

Administrative Program Review

# **PROGRAM SELF STUDY**

for

WCU Writing and Learning Commons (WaLC)

## **WRITING TUTORING PROGRAM**

(formerly the University Writing Center)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	ii
<b>RESPONSE TO PROGRAM REVIEW CRITERIA</b>	
<b>I. History and Description</b> .....	1
A. Primary Purpose and Key Functions .....	1
B. Goals/Priorities .....	1
C. History .....	1
D. Organizational Structure .....	2
E. Student Employees .....	2
<b>II. Alignment with WCU Mission, Vision, and Values</b> .....	3
A. Alignment .....	3
B. Changes in the Last Five Years .....	4
C. Anticipated Changes in the Next Five Years .....	4
<b>III. Demand for the Program</b> .....	6
A. Key Users and Participants.....	6
B. Measuring Demand.....	7
C. Major Interactions with Other Units.....	8
D. Related Programs and Services and the Unique Contributions of the WTP .....	8
<b>IV. Quality</b> .....	9
A. Identification and Measurement of Quality.....	9
B. Using Assessment to Improve Programs and Services.....	10
C. Major Accomplishments in the Last Five Years.....	11
<b>V. Cost Effectiveness</b> .....	12
A. Background and Measurements .....	12
B. In-house Tutoring .....	12
C. Writing Fellows.....	13
<b>VI. Opportunities</b> .....	13
A. Potential to Enhance Existing Programs and Services.....	13
B. How Other Units Advance/Hinder Our Effectiveness .....	14
C. Redundant Programs and Services.....	15
D. Services at Peer Institutions .....	15
E. Cost-Saving Measures and External Funding .....	15
F. Making Our Program Exemplary: Opportunities for Improvement.....	15
<b>APPENDICES</b> ( <i>separate file</i> )	
A. Mission, Goals, and Services	
B. Usage Reports (and Satisfaction Rates) by Semester	
C. Detailed Organizational Chart and Permanent Position Definitions	
D. Fulltime Staff Resumes/CVs	
E. Job Descriptions for Graduate Tutors and Writing Fellows	
F. QEP and Writing, Reading, and Critical Studies Program: Rubrics and Outcomes	
G. Surveys and Satisfaction Rates: Writing Fellows	
H. Policies and Appointments	
I. Faculty Services and Workshop Descriptions	
J. Online Services: Meebo and Smarthinking Information, Usage	
K. NSSE and the CSWC: Survey Means Comparisons (Writing Portion)	
L. Writing Fellows Program Information and Forms	
M. Website: Sitemap, Resource List, and Usage Rates/Analytics	
N. Additional Training Materials: Syllabi for English 220 and 221, Graduate Staff Meetings	
O. Peer Institution Comparisons	
P. Budget Information: Funds, Expenditures, Salaries, etc.	
Q. Survey of Student Files: Topics of Tutoring Sessions and Student Needs	
<b>ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS: Training Handbooks for In-House Tutors and Writing Fellows</b>	

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Executive Summary**

For over thirty years, the former University Writing Center, now functioning as the writing tutoring program of the Writing and Learning Commons, has provided support for student writing and communication at WCU. As our institution has grown, the mission and services of its writing center have expanded, keeping pace with current scholarship in writing program administration, our QEP, and changes in the student body and tutor workforce. Our former writing tutors/consultants have gone on to teach at many schools and universities and produce scores of scholarly and creative works, raising the profile of WCU and helping the University to meet the educational needs of the state and region.

Internally, our relationship to the campus has strengthened and deepened, particularly in recent years. Since 2008 alone, almost 5,000 students have sought our assistance in one-on-one consultation about their writing; this core service has consistently improved and expanded to include students from a growing number of populations, disciplines, and classes. In addition, our online resources, faculty consultations, and workshops, along with initiatives like the Writing Fellows Program, have helped academic departments and individual faculty members to focus on the essential academic skills outlined in our QEP and UNC-Tomorrow. Our commitment to preparing our graduate assistants for teaching and to graduate study in general has helped enrich the graduate experience at Western for many students, both consultants and clients alike.

Our recent merger with the former Catamount Academic Tutoring Center has resulted in the streamlining of training, consolidation of costs, and standardization of policies and outcomes. These changes have helped to improve and better coordinate the work of all the former Academic Success Centers. As we look forward, the creation of the Writing and Learning Commons (WaLC), our impending move out of Hunter Library, and the demands of the new 2020 Strategic Plan mean that we will need to be vigilant and attentive to our mission, values, outcomes, and practice.

