ANALYZING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR WRITING SKILLS AND THE

EFFECTS OF 100 LEVEL WRITING COURSE EXEMPTIONS IN THE SCHOOL OF

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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ABSTRACT

MARY KATE WORKMAN: Analyzing Students' Perception of Their Writing Skills and the Effects of 100 Level Writing Course Exemptions in the School of Business Administration at the University of Mississippi
(Under the direction of Dr. Alice Myatt)

For my thesis I have conducted research in the area of writing skills developed in an undergraduate setting through first-year writing courses. After researching current scholarship on the writing skills of recent business graduates, student athletes, and students who have participated in high school Advanced Placement (AP) programs, I have isolated my research for students in the School of Business Administration at the University of Mississippi (UM). Additionally I researched individualized tutoring strategies for each of these groups. I conducted a brief survey using Qualtrics, an online anonymous survey platform. This survey was emailed to 2,000 randomly selected students in the UM School of Business Administration asking about their experiences with first-year writing courses, the curriculum for the School of Business Administration, and their perception of how well prepared they feel for the writing expected of them in their future workplace.

My data results showed that most students did feel at least moderately prepared for the writing expected of them in their future workplace based on the writing skills developed during their time as an undergraduate student in the UM School of Business Administration. However, the data also showed no real correlation between high school AP students being more prepared than non-AP students for collegiate writing. Also, AP test scores were not a predictor of higher grades or perception of stronger writing skills.

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Additionally, the data showed that while students see the benefits of additional taking English or writing courses, they are not willing to take beyond what is already required of their major. The data for student athletes who are members of the UM School of Business Administration was inconclusive because there were so few respondents.

From my data I can conclude that despite first-year writing course exemptions, most students in the UM School of Business Administration do feel as though they have received an adequate education in building writing skills necessary for their futures. However, additional writing courses or writing assignments would help show the importance of a strong writing foundation and would only strengthen the skills these students already possess making them more viable hires and employees.

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INTRODUCTION

If I remember anything from my science courses, it is that before posing a
question for research, or form a hypothesis, one must observe. Over my four years at the
University of Mississippi (UM), I have had the chance to observe the study habits of
others in many different locations, study environments, and situations. However, I found
my most interesting observations came from working with my friends and also students
who come in for writing tutoring in both the Oxford Writing Center and the FedEx
Writing Lab. One common conclusion between the two groups is that others appreciate
my insight and feel comfortable asking for help proofreading and editing writing
assignments. Often, these people were embarrassed to share their writing, uncertain about
their writing skills, and sought help in clarifying the ideas they could communicate
clearly orally yet struggled to put on paper.

Many of my friends and the people I tutor are not students in the School of
Liberal Arts, but are STEM majors or members of the School of Business
Administration. Additionally, many of my friends felt the need to come to me for help in
our junior and senior years because they had not written a paper since freshmen year, or
some even since high school, and at times did not know how to start an assignment
because they were out of practice. This was surprising because while my other friends
were studying for tests or working to solve complex equations, I was sifting through
novels, drafting outlines, and typing, typing, typing. By the second semester of my junior
year, I was routinely reading close to a novel a week, and 10-plus-page paper

assignments stopped frightening me. I was developing the ability to sit and read or write for hours on end. What I did not realize, however, was that many of my friends and the students I tutored were not developing these writing skills in class and struggled to complete even a short paper without suffering from anxiety or doubt.

My love for reading and writing led me to seek out a job at the Oxford Writing Center. But once again, if there was one thing I observed at work, it was that while I enjoy reading and writing, many others do not. Students who came in for help struggled not only with grammar and conventions, but basic essay formatting and flow. I found that some of the best tutoring sessions started with a conversation, in which I would ask students to verbally tell me the points they were trying to convey, or the argument they were trying to make. In conversation, these students had clear, concise ideas, but on paper the ideas were muddled. Over time I saw this trend continue with many different students and observed that written communication proved more difficult than oral communication.

I saw this issue not only at the Oxford Writing Center but also at the FedEx Writing Lab. After additional tutor training, I was certified not only to work at the Oxford Writing Center, but also with student athletes in the FedEx Writing Lab. As a former student athlete, I understood the pressures to succeed both on the field and in the classroom while juggling a packed schedule. I also understood that sometimes professors would look at me differently when I walked into the classroom on the first day with the infamous red Nike backpack - a beacon at UM signaling student athlete status. It was as if I had to prove to my professors that I was not the "dumb jock" or "airhead cheerleader" they expected. Because of my unique experience as a student athlete, I am better able to

relate to student athletes and try to create a non-judgmental environment for tutoring. In this setting, I observed that others felt some of the same feelings I experienced.

I was able to take these many observations from my workplace, the classroom, and my personal life, and develop a starting place for my thesis. I started by asking questions such as: Why are my friends still struggling to write papers as juniors in college? Why have some not written a paper since high school? Why is the Oxford Writing Center constantly booked? How do I better help these students strengthen their writing skills? These questions were also coming at a point in my academic career where I needed to submit a thesis topic, and knew research about the writing skills of students at the University of Mississippi would be an interesting way to combine both my academic pursuits and passion for tutoring at work.

Majoring in both English and Political Science, made it so that this idea was outside of both of my fields of study. However, after working with the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, I was able to demonstrate my passion for this topic and had my project approved. I have worked closely with my advisor, Dr. Alice Myatt, who is also passionate about the subject. As Assistant Chair of the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, and a professor of first-year writing courses, she was eager to see my data as well.

I have worked on this thesis for three consecutive semesters. The first semester I focused primarily on developing research questions, conducting broad research, and brainstorming ideas for my own research on campus. The second semester was spent doing more focused research, isolating for business students and student athletes, and creating tutoring strategies that cater best to these groups of people. During this time I

also created my survey and submitted it for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Finally, in my third semester I began by administering the survey, analyzing the data, and composing my thesis.

