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An Investigation of the Feasibility of a Writing Center at Olivet Nazarene University: The Implementation of a Pilot Program

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FEASIBILITY OF A WRITING CENTER AT OLIVET NAZARENE
UNIVERSITY: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM

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Chapter 1

Mission and Purpose

Writing centers flourished in the 1970s when open admissions led many colleges and universities with underprepared students to initiate one on one support for writing (Boquet, 1999). Since that time the number of writing centers at colleges and universities has increased indicating the value they provide the college community. Muriel Hall (1995), Founder and Director of Purdue's Writing Lab, argues that writing centers not only help students to become writers, but also influence retention: "Writing centers, by offering a haven for students where individual needs are met, are also integral to retention efforts, are good recruiting tools..." (p. 27). Integral to the purpose of writing centers is the tutorial concept, working with writers one on one. Writing tutors differ from classroom teachers in important ways that change the relationship: they are not the authorities, assigners, or evaluators (North, 1984). Stephen North (1984) recommends that students come to the writing center early in the writing process rather than at the end as is the case of most teacher conferences. The tutorial relationship is more collegial in that tutors respond as collaborators or interested readers. Writing Centers have evolved over the years to become more than sites for remediation. They serve to raise the level of scholarship for all students, faculty, and the community through workshops, collaboration, and celebration opportunities.

As an extension of the holistic approach to student success and retention, Olivet must revisit the implementation of an on-campus Writing Center. Previous attempts to provide an online resource failed to meet the need of providing one-on-one tutorials. Research proves that this approach does not teach the student how to identify and correct gaps in writing thought, organization, and voice. From the students' perspective, "the more satisfactory tutorials were those in which the students were active participants in finding their own criteria and solutions" (cited in Hall, 1995, p. 30). An ONU Writing Center must be more than an editing center, serving more students than those with remedial writing skills. It should serve as a consistent presence on campus as a facilitator of quality writing across the disciplines. The research team conducted research, reviewed literature, visited successful writing centers across the region, and collected data to implement a pilot study for the academic school year of 2010-2011. Preliminary

research addressed staffing and training, financial commitments, logistical space and operations, and an in-depth look at the value of implementing such a program for retention purposes. The pilot study program served students from College Writing II and Scriptures II. Data collection for analysis was provided through revisions across drafts, interviews, and surveys. At the end of the pilot study, research, data analysis, and detailed cost-analysis figures were presented to ONU Administration and faculty, as well as a professional peer audience.

Statement of the Problem

Olivet Nazarene University has never had a writing center where students from any discipline can go for one-on-one assistance with writing. ONU did have an online writing service for some time that was funded through the Learning Development Center. While this effort was worthy, student readers were not trained as tutors and the online format was not conducive to a genuine tutorial experience. The Center for Student Success has done an admirable job of providing career and counseling services to students, but academic support in writing that is fundamental to student success is missing.

Why is a writing center needed? ONU is an institution with students of varying abilities. Many struggle with writing in their disciplines as well as in composition classes. Students have no place to turn for assistance after they complete their general education composition core, and faculty members across disciplines have no place to send students for help. In a preliminary review of the CCCU schools, we noticed that most of our peer competitors (e.g. Indiana Wesleyan, Wheaton etc.) have writing centers run by either English programs or Student Centers. The NSSE report 2009 also indicates that students at ONU compare less favorably with other CCCU schools and Carnegie Class in the areas of writing clearly and in synthesizing and organizing ideas (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009).

A writing center has an interdisciplinary purpose. It is intended to help writers of all abilities and disciplines, both students and faculty. It functions to make better writers, not just better texts (North, 1984). Unlike some misconceptions about its purpose, the writing center is not an editing shop. Muriel Hall (1995), Director of the Purdue Writing Lab, reports research that shows the importance of the tutorial experience and tutors who become collaborators in the writing process. In a study by Allen and by Walker

and Alias, students were asked to rate tutorials in which tutors gave authoritative, specific editing directions with those in which tutors collaborated with students to help students think through their concerns about writing. Students reported that the “more highly satisfactory tutorials were those in which the students were active participants in finding their own criteria and solutions” (cited in Hall, 1995, p. 30).

Writing center tutors collaborate in meaningful ways to help writers gain confidence: they encourage independent thinking and assist with strategic knowledge; they refuse to take ownership of the paper; and they help students overcome fear of writing. It is reasonable to suggest that students who make these gains remain at the institution. It is hoped that the outcome of the pilot study is the creation of an ONU Writing Center where students will be able to (a) demonstrate an ability to improve their writing by planning, revising, and editing, (b) value the writing processes and transfer writing processes to other disciplines, (c) use academic resources, (d) foster collaborative discussion to improve writing, (e) recognize their own needs and ask relevant questions, (f) appreciate and apply constructive criticism, and (g) gain confidence in writing for various disciplines.

Research Questions

The purpose of the pilot program is to study the effect of writing center tutorials on (a) improvements in student writing, (b) students' confidence in their writing abilities, (c) student satisfaction with writing center services, and (d) the extent to which students prepared for and utilized writing center services.

These research questions guided the writing center pilot program.

- 1.0 To what extent had the writing of students in College Writing II and Christian Scriptures II who went to the writing center improved throughout their respective courses of instruction?
- 1.1 To what extent had the writing of students in College Writing II and Christian Scriptures II who did not go to the writing center improved throughout their respective courses of instruction?

- 1.2 Were their differences in the extent to which writing improved over the course of instruction between students in College Writing II and Christian Scriptures II who went to the writing center and those in both courses who did not?
- 2.0 To what extent did students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who went to the writing center report confidence in their writing abilities?
- 2.1 To what extent did students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who did not go to the writing center report confidence in their writing abilities?
- 2.2 Were there differences in the extent to which students in College Writing II and Scriptures II respectively who went to the writing center and those who did not go report confidence in their writing abilities?
- 3.0 Were their differences in the extent to which students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who went to the writing center report being satisfied with writing center services?
- 4.0 Were there differences in the extent to which students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who went to the writing center were prepared for and utilized writing center services?

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Writing labs or clinics have been in existence in some shape or form since the 1930s as remedial agencies (North, 1995). In the 1960s, writing centers, called labs, were established to enhance writing instruction beyond the classroom. Language lab work similar to the scientific lab model for practice was initiated. In the 1970s when open admissions led many colleges and universities with underprepared students to initiate support for writing instruction, writing centers or labs flourished (Boquet, 1999). As writing “clinics,” they were often considered places to remediate writers’ errors. In an early report by the California State English Council, Edward White (cited in Yahner and Murdick, 1991) explained the philosophical debate that surfaced in the 70s: Are writing centers primarily editing services or places to support writers during the process of composing? He assessed the era accordingly, “The view of English as ‘therapy’ as filling its function by imparting correct spelling and other conventional forms of expression is widely held outside of the profession and even by 48.9 % of English departments in the United State (p. 14). On the other hand, “we [freshmen English courses at California State] are more interested in helping students test and develop ideas in writing rather than in maintaining the supposed purity of the tongue” (p. 14).

The viewpoints regarding the purpose of writing centers fell along conservative and progressive ideologies. For many universities during the 70s, the writing center became a place for traditional instruction using the skills and drill approach to improve editing skills, as was the case of Penn State University and Southern Illinois University. Penn State developed a “clinic” to support “basic” writers by breaking down writing into separate skills subsets; Southern Illinois used a model in which tutors went through the students’ writing “word for word” to correct it (Yahner & Murdick, 1991).

The Conservative Restoration era of the 70s aimed to make education responsible by tightening standards and returning to the “basics.” Yahner & Murdick (1991) criticized sharply this approach to writing instruction: “In the conservative view, good writing is a moral responsibility, poor writers are sinners, and teachers are the handbook –thumping defenders of the Mother Tongue” (p. 17). Even with

all the emphasis on accountability, testing, and writing purity, SAT scores fell during this time (Yahner & Murdick, 1991).

The Progressive Response occurred simultaneously in the 70s in response to the traditional approach. Some critics such as James Squire (1972) denounced educational policies that strove for correctness and heavy emphasis on testing. Expressionist theory of writing instruction rose to the forefront of writing paradigms due in part to noted proponents such as Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and Ken Macrorie (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995). Expressionists prioritized the practice of writing through exploration of language, ideas, and experience. It focused less on correctness and more on authentic voice and personal discovery (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995).

Whereas traditional writing instruction focused on skills and correctness, and expressionists prioritized discovery, social construction theory of writing emerged in the mid-80s emphasizing the social nature of writing. According to this theory, writing is a social construction dependent on the context and writers' participation in discourse communities. Murphy and Sherwood (1995), authors of *St Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, contend that in a writing situation "knowledge is 'made' by agreement, or consensus within discourse communities" (p.4). Within this framework, writing tutors play a more collaborative role serving to facilitate a conversation about the writing context and discourse of that community. They work with the writer to negotiate meaning in the writing context (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995).

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1974) sided with the progressive view and rejected the conservative view of writing instruction in its seminal work "A Students' Right to Their Own Language." The article argued that writing is situated in a particular context and all dialects are legitimized in some contexts. If writing appropriateness is contextual rather than standardized, writing instruction must focus on the individual and the context. Consequently, the progressive approach to writing instruction adhered to personal tutorials rather than skill instruction and testing (Yahner & Murdick, 1991). One of the first examples of the progressive model that advocated peer tutorials was reported by Ken Bruffee in Brooklyn College (cited in Yahner & Murdick 1991). He described tutorials

in the writing center through narrative, personal accounts rather than exposition of prescribed lessons or testing results.

The professionalization of the writing center developed over time from the meager basement model where writing labs were housed to current student-centered spaces conducive to conferencing. In one report, authors Yahner and Murdick (1991) described the evolution of their writing center at California University of Pennsylvania in three stages: Stage I in the 70s, was the Age of Innocence in which they believed that the only thing needed to create a successful center was to start it and wing it. Stage II in the early 80s, the Age of Conservatism was their approach that treated the center like a clinic and emphasized testing and skill practice as modes of teaching writing. Stage III in the late 80s and 90s, the Age of Enlightenment, developed from concern about the lack of theoretical grounding of the center's purpose. When they hired writing specialists schooled in recent writing theory, the writing center aligned its focus to develop a student-centered environment and one-to-one collaborative peer tutoring (Yahner & Murdick, 1991). The evolution of the writing center at this one institution was indicative of changes that resulted in the current student-centered paradigm espoused by the International Writing Center Association.

