**2018-19 Learning Centers Program Review**

Program Name: Writing Center
Program Contact: Anne Stafford, Teeka James, Sara Lawrence
Academic Years: AY 2016-17 and 2017-18 *(Data only available for AY 2016-17)*
Status:
Updated on: October 25, 2018

**Purpose:** The purpose of Program Review is to reflect on teaching and learning and to promote student success and equity through critical analysis and careful planning. Each center should look thoroughly at their student success data, learning outcomes assessment data (at the course and program level), and the relevancy of its curricula. The Academic Senate will provide support during Program Review in the form of workshops, guidance documents, and one-on- one mentoring. Coordinators should also consult their deans or directors for assistance on their Program Review and Resource Requests.

**1. Description of Program**
Provide a brief description of the program and how it supports the college's Mission and Values Statements, its Diversity Statement, CSM's and SMCCCD's Strategic Plans, and the college's Educational Master Plan. You may also discuss any factors that have impacted programming and usage. Include changes in student populations, statewide initiatives, transfer requirements, advisory committee recommendations, legal mandates, workforce development and employment opportunities, and community needs, as applicable.

> The Writing Center (18-102 & 18-104) provides high quality academic support for students enrolled in all of our integrated reading and writing composition courses, basic skills through transfer (ENGL 828, 838, 105, 100, 110, and 165), as well as those enrolled in ESL 400, Monday through Thursday, 8 am – 8:30 pm and Friday, 8 am – 2:00 pm. The Writing Center supports students with one-on-one essay conferences with experienced English and ESL instructors; tutorials on specific writing and critical thinking skills, assigned by classroom instructors according to individual student needs; and Grammar and Editing Workshops to assist students with specific writing skills. Students not enrolled in English classes may enroll in English 850, ESL 907 or ESL 908, open-entry/open-exit courses allowing regular individual appointments with instructors in the Center at any time. ESL 907 and ESL 908 primarily support students taking ESL 827 and 828 with reading and writing assistance but are open to any students seeking to strengthen their writing and reading skills. Finally, all CSM students may use the Writing Center's tutoring support during our drop-in hours, Monday through Thursday from 12:00 to 2:30. Connected to the Writing Center are two additional rooms—the Quiet Room (18-106), where students can research and compose their essays on Macs or PCs and a Computer-Assisted Classroom (18-108), where some English courses are taught.

> **Writing Center Mission Statement:** Best practices and research show that more students succeed in course-related writing when they are provided with individualized instruction outside the classroom. Thus, the mission of the Writing Center is to help students at all stages of the writing process for English and ESL courses in a welcoming learning environment that respects diversity. Unique among other writing centers at community colleges and universities in California, the Writing Center is staffed by English and ESL faculty who help students with their writing in one-on-one conferences. Since our tutors are English and ESL faculty, integration of instruction, pedagogy and curriculum occurs in both the classroom and the Centers.

> *NOTE: We wrote this program review report based on data from PRIE for only the 2016-17 academic year; we did not receive any data for the 2017-18 academic year. We were not able to comment on how the Writing Center supports the college's Education Master Plan because the EMP was not available until October 24, 2018, after we had completed Program Review.*

The Writing Center supports the college's mission statement and strategic goals.

**Priority 1: Improve Student Success, Priority 2: Promote Academic Excellence, Priority 3: Develop Responsive, High-Quality Programs and Services**

The Center works to ensure student equity through one-on-one tutoring by faculty trained to focus on all stages of the reading and writing process and individualized grammar and sentence development tutorials and workshops. The Writing Center fosters a culture of excellence and success by engaging and challenging students enrolled in both transfer and pre-transfer level English composition courses. Working closely with classroom instructors, the Writing Center is an integral part of the departmental curriculum.

The Writing Center improves student success in English Composition courses (and, we believe,  beyond) by responding to their individual needs. Students are encouraged to take the lead in their one-on-one conferences with faculty; when they are unsure about what to focus on in a particular session, faculty are trained to quickly assess students' areas of greatest need and prioritize the steps and strategies for strengthening their current writing assignment.

**Priority 4: Support Professional Development**
In addition to training Writing Center faculty in effective one-on-one instruction strategies, the Writing Center also supports the professional development of our instructional aides and student assistants. Instructional aides have taken courses in the district's Professional Development Academy, and our full-time aide recently visited the Museum of Tolerance. For many of our student assistants, this is their first office job (or first job, period), and we mentor them honing skills for the workplace. Many of our student assistants are international students who gain the added benefit of improving their communication skills through their job.

**Priority 5: Implement the Integrated Planning Cycle and Ensure Fiscal Stability and the Efficient Use of Resources**

We promote the efficient use of resources by making every effort to utilize all available faculty conference time slots and to limiting the use of paper (by using double-sided printing whenever possible) and printing to only what students need to support their success in their English classes.