## Reflections from the Process

At an engaged institution like WCU, a writing center can (and should) be a hub for supporting communication, critical thinking, research, interdisciplinarity, retention, diversity, graduate and distance education, the first year experience, multimodal teaching and learning, and faculty development across the curricula. Thus, in preparing this document, we have revisited repeatedly the following questions:

- What does the merger of the CAT and Writing Centers into the consolidated WaLC mean for our future? Has this affected our identity, and how will/should it change our services? Should we “cross-pollinate” more or less?
- What will our impending move to the Belk Building, anticipated growth/change in demand, and coming changes in general education, strategic planning, and other campus-wide efforts mean for our practice, and how can we best prepare for these changes?
- Should we look to expand our services in future and offer more, or focus down on key offerings? If the latter, on what should we focus?
- What means of assessment will be most feasible in future? How can we develop and effectively measure learning outcomes?
- Can data collection, scheduling of appointments, and other operations be improved? If so, how?
- Should we move toward a more multimodal set of services and practices, and what technologies will we need in future?

It is our sincere hope that this review process will help the writing tutoring program to identify its strengths and meet coming challenges and opportunities with a view towards making the WaLC an essential nexus of engaged learning at WCU.

## **RESPONSE TO PROGRAM REVIEW CRITERIA**

### **I. History and Description**

#### **A. Primary Purpose and Key Functions**

The Writing and Learning Commons' (WaLC) writing tutoring program (WTP) provides tutoring and writing resources to thousands of WCU students each year. The WTP<sup>1</sup> helps students develop and maintain successful, ethical writing and research habits. Our services include:

- Face-to-face, one-on-one and group writing consultations;
- In-class writing and research skills workshops;
- Faculty consultations on writing assignment design;
- Tutoring in English as a Second Language (ESL);
- Writing Fellows (a curriculum-based peer tutoring program);
- Online, open-access writing, research, and learning resources;
- Instant messaging service for simple writing queries;
- Extensive training and opportunities for all student employees;
- Documentation for instructors of students' visits and progress.

The WaLC is open to all currently enrolled WCU undergraduate and graduate students, both resident and distance, and all instructors. Our website is public and available to anyone.

#### **B. Goals/Priorities**

The WaLC seeks to enhance the academic environment and raise the level of academic discourse at WCU by providing tutoring, academic skills consultations, workshops, online learning resources, and faculty consultations. For our goals and services and a description of the Writing Fellows Program, see *Appendix A*.

#### **C. History**

The WTP was founded by the WCU English department as a writing lab in the late 1970s. In 1982, it moved to Hunter Library, and a succession of professors from English served as its half-

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<sup>1</sup> The term "writing tutoring program(s)" and WTP are not official WCU terminology. These terms are used only in this self study to refer to writing tutoring, the Writing Fellows program, and any and all services that were formerly part of the University Writing Center. Since the term "writing center" no longer applies to the newly combined Writing and Learning Commons (see I.C., "History"), we have used the acronym "WTP" for the reader's convenience herein.

time director. It became a fully independent writing center in 1988, and by 1992 it had two fulltime staff members and 15 tutors. The Writing Center then gradually expanded its services and scope, first as a unit of Advising, then Enrollment Management. Meanwhile, the Catamount Academic Tutoring (CAT) Center was founded in January 2001 as a subject-specific tutoring center. Both centers became units of the Office of Undergraduate Studies in 2007. Over the next few years, the Writing Center transitioned its in-house tutors to all graduate students, founded its Writing Fellows program, and updated its services and online resources. In July 2011, the Writing Center and the CAT Center merged to form the Writing and Learning Commons. The Writing Center Director's position was eliminated, and Leah Hampton, previously the Associate Director of the Writing Center, became Associate Director of the WaLC. (See section I. D. below.)

The former Writing Center served, on average, approximately 1,200 students in 3,000 individual tutoring sessions per academic year. Usage rates for the 2012 academic year are thus far comparable to previous years. The WTP is operating this year with approximately 75% of its previous staff and tutoring coverage, yet we have managed to tutor roughly the same number of students and increase our services to the campus. Usage rates are discussed in detail in *Appendix B*.

#### D. Organizational Structure

The WaLC (and its WTP) is a unit of Academic Affairs and the Office of the Provost. WaLC staff report to the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies. The WaLC's three full-time, permanent staff members are Chesney Reich (Director), Carrie Hachadurian (Administrative Support), and Leah Hampton (Associate Director and WTP coordinator.) Funding for WTP comes from three different sources: in-house graduate student wages come from the WaLC's annual state budget allocation; graduate assistants are paid by the English department and the Graduate School; and undergraduate Writing Fellows are paid from a separate fund which comes directly from student Education and Technology fees. A full organizational chart and vita for each WaLC staff member are provided in *Appendices C and D*.

#### E. Student Employees

The WTP relies almost solely on student workers for its tutoring services. Workshops and consultations are completed by permanent staff, with occasional input from graduate student workers. See graduate assistant job descriptions in *Appendix E* for a list of specific duties.