Value of Writing Center

The number of writing centers at colleges and universities has increased indicating the value they provide the community. Muriel Hall (1995), Founder and Director of the Purdue's Writing Lab, argues that writing centers not only help students to become writers, but also influence retention: "Writing centers, by offering a haven for students where individual needs are met, are also integral to retention efforts, are good recruiting tools... (p. 27). Integral to the purpose of writing centers is the tutorial concept, working with writers one on one. Writing tutors differ from classroom teachers in important ways that change the relationship: they are not the authorities, assigners, or evaluators (North, 1984). Stephen North (1984) says that students come to the writing center as a "starting or middle process of writing, not at the end" as is the case of most teacher conferences. The tutorial relationship is more collegial in that tutors respond as collaborators or interested readers. Writing centers serve to raise the

level of scholarship for all students, faculty, and the community through workshops, collaboration, and celebration opportunities.

Quantitative evidence as to the value of writing center is sparse with the exception of a few studies that count numbers of students serviced and number of improved grades on papers. Neil Lerner (1997) in “Counting Beans and Making Beans Count” found that students with lower SAT verbal skills improved their grades in writing with writing center intervention. But Lerner claims that writing centers must do more to be accountable through outcome based assessment if they are to maintain institutional support (Pemberton & Kinkead, 2003).

Non-Directive Tutorial Approach

During the past twenty five years, writing centers have espoused a non-directive approach in regards to the relationship of tutor to student writer (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995). Prior to this approach, tutors or teachers took a top-down directive approach to locating and correcting errors in students’ papers. In contrast, the non-directive approach, drawn from social constructivist writing theory, takes a Socratic approach and attempts to help students discover their own meanings and solutions in a specific context (Clark, 2001). Such pedagogy strives to empower writers. Stephen North (1984) in “The Idea of a Writing Center” argued that “our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (p. 27). The goal he asserts is to help writers learn through instruction rather than merely helping them produce good papers. Clark (2001) noted that the non-directive approach also implicitly assures colleagues in the academy that the student writers are not engaging in plagiarism by having a tutor write the paper. In one research report, Clark (2001) interviewed both students and consultants as to the direct involvement of the consultants in the tutorial. Clark found that directive/non-directive roles cannot be articulated in absolute terms. In the study, students who thought of themselves as poor writers attributed a more directive role to consultants than did the self-reported “good” writers, although the consultants reported a more non-directive role for their involvement. All students in the study, however, reported that the tutorial experience was helpful in providing a learning experience. Clark (2001) concluded that it is important to

adopt a “flexible approach to the issue of tutor directiveness” and that centers must promote “awareness of differences in students’ learning styles” (p. 46).

How do tutors establish a non-directive role with writers who come to a center? Experts agree that no two tutorials are the same and should not try to be scripted. Murphy and Sherwood (1995) suggest three phases in the non-directive tutorial process: the first is the pre-text phase where the tutor and writer are getting to know one another to guide further collaborations. It is important for them to build trust and confidence in the tutor-writer relationship. Tutors must respond to “various personalities and learning styles and be sensitive to differences in gender, age, ethnicity, cultural and educational backgrounds, and attitudes toward writing” (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995, p. 6). In the textual stage, the writer brings textual problems to discuss whether they are incomprehensible passages or frustrations with writer’s block. As Murphy and Sherwood (1995) note, the goal of the tutor is to help the student make progress for the long haul, not just for the paper at hand. They must take a “minimalist” or hands off approach for learning to take place (p. 12). Some tutors play a more active role by modeling sentence structures or editing techniques, as Irene Clarks (1995) suggests. The last stage of the tutorial is the posttextual stage whereby the tutor summarizes and offers a model of learning for the next time (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995). For example, in one tutorial session the writer, a non-traditional student returning to school, felt discouraged by the professor’s criticisms and doubted her ability to succeed. During the posttextual phase, the tutor summarized two or three major goals they had discussed and encouraged the student to rewrite. When the student rewrote and received a B-grade, she was elated and more importantly, better equipped to continue academic work than before the conference session (Murphy & Sherwood, 1995).

Directors and Tutors

Defining the role of a writing center director begins as a historical question that dates back to the first writing center. Who was the first director? How was that director defined? How has the professional position evolved over time? Lerner (2006) asserts that although writing center origins are predominately traced back to the 1940s and 1950s, “our roots stretch much deeper, that writing centers, clinics, or

laboratories have long been offered to help students learn to write. And the role and requirements of the person who directs those efforts have also been discussed for some time” (p. 3). The role of a director is linked to the ever-changing role of writing centers in multiple locations for multiple purposes.

Each academic institution varies in their vision for a writing center and the projected vision frames the role of the director. Lerner (2006) believes that “the terrain of our field seems separated into two types of directors: an active, enfranchised group with faculty or secure status and a part-time, contingent—and largely silent—group doing the best they can under very difficult conditions” (p. 10). Lerner’s theory of these two types of directors is key to examining how directors are viewed within the academy as well as the larger field of composition. Directors can only assume their role to the extent that they are given authority by their governing institution. But whether directors are members of the faculty or not, questions still arise as to the nature of their role in the academy. Are directors solely administrators? Are directors teachers? How does scholarship fit into these perceived roles and responsibilities?

Directors

Directors are administrators; they are essentially in charge of small administrative departments (Ferruci, 2001). However, their leadership responsibilities are not limited to budgeting, scheduling, and training tutors. Ferruci (2001) believes “writing center directors ... teach students a form of critical literacy that begins with acknowledging the difficulties in negotiating ingrained and systemic institutional-ideological assumptions about what it means to be a student, what it means to be a literate citizen.” This holistic definition also speaks to a larger role that directors play in the integration of literacy to the academy. As a director, this administrative role materializes in the organization and implementation of the institution’s ethos for the writing center. The center becomes more than a place to have a paper reviewed, and the director is instrumental in integrating a larger agenda into the daily administrative tasks that allow for teaching and scholarship to exist through the center.

Teachers

Directors are teachers; they contribute to the increased level of integrity as writing across the disciplines comes into focus through writing center resources and services. As Lerner argues, directors

fall into one of two categories; the first being that of a faculty member with secure status in the academy. Under this definition, the director serves in a capacity that is complimentary to the position held within the classroom; they are not separate roles.

Campus Coordinator

Directors are not limited to interaction with students since they are also continually finding ways to address and collaborate with faculty. Ferruci (2001) states that “the role the director occupies as teacher and scholar is not limited Directors constantly struggle with faculty to educate them not only about how students learn to write but also about the field of composition” (.114). This research coincides with what Harris (2000) concludes regarding writing centers and WAC programs (writing across the curriculum). Harris (2000) confirms, “despite the variety of ways in which writing centers are structured to work with the particular features of the WAC program on their campus, it is apparent that an increasing part of writing center directors' responsibilities is their work with faculty across campus” (p. 114).

The conclusions drawn by Lerner and Ferruci align with the dual role of a director as administrator-teacher. As a faculty member, the director has secure standing with colleagues. This standing allows for the director to operate the center through an administrative role to allow the faculty to participate and benefit from the center’s services. Harris (2000) references in her work a study conducted by Joan Mullin, Director of the Writing Center at the University of Toledo. The study, consulting more than 100 writing center directors, yielded proof that directors serve as administrators of a larger writing agenda. Harris (2000) reports:

Many directors reported on their expanding roles in WAC programs, being asked to hold faculty workshops, to educate teaching assistants in composition theory and conferencing techniques, to handle requests for tutors in classrooms, to serve as consultants to departments developing writing intensive courses, to sit in on classes to see how writing can be incorporated into the course, to serve as a campus resource for writing in various disciplines, and to collect from the faculty articles on discipline-specific writing. (p. 114)

In addition to these responsibilities, Mullin also oversees a bimonthly writing workshop for faculty members. In this workshop, faculty share individual writing projects that they are in the process of completing; faculty members meet and “discuss writing in general, exchange journals which welcome interdisciplinary writing, serve as resources for grants, and {devote} a meeting to the writing of successful (and unsuccessful) grants” (as cited in Harris, 2000, p. 114). In addition, directors can get campus personnel involved in the writing center by having tutors attend various courses, sending out newsletters and reports to keep communication open between faculty, and having faculty nominate potential tutors for future use (p. 119). All of these inclusive activities require logistical organization (administrator) but foster academic scholarship through coordinated services (teacher).

As faculty administrators, directors can also provide various services to encourage writing activities across campus where one-on-one tutorials are not scheduled. Examples of activities that are also classified as services include: providing resource materials on documentation and plagiarism, handouts that outline strategies for proofreading, workshops on integrating sources into papers, and research peer groups for library use (Harris, 2000). Harris also examines the possibility of directors overseeing various peer observations that would benefit students not presently involved in a writing assignment but in peer observation; “For example, sociology students come to ... observe students from other cultures as they interact with tutors; educational psychology students come in to study the use of different learning styles by students in the lab; business and organizational communication students observe the flow of communication ... “ (p. 115). These activities must be administratively organized by the director, but they are inherently educational in nature, thus affirming the director’s role as teacher.

Role of the Tutor

Writing centers use various terms to refer to the student workers hired and trained to offer services. The word *tutor* carries both negative and positive connotations. Historically, the word dates back to the British tutorial system, where the word denoted an educational privilege for only the rich; “Wealthy students were taught exclusively, and therefore, the word tutor connoted a place of prestige” (as cited in Rogers, 2008, p. 9). This context differs greatly from the American education system; “As the public

school system evolved, tutors supplemented traditional classroom teaching; as a result, "tutor" came to imply under-achievement, the need for special help, and remediation" (as cited in Rogers, 2008, p. 10). This negative connotation stained with remedial categorization has long been the focus of intuitional efforts to redefine the term tutor.

While most major theorists agree that function of a tutor is to assist and guide cognitive growth of students through tutorial sessions across the writing disciplines, the term tutor means more than just reader. Administrators and students think of the word tutor in limited context; however, individuals within the writing center understand the term to encompass more than just a reader (as cited in Rogers, 2008, p. 10). Here the term is referring to a variety of collaborative discussions that include conversations about the writing process, not just the tutor sitting down and reading a student's paper; "We mean the word *tutoring* to include activities which are not hierarchal at all - brainstorming, for example, or practical discussions of audience and of appropriate format, with the writer being the one who must finally make such decisions" (as cited in Rogers, 2008, p. 10).

Tutor Selection

Just as the role of the director is linked to the ethos of the writing center, so the role of the tutor is linked to the implementation of the center's mission. Tutor selection seeks to find qualified candidates to fulfill a specific role. Should tutors be selected from the English department? Should tutors be selected on their writing ability in content-specific courses in relation to students outside of English courses? How the director proceeds in hiring tutors hinges more upon the ability of the tutor to adapt to the student seeking assistance than it does to the tutor's ability to achieve success in English-specific writing courses.