My thesis is organized in five major sections: the Literature Review, Research Methods, Survey Data, Results, and Conclusions. In the Literature Review, I organize my thoughts into four broad categories: business students, student athletes, AP students and tutoring strategies. I examine the current scholarship on writing skills of each of these groups of people. The next two sections are where I address my research through a survey sent to a random pool of students in the UM School of Business Administration. In the remainder of my thesis I examine the raw data from my survey and general conclusions and recommendations based on my research.

As a product of public education, from Kindergarten through college, and soon at a public law school, I recognize the importance of public education. In fact, part of my plans to attend law school are so that I may someday be able to use my degree to make a difference in public education systems, whether that be representing school districts, teachers, or working for a State Department of Education. I hope my passion for improving education can be seen in my research, data, and analysis, and that others will be inspired by my work to conduct surveys on other populations of students to find ways to improve curriculums, particularly writing curriculums, as writing is a fundamental skill necessary for future success and communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Before beginning my own research on the perceptions of UM students in the School of Business Administration and their writing skills, I took the time to research and study the existing scholarship relating to my fields of interest. My research question was far from simple and was at first quite broad; therefore, I had several areas of focus including the writing skills of business students and student athletes, the merits and faults of Advanced Placement (AP) high school courses and their subsequent college class equivalents, and specific tutoring strategies for writing tutors while working with these cohorts of college students. While naturally the scholarship and opinions on the best solutions are varied and unique, the main underlying problem is that even though it is difficult to acquire empirical data for writing progress, the perception writers have of their skills greatly affects their literary success.

One general conclusion different scholars reached was that college students and new employees who have recently graduated from college are not producing writing at the level expected by their employers. There is a call for stronger writing curriculums for non-liberal arts majors and a focus on practical skills such as drafting a business plan, writing a memo, or summarizing data - essentially a way to build writing skills without necessarily writing English literary analyses. Additionally, for student athletes to succeed academically, they may need more personalized tutoring in order to build their

confidence off the field and prepare them for a career in case they do not become professional athletes.

The scholarship for AP classes, examinations and college course exemptions is also growing, yet lacks much empirical analysis. One of the sources I examined looked not only at the coursework for high school AP classes but also the college equivalent and proposes a solution for making the two more similar than they are different. A second source steps back and looks at the inception and purpose of the AP program. From there, scholars conducted a study to determine whether AP exam scores are predictors for collegiate success or if they are actually a causal force for collegiate success. Each of these studies and their results are important to my research because I plan to study correlations between AP course exemptions at UM and how those exemptions have affected the perceived writing skills of students who have tested out of introductory writing courses.

One common solution scholars produced for addressing the inadequate writing skills of college students or college graduates is to have individualized tutoring sessions. In my research I include a section in my survey asking students about their experiences with individualized writing help either with a writing tutor or in a private meeting with a professor. Current scholarship varies on the best tutoring strategies for business students, student athletes, and employees in terms of course-specific tutoring, ways to develop the identity of a writer, and in ways of altering a writer's perception about the importance of writing. In sum, the scholarship is not comprehensive or universal as the needs of each individual are different.

My literature review is organized by interest starting with the needs of business students, then student athletes, following with an examination of AP courses, and ending with a study of varying tutoring strategies for business students, student athletes and students in advanced courses. The common thread tying each of these aspects together is that perception matters. The way individuals perceive their writing skills, their identity as writers, the importance of writing, and how others view their writing, all deeply affect a person's literary work. For college students especially, how they perceive their future career and the writing they think they will or will not be doing is a huge influence. By researching each of these four areas I hope to connect this scholarship and add my own by researching the perception of UM students in the School of Business Administration (including student athletes) and see how AP course exemptions and individualized tutoring affect the perception of their skills as writer.

Business Students

I.

One of the main sources that inspired my initial research question was an article by CNBC about the disappointing pieces of writing produced by recent graduates in their professions, the main issue being the lack of ability to communicate clearly and effectively. In fact, even the top graduates from the most prestigious university business programs have trouble with writing, likely because the business curriculum included few writing courses. Therefore, even students had poor grades on writing assignments, their GPA was compensated by superior grades in other business and finance classes (Holland). Additionally, those who were capable of producing strong writing were still

unable to do so in a time sensitive manner. Whereas in college students have weeks to prepare a term paper, in the workplace they cannot meet tight deadlines (Holland). Even if new hires are the most intelligent people in the office, if they cannot effectively communicate their ideas, they are of no worth to the business.

This is an especially pressing matter because the world is shrinking due to technological advances in communication. Most of the noise in an office today is not coming from communication on the phone, but from the click of keyboards. Millennials have become accustomed to informal shorthand in texting and email, which has further distanced them from appropriate written communication in the workplace (Holland). For example, the National Commission on Writing conducted a study which reported that 120 American corporations concluded that a third of employees in the nation's blue chip companies write poorly (Sigmar and Hynes 133). Additionally, Sean Phillips, a recruitment director of a Silicon Valley supplier of equipment for life science research, reflects: "'Considering how highly educated our people are, many can't write clearly in their day-to-day work'" (Sigmar and Hynes 133).

Another example of employer dissatisfaction with the writing skills of employees was at the Philadelphia Federal Reserve. Supervisors were increasingly disappointed with the reports of bank examiners and time was often wasted going back to revise and edit confusing reports (Bernoff). Poor writing in any business is a major productivity drain and investing in writing support should be a top priority. In Josh Bernoff's survey of 547 business writers, 81% claimed that their time was wasted by poorly written material that had to be sent back to the author, revised and then reviewed what could be multiple times before the work was considered adequate. Even in a world where technology is taking

over many jobs and increasing efficiency, cognitive human critical thought is necessary in producing any piece of writing and the importance of writing skills cannot be emphasized enough. No matter the profession, written communication will always be a daily expectation.

