

College of San Mateo

Program Review Report - Student Services, Learning Communities, & Learning Support Centers

Student Services - LRSC - Writing Center

I. PROGRAM CONTEXT

Mission (100 word limit)

1. How does your program align with the College and District mission? (100 word limit)

The Writing Center aligns with both the College's mission and its institutional priorities. Specifically, we provide high-quality, innovative academic support for all students enrolled in all of our integrated reading and writing composition courses as well as any CSM student who wants reading and writing support for their other courses. In line with CSM's priority of student-focused support, we believe our students deserve the best help available, which is why students meet with actual practitioners for assistance with their academic reading and writing.

2. Program Description (500 word limit)

Best practices and research show that more students succeed in course-related writing when they are provided with individualized instruction from discipline experts outside the classroom (Boquet & Lerner, 2008; Lerner, 2005; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001). Thus, the mission of the Writing Center is to help students at all stages of the writing process in a welcoming learning environment that respects diversity. Unlike most writing centers at community colleges and universities in California, the Writing Center provides CSM students with faculty from the English and ESL departments to help students with their writing in one-on-one conferences. Since the Center's instructors are English and ESL faculty, integration of instruction, pedagogy, and curriculum occurs in both the classroom and the Center.

The Writing Center supports students by providing one-on-one essay conferences with experienced English and ESL instructors, both in-person and online, and with self-paced tutorials on specific writing and critical thinking skills, which are assigned by classroom instructors to respond to individual student needs, intervening as necessary when students need additional support to succeed in their composition classes. All CSM students may meet with instructors in the Writing Center for reading and writing support through a "stand-by" appointment process. Connected to the Writing Center are two additional rooms—the Quiet Room (18-106), where students can research and compose their essays on Macs or PCs, and a Computer-Assisted Classroom (18-108), where English courses are taught.

The Writing Center takes great pride in meeting the College's equity goals by providing additional learning support opportunities for our students. Above all, the Center is designed to be a warm, welcoming space on campus for students from all backgrounds and all ability levels, where instructors can work with students, meeting them "where they are" and giving all students what they need to succeed.

Program Service

3.A. How many students are served by your program?

For the last two years taken semester by semester, the Center has served 1374 students (Fall 2023), 1129 students (Spring 2024), 1648 students (Fall 2024), and 1281 students (Spring 2025).

3.B. How does your program intentionally serve underrepresented, disproportionately impacted or racially minoritized students (ie. Black and/or Indigenous People of Color; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer,

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Intersex, and Asexual; 1st Gen; Foster; Homeless; Undocumented; Veteran; Low-Income; or other disproportionately impacted student populations identified in our Student Equity data, etc.)?

All Center faculty, staff, and student assistants are committed to making the Center a warm, welcoming place for all CSM students. We support underrepresented and disproportionately impacted students by affirming their right to excellent academic support and by providing a safe and supportive space to study. We were not provided data relating to Center usage for most of the groups listed in this question, but anecdotally, we know that students from these groups use the Writing Center because we see them and talk to them and let them know we're glad they're here.

Student Access, Retention, and Completion

4. How has student access, retention, and completion changed over the course of this program review cycle?

The traditional ideas of retention and completion don't quite apply since the Center doesn't offer classes. (English department retention and completion numbers held consistent at 88% and 66%, respectively, across the program review period.) However, the Center offers matched appointments (instructor-recommended consistent support), which is the only "program" that gives us a way to track completion. We recently changed the frequency of matched students' appointments from every other week to every week, and this regularity has helped us retain far more students in the program instead of having them discontinue. Beyond our matched students, we learned that we have also been able to "retain" non-matched students since we know that students are more likely to come back after an initial appointment and have additional appointments later on in the semester. Our data shows that in Fall 2023, 254 students had only one appointment but 358 had more than one; in Spring 2024, 187 students had only one appointment but 302 had more than one; in Fall 2024, 345 students had only one appointment but 450 had more than one; and in Spring 2025, 198 students had only one appointment but 374 had more than one. Put simply, non-matched students, coming in on their own, don't just visit the Writing Center, they *revisit* the Writing Center to continue to use its resources.