Susan Hubbuch, Director of the Writing Center at Lewis and Clark College, believes that tutors "cannot afford to be parochial, entering a session with a student with inflexible, monolithic concept of 'good' writing, a concept that might be forged from knowing only the writing conventions of papers for English courses and thinking that "good" writing is whatever ... has produced and been rewarded for in these classes" (as cited in Harris, 2000, p. 116). On the other hand, "tutors who are ignorant of the subject matter may miss the important conventions that should be present. But tutors have the advantage of trying

to understand the argument from what they read in the paper, and as they do, they are forced to focus on the logic of the student's ideas" (p. 117). These two sides present a glimpse into the multi-faceted role that a tutor must possess, regardless of their individual course of study within a specific discipline.

Tutor Methodology

As facilitators during the one-on-one tutorial sessions, it is important for tutors to understand their role in asking questions, not just providing answers. Cook (2006) did a comprehensive study of writing center tutorials, examining a total of 473 questions asked by tutors. Cook organized these questions into 16 types of questions and then organized those types into two categories. Cook (2006) theorizes that tutors should model the following categorical types of questions during tutorial sessions:

The first category is Interpersonal Tutor Questions, and it contains the following types: process, consent, rapport, gauging, filler, distracting, refocusing, and orienting. Effects include the ability to manage tutorials, gain permission, establish rapport, check writer understanding or mood, participate in chat, distract writers, refocus writers, and inform tutors. The second category is Making Meaning Questions, and it contains the following types: clarifying, verifying, transferring, suggesting, prompting, modeling, drawing, and exploring. The effects are the ability to clarify tutor understanding, verify that tutor understanding is correct, transfer expertise, suggest change, lead writers through discovery, model thought processes, draw out information from writers, and challenge and stimulate writers' ideas and views. (pp. 7-8)

Categorization and projected effective means must translate into measurable data for analysis. The conclusion of this study confirmed that the role of the tutor is not simply to ask a specific categorical question, but the role is to effectively understand the question types so tutors know when and how to ask the question to engage the student. Cook (2006) concludes that "without an awareness of question types, tutors may find it difficult to know how to ask probing or challenging questions" (p. 8).

Brown (2008) conducted a research study at the University of Louisville's Writing Center in the fall of 2006. This study examined strategies that tutors used to deal with concerns students had about their

writing. Tutors addressed these concerns in tutorials by using two research questions: “1) What strategies do tutors employ during tutorials to address higher-order concerns? And, what strategies do tutors employ during tutorials to address later-order concerns?; and 2) How are these strategies perceived by participants in tutorials?” (p. v). The data from this study revealed that “the strategies used by tutors to address both higher-order and later-order concerns yielded three categories: open-ended questioning, reader response, and suggestion” (p. v). Brown’s study compliments the data collected by Cook, asserting that one of the tutor’s roles is to initiate and appropriately integrate questions into the tutorial session.

Although it is the tutor’s responsibility to ask strategic questions, it is equally important for the tutor to encourage the student to ask questions. Brown (2008) concluded from the data that “strategies generally assumed by writing center scholars to lessen control over the student and his or her writing can be used just as easily as other strategies to dominate the tutorial” (p. 110). How long a tutor dominates the tutorial session is one way to measure if students feel they are being heard, as well as have the opportunity to speak. In addition to asking questions, Brown looked at additional factors, including: “whether the tutor dominates the tutorial, including amount of time the tutor pauses to allow the student to answer questions or respond to suggestions, students’ overall level of participation/interest in the tutorial, students’ expectations for the tutorial, and tutors’ listening to students’ concerns (really “hearing” those concerns)” (pp. 7-8).

Brown (2008) concluded that the tutor must maintain a controlled balance of time. Tutors must ask leading questions, listen and engage students in their own response, allow for periods of silence, and integrate moments of praise and rapport building. When students are silent, the tutor must appropriately respond and engage the students so that the session does not become tutor-centered. Brown (2008) confirms, “when the silent student cannot articulate what was happening in his head during that long silence (“I’m not thinkin’ anything”), that does cut down the possibilities for dialogue, especially dialogue that is supposed to be student-centered” (p. 201).

Tutor Authority

A tutor must balance the role of asking questions with listening and creating rapport. But how does a tutor gain and maintain authority in a tutorial session? Levin (2006) concludes that there are specific elements that a tutor can utilize to assert this education-institutional authority. The first structure is control of discourse; “This kind of authority is enacted by the tutor’s asking questions, shaping the tutorial, deciding what gets done, what gets prioritized ...” (p. 180). This strategy aligns with what Brown theorizes about tutor’s balancing time in a tutorial. The second structure is assessing students’ meaning through the control of tools. Tutors maintain control in this structure by electing to use specific standards to assess if value is found in the student’s idea. Tutors enact this kind of authority by choosing which standards or criteria to apply in order to weigh whether a student’s idea is valuable. Brown (2008) suggests that “these standards might include text from the assignment sheet; advice from brochures; knowledge (actual or assumed) of what the teacher would want; the student’s own stated beliefs, intentions, desires, and/or priorities; general rules about paragraph structure, thesis statements ...” (p. 180). The third structure is “control over the appearance of control: this third writing center-specific element is tutors’ deciding whether to “hide the ball,” that is, to disguise the authority that comes with ingredients 1 and 2” (p. 180).

Tutor Responsibilities

The position of a director and a tutor are not either/or roles. These key players in the success of a writing center must balance multiple roles at once. The director is an administrator-teacher with agendas rooted in scholarship in the field of composition as well as academic integrity in writing across the disciplines. The tutor serves as a consultant and guide, understanding the integration of key questions at the appropriate time in the tutorial. These roles require consistent evaluation in relation to the writing center’s mission and outcomes. In addition, these key players must continually partner with institutional administrators to ensure success. Harris (2000) argues that “the price of success, though, can be exhaustion. Successful centers that expand to meet all the various writing needs on campus, that serve large and thriving WAC programs, can send the center—and the director—into permanent overload” (p. 120). So how do directors prevent overload for themselves and the tutors? Balancing responsibilities and

roles can seem like an impossible task if the administration is not aligned with the clearly defined services offered by the writing center. Harris (2000) believes directors and “their administrators need to recognize that all the contact activity, workshop development, and attendance at various meetings represents a major expenditure of time. Assistance will be needed as their job description expands” (p. 120). Here, the director must keep open communication between tutors, faculty, and administration concerning the growing needs, and success, of the writing center.

Writing Center Assessment

Academic books and journals are full of discussions of why and how to get meaningful measures of student learning outcomes. Interest is in closing the gap between what faculty teach and what students actually learn. Because academic departments and programs are necessarily concerned with grading student work, evaluating the effectiveness of pedagogy, and designing and redesigning relevant courses, assessment plans are implemented to evaluate program effectiveness, collect student performance data, and make meaningful decisions to improve program quality. In writing centers, as well, there is need for program evaluation and the assessment of student learning outcomes. To engender confidence in the effectiveness of a writing center, writing center directors should conduct systematic program evaluations, collect student learning outcomes data, and develop comprehensive assessment plans.

Program Evaluation

Like all educational programs, writing centers can benefit from educational program evaluation methods and research. According to Bell (2000), writing center directors should regularly evaluate their programs. As early as 1985 the National Writing Centers Association recommended that (a) a knowledge of evaluation methods and (b) providing for regular and thorough evaluation of the writing center program be listed among the essentials in the preparation of writing center directors (Simpson, 1985).

As per Wolf (1990), program evaluation is the systematic collection and interpretation of evidence leading to judgment of value with a view to action. This precise definition of program evaluation has significant utility for writing centers because it (a) generates systematic data that can be

trusted, (b) requires that writing center personnel interpret their findings, (c) involves comparing findings against criteria leading to sound judgments, and (d) taking action based on evidence (Bell, 2000).

Worthen and Sanders (1988) identified six orientations for program evaluation including objectives, management, consumer, expertise, adversary, and naturalistic or participant focused approaches to educational evaluation. Some of these evaluation approaches will serve writing centers better than others.

An objectives-oriented evaluation determines the extent to which program objectives have been met. Generally, program administrators (a) develop broad goals, (b) refine them into more specific learning objectives, (c) develop measurements, (d) collect data, and (e) compare the performance data with the intended outcomes (Worthen & Sanders, 1988). According to Bell (2001) the objectives-oriented approach is the best type of evaluation for writing centers. The objectives in most writing centers are to improve student writing, foster critical thinking skills, develop student self-confidence, and raise the visibility of college writing among the academy. In the effort to change students' writing behaviors, it is appropriate that writing center directors use objectives-oriented evaluations that specialize in documenting behavior change (Bell, 2001).

Outcomes Assessment

The standard measure for documenting behavior change or learning in higher education is student learning outcomes assessment. Historically, the mandate for student outcomes assessment began in the 1980s as a result of President Regan's interest in holding educational institutions accountable for student learning. Particularly vulnerable to the call for reform in higher education were writing centers that had assumed in the 1960s the role of providing access to students traditionally unable to attend college. The perception of writing centers as nurturing, personally empowering, and concerned with fostering individual development remains today (Summerfield, 2001).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some writing center researchers began to evaluate student learning as a measure of writing center effectiveness (Thompson, 2006). In 1979 McCracken criticized writing centers for relying almost exclusively on usage counts, course grades for students using the

centers, and anecdotal evidence from faculty as assessment data. She described pre-term and post-term errors analysis of writing samples to demonstrate writing center effectiveness. Further, in a study of 120 writing centers, 56 directors responded that assessment measures consisted primarily of counts, satisfaction surveys, and pre- and post-tests of grammar skills (Lamb, 1981). Finally, Neulieb (1982) expanded McCracken's pre- and post-test analysis of specific skills errors and recommended the collection and scoring of two writing samples, one collected during a student's first visit and one collected during the student's last visit.

Although assessment issues continue to appear in writing center journals, few writing centers have developed measures of student learning. Most opt to rely on quantitative counts of student use of writing centers and satisfaction surveys to satisfy administrative mandates for accountability. As Bell (2000) noted, counts and satisfaction surveys are necessary but not sufficient for assessment.

Writing Center Assessment Plans

Writing centers by nature are not curricular. Students do not earn grades through writing center work, and their activities in writing centers are not recorded on academic transcripts. Writing centers are more appropriately viewed as educational support programs, and the development of an assessment plan for a writing center should link assessment efforts to improving student learning outcomes. Several sources (Astin, 1991; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Sanders, 1994) describe characteristics of effective writing center assessment plans as (a) missional, (b) pragmatic, and (c) outcomes-oriented. Writing center assessment plans that attend to each of these characteristics will inform good decisions about long-term writing center policy and procedure.

Missional assessment.