II.

In order to combat this writing insufficiency, proper writing instruction needs to be practiced extensively in high school and college. In fact, "In a survey of 318 employers published earlier this year by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and conducted by Hart Research Associates, 80 percent said colleges should focus more on written and oral communication" (Holland). Additionally, "In a 2011 survey of corporate recruiters by the Graduate Management Admission Council, the organization that administers the standardized test for business school, 86 percent said strong communication skills were a priority" (Holland). Perhaps with the lack of writing instruction in college, business students do not perceive there to be much writing expected in the workplace; therefore, they put less of an emphasis on their own writing development. Kelley Holland argues that business owners could diminish this stigma by perhaps asking potential hires for a writing sample when applying for a job to determine if they would be a good fit for a position. Or, they could emphasize writing in new employee training, especially if the employer wanted their employees to communicate in a similar style and voice to clients.

Loucia S. Sigmar and Geraldine E. Hynes conducted a study to analyze writing performance of 352 business students - similar to the study I conducted. In their study most students met or exceeded expectations in format and content on a common writing

task - to compose a business memo based on a hypothetical business case - yet struggled with grammar and mechanics, with almost half scoring below expectations across all majors (Sigmar and Hynes 139). They also discovered that only about 25% of high school seniors were able to produce college-level writing, indicating that major learning and writing development happens in collegiate introductory writing courses (Sigmar and Hynes 133). By sampling across the entire School of Business at a Southwestern university in the U.S., they found no significant differences between the writing skills of different majors within the School of Business (Sigmar and Hynes 141). After analyzing the results of their study, Sigmar and Hynes suggested one way to improve student writing would be to have business professors assign more daily writing assignments, such as journal entries, to reinforce writing skills as well as essay sections on examinations where students must translate data into a written business report.

III.

Smaller class sizes and individualized tutoring are other suggested measures to take when combating the writing insufficiency of business students. Scholars Scott Warnock, Nicholas Rouse, Christopher Finnin, Frank Linnehan, and Dylan Dryer conducted a survey that analyzed the writing of business students in the LeBow College of Business at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Over the course of seven years, professors collected around 300 writing assignments from students per year (Warnock et al. 139). They had a control group and test group, with the test group having significantly smaller class sizes and routine individual meetings with their professor (Warnock et al. 145). Each summer a team of 30 assessors was assembled to rate the writing samples on a scale from 1-10 based on different criteria. The assessors were made

up of professors from many different disciplines on campus (Warnock et al. 39). The writing samples were selected from a first year "Introduction to Business" course as well as a third-year "Organizational Behavior" business course (Warnock et al. 139). The results showed that the test group's results were on average two points higher in all writing aspects ranging from organization and style, to grammar and attention to audience, which confirmed their hypothesis that smaller class size and individualized writing instruction contributes to academic success in writing (Warnock et al. 154).

The idea of smaller class sizes leading to success is not a novel idea in education, and professor Alice Horning at Oakland University compiled many different studies and theories about small classroom sizes and the learning benefits in her article, "The Definitive Article on Class Size." Horning looks at studies conducted in writing courses in different middle schools, high schools, and universities, including the University of Texas and Harvard, all of which show a positive correlation between small class sizes and writing grades (Horning 13). Rather than break down the many different studies on smaller class size, Horning looks at what is similar in each of the studies in her compilation. She concludes that if any courses should be pushing administrators for smaller class sizes, it should be writing classrooms, not only because first-year writing courses are essential for developing a student's writing skills, but also that writing courses deserve the highest priority because, "Writing and the critical reading that is one of its essential components underlies virtually all courses in college; success in college is tied to success in writing, taught well in small classes" (Horning 13). Writing does not go away after first-year courses but will be vital for success in most other courses as well and therefore cannot be neglected in a student's first year.

Another key factor contributing to the correlation between smaller classes and stronger writers is the idea that the smaller the writing class size, the more writing a student is producing per week (Horning 12). From a logistical standpoint, if a professor is requiring daily or weekly short writing assignments, the student is writing more on average. However, in a class of 30-50 students, the grading time for these assignments would be astronomical, leading to less time spent in lesson planning, thorough grading, meeting individually with students, and/or time the professor spends in developing his or her own scholarship (Horning 12). The ideal class size for writing courses agreed upon by many writing scholars is 20 or fewer students (Horning 19). With a class of this size, a professor has more time to engage with students both in the classroom and in office hours to help these students on a more personal level to develop and strengthen their writing skills. If professors of first-year writing courses invest significantly in their students' writing, these students will have a better shot at being more successful in future writing, whether that be a biology lab report, business development plan, or newspaper column. Writing is a fundamental educational building block that cannot be ignored or neglected.

Josh Bernoff's study of Philadelphia Federal Reserve workers mentioned earlier, also confirms the idea that writing never goes away, and that poor writing instruction haunts people later in their professions. At this point, employees at the Philadelphia Federal Reserve are likely not returning to school or taking writing courses on their own time, so rather than focus on smaller class sizes to lead to success, they saw improved writing from individualized tutoring. While they were working with an in-house writing specialist rather than a professor in office hours, there was still great improvement in the writing being produced as well as encouraging a more positive view surrounding writing

in the workplace (Bernoff). Even though employees were skeptical at first, mocking the program by wondering how a poetry major could improve their bank reports, they saw near immediate improvement in efficiency turning out high quality reports (Bernoff). In a one-on-one setting, employees felt more comfortable and less judged than they might have if it were a company seminar on writing skills, further proving the power of individualized tutoring.