**Graduate Assistants (currently 7).** GAs work as writing tutors/consultants and take appointments, walk-in clients, and special projects as needed. GAs are assigned (and paid \$8,000 per year) through the English department. GAs work 14 or 20 hours per week in the WaLC, depending on their program. (English M.A. candidates work 6 hours per week in the English department.)

**Graduate Tutors (currently 2).** GTs perform the same duties as GAs, but are paid directly from WaLC funds. They may come from any department/program. The pay rate is approximately \$8,000 per academic year (for an assistantship), or \$12 per hour, if employed hourly.

**Writing Fellows (currently 12).** Writing Fellows are talented undergraduates who are chosen through a rigorous application process and paid \$800 to \$900 per semester. Each Fellow completes two training courses and works exclusively with one faculty member per semester.

## II. Alignment with WCU Mission, Vision, and Values

### A. Alignment

The WTP is critical to the university's mission and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) outcome of helping students learn "to communicate effectively and responsibly." We are currently developing measurable learning outcomes for our student employees. In addition and in the meantime, the WTP uses the QEP's meta-rubric on effective and responsible communication, as well as the Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies program's learning outcomes for English 101 and 202 (*see Appendix F*) to guide its practice. These rubrics align closely with current scholarship in writing center administration and thus match WTP goals for training, materials, and service delivery.

Another QEP outcome, the ability to "integrate information from a variety of contexts," aligns to our day-to-day efforts to improve students' research and critical thinking skills. Further, UNC-Tomorrow (2007) identifies written communication as a "critical skill for global competitiveness" (Table 1, p. 12). Writing, research, and communication skills are repeatedly cited in UNC-T, the QEP, and individual departmental curricula as essential to student success.

Thus, the WTP concerns itself specifically and purposefully with the improvement of academic discourse on campus. Our services do not align with WCU's values by default, however; nor do we assume that by being in the business of assisting student writers, we automatically align with the academic colleges. We frequently seek feedback from faculty members, our advisory board, the QEP Assessment Committee, and other departments and units. All our training, tutoring, and resources promote active learning. We strive to help our clients synthesize their thinking, research,

and writing across a broad range of topics and interests. The WTP seeks to practice what the QEP and UNC-T preach through a variety of methods, such as

- Utilizing collaborative techniques and encouraging interdisciplinarity in client sessions;
- Encouraging students to think about their role as academic writers and understand the university and their fields of study as discourse communities;
- Providing practical resources and advice on ethical intellectual inquiry;
- Teaching editing skills that help students identify their own aptitudes, abilities, and interests;
- Supporting faculty by providing students with discipline-specific rules for writing and research in their fields of study and professional environments.

Thus, our practices align, on the macro- and micro-levels, with WCU's vision for student learning.

## B. Changes in the Last Five Years

As noted in "History" (see I.C.), the WTP was until recently a separate writing center. After merging with the former academic tutoring center, WaLC staff carefully considered QEP language and outcomes and revised its mission and goals (*see Appendix A*). Our new purpose is both more expansive and more specific, and we believe we are poised to grow and change with WCU.

Two specific internal changes are worth mentioning here. First, the WTP converted its in-house tutors to all graduate students in 2008. (Undergraduates still work as Writing Fellows.) Graduate assistants are better equipped to handle our training and employment requirements and work with graduate student clients, and they can apply their WTP work to their own research, teaching, and career-related tasks. Secondly, the WTP oversaw the implementation of Smarthinking (see III.D) in 2009. While this service is now administered by the Office of Continuing Education, we were instrumental in its implementation, and we still assist with its administration and marketing.

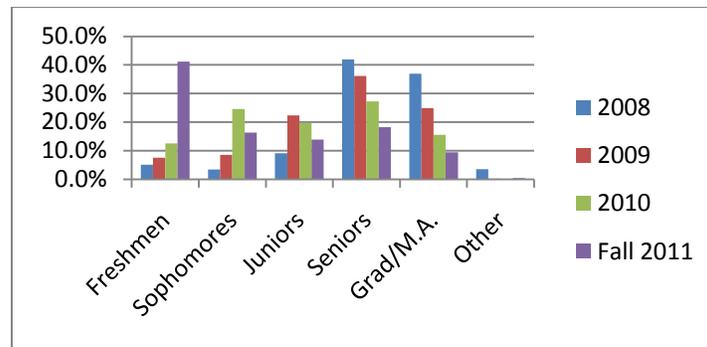
## C. Anticipated Changes in the Next Five Years

The most immediate impending change for the WTP is the WaLC's upcoming move out of Hunter Library to the Belk Building, an academic building that houses key constituencies like the department of Criminal Justice and the College of Fine and Performing Arts. While this new space is larger, more centrally located, and better suited to our work, leaving the library may impact our usage rates and method for assisting students with their research.