The Auburn University Assessment Plan is one example of a writing center assessment plan that started with a clear understanding of the University mission. Another important first step in developing Auburn writing center assessment plan was to pay careful attention to the English department mission statement before writing the mission statement for the writing center. The subsequent writing center

mission statement defined the goals, objectives and intended educational outcomes of the center's work with students (Thompson, 2006).

A clear sense of mission is also important for capturing the elusive qualitative or affective outcomes of student learning in writing centers. Attention to the affective domain is important. According to Learner (2001), mission-driven assessment plans can measure not just the extent to which writing centers produce better writers but also the extent to which writing centers contribute to students' social and academic integration.

Pragmatic assessment.

Historically, writing center assessment data has been primarily summative and included counts of students using writing centers, numbers of individual counseling sessions, or hours of student-peer tutor contact (Thompson, 2006). Some writing center directors measured the effectiveness of the writing center in terms of growth in floor space, numbers of tables and chairs, and open service hours (Bell, 2000).

Measuring client satisfaction is another form of summative assessment. Satisfaction surveys may be administered through telephone calls, given out after writing center sessions, or delivered through institutional data collection technology. Target groups for satisfaction surveys may include faculty, staff, students, peer tutors, or administrators. While usage counts may justify keeping the writing center's doors open, and satisfaction surveys can determine the attitudes of writing center users, they do not measure or document the extent to which students have become better writers (Thompson, 2006).

In very real ways assigning a final grade to student composition is summative assessment. There is a time and place for summative assessment of a student's writing, but most writing center policies and procedures presume students' need to embrace writing as a process. Formative assessment, assessment that is intended to improve student learning, lends itself to the process nature of student writing.

According to Trupe (2001) formative assessment throughout the writing process gives students a reason to read and understand instructor's comments on their writing and may help students apply instructor's comments to the same or similar writing assignments. Further, formative assessment builds

more time into students' schedules for thinking and writing and may foster students' abilities to critique and revise their own writing.

Outcomes-oriented assessment.

Measuring student learning outcomes in writing centers is most effective if writing center directors use multiple measures. A combination of curricular and non-curricular assessment measures may foster meaningful outcomes assessment and promote student retention.

Curricular outcomes assessment.

Curricular outcomes assessment measures growth in students' knowledge of the subject matter and the development of academic skills in a discipline. Astin's (1991) talent development model may provide a useful framework for measuring student learning in writing centers because of its intrinsic focus on cognitive development rather than on achievement of minimal competencies. Further, Astin emphasizes measuring the characteristics of students' skills on pre-test writing samples and measuring characteristics of students' skills on the same identifiable characteristics in a post-test after the educational treatment.

Palomba and Banta (1999) support assessment that emphasizes progress rather than relying exclusively on final outcomes. In their words, "assessing outcomes implies a finality; assessing progress suggests that there is time and opportunity to improve" (p. 5).

The principal goal of outcomes assessment in writing centers is to answer two questions: (a) did the writing center help students write better and (b) can that growth be measured (Brand, 2010)? Attempts to measure the gains students make as a result of writing center instruction may be appropriately called value-added assessment (White, 1990). Improved scores between pre and posttest measures should be observable. Although improvements in cognitive abilities may not be observable, improvements in an individual's writing process and product can be measured; therefore, outcomes assessment is an achievable and worthy goal of effective writing center assessment plans and may include pre- and post-test measures of writing quality and the development of expert composing processes.

In a recent study Casey Jones (2001) described several empirical studies that compared students' initial drafts with their final products. In every study cited, a key finding was that students who participated in writing center tutorials produced better final drafts. In a recent study, Niiler (2003) used a pre- and post-test method of assessment. He collected clean copies of essays from students who wanted to revise the essays for a higher grade. After students had used writing center services, he collected the revised essays. Trained tutors who read the revised essays rated the drafts as improved significantly in each category. Results from a follow-up study were similar. Again Niiler (2005) collected essays and compared the revised essays after students used writing center services. In this study trained faculty who read the essays noted that the writing had improved significantly from the initial draft to the final product.

In another study, Bell (2002) compared the tutelage of peer tutors in the writing center to those of professional tutors. He used pre- and post-test draft methodology to compare the nature and scope of tutors' responses to student writing over the course of developing a final draft. He found that peer tutors were more likely to edit students' drafts and recommend micro-level changes while the professional tutors were more likely to teach students to make changes themselves and make macro-level recommendations. He concluded that the professional tutors taught students new writing strategies they were able to apply to improve drafts after they left the writing center.

Assessing student writing from draft to draft may be facilitated by use of scoring rubrics. According to Moskal and Leydens (2000), scoring rubrics are descriptive scoring schemas developed by educators to guide the assessment of students' products and/or processes. Without a detailed discussion of the strengths or weaknesses of rubrics as measures of student learning, it is important to mention here, that rubrics have utility when they are carefully constructed to provide (a) content-related evidence, (b) construct-related evidence, and/or (c) criterion-related evidence. Content-related evidence refers to the extent to which students' responses to a given assessment instrument reflect their knowledge of the content area of interest. Constructs are processes that are internal to an individual. For example, an individual's reasoning process is an example of a construct. Criterion related evidence supports the extent to which students' performance on a given task may generalize to other similar more relevant activities

(Ralifson, 1991). Each of these types of evidence has utility for developing rubrics to assess student writing provided that those developing the scoring rubrics attend to both validity and reliability in the development of the rubrics.

Validity is dependent on the purpose of an assessment; therefore, evaluators need to be clear about the purpose (what they hope to learn) and the objectives (how students will display proficiencies) in the development of scoring rubrics. Reflecting on the purpose and objectives of the assessment will help evaluators select the forms of evidence - content, construct, and/or criterion - that should be used in the development of the rubric (Moskal & Leyden, 2000).

Reliability refers to the consistency of assessment scores. Evaluators who are developing rubrics for assessing student writing should consider rater, or scorer, reliability. Inter-rater reliability refers to the consistency of scores that are assigned by two independent raters, and intra-rater reliability is referred to as the consistency of scores assigned by the same rater at different points in time (Moskal & Leydens, 2000).

Clarifying the scoring rubric is likely to improve both inter-rater and intra-rater reliability. One method of further clarifying a scoring rubric is through the use of anchor papers. According to Yancey (1999), anchor papers are a set of scored responses that illustrate the nuances of the scoring rubric. After every effort has been made to clarify the scoring categories, other faculty may look for discrepancies by using the anchor papers and the scoring rubric over time. Differences in interpretation should be discussed and adjustments made to the scoring rubric to enhance reliability (Yancey, 1999).

In addition to collecting information about writing quality by using pre- and post-test methods and valid and reliable scoring rubrics, writing center directors may well want to evaluate changes in the composing strategies novice writers use compared to the strategies used by more expert writers. In the mid 1980s, Faigley, Cherry, Jolliffe, and Skinner (1985) compared expert composing strategies to novice composing behaviors in these categories: general knowledge of composition, planning and setting goals, generating content, organizing, drafting, and revising. It is commonly agreed that as students mature as writers they become more expert, more focused and flexible, in their composing behaviors. In her writing

center Thompson (2006) uses three instruments developed by Faigley (1985) and his associates to identify the development of more expert composing strategies over time. These instruments include The Process Log, a Self-Evaluation Questionnaire, and Pre-Term and Post-Term Interviews. The Process Log is a set of questions given to students at predetermined time over a semester. Questions are germane to certain composing processes. For example, students may be asked questions that mine their previous experience with the topic or the type of writing inherent in the assignment. Questions may ask how the student intends to begin, organize his thoughts, or write a first draft. As part of the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire, students are asked at the end of the writing process to reflect on the extent to which they changed their draft, their opinions, or their knowledge. The Pre-Term and Post-term Interviews provide rich opportunities to assess changes in student attitudes, apprehensions, and abilities relative to the writing process and may enhance writing development. Further, according to Thompson (2006) these process assessment tools contribute to student learning in writing centers.

Non-curricular outcomes assessment.

Curricular outcomes assessment includes direct measures of student learning related to course assignments, exams, or in the case of the writing center, student development as writers. Non-curricular outcomes assessment measures indirect outcomes including but not limited to writing center contributions to student retention and the academic culture of their respective institutions.

Student retention.

Certainly, keeping good statistics and documenting student success in writing both supports institutional mission and positively impacts student retention. Well-known student retention researchers Astin (1993) and Tinto (1993) cite difficulties with writing as one of the key contributors to student attrition. In response, writing programs in general and writing centers in particular have looked to SAT and ACT scores to develop placement criteria for freshmen entering composition courses. Recent studies have investigated initial placement criteria, ACT or SAT scores, as a basis for comparing the entry-level abilities of students and comparing grades of students who used writing center services to students who did not. Lerner (2001) found that SAT scores did not correlate with grades in composition classes from

students who did not use writing center services, but a positive correlation was found between SAT scores and students who did use writing center services. While it's premature to suggest that SAT/ACT scores alone can determine success, with larger sample sizes in future studies, the SAT/ACT scores may predict sooner rather than later who should be referred for writing center services.

In a study of 206 students Young and Frizsche (2002) found that on a major writing assignment 38% of the 206 students procrastinated on the assignment and reported low levels of satisfaction with their final product. Students who used writing center services reported starting the assignments earlier and higher levels of satisfaction with their work. While the findings do not suggest that writing centers cure procrastination, they do support a correlation between writing center use and starting writing assignments earlier.

Academic culture.

Writing centers may contribute positively to student retention, and according to Wingate (2001) the same data to support student retention may affirm that writing centers add to the academic culture of colleges and universities. Writing centers foster a climate where struggling students succeed and successful students excel. An ancillary outcome of writing centers is that they foster academic seriousness.

A study of writing center clients and peer tutors found that those students who voluntarily used the writing center had an average GPA of 3.32. Similar findings were reported for graduation rates. Of the students who used the writing center two or more times 90.1% graduated compared to 74.4% of students who used the center once or not at all. These findings are consistent with peer tutor data as well. The graduation rate for peer tutors was 94.3% and the average GPA for peer tutors was 3.55 overall and an average GPA of 3.6 in their majors (Wingate, 2001).

It is presumptuous to assume that a writing center makes better students. It is more appropriate to suggest that a writing center may become a congregating place for students who are serious about academics. As Wingate (2001) concludes:

Supporting academic culture is important in this age of credentialing, grade inflation, and student consumerism. . . the writing center is a place where students can engage in academic enterprises, discuss their ideas, write with more force and clarity, and then move out into the larger academy, empowered to take their own work seriously. What a terrific role for writing centers to play on our campuses: We need to help sustain a culture of academic seriousness (p. 11).

