

Program Name: Writing in the End Zone

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Academic Year: 2023-24

Status:

Updated on: September 28, 2023

1) Description of Program (200-400 words)

a) Provide a brief description of the program and how it supports the following:

Writing in the End Zone (WEZ) is a learning community focused on the retention, success, and transfer of under-represented student-athletes at College of San Mateo, most specifically African American and Pacific Islander male students. Now in its twentieth year, WEZ students are active participants in the CSM football program and take ENGL 105 and ENGL 110 in either a fall-spring or a spring-fall cohort.

Writing in the End Zone embraces CSM's mission, values, and solidarity statements, and it supports both the College's and the District's strategic priorities and goals. As is described below, WEZ continues to serve our target population well, and WEZ students continue to outperform their counterparts based on the metrics available to us.

b) Identify any factors, including federal, state, or local initiatives, that have impacted the program and the students served.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be challenging for our WEZ students as many were without appropriate technology at the start of the pandemic. The majority of our students were also sharing space with multiple members of the household, so finding a quiet place to study and participate in online coursework was almost impossible. However, with WEZ's early return to campus in fall 2021, our students and the WEZ team recommenced face-to-face instruction and participation with vigor. During the fall 2021 semester, Teeka James taught two cohorts of WEZ and Jon Kitamura acted as TA so as to reacquaint himself with the program and the new curricular changes that Professors James and Stafford have implemented.

WEZ staff commend the College's efforts to reduce barriers to student success through a myriad of post-pandemic programs and services, which the majority of WEZ students take advantage of. In collaboration with College of San Mateo's football program, WEZ coordinators ensure that students are aware of the support services that are available to them. The College's shift to offering "free college" to students within San Mateo county has been a boon for our students as has the implementation of SparkPoint to help with food insecurity. Most significantly, many WEZ students utilize SparkPoint's free groceries on campus (courtesy of Second Harvest) and free meals on campus (courtesy of our College's partnership with Samaritan house). Our District's SAM Cards (Student Aid for Meals) which provides students with \$100 meal cards each month for use Pacific Dining has been immensely helpful, especially considering that our student-athletes

arrive on campus before 8:00 am each day and leave after 5:00 pm and have little time to shop or prepare food each day.

Unfortunately, the District seems to have curtailed funding of the SAM card program in 2023 as 80% of our football student-athletes were denied SAM cards this year as compared to last year. It should be noted that almost all of our student-athletes qualify for SAM card assistance, yet only 20% of applicants were approved and many “zero EFC” students were denied. The WEZ team hopes that the District recognizes our students’ need for easily accessible food on campus and expands funding for this program (as we see in table 1, 63% of WEZ students qualify as low-income).

WEZ students also benefit from CSM’s efforts to provide free transportation to campus via Lyft rides though rides can be unpredictable and require advanced planning. All students in our WEZ classes also have laptops—an essential tool in any college composition course—and many obtain these through CSM’s loaner laptop program through the library. Thus, while there are no significant federal or state initiatives that have affected our program since our last program review, WEZ coordinators have ensured that our students recognize CSM’s efforts to eliminate barriers to student access and success and utilize these programs and services.

The WEZ staff is happy to report that since 2019, at least 82 WEZ students have earned AA degrees and transferred to four-year colleges and universities, many with generous or full-ride scholarships. Since 2019, WEZ students have transferred to institutions such as UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Oregon State, Brigham Young University, University of Hawai’i, San Jose State University, Sacramento State University, Cal Poly, Morehead State University, West Texas A&M, SUNY Stonybrook, and University of Oregon, among others. In addition, every year we get students contacting us to report that they’ve earned their BA, and in a growing number of cases, their master’s degree.

2) Results of Previous Program Review (200-500 words)

- a) **Describe the results of your previous Program Review’s action plan and identified equity gaps (previous goals, results achieved, changes implemented, plans still in progress, notable results/outcomes).**

Previous Goal 1: Review and update the curriculum for both WEZ courses. We evaluate and update our curriculum on a yearly basis; however, with the changes in coordination staffing, we anticipate making more changes than we typically have. The whole WEZ team looks forward to the process.

Results Goal 1: WEZ faculty have reviewed and updated curriculum in both ENGL 105 and ENGL 110. Specifically, ENGL 105 assignments have been streamlined, and essay assignments have been revised to give students different options in responding to topics/texts. The WEZ team is still actively seeking a new novel to incorporate into WEZ 110.