More significantly, as WCU's managed growth continues, and as writing becomes a more fully-integrated and essential part of individual curricula, we anticipate an increased demand for our

services. For example, the WTP has seen a steady, significant increase in freshman clients; indeed, our ratio of freshman clients has more than doubled so far this academic year. See figure below.

**Figure: Usage by Class, 2008 through Fall 2011**



Over the years, our usage statistics have shown that upperclassmen and graduate students (who tend to write larger and more involved projects) use writing centers more than underclassmen. We see this increased usage by freshmen as a positive development for several reasons. As individual programs seek to align with our QEP, instructors in many academic departments have been adding writing projects to their courses. WCU has also gradually raised its admissions standards and adopted comprehensive strategies for engaging freshmen; the academic profile of freshmen at WCU has therefore improved in recent years. The General Education Task Force's initial report suggests that future iterations of WCU's Liberal Studies program will include more courses with a "significant writing component" and more focus on collaborative learning and information literacy. The WTP has also strengthened its relationship with the English Department's first-year writing program since 2010. Thus, WTP freshman usage rates may indicate a coming tide of increasingly engaged students who are writing more, are more aware of our services, understand the importance of collaboration, and therefore require more feedback and support.

All these changes may also signal a growing demand from *instructors* for more training and support in the teaching of writing. Increased class sizes may also lead to more demand, as students seek out more individualized attention beyond their growing classrooms. No matter its cause, the increasing ratio of freshman clients signals an exponential growth in demand as current freshmen advance in their studies and continue to seek our services.

We also anticipate that online and distance students will continue to need support in greater numbers, hence our efforts to maintain a comprehensive website and online tools. As WCU seeks to eliminate redundant programs and services, we may be asked to provide specialized tutoring for athletes and other unique student populations. We may also face demand for de-centralized

services, due to campus expansion and the transition of Asheville programs away from UNCA, where students previously had access to UNCA's writing center. In short, we expect that in the near future we will be tasked with a more diverse range of duties for a steadily growing population of student writers.

Finally, recent cuts to graduate education and assistantships may be cause for concern. The WTP does not have sufficient funds to hire all its own tutors/consultants. We rely heavily on the Graduate School and the English Department for most of our workforce. If cuts to graduate study continue, we anticipate dire circumstances for the WTP. There is simply no feasible, cost-effective way to hire tutors and meet demand for our services without assistance from these other units.

### **III. Demand for the Program**

#### **A. Key Users and Participants**

Tutoring appointments are open to all undergraduate and graduate students, free of charge. There is no limit on the number of sessions for students. We operate on an appointment system, but we will take walk-ins (*see Appendix H* for our policies). Distance and online students can use our services if they are able to come to the Cullowhee campus for in-person appointments. Our website is available to anyone, including members of the public. All instructors, including graduate assistants, are eligible for assignment consultations, in-class workshops, and other services. All full-time faculty members are eligible to apply for Writing Fellows. While we do consult with faculty on writing instruction and support teaching via our workshops, the WTP does not assist instructors with their own scholarship or personal writing projects, because assistance for faculty scholarship is available through the Coulter Faculty Commons, the Graduate School and Research, and Hunter Library. We do screen and recommend paid copyeditors for faculty and staff members by request.

Overall, the WTP assists an average of 1,200 students per year, or roughly 13% of the student body, in one-on-one tutoring. Our website averages approximately 2,200 hits per month, and many instructors make our online tutorials required reading in their courses. In addition, the Writing Fellows program serves an average of 140 students per semester in at least three colleges. In-class workshop totals are more difficult to estimate due to inadequate record keeping in previous years, but in Fall 2011, WTP workshops were given in 24 courses (ranging from freshman to graduate level), with a combined enrollment of 500 students. For detailed information on student usage for the last three academic years, see *Appendix B*.

## B. Measuring Demand

Overall, demand for our services (and the type of services required) is estimated based on factors explained in II.C above—changes in curriculum, student population growth, and so on. The WaLC maintains healthy relationships with other units in order to anticipate these needs. (See section III.C below). Demand is, in practice, measured by the number of calls, appointments, and requests that we receive. These are measured in three ways, explained in the following paragraphs.

**TutorTrac.** The WaLC tracks all its student appointments through TutorTrac, a database system that interfaces with WCU's Banner Administration software. (See *Appendix B* for representative reports of available data). The bulk of the usage statistics and other data in this self study come from our TutorTrac archives, which go back to 2005. It should be noted that TutorTrac and Banner are imperfect systems, and much of this data is difficult to manipulate. Further, writing sessions are highly individualized, so we use a hard-copy signup sheet and require students to speak with a member of our staff about their needs when making an appointment. For all these reasons, certain aspects of demand are difficult for us to quantify. See Section VI for more details.