Summary

Although writing labs or clinics have existed for many years, there are still misunderstandings about the appropriate nature and scope of an effective writing center. Establishing a writing center that legitimately improves student writing requires and is valued by key stakeholders requires attention to establishing a non-directive tutorial approach which includes correctly defining the role of the tutor, strategies for selecting tutors, developing tutor methodology, giving tutors authority and defining tutors' responsibilities. Assessment of the efficacy of the writing center includes both clear program evaluation and outcomes assessment measures as well as methods to measure the extent to which the writing center fosters student retention.

Chapter III

Method

Plans for the writing center pilot project began in the Spring 2010 academic term. Initial activities included a review of the literature and site visits to Taylor University and Indiana Wesleyan University—schools with model writing centers. Implementation activities in the summer of 2010 included budgeting, IRB application, finding designated space, and hiring a director. The hiring and training of the tutor supervisor and the tutors began at the start of the fall 2010 semester.

Selection Procedures

Students selected to participate in the Pilot Program for the 2010-2011 academic school year were randomly selected from two courses: College Writing II and Christian Scriptures II. All students in the course were given a brief overview of the pilot study by the course instructor and asked to sign a consent form, affirming their participation in the study. The tutor supervisor randomly selected 10 students from each course to serve as the experimental group. The tutor supervisor facilitated all communication between the experimental group and the trained tutors during the semester, ensuring that course instructors were not aware which students from their courses participated in the study.

Instrumentation

A Writing Confidence Survey was taken by all students in each course to assess their personal level of confidence with academic writing. The survey was distributed at the beginning and end of each semester. The survey was anonymous; however, students were asked to identify whether or not they participated in the pilot study. All students in each selected course signed a Consent Form, allowing the pilot study to utilize assignment and course grades for comparison and analysis. Tutors signed a Confidentiality Form, affirming their commitment to the confidential handling of all personal information for experimental group participants.

Students completed a Writing Center Tutor Evaluation survey at the end of each tutorial session. Using a likert-type scale, students ranked their tutor's professionalism, friendliness, and expertise. Tutors completed a similar Writing Center Student Evaluation survey assessing the student's preparation,

receptiveness to feedback, and participation in the tutorial. At the end of the pilot study each semester, students completed a Writing Center Assessment Satisfaction Survey. This Likert-type scale survey assessed the tutor, one-hour sessions, procedures, and overall satisfaction with services offered through the pilot study.

A Writing Proficiency Data Collection Rubric was used to assess each student's paper for each course. On a proficiency scale of 1-4, the Rubric assessed the student's rough draft and final draft, evaluating writing competency, content, organization, coherence, quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, correctness, and format. Analysis compared scores between the experimental group and the control group.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for the fall semester ran from September 20—November 11, 2010, and from January 24—March 24, 2011, during the spring semester. The writing center was established on the second floor of the Library and was open from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The study operated for eight weeks each semester, with each course allotted four weeks of tutorials—each week coinciding with an aspect of the writing process in relation to a specific course assignment. The tutor supervisor scheduled tutorial sessions in one-hour increments. The supervisor organized a weekly schedule and maintained communication between tutors and students in the experimental group. Students received information via email concerning what materials they needed to prepare for their assigned tutorial session. Students were given the option to schedule additional sessions if the schedule for the week had openings.

Students meet with their tutors in assigned rooms in Benner Library. Tables, chairs, and access to library resources were provided for the tutors and students. A locked file cabinet housed various resource materials for use during the tutorial sessions as well as all evaluation surveys completed at each tutorial. Surveys were anonymous and kept confidential. They were collected weekly and recorded by the tutor supervisor.

Participants

Participants in the writing center pilot project included the writing center director, tutor supervisor, tutors and students selected to be part of the experimental group.

Director

Kristy Ingram, Assistant Professor of English, served as the Writing Center Director for the Pilot Study. She received a load reduction of three credit hours as compensation for her role. Kristy hired Brittany Frost, an English Adjunct Instructor, to serve as the tutor supervisor for the pilot study. Brittany helped train the student tutors, as well as assisted with data collection to measure student proficiency, confidence, and satisfaction with writing center services. Kristy met with Brittany and the student tutors once a week to discuss best practices in student-to-student tutoring, review current research on writing center policies, and discuss concerns or issues experienced during the tutorials.

Tutor Coordinator

Tutors.

The pilot study writing center was staffed with trained writing consultants, composed of carefully selected undergraduate students. Tutor selection was based upon excellence in thinking, writing, and communication skills, a desire for academic excellence, possession of strong grammar/mechanical skills, and the ability to work one-on-one with other students. Tutors for the pilot study held junior-class standing, a minimum 3.0 G.P.A., and earned a B or higher in College Writing II and Scriptures II. There were 10 students who applied for the tutor position; six students were asked to complete a follow-up application, and four students were interviewed. Ryan Dykhouse and Nicole Miller were selected to serve as student tutors for the fall semester; Ryan Dykhouse and Kayla Koury served as the student tutors for the spring semester. Students were compensated for their work at the standard hourly wage for student workers.

Students.

The students randomly selected from each course were given the option to accept or decline participation in the study. Student selection was done privately between Brittany Frost and each student

so the course instructor and other students in the course were not aware of who was participating unless a student individually shared that personal information. Students also had the freedom to stop coming to the assigned tutorials throughout the semester due to schedule conflicts and/or personal reasons.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

The four primary research questions guided the creation of assessment tools. Various structures of measurement throughout the study included: a likert-scale type survey as a pre-test and post-test measure to establish self-assessed levels of confidence, likert-scale type evaluations to measure preparation and effectiveness of both student tutors and student participants at the conclusion of each tutorial session, a likert-scale type survey measuring satisfaction of the overall pilot study resources, and a likert-scale type evaluation to measure evidence of revision between rough and final drafts. A mixed factorial ANOVA identified statistically significant differences on the pre-test and post-test surveys; a paired sample t-test identified statistically significant differences between the rough and final drafts.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of the pilot study was to study the effect of writing center tutorials on the writing of selected students enrolled in College Writing II and Scriptures II. Four general research questions guided the pilot program. The results are presented according to the research questions addressed in the pilot program. First is a description of the students who participated in the study. The rest of the research questions will be addressed within the context of (a) writing confidence, (b) writing improvement, (c) participants' receptiveness to writing center tutorials, and (d) student satisfaction with writing center tutors and services.

Description of the Student Population

The student population included a total of 117 students enrolled in College Writing II and Scriptures II in both the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 terms. Of those, 43 (37%) were male and 74 (63%) were female. With respect to class standing, 9 (8%) were freshmen, 40 (34%) were sophomores, 43 (37%) were juniors, and 25 (21%) were seniors. The overwhelming majority of students were Caucasians (95%). Other ethnic groups were represented as follows: Hispanic (3%), Asian (1%), and African American (1%).

A comparison of the College Writing II students to the Scriptures II students suggests that in both groups there were more females than males, most of the students in the College Writing II course were sophomores compared to juniors in the Scriptures II class, and in both courses the predominate ethnic group was Caucasian. Table 1 presents demographic data for both the College Writing II and the Scriptures II course.

Table 1

Description of the Student Population by Course

| Descriptor | College Writing (n=47) | | Scriptures II (n=70) | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % |
| Male | 18 | 38 | 25 | 36 |
| Female | 29 | 62 | 45 | 64 |
| Freshman | 9 | 19 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Sophomore | 25 | 53 | 15 | 22 |
| Junior | 7 | 15 | 36 | 51 |
| Senior | 6 | 13 | 19 | 27 |
| Caucasian | 43 | 91 | 68 | 97 |
| African American | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Asian | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 1.5 |
| Hispanic | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1.5 |

Writing Confidence

To answer the first research question which asked to what extent students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who participated in the writing center pilot program differed in writing confidence compared to students in these courses respectively who did not participate in the writing center pilot program, all students in both the College Writing II and Scriptures II courses were asked to respond to the Writing Confidence Survey (WCS), consisting of a series of factors associated with writing confidence, as a pretest measure. The WCS was administered again as a post-test measure to all students. Students were asked to respond to the following Likert-type scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Somewhat Disagree, 5 = Disagree, 6 = Strongly Disagree. Descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, were computed to describe student responses. Table 2 compares the writing confidence pretest and posttest results of all students in both College Writing II and Scriptures II who responded yes to going to the writing center to the

pretest and posttest as well as pretest and posttest results of all students in both classes who responded no to going to the writing center.

Table 2

Combined Yes and No Responses on the Writing Confidence Pretest and Posttest

| Confidence Factor | Pretest Yes (n=52) | | Pretest No (n=64) | | Posttest Yes (N=44) | | Posttest No (n=60) | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| I feel apprehensive about academic writing. | 3.36 | 1.23 | 3.64 | 1.34 | 3.61 | 1.43 | 3.80 | 1.45 |
| I avoid writing intensive classes. | 3.79 | 1.44 | 3.55 | 1.51 | 3.50 | 1.41 | 3.61 | 1.50 |
| I am confident I know how to write an academic paper. | 2.94 | 1.29 | 2.60 | 1.23 | 2.41 | 1.11 | 2.39 | 1.20 |
| I am pleased with the writing I produce for classes. | 3.10 | 1.32 | 2.66 | 1.25 | 2.61 | 1.06 | 2.41 | 1.10 |
| I procrastinate because I don't know how to start writing. | 3.65 | 1.48 | 3.88 | 1.37 | 4.05 | 1.30 | 4.02 | 1.52 |
| I spend time planning and rewriting my papers for classes. | 3.40 | 1.39 | 3.45 | 1.33 | 3.20 | 1.29 | 3.41 | 1.27 |
| I write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision. | 3.19 | 1.37 | 3.25 | 1.48 | 3.50 | 1.55 | 2.98 | 1.45 |
| I write more pages than required and then condense. | 4.04 | 1.32 | 4.29 | 1.35 | 3.93 | 1.35 | 3.88 | 1.55 |
| I would like to gain more confidence in my academic writing. | 2.35 | 1.32 | 2.59 | 1.35 | 2.83 | 1.33 | 2.95 | 1.25 |
| I know where to go to get help with my writing. | 3.46 | 1.41 | 3.38 | 1.39 | 2.80 | 1.36 | 3.15 | 1.29 |
| I would seek help with my writing if services were available. | 2.65 | 1.40 | 3.11 | 1.38 | 2.64 | 1.31 | 3.22 | 1.57 |

Combined Yes Responses

Students who received writing center tutorial help responded on the pretest that they slightly less than agreed that they knew how to write a paper, knew where to get help, sought help if services were available and wanted to gain more confidence in academic writing. They slightly less than somewhat agreed that they felt apprehensive about academic writing, avoided writing intensive classes, were pleased with the writing they did for class, procrastinated because they didn't know

how to start writing, spent time planning and rewriting papers for classes, and wrote a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision. Students somewhat disagreed that they write more pages than required and then condense.