A common theme in recent scholarship is that those who are recent graduates are described by their employers as unprepared for the standard of writing required in the workplace which is why I limited my research to business students and the perception of their writing. . Therefore, there is also a common theme calling for stronger writing preparation in college, smaller class sizes, and individualized tutoring. When business students have few writing classes and few writing assignments in their business classes, they begin to perceive writing as unimportant to their success. More of a focus is spent memorizing formulas, interpreting analytical trends, and focusing more on the math side of the business world. Meanwhile, the ability to think critically about statistics and write an analysis on certain business trends is falling to the wayside. In order to put pressure on business students and the administration of business departments, the perception of writing as a fundamental skill, necessary for success, needs to be emphasized. Further, first-year writing courses especially need to be small and individualized so that students can develop their writing skills early on. If these steps are taken early, it gives students more time in college to grow their writing skills, which will lead to better communication and production in the workplace.

Student Athletes

As a former student athlete, I set student athletes apart as a different category in my initial research, even though I am testing only those student athletes who are business students, because their college experience looks quite different from that of a typical student. Student athletes' days are scheduled, often from 6AM to 6PM, with early morning workouts, class, study hall, afternoon practices or games, watching film, meeting with coaches, and homework, - not to mention the intense travel schedules. When looking at the writing skills and the grades of student athletes, there are more factors that could be contributing to or hindering their success, therefore I isolated for student athletes in my research. Again, perception of the importance of writing and academic success is key to understanding how a student athlete will perform in the classroom.

I.

One of the most detrimental factors contributing to low academic motivation is the negative stereotype associated with student athletes. Studies have proven this is a legitimate concern when comparing the academic motivation of student athletes to non-athletes on college campuses. Focusing specifically on student athletes at Division I schools, Joy Gaston-Gayles noticed disturbing trends in low academic success, motivation, and graduation rates by students, specifically black males in high revenue-earning sports such as football and basketball. She discovered that in Division I athletic programs, despite the high-dollar academic support centers and tutoring programs, academic motivation remained low. These student athletes were regularly skipping class, tutoring appointments, study hall hours, etc. As a result, these students had grade point

averages (GPAs) only high enough to remain eligible to play. Looking at graduation records for football and basketball players, Gaston-Gayles noticed: "White basketball players graduated at a rate of 53%, but Black basketball players graduated at a rate of 35%. White football players' graduation rate was 62% and Black football players experienced a 45% graduation rate." Despite isolating for race, these numbers show that nearly half of the student athletes in men's football and basketball are not motivated to earn their degree.

Gaston-Gayles associates these low levels of academic success and graduation rates primarily with aspirations to become a professional athlete. Some of these athletes are not interested in finishing school and instead focus their time and energy on being drafted for professional sports before graduation. With this plan, it is no wonder academic motivation is low and classwork not taken as seriously. Here again, perception of the importance of writing has affected the success of a student's writing skills and this lack of effort has hindered these students in other classes beyond first-year writing courses. By comparing athletic commitment to pursuing a professional athletic career to student GPAs, there was a strong correlation showing the higher the athletic commitment, the lower the GPA (Gaston-Gayles). For student athlete academic support centers to reverse this trend, or at least improve graduation rates, they must alter the perceived importance of a degree. There are ways to encourage student athletes in their athletic success and their goals for being a professional athlete while also encouraging other options besides professional athletics. Gaston-Gayles does acknowledge there are many other factors, including a student's socioeconomic status, high school education, and

home environment that also contribute to academic motivation; however, her study focuses on the impact of a student's perception of his or her future career.

Eddie Comeaux also studied the trend of low academic motivation amongst student athletes, specifically male athletes in revenue-generating sports, yet he places more of the blame on the athletic academic centers and coaching staff. Comeaux noticed a common trend of athlete GPAs hovering right around the benchmark for eligibility. For Division I sports the GPA required by the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) is a 2.3 in core classes or a 2.0 for redshirt freshmen (Comeaux 274). Rather than push student athletes for academic success, athletic academic centers instead have cultivated a subculture of low academic expectations, asking only the bare minimum of students as far as academic eligibility goes. Additionally, Comeaux does not believe that graduation rates should be the a primary measure for student athlete academic success because in many cases it is associated with the student athlete doing "whatever it took to get out," with no true measure of what was actually learned (Comeaux 277).

Comeaux addresses new legislation passed by the NCAA to improve the "student" half of "student athlete" such as a new formula for an Academic Progress Rate (APR). However, Comeaux does not think APR is an accurate enough measure to show the learning that is (or is not) taking place during a student athlete's time at a Division I university (Comeaux 275). Additionally, Comeaux notices that when athletic academic support centers boast about the academic success of their programs, it is often anecdotal evidence with little empirical backing (Comeaux 275). If the administrators and tutors who are supposed to be encouraging the academic development of student athletes continue to have low expectations for the students, there is no real academic motivation

or competitive academic environment for these students to benefit from. Rather, "student" is falling second to "athlete."

II.

Student athletes require being studied in a category of their own for my research because of the fact that they are dually named. Other students are not referred to with this double name, but identify primarily as a student first, before identifying as an employee, member of a club, Greek organization, intramural athlete, volunteer, etc. And even if students identify with any or all of the things listed above, the weight placed on being a student almost always comes first. However, student athletes struggle with this dual identity, not knowing how to strike a balance, or on which side to put more weight, in order to achieve future success. Scholars have differing opinions on how to help student athletes deal with this identity crisis. Some say students are most benefitted by compartmentalizing their two identities on and off the field, while others believe the two should be fused and treated as one.