**Workshops and Special Assistance.** The WTP offers in-class workshops (*see Appendix I*) for any instructor seeking support for writing and research instruction. These workshops are tailored to individual needs and have not traditionally been tracked or counted over the years; see section III.A for Fall 2011 figures. We also frequently receive phone calls and visits from faculty and distance students with special questions or requests. These conversations are not tracked, but they are quite common and often involve detailed consultation on unique problems. Lastly, the WTP is currently piloting an online chat line for short, simple questions about writing. These queries are tracked in a logbook. See *Appendix J* and section III.D for more on our online services.

**Consortium for the Study of Writing in College.** WCU is a participant in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and in 2009, our NSSE included questions from the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC). According to the study's mean comparisons, WCU students showed a statistically significant higher rate of usage of writing tutoring services than other campuses in the NSSE study. Our students also worked harder on process and brainstorming and sought or received more feedback on writing projects in process. WCU also showed a significantly higher average of seniors who compile professional portfolios before graduation and/or submit their writing to a professional publication. These numbers are not an indication of any problems in student writing, but rather serve as positive indicators of student accountability and engagement, especially in relation to their communication and the accessibility of

campus resources. We believe these CSWC results are directly tied to WCU's implementation of the QEP and UNC-Tomorrow, and we are committed to supporting students in their efforts to write more and seek more opportunities to collaborate. Thus, we anticipate ongoing and significant demand for WTP services from a student body engaged in substantive writing projects across the curricula. (See *Appendix K* for NSSE and CSWC results.)

**Writing Fellows.** The Writing Fellows program determines demand on a case-by-case basis. The faculty application (*see Appendix L*) asks instructors to provide information on the areas of their teaching and writing instruction which they would like to improve and/or augment. Individual consultations, wherein the number of students, types of assignments, common problems, and other needs are assessed, are a required and recursive element of the application process.

### C. Major Interactions with Other Units

The WaLC is a support unit that collaborates with any student, individual, or academic program that needs us. Any academic unit that seeks to enhance writing instruction or foster better communication on campus is encouraged to partner with the WTP. For example, we have longstanding relationships with the departments of Criminal Justice and Environmental Health, the College of Business, Athletics, and the Office of Continuing Education.

Perhaps our closest and most productive collaborations are with the Graduate School and the English Department. The WTP prepares graduate assistants for teaching in English master's programs (which provide the bulk of our tutoring workforce) and assists English faculty with assessment of its freshman writing program. We rely heavily on the Graduate School for help with recruiting and training our GAs, and engage in ongoing collaborations with the Graduate School on supporting graduate theses and research projects. These interdependencies are efficient (no overlap of paperwork or duties) and mutually beneficial. The WTP also works with Hunter Library's Reference staff to support student research and with Information Technology on assisting students and faculty with unique projects like the eBriefcase (WCU's online student portfolio system). The WaLC collaborates with the Mathematics Tutoring Center, the office of the First Year Experience, and other units of Undergraduate Studies on promotion, assessment, and advancement of its services. The WaLC and WTP also partner closely with the Academic Success Program (ASP), a summer "bridge" or conditional admission program, every summer, providing instructors, tutoring, and other resources. Whenever possible, we share costs and logistical support with all these units.

## D. Related Programs and Services and the Unique Contributions of the WTP

Student Support Services and Athletics offer limited, informal tutoring for their students with unique demands, but these students are usually referred to the WaLC, and none of these units employs writing tutors. The Coulter Faculty Commons offers excellent support to instructors on assignment and course design, but CFC staff members do not specialize in the instruction of writing.

The Office of Continuing Education provides Smarthinking.com, a contracted online tutoring service, for distance students who cannot come to Cullowhee for in-person appointments. WTP staff members assist Continuing Ed with the administration of our Smarthinking contract. While Smarthinking is useful for distance students, it is limited in its scope, providing only asynchronous and global feedback on submitted papers. Assessment is also problematic since Smarthinking is an independent contractor. All WTP consultations, workshops, and online resources are available to distance faculty.

No other unit or department at WCU offers writing tutors, Writing Fellows, workshops, consultations, web tutorials, or any other resources like ours. All of the major services and programs offered by the WTP are unique contributions to the campus community.

## IV. Quality

### A. Identification and Measurement of Quality

The WTP tracks and measures the quality of its services using five primary methods.

**TutorTrac.** TutorTrac provides demographic information on clients, satisfaction rates, and information on demand and usage. For examples of TutorTrac reporting, see *Appendix B*.

**Surveys and Evaluations.** All participants (students and new instructors) in the Writing Fellows Program are surveyed each semester. The WaLC is also participating in a campus-wide survey about its services (and other units of Undergraduate Studies). For survey results on Writing Fellows, see *Appendix G*.

**Web Analytics.** The WaLC tracks traffic to its homepage and online resources. For a summary of our recent website hits and usage see *Appendix M*.