Previous Goal 2: Maintain our energy and enthusiasm so that we can continue to provide our students with the wrap-around services that have proven to be so successful over the past seventeen years. Returning to campus has helped rejuvenate us already.

Results Goal 2: We have accomplished this goal. Our spirits are high, our commitment to our students and the WEZ community unflagging.

Previous Goal 3: Resume our community events: celebratory “breaking of bread” at the end of the fall and spring semesters, and a field trip to a theater production in the spring (public health conditions willing).

Results Goal 3: WEZ cohorts now participate in a program-wide community-building event in the spring semester which brings together students from both WEZ cohorts (one section of ENGL 105 and one section of ENGL 110), WEZ faculty, and additional coaching staff. WEZ coordinators also participate in CSM football’s annual Awards Ceremony and recognize our students’ academic efforts and accomplishments.

Previous Goal 4: Find new funding to provide our students with the books and school supplies that Tom Bauer’s office has so generously funded since 2015. A resource request for this goal has been submitted.

Results Goal 4: This is our biggest challenge as our program continues to seek additional funds to purchase books and school supplies for our students. While we have had informal agreements with the District office in the past (most notably with Vice Chancellor Tom Bauer), the budget augmentation we requested in 2021 was not approved. (Please see this year’s plans and budget augmentation request for additional information.)

Previous Goal 5: Discontinue the co-requisite structure of WEZ. It is no longer necessary and makes a lot of unnecessary work for our division assistants.

Results Goal 5: Completed.

b) Explain any curriculum or programmatic changes since last program review

At its core, Writing in the End Zone has remained the same; this is a two-semester course sequence that guides students through ENGL 105 and ENGL 110. After acting as a TA/Observer in fall 2021, Jon Kitamura rejoined the WEZ team as English instructor and co-coordinator in the fall 2022 semester, working alongside Teeka James (English), Bret Pollack (Athletics), Hansen Sekona (Athletics), and Tim Tulloch (Athletics).

Since our last program review, we have embraced a hybrid modality for the WEZ sections of ENGL 105, for both the fall and spring cohorts. During the football season (the fall semester), the football team routinely has at least three away games as well as a “bye” week that lead to Friday class cancellations. As a result, WEZ coordinators have

eliminated Friday classes to prevent such cancellations. For ENGL 110, this shifts the course offering to a 3x/week schedule (M, W, Th). For ENGL 105, WEZ coordinators have adopted a hybrid modality which provides students with ample instruction and support. Students in WEZ ENGL 105 classes now meet in-person for four hours a week and have one hour of asynchronous instruction. In addition, because of institutional support in the form of reassigned time, WEZ faculty are able to spend three to four hours per week working with students individually and in small groups in the Learning Center during Power Hour (study hall). This mix of face-to-face classes, individualized instruction, and an online component provides students with multilayered instruction and support, with the added benefit of increased flexibility, which is crucial for our student-athletes. Students and coordinators alike are pleased with the change.

In addition, both English instructors have adopted a contract grading model, an evaluative method recognized in the field of English composition as an equity-advancing and anti-racist means of assessment. Research suggests that traditional grading practices in college-level composition courses favor students who already have significant linguistic fluency. This means that students with ample experience in academic writing or who are already adept in writing in standardized English typically receive higher grades on essay assignments while marginalized student groups—most notably low-income students and students-of-color—are at a disadvantage, simply because they typically come to us from environments where standardized English is either not taught or customary (Inoue 2019). To combat this inequity, WEZ English faculty now employ contract grading to measure student progress and to determine students' overall grades for the course. This contract, an agreement between the instructor and the student, emphasizes both the quantity of work students produce as well as the quality of that work. WEZ English faculty still provide evaluative feedback on student writing though essays are now scored as either Passing or Not Passing as opposed to receiving letter grades. In this way, the WEZ grading contract rewards effort and consistency and allows for revision so that student writers can continue to refine and polish their work. This model works particularly well with our WEZ students as it emphasizes consistent effort and growth over time, two fundamental principles in college sports.

- c) **Discipline-level and SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) assessment/Student Services and SAO (Service Area Outcomes) assessment: Describe learning or area assessment plans implemented since last Program Review, including any activities undertaken to address equity or delivery mode gaps.**

Not applicable. WEZ does not have student learning outcomes as a program. Our course-level SLOs are assessed along with the rest of the courses in the English and Kinesiology (VARS/TEAM) departments.