On the posttest students who received writing center help indicated that they agreed that they know how to write a paper, are pleased with the writing done for class, would like more confidence in their academic writing, know where to go to get help, and would seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning and rewriting papers for classes, write drafts straight through from start to finish with little revision, and write more pages than required and then condense. They somewhat disagreed that they procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing.

Combined No Responses

Students who did not receive writing center tutorial help reported that they agreed that they were confident in knowing how to write a paper, pleased with the writing they did for class, and would like to gain more confidence in academic writing. They somewhat agreed that they felt apprehensive about academic writing, avoided writing intensive classes, procrastinated because they didn't know how to start writing, spend time writing and rewriting papers for classes, wrote a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, knew where to go to get help with writing, and would seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat disagreed that they write more pages than required and then condense.

On the posttest students who did not receive writing center tutorial help reported that they agreed that they know how to write a paper, are pleased with the writing they do for class, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, and would like to gain more confidence in academic writing. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing,

avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning and rewriting their papers for classes, know where to go to get help with their writing, write more pages than required then condense, and seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat disagreed that they procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing.

A mixed factorial ANOVA searched for statistically significant results between student groups on both the pretest and the posttest. Alpha was set at $p = \leq .05$ to determine statistically significant differences. Results less than $p = \leq .05$ suggest that differences in student response are likely not due to chance, but that the treatment (e.g. writing center tutorials) had an effect on the results. Analysis of both College Writing II and Scriptures II student responses yielded statistically significant differences between students who went to the writing center tutorials and those who did not with respect to the items student confidence in knowing how to write a paper ($p = .025$), how pleased they were with the writing done for class ($p = .025$), their desire to gain more confidence in writing ($p = .20$), and knowing where to get help if it's available ($p = .016$). Analysis of the effect of writing center tutorials on pretest/posttest responses from students who went to the writing center were statistically significant with respect to the items pleased with the writing done for class ($p = .047$), and seek help with writing if available ($p = .007$).

Interest in this study was also in looking specifically at College Writing II students and students in Scriptures II. Table 3 presents a comparison of the College Writing II results of the yes and no responses on the Writing Confidence pretest and posttest.

Table 3

College Writing II Yes and No Responses on the Writing Confidence Pretest and Posttest

| Confidence Factor | Pretest Yes (n=21) | | Pretest No (n=25) | | Posttest Yes (n=19) | | Posttest No (n=25) | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| I feel apprehensive about academic writing | 3.10 | 1.09 | 3.00 | 1.15 | 3.58 | 1.34 | 3.00 | 1.54 |
| I avoid writing intensive classes | 3.90 | 1.61 | 3.12 | 1.53 | 3.58 | 1.64 | 3.35 | 1.38 |
| I am confident I know how to write an academic paper | 3.33 | 1.15 | 2.83 | 1.13 | 2.42 | 1.17 | 2.54 | 1.07 |
| I am pleased with the writing I produce for class | 3.24 | 1.26 | 2.88 | 1.13 | 2.84 | 1.12 | 2.38 | 0.80 |
| I procrastinate because I don't know how to start writing | 3.67 | 1.43 | 3.44 | 1.29 | 4.05 | 1.03 | 3.65 | 1.57 |
| I spend time writing planning and rewriting my papers for classes | 3.52 | 1.44 | 3.92 | 1.19 | 3.42 | 1.50 | 3.61 | 1.27 |
| I write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision | 3.57 | 1.47 | 3.08 | 1.68 | 3.79 | 1.71 | 2.85 | 1.43 |
| I write more pages than required then condense | 4.50 | 1.32 | 4.63 | 1.25 | 4.11 | 1.29 | 4.44 | 1.44 |
| I would like to gain more confidence in my academic writing | 1.81 | 1.08 | 3.05 | 1.37 | 2.40 | 1.41 | 2.00 | 1.03 |
| I know where to go to get help with my writing | 3.62 | 1.56 | 3.92 | 1.19 | 2.53 | 1.07 | 3.04 | 1.37 |
| I would seek help with my writing if services were available | 1.90 | 1.30 | 2.68 | 1.14 | 2.37 | 1.26 | 2.35 | 1.35 |

College Writing II Yes Responses

College Writing II students who responded yes to receiving writing center tutorial help agreed that they would like to gain more confidence and would seek help if services were available. The somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, confident they know how to writing an academic paper, pleased with the writing they produce for class, procrastinate because they don't know how to start, spend time planning and rewriting papers for classes, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, and

know where to get help if it's available. They somewhat disagreed that they write more pages than required and then condense.

On the posttest these writing program participants agreed that they felt confident they knew how to write an academic paper, pleased with the writing they did for class, would like to gain more confidence, know where to get help if available, and seek services if available. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning and revising papers for classes, and that they write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision. They somewhat disagreed that they procrastinate because they don't know how to start and that they write more pages than required and then condense.

College Writing II No Responses

College Writing II students who did not receive writing center tutorial help responded on the pretest that they agreed that they were confident they know how to write an academic paper, pleased with the writing they produce for class, and would seek help with their writing if services were available. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing, spend time planning-writing-rewriting papers for classes, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, would like to gain more confidence in their writing, and know where to seek help with their writing. They somewhat disagreed that they write more pages than required and then condense.

ANOVA results for the College Writing students found statistically significant differences in the responses of students who said yes they were selected to participate in the pilot program and those who said no with respect to I would like to gain more confidence in my writing ($p = .001$), and I know where to go to get help with my writing ($p = .001$)

The other group of students in the study consisted of students enrolled in a Scriptures II course. Again, interest was in the extent to which students who went to the writing center differed from students in Scriptures II who did not go to the writing center in their responses to the pretest and the posttest.

Table 4 presents Scriptures II student responses to the writing confidence pretest and posttest.

Table 4

Scriptures II Yes and No Responses on the Writing Confidence Pretest and Posttest

| Confidence Factor | Pretest Yes (n=31) | | Pretest No (n=39) | | Posttest Yes (n=25) | | Posttest No (n=35) | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| I feel apprehensive about academic writing. | 3.71 | 1.27 | 4.04 | 1.30 | 3.64 | 1.52 | 4.37 | 1.37 |
| I avoid writing intensive classes. | 3.71 | 1.34 | 3.82 | 1.44 | 3.44 | 1.23 | 3.80 | 1.57 |
| I am confident I know how to write an academic paper. | 2.68 | 1.33 | 2.46 | 1.27 | 2.40 | 1.08 | 2.29 | 1.30 |
| I am pleased with the writing I produce for class. | 3.00 | 1.37 | 2.51 | 1.32 | 2.44 | 1.00 | 2.43 | 1.24 |
| I procrastinate because I don't know how to start writing. | 3.63 | 1.54 | 4.15 | 1.37 | 4.04 | 1.43 | 4.29 | 1.45 |
| I spend time writing, planning and rewriting my papers for classes. | 3.33 | 1.38 | 3.15 | 1.35 | 3.04 | 1.10 | 3.26 | 1.27 |
| I write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision. | 2.94 | 1.26 | 3.36 | 1.35 | 3.27 | 1.39 | 3.09 | 1.48 |
| I write more pages than required then condense. | 3.74 | 1.26 | 4.07 | 1.40 | 3.80 | 1.41 | 3.46 | 1.50 |
| I would like to gain more confidence in my academic writing. | 2.71 | 1.37 | 3.13 | 1.36 | 2.67 | 1.20 | 3.47 | 1.05 |
| I know where to go to get help with my writing. | 3.35 | 1.31 | 3.03 | 1.40 | 3.00 | 1.53 | 3.23 | 1.24 |
| I would seek help with my writing if services were available. | 3.17 | 1.23 | 3.38 | 1.46 | 2.84 | 1.34 | 3.89 | 1.41 |

Scriptures II Yes Responses

On the pretest the Scriptures II students who participated in the pilot study agreed that they are confident they know how to write an academic paper, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, and would like to gain more confidence in academic writing. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, confident about knowing how to write an academic paper, pleased with the writing they produce for class, procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing, spend time planning-writing-rewriting papers for classes, write more pages than required then condense, know where to go to get help with writing, and seek help with writing if services were available.

On the posttest these same students agreed that they were confident about knowing how to write an academic paper, pleased with the writing they produced for class, would like more to gain more confidence in academic writing, and seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat agreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning-writing-rewriting papers for classes, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, write more pages than required then condense, and know where to get help with writing. Finally, they somewhat disagreed that they procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing.

Scriptures II No Responses

Students who did not participate in the pilot program responded on the pretest that they agreed that they are confident they know how to write an academic paper, and are pleased with the writing they produce for class. They somewhat agree that they avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning and rewriting papers for classes, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, would like to gain more confidence in academic writing, know where to go to get help with writing, and seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat

disagreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing, and write more pages than required then condense.

On the posttest these students agreed that they are confident that they know how to write an academic paper, and they are pleased with the writing they produce for class. They somewhat agreed that they avoid writing intensive classes, spend time planning and rewriting papers for classes, write a draft straight through from start to finish with little revision, write more pages than required then condense, would like to gain more confidence in academic writing, know where to go to get help with my writing, and would seek help with writing if services were available. They somewhat disagreed that they feel apprehensive about academic writing, and procrastinate because they don't know how to start writing.

Analysis of Variance results showed that with respect to Scriptures II students who said yes to participating in the pilot program and those who did not, there were no statistically significant responses on the pretest and the posttest. However, the effect of tutoring indicated statistically significant differences with respect to feeling apprehensive about academic writing ($p = .028$), like to gain more confidence ($\alpha = .008$), and would seek help with writing if services were available ($p = .011$).

Writing Proficiency

The second research question related to the extent to which students in both College Writing II and Scriptures II who went to the writing center for help differed in the improvement of their writing from students in both classes who did not go to the writing center. Student writing was evaluated using the Writing Proficiency Assessment Scale (WPAS). Developers of the WPAS used a Likert-type scale as follows: 1 = Very Proficient, 2 = Proficient, 3 = Somewhat Proficient, 4 = Not at all Proficient. The WPAS was used to assess the content, organization, coherence, quantity of detail,

quality of detail, complexity of ideas, correctness and format on first the rough draft and then the final draft.

Paired sample t-tests were computed to look for statistically significant differences on the rough draft and the final draft between those students in the pilot program and those students who were not. Table 5 presents the combined writing proficiency results of all students in College Writing II and Scriptures II.