**Training.** Our recruitment procedures, training, scheduling, observations, and staff meetings guarantee that all writing tutors are highly prepared and qualified. WTP training materials are provided in *Appendix N* and the two additional attachments to this document (tutor handbooks).

**Benchmarking.** The WTP periodically compares its services to those at peer and aspirant institutions, as well as other UNC schools and nearby institutions. Our approach is similar in scope to these schools and follows the same principles and practices as those at peer institutions and elsewhere. Writing tutors/consultants use a collaborative approach, evaluating higher-order concerns and orienting students to the academy and academic writing before focusing on sentence-level problems. They also help clients identify their own unique editing issues and develop revision plans. In some cases the WTP outperforms its peers; for example, only one institution in our recent benchmarking survey offers Writing Fellows consistently—James Madison University, a competitive peer/aspirant school. (Our Writing Fellows program has also served as a model for three area schools—Montreat College, Mars Hill College, and UNCA.) See *Appendix O* for detailed benchmarking.

In addition, Leah Hampton meets regularly with local writing center administrators from five local institutions to compare methods and experiences. Also, the WaLC's Advisory Board includes members from across the campus who provide feedback and support on assessment and demand.

Finally, while WTP cannot reliably track individual grades received by students after their sessions (and while doing so would not be an indicator of quality in and of itself), we do know that the average GPA of our student clients (3.18) is higher than the average GPA of the undergraduate student body (2.54). Further, *Appendix K* on NSSE results shows that WCU students enjoy a higher-than-average level of engagement with writing and writing resources (like the WTP). Finally, the majority of our student clients (approximately 70%) refer themselves to the WaLC or are referred by a peer rather than being required/referred by an instructor. Together, these numbers suggest a high level of self efficacy among WTP student clients; self efficacy and confidence about one's writing are generally considered by writing program administrators to be predictors of programmatic success.

## B. Using Assessment to Improve Programs and Services

WTP tutors and staff regularly utilize assessment data to improve programs and services. This involves recursive, ongoing training and review of services on an individual level, coupled with efforts to connect (and re-connect) to other programs and units, as described in Sections II and III above. Specific areas where assessment results are implemented and shared are explained below.

**TutorTrac.** All WTP staff receive feedback on the success of their sessions, as determined by TutorTrac's records of student satisfaction. Tutors/consultants can review satisfaction rates and client comments at any time. TutorTrac also provides instructors with weekly updates on their

students' WTP sessions, including the number, length, and content of sessions. WTP and WaLC staff rely on TutorTrac to measure and predict demand, client satisfaction, and the needs of the students we serve. Any issues or problems that arise via the TutorTrac system, such as a dissatisfied student client or an instructor with concerns about session content, are handled personally by Leah Hampton or Carrie Hachadurian. All WaLC permanent staff also review session notes in TutorTrac at random to ensure the quality of this feedback; WaLC staff also frequently run reports in TutorTrac on usage, special populations, and individual students throughout any given semester.

**Surveys, Observations, and Evaluations.** All participants in the Writing Fellows program (faculty, students, and Fellows) are surveyed or evaluated each semester. Results of these surveys are compiled and shared with all concerned parties, providing program staff and instructors with valuable feedback that informs their practices the following semester. (For an example of these individualized reports, see *Appendix G*.) Writing Fellows take two training courses in their first year, English 220 and English 221, wherein Fellows engage in ongoing peer- and self-evaluation of their skills and practices while reading a variety of texts on writing center practice (see *Appendix N*). Leah Hampton receives standard student CoursEval data on these classes. Graduate writing tutors are evaluated using session observations, staff meeting exercises, and ongoing mentoring. These observations include a formal review form (see *forms in appendix of "Additional Attachment"*) and meetings to discuss success and areas for improvement. Lastly, all tutors/consultants mentor one another and utilize the collaborative layout and approach of the WaLC to inform and encourage one another's practice in session. For example, Writing Fellows are always paired with a Senior Fellow who reviews their work and guides them through their first batch of papers. Graduate assistants and Writing Fellows frequently observe one another's sessions and offer informal feedback that complements the more formal training, observation, and evaluation done by WTP permanent staff.

All assessments and quality controls help ensure that our policies and training work effectively and result in improvements. For example, qualitative data from CoursEval, TutorTrac, and graduate student evaluations in Spring 2010 resulted in a full revision of all WTP training materials, and TutorTrac data is used to help the WTP make informed hiring and training choices.