Professor Marisa Sandoval Lamb argues the latter, that by engaging the athletic side of the student in the classroom, there is more opportunity for success. Lamb tries to relate the skills necessary in athletics to the skills needed in the writing classroom. She emphasizes the amount of literacy already in sports, from reading plays, to following pre-planned workouts and dietary schedules (Lamb 62). Lamb then makes a more abstract comparison when she lists skills important both in athletic competition as well as in strong writing such as: "focus, memory, dedication, confidence, and patience" (Lamb 63). By making these parallels, Lamb shows student athletes already possess the skills necessary to be a successful writer; they just need to translate those skills into an

academic setting. She compares a term paper to a big game, letting the students know that to be successful they must "watch film" - do their research, "practice different plays" - edit and revise, "be mindful of other players" - consider the audience, etc. (Lamb 63).

In addition, by showing student athletes that they already possess the skills to be a strong writer, it boosts their confidence by showing that they can be successful on the field and in the classroom. Lamb knows that confidence as a writer is a major breakthrough considering the often-negative assumptions and low expectations surrounding student athletes in the classroom (Lamb 65). Building on this idea of classroom success, by becoming stronger writers, student athletes see that their words can be powerful and make a difference. This discovery can also boost academic motivation when student athletes see that their voices can have influence in the world, and that their writing is valuable (Lamb 66). While Lamb's article is convincing and plausible, her evidence is primarily anecdotal.

In contrast, C. Keith Harrison, Jeff Stone, Jenessa Shapiro, Sharon Yee, Jean A. Boyd, and Vashti Rullan conducted a more empirical study by creating a controlled experiment that analyzed the perceptions student athletes have about their intelligence. The difference in this study is that they focused on the differences between male and female student athletes. Harrison et al. conducted two different surveys. The original survey was created out of curiosity to determine if the negative stereotype surrounding student athletes as "dumb jocks" was true in their population. This was confirmed when faculty rated student athletes more negatively than other students, especially if the hypothetical student was receiving a scholarship and special advising/tutoring, being admitted to the university despite low test scores, and missing class (Harrison et al. 79).

Once this was confirmed, the study shifted to see if these negative assumptions by faculty members influenced the test scores of student athletes in a simulated testing environment.

In the study, the main research question was: If student athletes feel that their professors have a preconceived negative association about their role as student athletes, is there additional pressure to succeed for fear that individual failure will confirm the negative stereotype of the whole? (Harrison et al. 80). In the study students were given a booklet of randomly selected Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and American College Testing (ACT) problems. Different identities were primed before the exam began by asking on the cover page: "If you participate in Division I intercollegiate sports, please indicate below" with some test booklets having a box to check "I am an athlete" while others instead had the option to check, "I am a scholar athlete," and still others with the option only to check, "I am a research participant" as well as being asked to identify their gender (Harrison et al. 84).

The results were surprising, and quite different when analyzed along gender lines. Results showed that male student athletes completed more problems correctly and attempted more problems overall when they were primed as an "athlete" only and scored worst when identifying as "research participant" (Harrison et al. 85). In comparison, female student athletes performed worst when they identified as a "scholar athlete" and had statistically similar results for both "athlete" and "research participant" (Harrison et al. 85). When making conclusions about these research results, the scholars claim that male student athletes perform best when their athletic identity was primed (whether as solely an athlete or a scholar athlete) because they feel confident in their athletic identity and this confidence carried over into their academic work. Male student athletes feel

valued and self-assured most when identifying as an "athlete" because they feel a certain prestige for being an athlete. But there is also evidence that they fear confirming negative student athlete stereotypes. For example, when identifying as a "scholar athlete," their scores were lower than when identifying only as an "athlete," yet not as low as "research participant" (Harrison et al. 89).

Women performed worst when identifying as a "scholar athlete" and had similar scores when identifying as either an "athlete" or "research participant" showing that they have difficulty in the classroom coping with the dual identity but perform better when they can compartmentalize their identities (Harrison et al. 87). There is not much evidence to show that women achieve the same "ego boost" as males do when identifying as an athlete. This may be because women are more affected by faculty assumptions and fear confirming the "dumb jock" stereotype, or because there is not the same level of prestige for women's athletics as men's. This additional pressure likely affected the number of problems attempted, explaining the lower scores in the "scholar athlete" category (Harrison et al. 87).

Questions regarding how these students choose to identify in the classroom were raised after seeing the results of these studies for both men and women. Perhaps female student athletes would rather not admit their student athlete status; however, this is nearly impossible due to the accommodations professors must make for practice and travel schedules. Should professors be blind to student athlete status? Or should be professors be held responsible for being more open minded in regard to student athlete academic performance, leaving prior assumptions at the door?

III.

  Even though it is evident that assumptions about student athletes' academic abilities are negatively affecting student athletes, decades-long perceptions will not change overnight. Therefore, other measures have to be taken to change the academic atmosphere both within athletic teams, athletic academic support centers, and in the classroom. Multiple studies show, both for student athletes and non-athletes, that individualized tutoring can increase learning and GPAs. If student athlete GPAs continue to climb, this may be the strongest evidence to reverse stereotypes on college campuses. Therefore, with confidence building and increased learning in individualized or small group tutoring sessions, progress can be made. However, student athletes are shown to respond better to some tutoring strategies than traditional students.

  Robin Redmon Wright, like the previous scholars listed, recognizes the "us" versus "them" division between student athletes and faculty on college campuses, and reports this culture developing in high school as well. In this atmosphere, charged with animosity, athletes tend to become more resentful towards educators, are reluctant to ask for help or meet with professors to discuss a draft of a writing assignment, and in turn are receiving lower grades, further perpetuating the stereotype. Wright suggests one way to get past this divide is through the use of tutors, specifically peer tutors. By working repeatedly with the same writing consultant, these tutors serve as a neutral middle ground between student athletes and professors. Wright notes the importance of student athletes working with the same tutor so that they can establish trust. Student athlete or not, opening up and sharing writing, especially on a personal topic, is frightening, but once

that trust has been established it opens the door for cooperative work and constructive feedback.