Additionally, we have streamlined and firmed up our practices around offering Zoom conferences for students unable to be on campus. While students report to us that they strongly prefer meeting in person to meeting on Zoom by about an 8:1 average over the review period, we know the remote option is the only possible access for some students, which is why we have integrated that option permanently into our offerings.

Our ongoing challenge with access is for our evening students. We have not been able to secure dependable evening staffing over the last two years, which has made our hours and our evening appointment options inconsistent. Students have reported this as a problem to us, saying in comments that they wish we could be open later. One student wrote, "I have classes until 3:30 pm and work on campus until 5, the opening hours that they had before were really helpful and convenient. I really hope they can find someone to cover that evening shift." We are hopeful that our recent hire will help us offer steady evening access

Delivery Method(s)

5. What delivery method(s) does your program utilize to best serve students? (ie. in person, in the community, online, hybrid, hyflex, scheduled appointments, drop ins etc.). How does your program determine which delivery methods are most beneficial for students?

The Writing Center's resources are available to students in person, over Zoom, and online. Students can schedule in-person or Zoom conference appointments up to two weeks in

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advance, or they can drop by the Center and put their name on our standby list for the next available appointment. In addition to providing a quiet, welcoming space to study, the Writing Center also uses a Canvas shell to make self-paced support materials available to students online.

We believe both our in-person and online conferences are beneficial to CSM students, particularly because both methods are grounded in individual, one-on-one support and focus on each student's writing in progress.

Partnerships

6. What are your on and off-campus community partnerships and how are they operationalized to support students?

n/a

Institutional Alignment

7. How does your program support the College of San Mateo as an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) designated institution?

The Center's demographic data shows that our service to students under the umbrella HSI and AANAPISI markers slightly exceeds the college's enrollment makeup. In the 2023-2024 academic year CSM's makeup of students under the umbrella HSI and AANAPISI markers was 61.3% while the students served in the Center were 67.5% (Fall 2023) and 67.9% (Spring 2024). In the 2024-2025 academic year CSM's makeup of students under the umbrella HSI and AANAPISI markers was 62.4% while the students served in the Center were 67.6% (Fall 2024) and 69% (Spring 2025). This support is echoed in the data regarding conferences, as 61.9% of all meetings with English instructors in the Center across both academic years were attended by students under the umbrella HSI and AANAPISI markers. When we also factor in data on matched appointments (instructor-recommended consistent support), the data shows similar use (61.59% of matched appointments were for students under the umbrella HSI and AANAPISI markers) (see Table 1 below). In short, the Writing Center is a place where our Latinx, Asian, AI/AN, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students consistently receive support.

II. LOOKING BACK: Accomplishments and Challenges

8. Describe major accomplishments since the last program review cycle.

Resource Revision: Since our last program review report, we have completed updating all of our academic support tutorials. The tutorial resources in the Writing Center are self-paced, single-skill materials developed by the CSM English department. Tutorial topics focus on five skill categories: proofreading, sentence development, using sources, essay and paragraph development, and critical thinking. Each category is divided into single-topic resources, such as subject-verb agreement, using noun phrase appositives, integrating quotations, thesis statements, and logical fallacies. In all, we have 39 discrete tutorials available to students.

Because many of these tutorials had not been revised in quite a while, we found that some references in the materials were not "landing" well for our current students. (For example, we can no longer assume that most students are familiar with the original Star Wars films.) So over the past two years, we've reviewed and revised the tutorials to either update or "universalize" the examples and the focus of exercise questions.

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Reduced Noise: While our remote (Zoom) appointments are effective, upon returning to campus from the pandemic, the Writing Center would become quite noisy at peak usage hours with multiple faculty working with students over Zoom. Though everyone used headphones and tried to speak quietly, the plain fact is that people just speak louder when having a conversation over a phone or a Zoom call.

We explored with our deans (LAD and ASLT) a variety of ways to mitigate the noise (including consulting with facilities to see if adding sound-proofed cubicles would work), but we couldn't find a method that would be effective and economical.