### C. Major Accomplishments in the Last Five Years

Since 2006, the former Writing Center, now the WaLC's WTP, has continuously improved and expanded its services. Our accomplishments include:

- Implementing a Writing Fellows program (the first in the UNC system);

- Successfully merging with the former CAT Center and combining resources and services to increase cost effectiveness while maintaining or expanding all existing services;
- Increasing the number and variety of in-class workshops and consultations for faculty;
- Converting to an all-graduate student in-house staff to improve the consistency and reliability of advice to students;
- Completely revising our website twice, including significant updates and additions;
- Receiving two separate QEP assessment grants;
- Developing extensive training materials for both writing tutoring and Writing Fellows;
- Participating in two studies (in Philosophy and Criminal Justice) on Writing Fellows;
- Mentoring administrators at two area colleges in their creation of Writing Fellows programs;
- Training scores of future English teachers, many of whom have gone on to teach in area schools and universities (three former WTP employees currently serve on the faculty of WCU's English department; at least two former employees have recently published books);
- Assisting a grand total of over 4,500 students in over 15,000 sessions, totaling 18,545 hours of writing tutoring since August 2008.

## V. Cost Effectiveness

### A. Background and Measurements

In June 2011, the former Writing Center (now the WTP) merged with the former CAT Center to form the WaLC. Two permanent, fulltime positions were eliminated. While the Writing Fellows Program maintained its own fund, the budget for in-house writing tutoring was merged with the WaLC's total budget. For budgets for the last three fiscal years, see *Appendix P*. Note that the FY 2012 budget for WTP's in-house services and all resources not exclusive to Writing Fellows are now filed under the WaLC's budget, which must also cover the services of the former CAT Center. The merger of the CAT and Writing Centers necessitated cost effectiveness measures, and WaLC (and WTP) funds are now allocated so that most expenditures serve multiple purposes.

### B. In-House Writing Tutoring: Indicators of Cost Effectiveness

Supplies, space, and resources were combined with the former CAT Center in Summer 2011. Supply and operational funds for both centers were combined into one smaller budget. Our

healthy interdependency with English helps us cover labor costs while providing free training to English graduate assistants preparing to enter the classroom.

Permanent fulltime staff combined duties after the elimination of two positions, and any funds not reverted to the state were applied to student wages.

The WaLC website includes PDF versions of all its writing mini-courses and tutorials, which saves printing costs. These resources are free and frequently used in classes campus wide, saving academic departments the cost of developing and printing such information. The Meebo chat line uses free software and is incorporated into employee prep time; this service does not require any identifiable expenditures. TutorTrac and advertising/promotional costs are shared with the Math Tutoring Center. Our development of a Blue Ridge writing center group (BRWCG) allows for free professional development for Leah Hampton, as well as valuable outreach, particularly during assessments and other reviews, when members share materials and feedback.

Usage rates are essentially the same as last year, despite having less space and fewer staff. In short, we've done more with less.

### C. Writing Fellows: Indicators of Cost Effectiveness

Supplies, space, and resources are shared with the WaLC whenever feasible.

Training is completed through a credit-bearing course; students are not paid for this time.

Professional development. Faculty consultations have increased in the last year, and these consultations do not require any identifiable expenditures (though they do take up considerable time for the Associate Director). Resources and materials for Writing Fellows have been updated with input from BRWCG members (see above), at no identifiable cost.

## VI. Opportunities

### A. Potential to Enhance Existing Programs and Services

WTP already collaborates with other departments and is a unique and unduplicated service. None of our services can be further outsourced or automated. See section VI.F below for information on potential opportunities. The collection of assessment data on in-house writing tutoring could be automated and streamlined, hence our recent partnership with IT/CIS classes to build a new visit record system.

## B. How Other Units Hinder Our Effectiveness

Because we operate independently of academic departments and seek to serve their needs, we are rarely hindered by academic units. There are other units that limit our effectiveness, such as:

**Information Technology.** Banner and TutorTrac are problematic softwares, and we would prefer more options for data collection and control, as noted in section VI.A above.

**Branding and the Print Shop.** The promotional materials and online presence we believe would be most effective for students are not possible under current branding rules and procedures. Also, the Print Shop's turnaround times for basic materials and strict adherence to Branding protocols can occasionally hinder our ability to market our services. If the WaLC (an internal, academic unit) was exempt from Branding rules, we would be able to provide a more consistent, user-friendly website and other materials which would better serve the campus. Managing our own "message" would also provide professional development opportunities for our permanent and student staff, many of whom are professional writers with experience in media and design.

**Graduate School.** The Graduate School advances our mission on a daily basis, but recent cuts to graduate assistantships have hindered our ability to hire all the tutors/consultants we need.

**Financial Aid.** We rely on work study students to provide front-desk coverage, and could potentially hire them as Writing Fellows, but the financial aid decisions and awards process makes it difficult for us to identify qualified work study students in time to adequately hire/train them before the start of the semester. Furthermore, in fall 2011, we lost a highly qualified, veteran writing tutor because information about his eligibility for aid was delayed until after the start of the semester; he was dismissed from the university after he had already begun working for us. Without efficient communication from the Financial Aid Office about student eligibility, we are forced to hire more non-work study students, which limits hiring options and cost effectiveness.