3) **Current Program Review (200-400 words)**

- a) **Student population equity: Discuss any gaps in student success, persistence, satisfaction, utilization or enrollment across student populations (statistics provided**

for ethnicity, first-generation, age, gender and total enrollment), or student population served.**Findings:**

We do not see equity gaps in our WEZ student population in terms of enrollment and academic success. Writing in the End Zone continues to serve our target populations (African American and Pacific Islander male students) (see table 1), and those students continue to pass courses at higher rates than do students in the relevant control groups (see tables 2 and 3).

The PRIE data for AY 2022-2023 (see table 1) indicates that just over 21% of our WEZ students completed high school outside of California. Because of CSM's outstanding reputation in academics, student support, and athletics, our program draws many students from outside of San Mateo County, which increases the College's enrollment. However, this means that upwards of one-fifth of our students are not eligible for the programs that the District has to close the opportunity gaps experienced by our low-income students. Specifically, many of our students do not qualify for free college because they live outside of San Mateo County, and those who are from out-of-state pay increased tuition while also grappling with the astronomical housing costs in the Bay Area.

As has been the case in all previous WEZ data analyzed since 2004 (and tracking students back to 2002), students in WEZ *English* courses have succeeded at higher rates than students in "non-WEZ" English courses. We are pleased to report that this year's data show that our students' high success rates extend beyond our WEZ classrooms and into all of their college courses. In fall 2022 and spring 2023, all WEZ students succeeded in their college classes at significantly higher rates than did "non-WEZ" CSM students (see tables 2 and 3). In fall 2022, 33% more Black (non-Hispanic) WEZ students passed courses than did non-WEZ Black (non-Hispanic students) (80.5% versus 58%) while 60% more Pacific Islander WEZ students succeeded in their coursework than their non-WEZ counterparts (81.4% versus 44%) (see table 2). Those differences increased in spring 2023 for Black (non-Hispanic) WEZ students, 43.5% more of whom completed courses than did non-WEZ Black (non-Hispanic) students (see table 3). In fact, WEZ students outperformed their non-WEZ counterparts in every demographic group, with success rates ranging from a low of 80.5% to a high of 100% (spring 2023 has one outlier: a single student who passed only 50% of their courses) (see tables 2 and 3). As a group, WEZ students' median success rates are 94% for fall 2022 and 82.6% for spring 2023.

Analysis:

We attribute the continued success of our students and WEZ to several factors:

Collaboration between English and Kinesiology/Athletics faculty: Ultimately, WEZ's continued success is the result of seamless collaboration between the College's Athletics and English faculty. All WEZ coordinators (and notably the entire coaching staff of CSM's football team) prioritize academic success and achievement through intensive support. WEZ coordinators are in constant communication regarding student attendance,

participation, assignment completion, and external factors that may impede student success and collaborate so as to remove these barriers.

Reassigned time for faculty coordinators: Reassigned time allows for this collaboration between departments/divisions/faculty to take place. WEZ coordinators meet weekly to review student progress, design strategies for student engagement, and intervene when necessary to assist students who are struggling in the classroom or who face external factors that interfere with their academic performance. WEZ coordinators also use this time to provide targeted individual support to students during Power Hour (the team's daily study-hall session) and to participate in team meetings so that our courses are aligned with the football program's values and goals.

Incorporation of wrap-around services to eliminate barriers to student success: As stated previously, WEZ coordinators guide students towards various District- and College-sponsored support programs. This includes SparkPoint services, the CSM Library's technology loaner program, financial aid and scholarship awards, and transportation services. In addition, reliable access to WEZ-supplied books and study supplies guarantees that no student is without course material.

Cohort structure: WEZ's "looping" program structure may contribute to student success. Each WEZ student cohort stays together with a single instructor for both ENGL 105 and ENGL 110. This "looping" model has been shown to improve student learning in multiple studies focused on K-12 education (Hill and Jones 2018; Tourigny, Plante, and Raby 2020; Hwang, Kisida, and Keodel 2021).

WEZ's continued commitment to equity-focused, anti-racist pedagogy and practice.

Resources:

We were not granted our resource request in the last program review cycle.

Plans to address opportunity gaps:

WEZ currently is allocated a budget of roughly \$10,000 per year. This money supports community-building field trips, learning community logo shirts, graduation sashes, and two end-of-semester celebration meals (pizza) per year.

