

<NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT/MAJOR OR MINOR>

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 – 2019
REPORT DUE DATE: 11/01/2019

Academic Effectiveness Annual Assessment Resource Page:

<https://myusf.usfca.edu/arts-sciences/faculty-resources/academic-effectiveness/assessment>

Email to submit the report: assessment_cas@usfca.edu

Important: Please write the name of your program or department in the subject line.

For example: FineArts_Major (if you decide to submit a separate report for major and minor);
FineArts_Aggregate (when submitting an aggregate report)

I. LOGISTICS

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

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2. Please indicate if you are submitting report for (a) a Major, (b) a Minor, (c) a Major and Minor aggregated report (in which case, each should be explained in a separate paragraph as in this template), (d) a Graduate or (e) a Certificate Program

The Writing center is an academic support organization.

3. Please note that a Curricular Map should accompany every assessment report. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map?

No, but we are considering revising the curricular map to focus more on the student experience for next year. However, in order to get more information about learning outcomes, Suparna Chakraborty, Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness, referred me to Golden Venters, Director of Organization Effectiveness, and Golden Venters referred me to Kim Rutledge, Director of the Learning Center, and Kim is the one who gave us the Learning Goals in the first place, which were adapted from Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education. So maybe we should keep them as they are.

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? No

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.

4. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? No.

The following are a list of the writing center goals. We are not a program that offers any kind of major or minor, but rather our “goal” is to assist students across the curriculum with their writing projects. (see attachment for related skills and assessment measures.)

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

State the particular program learning outcome(s) you assessed for the academic year 2018-2019. What rubric did you use?

This past year, we were transitioning to using alternate methods of assessment from our previous report, which looked at student work products. Writing center research shows that student work products are not the best assessment measure as writing center work focuses on the student writer, not the paper (North,1984). What this means is that our “product” is really a conversation that goes on between the student and the consultant. Writing center consultants perform a variety of functions in a writing center conference, depending on the level of the student writer, the nature of the project, and the stage of development of the paper. WC consultants might use a variety of speech acts including direct instruction, cognitive strategies, and motivational strategies (Mackiewicz and Thompson, 2015). For this cycle, our WC data is focused on assessing Goals 3 and 4, “nurture the development of students’ confidence as learners,” and “encourage students to take ownership for their educational experiences.” Usage data speaks to Goal 5, “support learning needs of students at all skill levels and with all learning styles.”

III. METHODOLOGY

Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

The assessments we focused on for this cycle were I Goal 5 as measured by usage data, II Goals 3 and 4 as measured by survey feedback, student comments, observations of Writing center sessions.

I For **usage data**, (Goal 5) research by Babcock and Thonus (2018) as well as my own research (Dennen, 2015) shows a positive correlation between usage of writing center services and improvement in student writing.

Salesforce Writing center Student Usage Data

Fall 2018: We had 1926 scheduled appointments, and of those, 1239 were completed. The largest percentages for our appointments came from A&S Arts (28%) and School of Management (31%). The College of Arts and Sciences together accounted for 47% of all our appointments. Zoom appointments accounted for 7% or 91 out of 1239 appointments. International students (as measured by student status not by first language) accounted for 34% of our appointments. For class standing, graduate students (Masters and Doctorate) accounted for 21% of our appointments. Freshmen were the largest group, accounting for 44%.

Spring 2019: Spring Semester usage is usually a little bit lighter than Fall. Spring 2019, we had 1018 appointments, 81 of which were Zoom appointments. The percentages for International students, graduate and undergraduate, and appointments by college were roughly the same as Fall semester. Usage was up about 78 appointments for Spring and 183 appointments for Fall over the previous year. (See attachments for Stats Fall 2018 and Spring 2019.)

II Student satisfaction. (Goals 3 and 4). Whereas there is no direct correlation between satisfaction and student improvement, there is a correlation between satisfaction and usage, which has been shown to correlate with improvement. In addition, studies show that creating a positive experience for the student enhances student attitudes which lead to greater self-efficacy, confidence, and motivation ((Bandura, 1997; Mackiewicz and Johnson 2013).

Qualtreks: Student Satisfaction Survey & Student Feedback Comments

We use Qualtreks online survey to assess student attitudes and satisfaction with their writing center conferences. This information doesn't necessarily provide data on whether or not their papers have improved or whether they have become better writers, but student attitudes do play a role in their learning process (Mackiewicz and Johnson 2013). The number of responses shows that this instrument is underutilized and would be more robust if students had access to a kiosk with an ipad attached directly outside of the Writing center rooms. The data for Spring 2019 show a total of 14 responses. Q1: 12 out of 14 responders had only used the Writing center 1 or 2 times, which may account for some students misunderstanding the work that we do. Q3 4 out of 14 students did not feel the WC addressed their concerns, and 6 out of 14 rated their sessions below "satisfied" on Q5. However, 10 out of 13 respondents felt that they had a better

understanding about how to proceed with their paper after their session. Some of the comments students made may account for their dissatisfaction. First of all, most surveys of this sort suffer from a “Yelp” bias. Students who are unhappy about something tend to give feedback whereas satisfied students often do not. Seven out of 13 students indicated their primary language is not English, so those students may be expecting more grammar help. Last, in the comment section, there was a complaint about Zoom not working properly. This can be a frustration for students, especially when they are on a deadline. In general, Zoom appointments have been very successful, especially for off-campus students who cannot commute to campus for a Writing center appointment. We are trying to make the Zoom experience seamless for students, and most of the time they are fine. Occasionally there are Wifi issues that are beyond our control, or the student has not set up the program properly. In those cases, the front desk is there to help them access the program.