**Housing.** Residence Life's requests for special programming occasionally hinder our effectiveness. The WaLC is asked to provide workshops, training, and even tutoring in the dorms. These services require added printing costs and extra hours for tutors. Sessions are usually late in the evening, making them difficult to plan. Attendance is sporadic, and Residence Life does not track or require attendance. Locations are often inadequate for our purposes, and tutors must work without supervision. Despite the limited return on investment and chronically low attendance at these events, Housing staff continue to request these services, and have not yet acknowledged (or attempted to assist us with) the costs and logistical requirements of providing them.

### C. Redundant Programs and Services

The WTP does not offer any redundant programs or services, since none of its services are duplicated elsewhere on campus. However, a few duties related to other units could be eliminated:

- WTP could share more administration of Smarthinking with Distance/Continuing Ed staff.
- Special summer programs frequently require support during a time when resources are extremely limited. If programs like the Jamaican Cohort (which already provides extensive support to its students) require WTP support, the nature of that support should be clearly outlined in advance so the WTP can assess the resources available and/or lobby for additional resources and support from the Office of Continuing Education.

### D. Services at Peer Institutions

Comparison of WTP to similar units at peer and aspirant institutions shows that WCU meets, and often exceeds, expectations and standard practice. A detailed table of peer institution comparisons is provided in the Benchmarking section; see *Appendix O*.

### E. Cost-Saving Measures and External Funding

The WTP already operates on a limited budget and is beholden to other departments for most of its graduate student staff. External grants are an unlikely source of funding because the overwhelming majority of grants for tutoring (federal and private) are awarded almost exclusively to K-12 and community/adult literacy programs. Students with Federal Work Study grants could be utilized more, especially as Writing Fellows, but only if WCU's Financial Aid Office can provide timely notification to hiring departments of students' eligibility for financial aid.

There are two potential sources of increased funding. First, campus athletics receives moneys from the NCAA for tutoring. WTP provides virtually all writing support for student athletes but does not receive any of these NCAA funds. The second potential source would require a change in the allocation of student Education and Technology fees. Currently the campus Information Technology Division receives 85% of these fees, while the WaLC receives a portion of the remaining 15%, despite serving thousands of students each year.

### F. Making Our Program Exemplary: Opportunities for Improvement

The WTP already offers exemplary services which are ranked highly by faculty and students and which measure up very well against peer institutions (*see Appendix O*). Nevertheless, there are opportunities for enhancement. A "wish list" is provided on the next page.

**Table: Opportunities for Improvement**

<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Method/Via?</b>	<b>Reason/Comments</b>
More faculty education on our services, ethics, policies, and methods	Publicity, Department Heads Council, other?	To help faculty use our services more effectively and avoid common pitfalls such as seeing students "too late in the game."
Larger budget	E&T fees, Athletics, other?	To expand services, hire more student workers to keep up with demand
Better database system	Information Technology	To increase reliability of records, track progress and effectiveness better
More tutors from other programs	Biology, Business, etc.	To offer more discipline-specific tutoring and support specialized assignments
Expanded Meebo/online chat or other synchronous online assistance	Unknown. (Requires additional budget/staff)	To increase opportunities for students, streamline student queries
Expanded services for graduate students (thesis/dissertation and specialized writing/research support, more info online)	Website, grad faculty, Graduate School, CFC, etc.	To better prepare students, target unique projects and concerns of these students, raise profile and quality of grad programs
Assessment for in-class workshops, long-term effectiveness, and so on	Office of Institutional Planning, I.T., other?	To better assure quality, provide reliable data to campus on student writing
New physical location	WCU Space Planning cmte [APPROVED]	To make WTP more accessible, accommodate demand, eliminate overcrowding
Professional development opportunities for WaLC Associate Director	Professional orgs (IWCA SI?), other	To increase WCU exposure, ensure WTP stays current
More consultations for faculty/expanded assistance and preparation for WAC and/or teaching writing in the disciplines	WaLC, CFC, WRCS collaboration, other?	To assist with continued implementation of QEP and Strategic Plan and new Liberal Studies courses, improve writing instruction and support faculty as demands on their time and skills grow.
UNC-wide standards on writing center admin and/or tutoring	Leah Hampton, other UNC writing and tutoring centers?	To ensure that decisions about writing instruction and tutoring are made by experts in the field, not administration
Expanded assessment of student need and content of tutoring sessions NOTE: A preliminary survey was done in December 2011; see <i>Appendix Q</i> .	Unknown <i>See Appendix Q</i>	To track areas of greatest need in student learning/writing and provide data to campus about tutoring and areas where students need more institutional support for their communication.