Table 5

Combined Rough Draft and Final Draft Writing Proficiency Results

| Writing Competency | N 105 | Rough Draft M SD | Final Draft M SD | <i>df</i> 104 | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| Content | | 1.81 .78 | 1.77 .68 | | 1.16 | .25 |
| Organization | | 1.73 .73 | 1.58 .68 | | 3.11 | .00* |
| Coherence | | 1.79 .88 | 1.72 .78 | | 1.54 | .13 |
| Quantity of Detail | | 2.32 .87 | 1.97 .78 | | 4.00 | .00* |
| Quality of Detail | | 2.02 .87 | 1.91 .89 | | 2.08 | .04* |
| Complexity of Ideas | | 2.10 .71 | 1.90 .71 | | 4.23 | .00* |
| Correctness | | 2.46 .80 | 2.41 .83 | | .761 | .45 |
| Format | | 2.22 .82 | 1.94 .81 | | 3.90 | .00* |

* $p \leq .05$

The combined results for all students are that on the rough draft students were assessed as proficient in content, organization, and coherence. They were somewhat proficient in quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, correctness and format. However, on the final draft students showed remarkable improvement. They were found to be proficient in content, organization, coherence, quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, and format. Only on format were they somewhat proficient.

Paired sample t-tests were computed and statistically significant differences between those students who participated in the pilot program and those who did not were found with respect to

organization ($p = .00$), quantity of detail ($p = .00$), quality of detail ($p = .04^*$) and complexity of ideas ($p = .00$).

To focus just on the College Writing II students and compare results between those students who went to the writing center and those who did not, descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, were computed. Table 6 presents a comparison of the rough draft and final draft findings for all of the students in the College Writing II course.

Table 6

College II Rough Draft and Final Draft Proficiency Results

| Writing Competency | N 39 | Rough Draft | | Final Draft | | <i>df</i> 38 | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------|---------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-----------------|----------|----------|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| Content | | 2.15 | .87 | 2.10 | .72 | | 0.70 | .49 |
| Organization | | 1.77 | .78 | 1.54 | .60 | | 2.30 | .03* |
| Coherence | | 1.79 | .95 | 1.62 | .81 | | 2.21 | .03* |
| Quantity of Detail | | 2.18 | .88 | 2.10 | .79 | | 0.72 | .47 |
| Quality of Detail | | 2.12 | .70 | 2.05 | .72 | | 0.90 | .37 |
| Complexity of Ideas | | 2.23 | .78 | 2.05 | .69 | | 2.21 | .03* |
| Correctness | | 2.59 | .79 | 2.49 | .79 | | 1.00 | .32 |
| Format | | 2.31 | .89 | 1.95 | .89 | | 2.40 | .02* |

* $p \leq .05$

College Writing Proficiency

Findings from the analysis of the College Writing II students suggest that on the rough draft these students were proficient in organization and coherence, but they were only somewhat proficient in content, quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, and correctness. On the final draft the College Writing II students were found to be proficient in organization, coherence, and format. They were still only somewhat proficient in content, quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, and correctness.

Again, paired sample t-tests were computed to assess differences between College Writing II students who went to the writing center and those who did not. Statistically significant differences were found with respect to organization ($p = .03$), coherence ($p = .03$), complexity of ideas ($p = .03$), and format ($p = .02$).

Similar focus was on changes between Scriptures II students who participated in the writing center pilot program and those who did not participate. Table 7 presents a comparison of the rough draft and final draft assessment findings for all students in the Scriptures II course.

Table 7

Scriptures II Rough Draft and Final Draft Proficiency Results

| Writing Competency | N | Rough Draft | | Final Draft | | <i>df</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------|----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|----------|----------|
| | 66 | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| Content | | 1.61 | .65 | 1.58 | .58 | | 1.0 | .32 |
| Organization | | 1.68 | .71 | 1.61 | .72 | | 2.3 | .02* |
| Coherence | | 1.79 | .85 | 1.79 | .75 | | .00 | 1.0 |
| Quantity of Detail | | 2.41 | .86 | 1.89 | .77 | | 4.2 | .00* |
| Quality of Detail | | 1.95 | .98 | 1.83 | .97 | | 1.9 | .06 |
| Complexity of Ideas | | 2.02 | .67 | 1.81 | .72 | | 3.7 | .00* |
| Correctness | | 2.38 | .80 | 2.36 | .85 | | .19 | .85 |
| Format | | 2.17 | .78 | 1.93 | .76 | | 3.2 | .00* |

* $p \leq .05$

Scriptures II Proficiency

Results from the Writing Proficiency Assessment Scale (WPAS) for all of the Scriptures II students suggest that on the rough draft students were proficient in content, organization, coherence and quality of ideas. They were somewhat proficient in quantify of detail, complexity of ideas, correctness, and format. On the final draft, however, Scriptures II students were found to be proficient in not only content, organization, and coherence but also in quantity of detail, quality of detail, complexity of ideas, and format. They were only somewhat proficient in correctness.

Again, paired sample t-tests suggested statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between Scriptures II students who participated in the writing center pilot program and those who did not with respect to organization ($p = .02$), quantity of detail ($p = .00$), complexity of ideas ($p = .00$), and format ($p = .00$).

Student Participants Receptiveness to Writing Center Tutorials

The Writing Center Pilot Program also investigated differences in the extent to which students in College Writing II and Scriptures II were prepared for and utilized writing center services.

At each tutoring sessions student participants were assessed on their level of preparation, if they clearly explained their need for assistance, and whether or not they left with a clear understanding of how to proceed. A combined total of 12 student evaluation forms were submitted. Results from the evaluation forms indicated that 76.5% percent of the students who went to the writing center were prepared, 85.6% clearly explained their need for assistance, and 99.2% of the student participants in the writing center left tutoring sessions with a clear understanding of how to proceed.

Students were also assessed on their receptiveness to the tutoring sessions. A Likert-type scale was used as follows: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. Overall, writing center tutors who evaluated students in both College Writing II and Scriptures II agree that students participated in discussion ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .62$), received feedback ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .44$), and incorporated suggestions ($M = 1.39$, $SD = .67$).

As part of the evaluation process, writing center tutors were asked to write summary comments at the end of each tutoring session. Tutor responses were coded for content, and then analyzed. Tutor comments described students as prepared or unprepared. Comments on writing center tutorial sessions also included covering guidelines for assignments, narrowing the topic, APA format, rough draft consultation, final draft reviews, help finding sources, appreciation for writing center

help, directions for how to proceed, and giving encouragement. In some cases evaluation forms had no comments; however to ensure authenticity they were included the analysis and notes as having no comments. In some cases tutor frustration with students who were not prepared and personal notes to the Writing Center coordinator were noted; however, these comments were not included in the analysis. Table 8 presents the nature and scope of tutor comments on the writing center student evaluation forms for students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who used writing center services.

Table 8

Tutor Comments on College Writing II and Scriptures II Students Use of Writing Center Services

| Tutor Comment Category | College Writing II n = 71 | | Scriptures II n = 61 | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| | F | % | F | % |
| Prepared for tutoring session | 14 | 20% | 4 | 7% |
| Unprepared for tutoring session | 8 | 11% | 4 | 7% |
| Covered guidelines for assignment | 2 | 3% | 4 | 7% |
| Narrowing topic | 10 | 14% | 5 | 8% |
| APA Format clarification | 3 | 4% | 4 | 7% |
| Rough draft consultation | 8 | 11% | 9 | 15% |
| Final draft reviews | 3 | 4% | 3 | 5% |
| Help finding sources | 5 | 7% | 6 | 10% |
| Appreciation for writing center help | 3 | 4% | 2 | 2% |
| Directions for how to proceed | 12 | 17% | 14 | 23% |
| Giving encouragement | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |
| No comment | 3 | 4% | 4 | 7% |

Most of the tutor comments about the how College Writing II students used the writing center related to how well prepared students were for their writing sessions, help given for narrowing the topic, and directions for how to proceed. The least amount of comments were relative to covering guidelines for assignments, expressions of appreciation for the writing center, APA format

clarification, final draft reviews, and giving students encouragement. Three evaluation forms had no comments at all.

For the Scriptures II students the tutors made most of their comments about how to proceed, rough draft consultations and final draft reviews. The tutors commented the least about expressions of appreciation for the writing center and giving encouragement. On four evaluation forms there were no comments at all.

Student Satisfaction

The final research question asked about the extent to which students in College Writing II and Scriptures II respectively who went to the writing center tutorials reported being satisfied with writing center services. First, all students in both College Writing II and Scriptures II were asked to evaluate the writing center tutors. Student responses were aggregated for a better sense of overall student satisfaction. A total of 137 tutor evaluation forms were submitted. When asked if the tutor asked what you wanted to accomplish 97.98% responded yes and 2.2% said no. All of the students who responded, 100%, said that yes that (a) the tutor reviewed how to proceed and (b) the tutor used the writing session time wisely.

Students were also asked to rate their tutors after each session using the following Likert-type scale: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = more than satisfied, 3 = satisfied, 4 = less than satisfied, and 5 = not at all satisfied. Table 9 presents overall satisfaction of students with each of the writing center tutors.

Table 9

Student Satisfaction with Individual Writing Center Tutors

| Tutor | n | Professionalism | | Friendliness | | Expertise | |
|---------|----|-----------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|------|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Tutor 1 | 26 | 1.15 | 0.78 | 1.15 | 0.78 | 1.19 | 0.80 |
| Tutor 2 | 61 | 1.26 | 0.89 | 1.20 | 0.87 | 1.28 | 0.90 |
| Tutor 3 | 29 | 1.52 | 1.24 | 1.44 | 1.24 | 1.76 | 1.20 |
| Tutor 4 | 21 | 1.57 | 1.29 | 1.48 | 1.21 | 1.52 | 1.25 |

As a final evaluation measure College Writing II students and Scriptures II students who participated in the writing center pilot project were asked to respond to a satisfaction survey. First, they were asked to circle the number of times they visited the writing center. College Writing II students visited the writing center slightly more often ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.29$) than Scriptures II students ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .83$). Second, to measure satisfaction with writing center services they were asked to respond to the following Likert-type scale: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = more than satisfied, 3 = satisfied, 4 = less than satisfied, 5 = not at all satisfied. Table 10 presents College Writing II and Scriptures II student responses to the satisfaction survey.