We decided to shift the way we scheduled faculty in the Center. We still have Zoom and in-person appointments available to students throughout the day, but between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., faculty fielding those Zoom appointments work remotely—from their homes or on-campus offices. Before 11:00 and after 2:00 p.m., Center faculty field both in-person and Zoom appointments from the Writing Center. Though generally speaking, we prefer that appointments take place in the Center so that staff can quickly fill cancelled appointments with students on the standby list, this change has reduced the noisiness of the Center.

8.A. How did your accomplishments help to close the opportunity gap for disproportionately impacted, underserved or racially minoritized students?

Matched Appointments: The Writing Center's matched appointment system helps our most vulnerable students receive consistent writing and reading support by pre-scheduling their appointments and pairing each student with the same instructor week after week. In the past, matched appointments were scheduled every other week; however, the number of missed appointments post-pandemic was trending upwards. So in Fall 2024, we piloted a new scheduling model: weekly appointments. This change has been successful. We have had fewer students miss their appointments, and classroom faculty have reported that their matched students have benefitted from the consistent, weekly support.

Matched Appointments by Ethnicity	Number of Appointments	Percent of Total
Hispanic	82	54.3%
Filipino	4	2.65%
White, Non-Hispanic	39	25.83%
Asian	7	4.64%
Black, Non-Hispanic	19	12.58%
Total	151	100%

Table 1

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9. Describe major challenges since the last program review cycle. Have these challenges contributed to the expansion of or continuation of equity gaps?

1. **Challenge 1:** As we discussed in our 2023 program review report, one of our biggest challenges has been retaining instructional aides to staff the center. After many years of minimal staffing, we were granted two full-time instructional aide positions. However, the staff member who filled that role initially (starting in April of 2023) took a new position in the CSM Learning Center in March of 2025, so we were again understaffed. Though we and the College knew of the impending staffing shortage in December, 2024, it took the College until June, 2025, to approve a new hiring committee to refill the position. Our new hire will finally begin working in the Center in November, 2025.

The delay in approving the position for rehiring resulted in the Writing Center being understaffed for over six months. It also meant that we couldn't keep the Writing Center open past 4:00 p.m., which eliminated the in-person support resources for our students taking evening classes. In this way, an unnecessarily delayed hiring process contributed to expanding opportunity gaps for our students.

In addition, the continued understaffing caused by the College's lack of urgency in moving the rehiring forward not only made it difficult for other Center staff to take their legally entitled breaks and exercise their contractual benefits to vacation time, but also forced us to impose on staff from other centers to pinch hit for us when Center staff could not be at work due to illness so that we could keep the Center open for our students.

Challenge 2: Faculty Staffing and College Support

Since the pandemic, the College has steadily reduced its support for staffing the Writing Center. We examined the Center's unit allocation from Spring 2021 through Fall 2025 (see Table 2). From Spring 2021 through Spring 2025, the Center's average unit allocation was 54 units. This semester, the Center was allocated only 40 units, a 20% cut, which resulted in 30 fewer appointments per week that we can offer our students.

This reduction in funding has negatively impacted our students in two ways. First, since the Writing Center is the primary intervention that the English department has established to bridge the gaping opportunity gaps created by AB705 (the elimination of pre-transfer, post-secondary courses in English and mathematics), it is disheartening, to say the least, to see the intended lifeline rationed due in a way that affects our most vulnerable students the most.

Second, this rationing of academic support has significantly increased the

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Center’s equity gap. Appointments are now fully booked two weeks in advance (the maximum lead-time for making appointments), a fact which classroom faculty report causes their students frustration and deters them from seeking out academic support services. When students can’t access the support they want when they need it, those academic support services in effect do not exist.

Students have noticed the reduction in appointment availability. Out of 350 total responses to the Center’s student survey, 40 (11%) students commented in an optional, write-in question that they wished the Center had more support available to them. For example, one student who wished we had more appointments available wrote, “Having more open time for conferences would be the only improvement that I can think of.” Another student also wanted more support in the form of longer appointments: “I feel like Writing Center times could be a little longer. Excellent job on everything else.” These students’ sentiments are representative of the rest who expressed a desire for increased academic support.