Overall student usage of the center (see table 1) has remained relatively steady over the past three years, with a downward trend reflecting the general decline in enrollment collegewide. We support students in all English composition courses (ENGL 828, 838, 100, 105, 110, 165) and in ESL 400.

| Semester | Total Writing Center Users |
|---|---|
| Fall 2015 | 2436 |
| Spring 2016 | 2175 |
| Fall 2016 | *No data provided* |
| Spring 2017 | *No data provided* |
| Fall 2017 | 2051 |
| Spring 2018 | 1968 |

*Table 1*

Our conferences are the cornerstone of what the Writing Center provides. We have been conscientious about using the 58 units of Writing Center staffing to serve the greatest number of students. We are pleased that for AY 2018/2019, approximately 80% of our conference appointments were utilized by students. That number increases when we exclude the first two weeks of the semester, when most students are not yet working on major writing assignments in their English classes. After about the fourth week of each semester, nearly every appointment is booked in advance; however, some students cancel their appointments at the last minute and some simply do not show up at all. We fill these appointments with students who come in to put their name on our "stand-by" list whenever possible, so that only a small percentage of appointments go unused.

**Priority 6: Enhance Institutional Dialogue**

The Writing Center coordinators support Priority 6 by working closely with the English Department, the Language Arts Division, and colleagues working in other student support centers. For example, during the 2017-18 academic year, we worked with colleagues in counseling to devise ways to support more students with writing their personal statements for transfer and scholarship applications.

In addition, Writing Center participates on the Learning Support Centers Coordination Committee (LSC[3]), a consultation group which focuses on coordination between the College's Learning Center and the discipline-specific Learning Support Centers. This committee brings together faculty coordinators, directors, classified staff, and students in a combined effort to ensure student success and to enhance institutional dialogue. Work on this committee has included aligning and updating SLOs, providing comprehensive academic support across the disciplines, and coordinating resources and hours.

**2. Results of Previous Program Review**
   a) Describe the results of your previous Program Review's action plan.
   b) Student success and equity: Discuss what your program has done to address equity gaps between student populations.
   c) Provide an update on any long-term plans that are still in progress (if applicable).

**a)   Describe the results of your previous Program Review's action plan.**

In our 2016 Program Review report, we identified three plans: 1) expand support for reading in English and across the curriculum; 2) explore options for increased student support space in light of changes on the first floor of North Hall; and 3) continue development of technology-based Writing Centers. We have focused our work over the past two years on these three goals, with the following results.

**1. Expand support for reading in English and across the curriculum**
   - As planned, we served on the Reading Task Force (while it was functioning).
   - We instituted pre-scheduled conferences focused on reading support for ENGL 828 and 838 students identified by their classroom teachers as at risk. Students met with faculty in the Writing Center every other week throughout the semester, which guaranteed them appointment time in the Writing Center and helped establish effective relationships between those students and Center faculty and staff. All of the students who consistently attended their appointments passed their English classes. Many continued to use the Writing Center independently in subsequent semesters. Not surprisingly, the challenge is to support students in attending consistently.

**2. Explore options for increased student support space in light of changes on the first floor of North Hall**

- Since renovation of Building 17 has been "on hold," though we've been in conversation with colleagues about the anticipated repurposing of the Village rooms, we have not pursued specific plans.

**3. Continue development of technology-based Writing Centers**
- We tried expanding online and remote Writing Center conferences, but the student demand did not support dedicated time slots. We found that we use our Writing Center resources more efficiently by making some in-Center appointments available remotely as we can then allow students waiting in the Center to take those appointments if they do not get used remotely.
- We were hoping to use Canvas to host interactive support materials for students but learned that Canvas is not well suited for that type of usage.

**b) Student success and equity: Discuss what your program has done to address equity gaps between student populations.**

For Fall 2017, the data show the following information regarding **ethnicity and Center usage**:

- For the following groups, the Writing Center serves students at **higher** rates than their percentage of the total student population:
    - Asian: 27.8% (WC) v. 20.9% (Collegewide)
    - African American: 3.3% (WC) v. 3.0% (Collegewide)
    - Hispanic: 23.4% (WC) v. 18.8% (Collegewide)
    - Pacific Islander: 2.7% (WC) v. 2.2% (Collegewide)
- For the following groups, the Writing Center serves students at rates **nearly equivalent** to their percentage of the total student population:
    - Filipino: 6.1% (WC) v. 6.9% (Collegewide)
    - Native American: 0.0% (WC) v. 0.1% (Collegewide)
    - Multiracial: 18.2% (WC) v. 18.5% (Collegewide)
- For the following group, the Writing Center serves students at a **lower** rate than their percentage of the total student population.
    - White: 17.2% (WC) v. 27.7% (Collegewide)

For Fall 2017, the data show the following information regarding **age and Center usage**:

- While students who are nineteen years old or younger makeup 30.1 percent of the total CSM student body, they comprise 53.6 percent of students served by the Writing Center.