Another important factor of the tutoring method Wright suggests is that student athletes are going voluntarily. By scheduling tutoring as a mandatory event, student athletes are more likely to be resentful of the session and will be more closed minded towards the tutor, making trust hard to establish. If student athletes decide to schedule a writing tutor on their own accord, it shows academic development in the sense that they are seeking help to understand. This is important in Wright's philosophy because he, too, notices the subculture of low academic expectations seen in coaches and athletic academic support staff, who pressure athletes to take a soft curriculum. Student athletes, especially those who want to pursue professional athletics, often follow this advice for fear of taking more challenging courses, making lower grades, losing eligibility and playing time, losing scholarships, and then losing hope of professional athletics if they cannot perform in a collegiate setting. However, if these student athletes can connect with a writing tutor and build their skills and confidence in one of the most fundamental skills necessary for academic success, then they will in turn have more academic motivation and may choose to take more difficult classes, pursue a major they enjoy, and actively work for their degree alongside athletics.

In the conclusion of the Harrison et al. study, the idea held true that student athletes, fearful of upholding negative stereotypes are often less likely to participate in the classroom, join study groups, visit a professor's office hours or ask for help when they do not understand concepts (Harrison et al. 92). Therefore, in tutoring sessions or small group sessions provided by athletic academic support centers, tutors need to be

aware to leave negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about student athletes at the door. On behalf of the student athletes, they too have to leave outside distractions at the door. Often if student athletes have had a poor practice, lost a game, or did not have much playing time, they have difficulty separating that athletic failure from academics and become disengaged. But if they have a tutor building their confidence and applauding successes - big or small - it can help reinforce the idea that student athletes are valuable in the classroom as well as on the field (Harrison et al. 82).

By understanding the additional pressures and stresses placed on student athletes, more direct and personal academic assistance can be provided to this subset of students. Especially when working with first year students, helping them make the transition into the hectic schedule of a student athlete can be key. If academics are not emphasized, particularly writing, these students may miss out on skills necessary for success in many other courses. With negative stereotypes often hindering learning, student athletes may begin to listen to those stereotypes, or fear confirming them, and become disengaged from the "student" part of "student athlete." The common theme amongst writers of perception affecting performance is just as relevant, if not more relevant with student athletes. If they do not think writing will be important in their future, if they think that professors will not like their writing even if they try, if they think they cannot ask for help without being mocked, their opportunity for development as a writer is seriously stifled.

This trend can be reversed through positive reinforcement. By changing the discourse surrounding student athletes and their academic performance, professors may begin to become more open minded, student athletes would become more active participants in the classroom, and more proactive in seeking help. By forming

connections with tutors who create a non-judgmental space to share writing, the student athlete's confidence not only as a writer, but as a knowledgeable student grows, raising their academic motivation. The domino effect continues with student athletes making higher grades, considering careers outside of professional athletics, and the negative stereotypes could deteriorate. If professors, students, coaches, and athletic academic support staff are sensitive to these issues specific to student athletes, major changes could be made on college campuses.

Advanced Placement Students

A third area of research I looked at was that concerning Advanced Placement (AP) high school classes, AP examinations, and how colleges and universities use AP scores to decide whether an incoming freshman can be exempt from first year writing courses based on their AP English Language and Composition scores. In my survey I asked whether students chose to use their AP class exemptions for first year writing classes and how they think this has affected their writing skills. When researching prior scholarship I did not find many studies on how these class exemptions affected students, but by looking at why the AP curriculum was created in the first place and reading about studies in Texas, it gave me a baseline for comparing my results. Ultimately, more research is needed regarding AP testing and college class exemptions.

I.

Kristin Klopfenstein and M. Kathleen Thomas conducted a study in which they they looked at the history of the Advanced Placement curriculum and whether high school AP scores were linked to success in college either in a causal or predictive way.

The AP program was created in 1957, not necessarily as a challenging high school curriculum for honors students, but specifically for high school students to learn college level material and earn college credit for their work (Klopfenstein and Thomas 873). The idea was that certain high school courses were similar to entry-level college courses. Therefore, if they were performing adequately in the high school equivalent, they could test out of these first-year courses, avoiding needless repetition. AP courses were originally offered only at elite private schools, but over the past 50 years the program has grown exponentially to the point that state legislatures are either mandating or giving financial incentives to schools to provide AP courses to high school students (Klopfenstein and Thomas 876).

Created by the College Board, the AP program is routinely promoted by the College Board with different studies showing a link between passing AP exam scores and college success. However Klopfenstein and Thomas, as well as many other scholars, are skeptical of these studies as the College Board is clearly biased towards a program they own and profit from (Klopfenstein and Thomas 874). The College Board uses their own statistics to push legislators and school districts to offer the AP program if they want the students in their district to be successful in college. However, Klopfstein and Thomas argue that they "found no evidence that AP course-taking increases the likelihood of early college success beyond that predicted by the non-AP curriculum for the average student, regardless of race or family income" (Klopfenstein and Thomas 874). In fact, they found that many students that did have passing AP exam scores still enrolled in the corresponding collegiate introductory courses, citing that their university either required a 4 or 5 score (whereas 3 is considered passing), did not accept AP exam scores at all, or

students voluntarily retook the course feeling they were not adequately prepared by the high school equivalent (Klopfenstein and Thomas 877).