Semester	Unit Allocation	Student Appointments Available Per Week	Student Appointments Available Per Semester	Weekly Appointment Change	Semester Appointment Change
Spring 2021	58	174	2784	0	0
Fall 2021	58	174	2784	0	0
Spring 2022	51	153	2448	-21	-336
Fall 2022	57	171	2736	18	288
Spring 2023	57	171	2736	0	0
Fall 2023	49	147	2352	-24	-384
Spring 2024	55	165	2640	18	288
Fall 2024	54	162	2592	-3	-48
Spring 2025	50	150	2400	-12	-192
Fall 2025	40	120	1920	-30	-480

Table 2

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Impact of Resources Allocations Process (250 word limit)

10. Describe the impact to date of previously requested resources (staff, non- instructional assignment, equipment, facilities, research, funding) including both resource requests that were approved and were not approved.

Request 1 (Fall 2023): After two failed hiring searches, we requested to consolidate our two, vacant part-time Instructional Aide II positions into one full-time position. Request granted.

Impact: See a, b, c below.

Request 2 (Fall 2023 and 2024): Twelve wheeled chairs for the Quiet Room. Request denied.

Impact: It is cumbersome to vacuum because the chairs are difficult to move around.

Request 3 (Fall 2023 and 2024): Replace overhead SMART projector and presentation system. Request denied (2023) and granted (2024).

Impact: We have not received the new equipment.

Request 4 (Fall 2024): Two window-mounted air conditioners. Request granted.

Impact: We still have not received the air conditioning units.

Request 5 (Fall 2024): New computers to replace the Center's existing machines, which could no longer be updated with the current operating systems nor could they run Adobe for students to use to access course materials. Request granted.

Impact: We have not yet received the computers.

10.A. What impact have these resources had on your program/department/office and measures of student success or client satisfaction?

1. **Staff:** For the brief time when we had two, full-time staff positions filled, we were able to keep the Writing Center open to provide access for our evening students and to revise the tutorials.
2. **Projector Equipment:** We have not received the new equipment. No positive impact to report yet.
3. **Air conditioning units:** We have not received the new equipment. No positive impact to report yet.
4. **New computers:** We have not received the new equipment. No positive impact to report yet.

10.B. What have you been unable to accomplish due to resource requests that were not approved?

1. **Staff:** While waiting for the approval to rehire, we couldn't provide support for our evening students, nor could we survey those students to learn more about their experience.
2. **Projector Equipment:** Impossible to reliably plan class lessons since faculty can not count on equipment functioning correctly. Not reliable; tech frequently fails while instruction is actively happening, causing problems with lessons.

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3. **Air conditioning units:** With no air conditioning, it is uncomfortable to work in the Center on warm days. On very warm days, the Center becomes very uncomfortably warm, impeding the productivity and efficiency of conferences.

New computers: We cannot offer students reliable access to their course materials if faculty posted readings and assignments as PDF documents.

10.C. How have these resources (or lack of resources) specifically disproportionately impacted students/clients?

1. **Staff:** Evening students have been positively and negatively impacted. When we had the position filled, students gained a safe, quiet space to study and prepare for their evening classes and had both Zoom and in-person appointments available to them. When the position was vacant, evening students only had access to Zoom appointments.
2. **Projector Equipment:** Students experience reduced learning opportunities in classes while the professor wrangles with temperamental equipment. We often schedule ENGL C-1000-E (105) classes in the Computer Assisted Classroom so that students have the opportunity to begin drafting their essays with hands-on guidance from their instructor. When the projector doesn't work, these students receive suboptimal support.
3. **Air conditioning units:** On hot days the Center clocks in at over 80-85 degrees. This is not conducive to studying.
4. **New computers:** Students without personal computers experienced another barrier to academic access and success.

III. SAOs and SLOs

11. State your Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) and/or Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

When using the Writing Center, students should:

1. Have knowledge of the Writing Center's resources, including how to access them.
2. Demonstrate mastery of specific writing skills after completion of tutorials.
3. Be able to identify, understand, and incorporate the writing skills that they need to work on after completing conferences with faculty.
4. Acquire a greater understanding and control of their writing process.

12. Describe how your program assessed your SAOs and/or SLOs.

SLOs were assessed through student surveys collected both in the Center and online.