Spring 2018 shows very little difference from the data above. For Spring 2018, the data show the following information regarding **ethnicity and Center usage**:

- For the following groups, the Writing Center serves students at **higher** rates than their percentage of the total student population:
    - Asian: 29% (WC) v. 21.6% (Collegewide)
    - Hispanic: 19.9% (WC) v. 18.3% (Collegewide)
    - Pacific Islander: 3.5% (WC) v. 2.1% (Collegewide)
    - Multiracial: 20% (WC) v. 19.1% (Collegewide)
- For the following groups, the Writing Center serves students at rates **nearly equivalent** to their percentage of the total student population:
    - African American: 2.9% (WC) v. 3.0% (Collegewide)
    - Native American: 0.0% (WC) v. 0.1% (Collegewide)

- For the following group, the Writing Center serves students at a **lower** rate than their percentage of the total student population.
  - Filipino: 5.0% (WC) v. 6.8% (Collegewide)
  - White: 18.3% (WC) v. 27.4% (Collegewide)

For Spring 2018, the data show the following information regarding **age and Center usage**:

- While students who are nineteen years old or younger makeup 26.3 percent of the total CSM student body, they comprise 46.5 percent of students served by the Writing Center.

Based on these data, we see no equity gap in the services provided by the Writing Center. That said, we continue to provide high quality writing and reading support for all students enrolled in English composition courses.

**C. Provide an update on any long-term plans that are still in progress (if applicable).**

Our online reporting form--a Google-based, custom built database/software thing--streamlines the communication between the Writing Center staff, students, and classroom teachers. The programming maintenance behind the reporting forms has been done by a volunteer who will likely not be able to continue providing this support beyond this academic year. We had approached District IT in the past about their taking over the maintenance, but they do not have the resources to take it on. We have begun discussions with Melissa Green in CIS to determine whether we can collaborate with them whereby a CIS student with CIS faculty support could take over the programming maintenance. Given all faculty's difficult workload, we have not been able to fully explore this option as of this time.

**3. Current Assessments**

a) Discuss what your center has done this Program Review cycle to address usage gaps between student populations, describing your successes, works in progress, and/or ongoing challenges. Refer to SARS, PRIE data, and other data sources as appropriate.

In fall 2016, we collected data showing that students in below-transfer courses (particularly ENGL 828 students) used the Writing Center at a lower rate than did students in transfer-level courses. As described in our response to 2.a.1, we successfully instituted pre-scheduled bi-weekly conferences for students in ENGL 828, and later expanded to include students in ENGL 838.

b) Discuss what your center has done this Program Review cycle to address access gaps between modes of delivery (online, hybrid, and face-to-face), describing your successes, works in progress, and/or ongoing challenges.

To support our online students, the Writing Center offers all students the option of remote conferences, (they send their essay electronically and have a phone conference with an instructor who is in the center). We've tried scheduling remote appointments at various times of the day, but despite these efforts, these appointments do not regularly fill. It is possible that students prefer face-to-face conferences, but we have no specific data that explain why our remote conferences are not well utilized. We will continue to explore strategies to support our online students.

c. Center Efficiency Indicators: Is the center efficient in meeting student needs? Discuss center efficiency, including staffing, hours of operation, tutorial and other services, space utilization, equipment, technology, or website, as appropriate.

These seem to us like two different questions. When it comes to measuring center efficiency based on staffing, hours, equipment, etc., we demonstrate a high level of efficiency because we serve a high number of students with a lean staff and a small space (proportional to the number of students we are tasked with serving each semester). The first question, however, about efficiency in meeting student needs is trickier. One of the primary functions of the Center is providing one-on-one conferences for students to work on reading and writing assignments with faculty members. While we know that these conferences provide meaningful help for students, we also know that we don't offer enough conferences each semester for all composition students to get as many conferences as they need (which, depending upon individual needs, can be anywhere from 1-5 on average) over the course of the semester. We know there are students each semester who have zero conferences, and for at least some of those students, conferences could have made the difference between passing and not passing a class. We would like to find out more about why these students end up with zero conferences in a semester. Based on what we know so far, the biggest obstacle is that students are unable to find an available conference at a time that fits with their very busy schedules. According to the surveys, in addition to scheduling challenges, some students noted that they would like to see expanded hours of operations (open later on Fridays and open on Saturdays) and some said that they would like longer appointments.

d.  Reflect on recent assessment results for the center, including SLOs, best practices, and surveys. Identify trends and discuss areas in need of improvement. Specify how assessment informs center development and changes to the center.