In their study, Klopfenstein and Thomas studied roughly 28,000 Texas high school graduates who attended one of 31 four-year Texas public universities in the fall of 1999. They were looking to see if out of the 28,000 students, the subset of students who took AP courses were more successful in college. They based "college success" on second year retention and first year GPA (Klopfenstein and Thomas 878). In sum, their results showed that the difference between AP students and non-AP students was statistically insignificant. Their results do show an upward trend in college retention for students with AP experience; however, the effects were small and insignificantly different from zero, indicating that the correlation is just as likely to be due to random chance as it is to positive AP results (Klopfenstein and Thomas 881). The scholars did isolate for minority students, primarily Hispanic students, and did see a larger correlation between AP experience and GPA, but for the majority of students in the study the results were negligible (Klopfenstein and Thomas 885).

In conclusion, Klopfenstein and Thomas do see value in AP courses as *college preparatory* courses, rather than *college level* courses, suggesting that they help students build skills necessary for college such as taking notes on lectures, developing study habits, reading advanced texts, and learning to sit for lengthy exams. However, when the College Board calls these high school classes "college level," they are assuming all of those skills used by college students are already developed in 14-to-18-year-old students (Klopfenstein and Thomas 887). The skills being developed in AP courses may be

predictive of college success, but taking a heavy course load of AP classes is not a *cause* of college success.

II.

Another study, while not as extensive, was conducted by James Warren at the University of Texas and seven high schools in close proximity to the university. Warren was not necessarily testing the link between AP scores and college success, but was more interested in why colleges and universities accept these scores for class exemptions and wanted to see if the high school AP courses were as similar to their college equivalents as they claimed to be. As of 2010, 60% of U.S. high schools were offering AP courses and 90% of U.S. colleges and universities have AP Exam policies (Warren 79). With such huge numbers of AP high school courses being offered, Warren, as well as others, were critical of the lack of communication between high school AP instructors and university admissions boards who blindly accept any scores from 3-5 on one four-hour exam as a sign that a student passed the equivalent first year course. Warren wondered if these students were truly experiencing a college level course, or if high school AP teachers were merely "teaching to the test" because they are under administrative pressure to have their students produce passing sores (Warren 80). In contrast, college professors design their own final exams and are not under the same pressure for their students to pass a standardized test; therefore, Warren hypothesized that college students were learning completely different content in a different style from their high school AP equivalent.

In Warren's study, he focused specifically on the AP English Language and Composition course being offered in Texas public high schools and compared it to the University of Texas's first year writing course, Rhetoric 306 (RHE 306) - the course that

could be exempted by a score of 3 or higher on the AP English Language and Composition exam (Warren 87). Warren chose to conduct his study at the University of Texas (UT) because UT receives more AP exam scores than any other U.S. college or university - in fact they accept 18% more than the next highest school, the University of Florida (Warren 86). Additionally, 75% of students who submit their AP English Language and Composition scores are exempt from taking RHE 306 (Warren 86). With such high exemption levels, Warren found UT to be a good place to look at the similarities and differences between the syllabus of high school AP English courses and RHE 306.

When comparing the syllabi, course descriptions, and course goals between the two he found that they were much more different than they were alike. By breaking down the AP English Literature and Composition exam the high school students were being prepared all year to take, Warren noted that 45% of the exam was a multiple choice section testing students' ability to understand rhetoric in poetry and prose, and the remaining 55% of the exam asked students to compose three different essays in under 120 minutes (Warren 82). This was in far contrast to the objectives of RHE 306 in which students were graded most heavily on their academic research and analysis papers. Rather than speedily compose three essays using no outside resources, RHE 306 students were trained in reading, researching, using primary and secondary sources in their writing, peer editing, revising, and after several weeks of drafting, submitting an essay (Warren 84). The RHE 306 class was also much more individualized, as students were required to meet with their professor for feedback during the drafting process on each of their major

assignments, whereas there were no mandatory individual meetings between high school students and their AP teacher.

There is another reason Warren chose to compare AP courses and UT class equivalents - the development of the Students Partnering for Undergraduate Rhetoric Success (SPURS) program. This program was created in 2005, right around the time of Warren's study. SPURS was created to address the discrepancies between the two courses and brought together high school AP English teachers and UT writing professors over the summer for a collaborative workshop where they discussed specific skills they wanted to develop and selected common texts for both groups of students to study. Additionally, they set dates throughout the school year for SPURS coordinators to check in on the high school instructors to make sure they were not merely "teaching to the test" but helping students develop strong writing skills necessary for these high school students to possess if they planned to exempt their introductory college writing courses (Warren 84-85).

Warren and SPURS coordinators admit that there are still major differences between the two courses, as RHE 306 students would not be adequately prepared to take the AP English Language and Composition exam after their semester course, but neither are all high school AP students writing at the same level as the students who completed RHE 306 (94). However, steps are being taken to address these major differences and other states are seeing this idea and are inspired to take steps of their own. Warren concludes by suggesting not so much that high school AP courses should be changed dramatically, but that the College Board should change the design of the AP exam so that high school instructors do not feel the pressure to produce students capable of only

producing fast essay drafts, but that there is more of a focus on developing writing skills that involve researching, drafting, and revising (Warren 96). Some suggest adding a portfolio aspect to the AP Exam where students can submit essays written outside of the 120 minute testing time.

Looking at both of these studies, there is a trend that the perception students have of their writing affects their style of writing and their composition process. High school students enrolling in AP courses are often highly motivated and driven for success. If they perceive that the best way to succeed is to score highly on the AP exam, earn scholarship money, and rush through college by exempting out of first-year classes, then they will train themselves to write in a way that will please AP readers. However, this style of writing is uncommon in a first-year writing course where students spend much more time drafting and writing. Additionally, if high school instructors feel pressure from administrators to produce students with high test scores, this perception may be felt by students and they begin to associate writing with high pressure environments. This may deter them from taking future writing courses, which in turn limits the amount of writing experience a student has. This could affect student success both in college and in their future workplace if they remain poor writers.