From the spring 2014 semester through his retirement in the spring 2022 semester, former Vice Chancellor Tom Bauer generously paid for the books our WEZ students used in their WEZ English classes. He had been at a Board presentation that our students had made about our learning community and was moved to support the program in a tangible way. He asked us what we needed, and we immediately responded, "books!"

As is the case for most of our vulnerable student populations, the price of textbooks can prove to be a formidable barrier to WEZ students' learning and success in their classes. While WEZ has made every effort to choose texts with economy in mind (for example, instead of hundred-dollar textbooks, we only order trade books, which usually cost between \$15 and \$25 each), for many of our students, coming up with the \$30 to \$45

they need for their WEZ books is quite difficult. As a result, WEZ faculty are seeking funds to build a Writing in the End Zone library whereby our books are purchased and distributed to students. In addition, when WEZ faculty deliver books on the first day of a new academic unit, all students have the book in hand and are able to engage with the class material; books are not lost, nor are we waiting for some members of the class to purchase the text. Providing textbooks and study supplies truly eliminates a barrier that can impede student progress and is a direct way that our program helps to fulfill CSM's Mission to ensure "equitable outcomes so students can realize their full potential."

Many of our students are first-generation college students (46% identify as first-generation college students in AY 2021-2022) (see table 1); they perceive themselves as athletes first, and college students second. In fact, many have expressed that they do not feel as though they belong in college, and they would not be here if it weren't for football. WEZ aims to transform students' self-concept and strives to foster our students' academic identities *and* skills. WEZ sweatshirts are a simple, tangible means by which our students begin to view themselves as scholars *and* athletes; each student who enters the program and who passes their first academic essay earns a WEZ sweatshirt, which symbolizes their rightful place in our academic institution. This practice has proven successful in other learning communities and has been adopted statewide in both Puente and Umoja.

b) Modes of Delivery equity: Discuss any gaps in student success, persistence, satisfaction, utilization or enrollment, and student population served across different delivery modes. Please comment on in person services/instruction vs hybrid services options/instruction vs completely online services/instruction.

We see no equity gaps in the success of WEZ students based on mode of delivery (hybrid and face-to-face course offerings).

c) Challenges and Opportunities: Describe any other particular challenges, opportunities, or other factors that impact the success of your program (e.g., natural or health disasters, assessing whether a degree program is meeting its learning outcomes, developing new degree programs or courses, adapting to a changing student population, keeping a flagging program alive, starting a learning community, resources, etc.).

Challenges:

As is evident in the data from AY 2021-2022 (see table 1), close to two-thirds of WEZ students are low-income and routinely struggle to afford the expenses associated with being a college student: textbooks, basic school supplies, transportation to school, food, and housing. The PRIE data for 2022-2023 indicates that 21.4% of WEZ students graduated from high schools outside of California, and an additional 25% graduated from an "unknown" high school. We also know that a high number of our WEZ students are from outside the immediate Bay Area (for example, Sacramento, Vallejo, Pittsburg, Antioch, Tracy). These factors illustrate how transportation and housing costs exacerbate

the opportunity gaps our students experience. Therefore, securing additional funding for books and school supplies will help alleviate some of the economic burdens our WEZ students face (see our resource request for 2023).

Opportunities:

Collaboration with Math in the End Zone: Most of our WEZ students also participate in the Math in the End Zone (MEZ) learning community (coordinated by Joshua Rhodes and Mike Dovenberg). Unfortunately, MEZ staff haven't yet been granted release time for coordinating the program. However, we see an opportunity to develop cross-community projects that help students learn how to use their reading, writing, and math skills in concert.

4) Planning

- a) **Discipline-level and SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) assessment/Student Services and SAO (Service Area Outcomes) assessment for 2023-2025:** Describe learning or area assessment plans for this Program Review cycle, **including any activities planned to address equity or delivery mode gaps.**

Not applicable. WEZ does not have student learning outcomes as a program. Our course-level SLOs are assessed along with the rest of the courses in the English and Kinesiology (VARS/TEAM) departments.