13. Summarize the findings of your program's SAO/SLO Assessments.

13.A. What are some improvements that have been, or can be, implemented as a result of SAO/SLO Assessment? Please include meaningful action plans to improve student access and success.

According to the survey data, we are achieving outcome A nearly perfectly: 97% students report proficient knowledge of the Center's resources in Fall 2023; 99% in Spring 2024; 98% in Fall 2024; and 98% in Spring 2025. We also have significant achievement with outcome C,

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with a high majority of students reporting improved understanding of necessary writing skills after completing conferences (99% in Fall 2023; 93% in Spring 2024; 99% in Fall 2024; and 99% in Spring 2025). For outcome D, students reported that conferences “helped very much” or “helped some” as follows: 90.2% and 9.3%, respectively, in Fall 2023; 91.1% and 7.6%, respectively, in Spring 2024; 93.7% and 6.3%, respectively, in Fall 2024; and 90.3% and 9.2%, respectively, in Spring 2025. We did not have a method to collect data to assess outcome B in the Center, as that is a determination largely made by the classroom faculty. We plan on revising the SLO so that it can reflect more appropriate measurements related to the Center.

13.B. How did your program’s SAO/SLO assessment address antiracism?

To be candid, our SLOs at this time don’t really offer a meaningful lens to interpret antiracist procedure and pedagogy in the Center. We would like to revise our SLOs to better address that. However, we have other data that speaks to antiracist work. For example, our matched appointments numbers show that nearly 75% of those appointments go to students of color, disaggregated specifically as 54.3% Latinx, 2.65% Filipino, 4.64% Asian, and 12.58% Black/African American. Because this program represents our most consistent and dedicated reading and writing support for students, these numbers demonstrate the Center’s commitment to antiracist pedagogy.

13.C. How did your program’s SAO/SLO assessment address equity?

The data from outcome A demonstrates a key component of equity - access. The fact that, semester over semester, our students nearly unanimously say that they know how to access the Center’s resources is significant since we serve groups who are still facing opportunity gaps (averaged over the four main semesters from Fall 2023 to Spring 2025 we 78% of students served were students of color; 11.5% had a disability; 46.75% were first generation; and 28.75% were low income).

IV. LOOKING AHEAD

SAOs and SLOs for Next Review Cycle (100 word limit)

Program Improvement Initiatives/Resource Requests (250 word limit)

14. With an equity and antiracism lens, what changes could be implemented to improve your program? Please include meaningful action plans to improve student access and success.

While we don’t currently have enough staffing to do so, we’d love to be able to partner with student support offices around campus - the Undocumented Center, EOPS, Pride Center, DRC, Vets Center, and others - to make consistent, weekly appointments available on site, where students might be more comfortable. We believe the Center is doing a good job of maintaining a warm, welcoming environment for all students, but there’s simply no way to know who *isn’t* coming in. By meeting the students where they (literally) are, we may be able to offer even more support.

15. How will you address the opportunities for improvement that you identified throughout the prior sections of this Program Review?

While we don’t currently have enough staffing to do so, we’d love to be able to partner with student support offices around campus - the Undocumented Center, EOPS, Pride Center, DRC, Vets Center, and others - to make consistent, weekly appointments available on site, where students might be more comfortable. We believe the Center is doing a good job of maintaining a warm, welcoming environment for all students, but there’s simply no way to know who *isn’t* coming in. By meeting the students where they (literally) are, we may be able to offer even more support.

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15.A. What additional antiracism training do you/your program need in the upcoming year?

not needed

15.B. What research or training will you need to accomplish these plans?

not needed

15.C. What supplies, equipment, or facilities improvements do you need?

We need additional faculty units to meet current demand from English students and to potentially expand our offerings into other locations around campus.

V. STATEMENT OF COLLABORATION

A. Statement of Collaboration

The staff members listed below collaborated in an open and forthright dialogue to prepare this Program Review. Statements included herein accurately reflect the conclusions and opinions by consensus of the program staff involved in the comprehensive self-study.

Participants in the writing of this Program Review

Sara Lawrence & Teeka James

Principal Author: Name and Title

Sara Lawrence, English Professor; Teeka James, English Professor

Date

10/24/2025

Name of Dean and/or Supervisor

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Date

10/24/2025