuses. We have found that students are more likely to attend tutoring session when they have met the tutor beforehand. Asking for help is not always an easy thing for students to do, so this is one way we make the process a bit less intimidating. We also have writing consultants present during Resource Fairs. For example, the writing consultant at Pleasanton has been part of the resource fair last year and will be again this October. This is yet another way to promote students using the tutoring resource available to them.

Challenges
The biggest challenge at the extension campuses aside from space is scheduling. The writing consultants at the extension campuses are adjunct professors with full schedules; they have limited availability. Students in these USF programs are also busy with full-time jobs and other commitments outside of school. With only 4 hours of tutoring available during the week, there are simply some students who cannot be get tutoring at the extension campus.

We have tried two different methods for to help improve the timing issue:

1. We polled students on their “best” times for tutoring. Although there wasn’t one distinct preference, we used this information to modify tutoring schedules for the spring. For example, in the spring of 2015, writing consultants at the Sacramento and Santa Rosa were only tutoring one day a week. Since the survey indicated that students wanted to meet on different days of the week, all the tutors for the extension campus now tutor two days a week.
2. We have given writing consultants resources to direct students to the phone and Skype conferences available through the main campus.
3. Another potential solution suggested by a writing consultant is to have “floating hours” (perhaps 5-10 hours per semester) where students could make an appointment with the tutor outside the regular tutoring hours.

Another solution to the time issue could be to offer more tutoring at each campus; therefore, instead of having tutoring only two days a week, it could be extended to three days a week or even four. This would help more students be able to utilize the program.

Conclusion
The faculty, the administrative staff, and even the students at the extension campuses have expressed gratitude for this program. We believe that it is a valuable resource that will continue to grow with each campus.
VIII. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE
Describe where the staff would like the Unit to go in terms of services, performance standards, collaboration with other units, synergies, etc.

At USF, we have three separate centers for academic support in various areas. The Learning Center helps students with course material for over 80 courses, including Nursing, Business, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Environmental Sciences, and Physics. The Writing Center helps students with writing in all schools, graduate and undergraduate. The Learning and Writing Center has been located together in 215 Cowell for many years. Last year, a Speaking Center was created and is housed in Malloy Hall. It seems logical that these centers should be best housed in the same location, ideally, one that is central and neutral, such as the library.

Describe where is the field going based on the literature, professional association meetings, etc. and how the Unit is ready to address those challenges and improvements.

As mentioned earlier, the two biggest changes and challenges reflect our changing student body. Because of limited space on campus, on-line programs are increasing and we need to find a way to accommodate distance conferencing that still constitutes quality exchanges between students and consultants. The second challenge is the increasing number of second-language learners studying at American universities. We are already working with a large number of these students, and we believe the field will continue to evolve to engage and support multi-language learners at the university.

Technology
The increasing use of technology in education is undeniable. Students now come to college fluent in computer skills and competent to navigate multiple websites and programs. The Writing Center will continue to provide on-line information, links, and programs designed to augment the face-to-face conference. We now offer three editing programs on our website for those students who require editing assistance. Far from replacing the traditional writing center conference, the information provided online will help students better prepare for their conferences and may be a useful tool for advancing discussion. In addition, programs like Echo 360 allow for short writing-related videos to be posted to our website for student use. Sometimes students feel more comfortable watching a video than looking something up. Currently, we have one for in-text citations MLA format and one for in-text citations APA format. If these are popular, we can develop a library of on-line videos for students. For our consultants, Canvas has provided a format for easy access to announcements, information, and resources. This semester Doreen Ewert, Director of the AEM program gave a presentation at our meeting about working with second-language learners. She made available to us, by posting on our Canvas site, several articles on the latest research in second-language acquisition.

Northern California Writing Center Association
The director of USF’s Writing Center is a member of the board of directors of the NCWCA. Information about writing center conferences, articles, handouts and presentations are posted for all consultants on our Canvas page. For last year’s NCWCA conference, Dan Melzer gave a particularly relevant presentation on how to prepare tutors
to work with students in different genres across the curriculum. He generously provided
dhandouts for us to post on our Canvas course. Given our diverse student body, we found
his resources useful for a productive discussion about how we work with students in the
disciplines and what we can do to help students understand different requirements for
different genres.

Current trends in Writing Center pedagogy reflect the current trends in university
pedagogy. Universities and writing centers now need to find ways to include and engage
students from diverse categories and identities including race, class, gender, language,
socioeconomic status, learning styles, and disabilities. There is no one cookie-cutter way
to meet the needs of all students. Professional development in meeting the needs of all
students will be a continuing need in the future.