Table 10

College Writing II and Scriptures II Satisfaction with Writing Center Services

| Writing Center Service | College Writing II (n = 18) | | Scriptures II (n = 19) | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| One-on-one tutoring | 1.55 | 1.34 | 1.32 | 0.67 |
| Writing center resources | 2.22 | 1.22 | 1.95 | 0.85 |
| Writing center tutors' expertise | 1.78 | 1.17 | 1.42 | 0.61 |
| Writing center location | 1.61 | 1.04 | 1.42 | 0.77 |
| Writing center hours | 2.11 | 1.18 | 1.74 | 0.93 |
| Feedback on papers | 1.78 | 1.31 | 1.79 | 0.98 |
| Length of tutoring sessions | 1.72 | 1.00 | 1.53 | 0.77 |
| Attention tutor paid to your papers | 1.67 | 1.19 | 1.79 | 0.98 |
| Information tutor gave for improving | 1.78 | 1.26 | 1.47 | 0.78 |
| Effort you put into writing your papers | 2.38 | 1.14 | 1.95 | 0.97 |
| Information to help you revise your papers | 1.72 | 1.18 | 1.63 | 0.83 |
| Writing center tutors' friendliness | 1.44 | 1.29 | 1.16 | 0.38 |
| Your attitude for improving your writing | 1.89 | 1.18 | 1.58 | 0.77 |
| Your understanding of the writing process | 2.00 | 1.19 | 1.84 | 0.90 |

Results from the satisfaction survey suggest that in all areas both College Writing II and Scriptures II students were more than satisfied with (a) writing center services and (b) their own effort.

Summary

The writing center pilot program investigated differences between students in College Writing II and Scriptures II who received writing center tutorial help and students in both classes who did not. Interest was in the extent to which students differed in writing confidence, writing proficiency, receptiveness of student participants, and student satisfaction.

Overall, while there was some variance in items, students who participated in the writing center program and students who did not generally agreed or somewhat agreed with most of the items associated with writing confidence. Of particular importance are the statistically significant

differences in student confidence on these items: knowing how to write a paper, how pleased they were with the writing done for class, their desire to gain more confidence in writing, knowing where to go to get help if it's available.

College Writing II and Scriptures II students who participated in the writing center pilot program and those who did not generally agreed or somewhat agreed with most of the items related to writing confidence. Statistically significant results were found for College Writing II students on the items I would like to gain more confidence in my writing, and I know where to go to get help with my writing. In contrast, statistically significant results were found for Scriptures II students on the items I feel apprehensive about academic writing, I would like to gain more confidence in my writing, and I would seek more help with writing if services were available.

Students who went for writing center help and those who did not showed gains in most of the areas associated with writing proficiency; however, there were statistically significant differences between students who went for help and those who did not with respect to organization, quantity of detail, quality of detail and complexity of ideas.

The College Writing II students who went to the writing center had significant improvement in organization, coherence, complexity of ideas, and format compared to those College Writing II students who did not participate in the pilot program. The Scriptures II students who received writing center help had significant improvement in organization, quantity of detail, complexity of ideas, and format over Scriptures II students who received no writing center help.

Tutor evaluations of students who participated in the writing center program suggested agreed that students who came to the writing center tutorials were generally well prepared, clearly explained their need for assistance, and left the writing center with a clear understanding of how to proceed. Further, students were receptive to writing center tutorials. Writing center tutors agreed

that both College Writing II students and Scriptures II students participated in discussion, received feedback, and incorporated suggestion into their writing.

College Writing II students visited the writing center slightly more often than Scriptures II students. Both groups of students found the writing center tutors to be professional and friendly. Both groups of students agree that writing center tutors had an appropriate level of expertise. Outcomes from the writing center satisfaction survey both groups of students were more than satisfied with writing center services and their own effort.

Chapter 5

Interpretation of Results

Writing Confidence

A mixed factorial ANOVA yielded statistically significant differences between students who participated in the pilot study and those who did not in relation to writing confidence. The study showed that students who participated in the pilot study gained confidence in knowing how to write a paper, increased overall satisfaction with the writing they had done for class, increased desire to gain more confidence in writing, and a heightened awareness of where to receive writing help. These four areas yielded the highest statistical differences for both courses, emphasizing that confidence is not limited to writing-intensive courses.

Writing Proficiency

Increased confidence will not yield proficiency in academic writing; however, it plays a key role in the fundamental belief in a working process regarding writing. Paired sample t-tests computed statistically significant differences between the rough and final drafts of papers submitted by students who received writing center tutorials. Of the eight categories used to score the two drafts, students who participated in the study reported significant differences in the areas of organization, quantity of detail, quality of detail, and complexity of ideas. Broken down by course, College Writing II students recorded improvement in areas of organization, coherence, complexity of ideas, and format. Students in Scriptures II recorded improvement in areas of organization, quantity of detail, complexity of ideas, and format. These areas of improvement, respectively for both courses, speak to the effectiveness of the tutorials focusing on the discourse of writing in context. As previously affirmed by Murphy and Sherwood (1995), the collaborative role of writing center tutors is to facilitate a conversation of writing context (p.4). Since one of the main goals of the study was to provide writing help, not editing services,

these statistically significant areas of improvement affirm that the success of a writing center's ability to increase student proficiency in writing cannot focus on grammar and mechanical elements alone.

Student Receptiveness to Writing Help

Logistics alone cannot guarantee a productive and effective tutorial. Student preparation plays a key factor in the student's receptiveness to receiving help from the tutor. Self-reporting evaluations by students yielded evidence that 76.5% of students were prepared for the tutorial session, 85.6% of the students were able to clearly communicate their need for assistance, and 99.2% of the students left the tutorial session understanding how to proceed with the work. These elements played into the effectiveness of the tutorial session, affecting student receptiveness to tutor help. The preparation and ability to communicate a desired outcome for the session allowed tutors to yield the 99.2% statistic of dismissing the student with a clear sense of direction. Preparation can also be attributed to the tutor supervisor who communicated regularly with students reminding them of upcoming tutorials and reminding students to bring any/all necessary resources for the session. These results affirm the importance of well-trained supervisors and tutors.

Student Satisfaction with Writing Center Services

Receptiveness and productivity do not always equate to satisfaction; however, they contribute to overall satisfaction. A likert-type scale survey yielded overwhelmingly positive response to student satisfaction with both student tutors and tutorial effectiveness. Almost all (97.98%) of the students who participated in the study reported that the tutor helped them accomplish what they wanted in the session, and all (100%) of students who participated in the study reported that the tutor used the tutorial time wisely and reviewed with the student how to proceed before the session ended. As a final measure at the end of the pilot study, student participants completed a likert-type scale survey assessing overall satisfaction with the pilot study, not just the tutor and individual sessions. Although College Writing II students utilized the tutorial sessions more often than the Scriptures II students, all

students reported that they were more than satisfied in all areas of the satisfaction survey—both writing center services and their own contributed efforts.

These results affirm the committee’s decision to include the Scriptures II course—a non-intensive writing course—in the pilot study. Research shows that centers work with students from all majors and disciplines, not just English students.

Recommendations

This pilot study of two classes in the fall and spring investigated the effects of writing center treatment on writing confidence, writing proficiency, receptiveness of student participants, and student satisfaction. The population in the study consisted of 117 students ranging from freshmen to seniors and various ethnicities. Our findings indicated that students who received the writing center treatment gained confidence in knowing how to research, write, and revise the paper and where to get help. They also reported that they were pleased with their final papers.

This finding suggests that students at Olivet Nazarene University would benefit from a writing center on campus to help them gain confidence in academic writing. Students who participated learned that they knew where to get help, an important step to success, and they reported that they would seek help if it were available. These findings echo Muriel Hall’s premise that a writing center offers “a haven for students where individual needs are met” (Hall, 1995, p. 27). Currently, students must rely on peers or meetings with professors or chance to find help with writing. The visibility of a writing center would convey an important message to students that Olivet is here to help them succeed.

Another finding of the pilot was that those who attended the writing center made gains in the quality of their writing in organization, quantity of detail, quality of detail, and complexity of ideas compared to the non-treatment group. This finding might be anticipated in a writing course such as College Writing; however, one course taught both fall and spring was a non-intensive writing course. Consequently, this finding is a compelling argument for the implementation of a writing center. The

pilot tutors reported that these were the areas of focus in the tutoring sessions, so it would make sense that participants improved in these areas. It is also important to note that there was no improvement in grammar since the tutorials emphasized global concerns rather than editing. Tutors were intentional in their efforts to mentor and tutor, rather than edit students' papers. This rationale is consistent with the literature that says the goal is to "improve student writers, not student writing" (North, 1984; Murphy & Sherwood, 1995). If a writing center can help students improve their papers in organization, detail and complexity of ideas, students will more likely achieve academic excellence.

This study also found that those who received the writing center treatment were receptive to it. They were generally well prepared and left with a clear understanding of how to proceed to write the next draft. The students in the study participated in the tutorial discussion and incorporated suggestions into their writing. Given that the students in the writing center group were selected from each class in a blind draw, this finding suggests that a writing center on campus would be well received if it were staffed with trained personnel. The literature shows that the collegial nature of the tutorial relationship is beneficial to the campus climate for students, faculty, and the greater community (North, 1984).

The success of this writing center pilot was due in large part to the administration of the center and training of the student tutors. The pilot was directed by an English professor who had teaching and writing experience and strong organizational skills. She spent time selecting, meeting, and training tutors throughout the year so that the tutors were confident and clear about their roles. The setup of the writing center modeled those at Indiana Wesleyan and Taylor Universities. Based on our initial findings, we recommend that a writing center be led by a professional, one with English and writing expertise and strong organizational skills. We suggest that a writing center director be at least a half time faculty position. On-going training of student tutors is imperative if the writing center functions

successfully. One model is to require peer tutors to take a one-hour credit class on tutoring taught by the director to provide excellence and accountability and to offset the expense of hiring tutors.

Although the findings of our study are limited due to the small population, flaws in our assessment instruments, and limited resources and space, the team was pleased with the outcomes of the study and recommends that Olivet invest in a writing center based on research results. In summary we offer these specific recommendations:

- Implement a writing center on campus for the undergraduate program. The pilot showed that it does not take a large outlay of funds to produce positive results.
- Start small and grow as resources are available. Positive results were from the one-to-one tutorials that are systematic and professional.
- Designate a public space as the writing center. While physical space is a problem on campus, a writing center is a good use of some space to promote academic excellence and demonstrate support of student success. Tutors used a small space in the library, and although we were grateful for it, a writing center will need at least a room large enough for a couple of desks, a computer, and file of resources. Benner Library was an effective central location.
- Hire one faculty professional (half time position) to direct, staff, advertise, and coordinate the writing center. Staff the tutors with qualified students who will take a tutoring class of one hour.

Although this study did not track final grades to compare them, the findings suggest that the writing center made a positive impact on the participants. In fact, some students asked where the writing center went in the fall 2011. We would like to respond that it will be coming back.

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