> Unfortunately, though we collected data for four semesters (AY 2016-17 and AY 2017-18), PRIE only provided us with the data for AY 2017-18. So based on those two semesters of survey data, we can make the following observations.

> Three hundred ninety students completed exit surveys about their experiences in the Writing Center: 367 responded to a survey about their essay conferences with faculty and 23 responded to a survey about their use of Writing Center tutorials (self-paced skill practice modules).

> Survey responses indicate that students had overwhelmingly positive experiences using the Writing Center in general, and meeting with instructors for one-on-one essay conferences and tutorials in particular. Overall, students rated the quality of the Writing Center's services very highly: 95.2% gave a rating of "very good" or "excellent." More than 90% of students say that the Writing Center is open when they need it "most of the time" or "always." More than 90% of students say that the front desk staff are "completely" helpful. Mostly important, students say that the work they do in the Writing Center has strengthened their writing skills: 89.5% say that they can apply their work on tutorials to their writing; 90% say that essay conferences were helpful to their writing.

> Students experience the Writing Center as a positive and encouraging support resource. Students wrote, "I appreciate the opportunity to speak with a professor to improve my work"; "[Front desk staff] are so nice! I am not afraid to ask for help"; "You guys made sure that I got the help I needed and that did not go unnoticed"; "I come for every essay"; "The center instructors always inspire me with brilliant ideas"; and finally, "Without the Writing Center, where would I be?"

**4. Planning**
Describe and prioritize goals and plans to sustain and improve student success and equity (referring to Parts 2 and 3 above):
   a.  Provide a brief description, including actions, measurable outcomes, and timelines.
   b.  What will your center do to increase student success and promote student equity in the next two years? What kind of professional development and institutional support will be engaged and enacted to meet these goals?

c.   Describe other professional development activities and institutional support and collaborations that would most effectively ensure that the center achieves its goals and plans.

**AB 705**

The English department is currently involved in extensive discussion about how best to respond to the mandates of AB 705, which is going to result in the near, or total, elimination of all below-transfer level courses (English 828 and 838) by Fall 2019. All of our discussion to date has centered on the challenges of helping students who are essentially not college-ready in their reading and writing skills successfully complete transfer English within their first two semesters at CSM. Meeting this goal will require additional resources **for** some of our students, which will mean additional resources **from** the college. We anticipate that some of that additional support will involve significantly expanding the role of the Writing Center. No firm decisions have been made at this time. English department faculty will continue meeting through fall 2018 and spring 2019 to re-design English 105 and will work closely with the Writing Center coordinators to decide how the Writing Center can best support students.

Fully staffing the Writing Center has been challenging over the past four semesters. As more and more of our courses are 5 units, more part-time faculty are reaching their ten-unit limit in their classroom teaching assignments and are therefore unable to take units in the Writing Center. Full-time faculty are stretched so thin that some are not able to take more than one or two units, if any, in the Writing Center. This fall (2018), we have been unable to find a replacement for a faculty member who has gone out on maternity leave. That said, the entire English department agrees that our Writing Center is critical to our students' academic success, largely due to our unique, faculty-staffing model.

As the department and the college make decisions about how to support students in their reading and writing skills in the post-AB705 milieu, hiring more faculty will clearly be essential for the Writing Center to continue meeting students' needs, closing equity gaps, and promoting academic success.

**CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ESL STUDENTS**

Starting in Fall 2019, students in ESL 400 will be primarily served in the ESL Center, not the Writing Center, as they have been in the past. While we believe this change will benefit our ESL students, we are concerned that the traditional staffing structure (using TBA attachment to determine the number of faculty units we can staff) will result in zero units (FLCs) of ESL faculty in the Writing Center, leaving ESL students who have moved into ENGL 100, 105, 110, and/or 165 without specialized support. To further their development, these students will need the continued support of ESL faculty, who have the specialized training to best support students' written language acquisition. In order to provide this support, the Center needs to have ESL faculty working here regardless of which center ESL 400 is attached to.

**CAMPUS WIDE ACCEPTANCE OF TEACHING READING**

The Writing Center is eager to collaborate with faculty in other disciplines to support students. Students read and/or write in most of their CSM courses. English courses and the Writing Center may provide the foundation for students to develop and hone reading and writing skills, but in order for students to continue to develop those skills in meaningful ways, students need reading and writing support in their courses across the campus. The Writing Center will always be a place that supports students and helps students build and refine reading and writing skills, but thinking of these skills as "housed" in English classes or the Writing Center does a tremendous disservice to our students who need continuous support, support that goes beyond their limited time in composition classes. This will become even more urgent with the changes coming from AB705 and the additional support that we anticipate students will need. The Center, in conjunction with the English department, would very much like to participate in campus-wide professional development activities that will help all CSM faculty support their students' learning and growth in reading and writing.