- b) **Program goals: Based on your current review of your program's equity gaps, learning assessments and challenges and opportunities, identify specific goals and plans. Please note that whereas SLOs/SAOs involve assessing and measuring a specific skill or knowledge students will be able to do/understand upon successful completion of a course, program, service, and/or degree/certificate, program goals reflect overall aspects of your program or service you hope to improve.**

Goal 1. Curriculum revision

- *Description:* WEZ faculty will continue to review and refine our curriculum in ENGL 105 and ENGL 110 so as to best reflect contemporary topics in sports and society. This includes researching content for the development of new unit(s) for ENGL 105 (NIL deals, the transfer portal) as well as adopting a new novel for ENGL 110.
- *Actions:* Faculty will research potential new topics and supporting texts by the next program review cycle.
- *Outcomes:* Design a new unit for ENGL 105 and ENGL 110 (the novel)
- *Timeline:* Fall 2025

- *Responsible party:* English faculty and coaches
- *Support:* Continuation of WEZ reassigned time

Goal 2. Secure additional funding in order to continue to support students with books and school supplies. This tangible, material support is essential for closing equity gaps.

- *Description:* Per our 2023 resource request, WEZ coordinators aim to close opportunity gaps by providing access to requisite materials for course completion.
- *Actions:* Submit resource request
- *Outcomes:* Obtain funding for resources as requested
- *Timeline:* Fall 2025
- *Responsible party:* English faculty and coaches
- *Support:* Approved budget augmentation described above and in our 2023 resource request

Goal 3. Collaborate with Math in the End Zone

- *Description:* Explore collaboration opportunities with our colleagues in Math in the End Zone.
- *Actions:* Meet with MEZ staff to brainstorm ways we can collaborate. Support MEZ in their quest for institutional recognition and funding.
- *Outcomes:* If possible, create one curricular collaboration project for our students
- *Timeline:* Fall 2025
- *Responsible party:* English faculty and coaches
- *Support:* Continuation of WEZ reassigned time

References

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- Tourigny, R., Plante, I., & Raby, C. (2019). Do students in a looping classroom get higher grades and report a better teacher-student relationship than those in a traditional setting? *Educational Studies*, *46*(6), 744–759. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2019.1663152>

Table 1
DEMOGRAPHICS

ETHNICITY	WEZ (2021-2022)	WEZ (2022-2023)	College (2022-2023)
Headcount	<i>N</i> = 35	<i>N</i> = 134	<i>N</i> = 11,026
Black (Non-Hispanic)	22.9%	30.6%	3%
Pacific Islander	17.1%	25.4%	2%
Multiraces	20%	20.9%	7%
Latinx	17.1%	9%	32%
White (Non-Hispanic)	20%	11.9%	26%
Native American	0	0	0
Filipino	2.9%	1.5%	7%
Asian	0	0.7%	20%
Unknown	0	0	3%
OTHER			
First Generation	45.7%	33%	45%
Low-Income	62.9%	<i>no data provided</i>	<i>no data provided</i>

Source: PRIE data

Table 2
STUDENT SUCCESS RATES (FALL 2022)

	WEZ			Collegewide (non-WEZ) Comparison Group		
	N	Course Success Rate	Average Term GPA	N	Course Success Rate	Average Term GPA
Enrollments (duplicated enrollment count)						
Male	609	85.4%	3.2	8,540	69.4%	2.99
Black (Non-Hispanic)	185	80.5%	3.05	385	57.9%	2.78
Pacific Islander	129	81.4%	3.01	426	43.7%	2.54
Multiraces	135	84.4%	3.23	1,401	75.2%	3.12
Latinx	67	94%	3.4	6,385	63.8%	2.78
White (Non-Hispanic)	81	95.1%	3.55	4,541	75.5%	3.21
Filipino	11	100%	3.55	1,177	73.7%	3.01
Asian	5	100%	3.64	2,707	79.8%	3.37

Source: PRIE data

Table 3
STUDENT SUCCESS RATES (SPRING 2023)

Enrollments (<i>duplicated enrollment count</i>)	WEZ			Collegewide (non-WEZ) Comparison Group		
	N	Course Success Rate	Average Term GPA	N	Course Success Rate	Average Term GPA
Male	502	85.1%	3.16	8,845	71.0%	3.0
Black (Non-Hispanic)	160	88.8%	3.19	445	57.1%	2.74
Pacific Islander	137	81.1%	2.9	407	50.9%	2.61
Multiraces	104	86.5%	3.15	1,448	74.0%	3.11
Latinx	46	83%	3.37	6,451	65.6%	2.8
White (Non-Hispanic)	47	80.9%	3.51	4,777	76.6%	3.19
Filipino	2	50%	3.4	1,173	72.9%	3.3
Asian	6	100%	3.63	3,206	80.2%	3.34

Source: PRIE data