Qualitative data are also a good way to assess student satisfaction. Attached also are 12 student comments from Jonathan Hunt’s 110N class. Eleven out of the twelve respondents said that they had never been to the Writing center before. All 12 respondents felt that their Writing center appointment was helpful. (Goal 3 and 4).

III Writing center Observations (Goals 3 and 4)

In contrast to assessing individual student work products, assessing speech acts is a more accurate way to understand the work that is going on the Writing center.

One undervalued category of speech act is motivational strategies. See attachment listing tutoring strategies by Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015). Observations of 8 writing center conferences were held during the Fall 2018 (5) and Spring 2019 semesters (3). For this assessment the opening and closing of the session and whether the student was engaged in the session (questions 1,5 and 6) was assessed. One additional element was added to the closing in Fall 2019, “Student was invited back.” Rebecca Day Babcock reported in her keynote address in the 2019 Northern California Writing center Association Conference that in a meta-analysis of writing center research a positive correlation with increased writing usage was associated with whether or not the student was invited back.

IV. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

Question from Observation Form	Percentage of conferences that completed this task
Question 1: Consultant greeted the student at the beginning of the conference and established positive tone for the conference	8/8
Question 5: The student was actively engaged in the session.	6/8
Question 6: At the end of the session, the consultant either asked for or provided a summary of what was discussed to give the student a direction for proceeding with the paper. Consultant invited the student to return in the future.	7/8

Although there were a limited number of observations for the 2018-2019 school year, consultants in the majority of sessions observed writing center protocols as described on the observation form and created a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for the session (Goal 3). A majority of student participants were engaged in the sessions, which positively corresponds to goal 4. At the end of the session, 7 out of 8 conferences were observed to complete the conference with a summary of what was discussed, a direction for the student to continue working on the draft, and an invitation to return (Goals 4 and 5).

V. CLOSING THE LOOP: ACTION PLAN BASED ON ASSESSMENT RESULTS

1. Based on your analysis in Section 4, what are the next steps that you are planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require any changes to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

Observations of writing center sessions are an excellent way to assess the interaction between student and tutor, which should be the focus for writing center assessment. Our original writing center observation form, however, was designed to assess the tutor, not the student. So, this assessment instrument was not meant to measure student learning, though question 5 probably gets the closest to this type of PLO.

There are 2 projects that we have begun to enhance the robustness of our writing center work.

1. Retention of students is an important goal for USF. I am collecting data for a correlation study. I was able to obtain a list of red-flagged students (students identified as “at risk”) for the incoming freshman class of 2018 from Academic Support Services . I plan to track these students during their time at USF to see if those students who use WC services had a greater rate of retention than those who did not.

2. Next year we plan to have recordings of student conferences in addition to observational reports. We plan to do a small rhetorical analysis of speech acts for these conferences to see

what speech acts are motivational as identified in the study by Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015).

3. I'd like to put a kiosk outside the Writing center rooms that has an ipad with our Feedback survey on it. Students would be more inclined to give us feedback on sessions if they are asked to and have a means to do it right after each session.

2. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2017-2018, submitted in October 2018)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in the more recent assessment discussed in this report?

Last year's summary comments mentioned "the best practices and leading research in the field [recommends] examining the content of tutoring conferences themselves as direct evidence for assessment." This year, we did not focus on student written products as a measure of assessment, but rather on whether students were using the Writing Center, whether they were satisfied with their sessions, and whether the conferences contained speech acts associated with increased motivation and self-efficacy. In addition, our usage data shows how many appointments were completed in the writing center, which positively correlates with student writing skills and all 5 Writing center Goals.

VI. BIG PICTURE

What have you learned about your program from successive rounds of assessment? Is a picture of the whole program starting to emerge? For example, what areas of strength have emerged? What opportunities of improvement have you identified?

I think writing center work by its nature is very difficult to assess. By trying to apply a program's outcomes to Writing Center, imagine teaching a writing class in which every student at all levels, freshmen through doctorate, and from all programs is enrolled. How would you assess such a class? If we look at competence, there is every level of competence. If we look at individual papers, there is every type of paper. How are we to assess improvement? And how can we know the writing center session is responsible for the *student writer* to be improved—not the paper. Fixing papers would be easy, but fixing a student's paper does not improve the student writer, which is the work of a writing center. As far as data goes, I think that usage data is useful and retention data is useful if we can get it. As far as assessing the actual work of the Writing Center, student motivation is a very strong component in improving self-efficacy and has been largely undervalued in assessments.

VII. Feedback to your Assessment Team

What suggestions do you have for your assessment team (the Faculty Directors of Curriculum Development and the Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness)? What can we do to improve the process?

If we could install a kiosk outside of the writing center rooms so that students could complete an evaluation after their conferences, that would be helpful in getting more responses to our

student feedback survey. Long term, I envision our center being located in the same space as the Learning and Speaking Centers to form a one-stop “Learning Commons” for students. I also think creating a space that is ours, where we can keep resources like books, posters, comfortable chairs, coffee, etc., would give the impression that we are a center where students can come, talk, work, and share ideas, which would foster student involvement and participation.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

Babcock, Rebecca Day and Therese Thonus. *Researching the Writing center: Towards Evidence-Based Practice*. Peter Lang, 2018.

Dennen, Leslie. "Writing center for Credit: A Correlation Study." *Sound Instruction: Writing center Theory and Practice*, vol.4, edited by Kelly A. Charron, Academic Exchange Quarterly, 2015.

Mackiewicz Jo, and Isabelle Kramer Thompson. *Talk About Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experiences Writing center Tutors*. Routledge, 2015.

North, Stephen. "The Idea of a Writing center." *College English*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (Sep., 1984), pp. 433-446