Tutoring Strategies

One common theme throughout these three areas - business students, student athletes, and advanced placement students - is the idea that individualized tutoring is a strong supplement to writing instruction in the classroom. By engaging in one-on-one or small-group tutoring, students are able to ask questions they may be nervous to ask in a

classroom setting. They are also able to have more personalized feedback and learn editing strategies that may not be covered by a writing professor. By working with a tutor, they can build their confidence as writers, see the power of their words, and become more motivated to produce stronger writing in the future. However, tutoring is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of poor writing and each of these three groups requires different tutoring strategies to create a better environment for learning.

I.

The original issue that sparked my research was the fact that recent graduates are not producing writing at a level adequate for their employers. One interesting solution to this problem has been introducing in-house writing specialists for continuing education for employees. When the Philadelphia Federal Reserve hired Jessica Weber, a writing specialist, to be on hand for help with bank reports, the employees were at first skeptical (Bernoff). However, by allowing the program to be voluntary, employees who did take advantage of her services found themselves eager to return and learn how they could produce better writing, further encouraging other employees to do the same. These sessions could be conducted in person or over the phone and were entirely confidential, so that if an employee was nervous that their boss would know they felt insecure about their writing, they could feel safe coming to ask for help in secret (Bernoff).

Bernoff's research at the Philadelphia Federal Reserve showed a 36% improvement in overall quality, a 56% improvement in organization, a 48% improvement in clarity, a 38% improvement in support and analysis, and a 20% improvement in grammar in bank reports once the writing specialist was introduced. Additionally, by the employees working with the same tutor, they were able to develop a more unified writing

style that was attractive to clients (Bernoff). Even in a job sector that is primarily concerned with math and economics, investing in a writing specialist produced a huge return in overall productivity and efficiency when writers were able to produce better writing from the start, rather than having their work sent back by supervisors for revision multiple times. However, this is a problem that would not need fixing if students were receiving proper writing education from the start.

Another reason this program, and others like it have high opportunities for success is that non-traditional students and adult learners are often more highly motivated to improve their skills in the workplace than the classroom. One reason is because they know that their personal improvement can lead to additional monetary compensation. They understand the value of personal intellectual improvement may result in higher paychecks to support their families (Ryan and Zimmerelli 71). Additionally, tutoring sessions with adults in the workplace can be more streamlined and direct because rather than needing to produce different styles of writing - like what might be necessary in college such as a poetry analysis, lab report, or newspaper column - they have one standard business format (Ryan and Zimmerelli 72).

When working with adult learners, tutors do need to be mindful and respectful if there is a significant age gap between the tutor and the student, so that trust can be established and a non-judgmental atmosphere created. Tutors must also be respectful of an employee's time. Employees are on the clock and often under strict deadlines, so by establishing goals at the start and end of a session, adult learners (who are generally more goal driven) will feel as though the time was spent productively. Finally, tutors working with employees should continue to work as tutors and teachers, not as a crutch for

employees. Tutors should engage in active collaboration so as to not turn into a "fix-it-shop" for employees who are merely looking for edits (Ryan and Zimmerelli 72).

II.

When isolating for college business students specifically, there is an ongoing debate on whether tutors should be course-specific or more generalized. There are benefits and drawbacks to both, raising the debate on whether business students would benefit more from a fellow business student tutor who understands the content, or whether a non-business student would be more beneficial as an outsider reader who focuses on more global revisions without being bogged down by content. Rather than delve into the massive amount of scholarship debating course-specific tutors I focused on two studies, one which focuses on engineering students and the issue of more technical writing, and another which studies the tutoring between business students in an economics course.

The first study I examined is by J. Mackiewicz who studied tutoring interactions between undergraduate tutors from the on-campus writing center working and undergraduate engineering students at the University of Minnesota Duluth. While my focus is on business students, I think this study is relevant to my research because she conducted a study with both course-specific and non-course specific tutors. In addition, business students especially in majors such as finance or economics often produce technical writing with which non-business students may not be familiar. In this study specifically, Mackiewicz also notes that the general profile of writing tutors from the University of Minnesota Duluth as well as surrounding universities shows a trend of

writing center tutors generally being English, social science, or humanities majors (Mackiewicz 316).

For her study, Mackiewicz asked engineering students to use the same assignment and work first with a non-engineering major in a writing tutoring session and then later work on the same assignment (the original document, before suggestions were made by the first tutor) with a writing tutor who is also an engineering major. In the first session, with the tutor from a non-engineering background, Mackiewicz observed less verbal communication, less confidence from both students, and less understanding on both sides (Mackiewicz 319). The tutor offered more surface-level comments, used more hedges (maybe, sort of), and a few times made incorrect suggestions that began to turn the informative analysis assignment into a persuasive essay (Mackiewicz 320). Because the student was unfamiliar with the content, the tutor redirected most of the session towards subjects she was knowledgeable in, such as proper citation format, sentence variation, and general grammar (Mackiewicz 327).

In contrast, in the sessions with the engineering major, the tutor tended to dominate the session rather than work in a more collaborative, instructive manner (Mackiewicz 323). The tutor was able to identify with the assignment on multiple levels and offered her suggestions on presentation of content as well as on the writing aspects. As someone who understood the content, the tutor was better able to understand the intended audience and offer valuable suggestions on word choice and sequencing of information (Mackiewicz 322). This assignment also included analytical graphs and graphics and while the non-engineering tutor did not address these graphics, the engineering student offered advice on how to make the graphics easier to read and

understand (Mackiewicz 323). Overall, the second tutor was able to use more inclusive pronouns (we both, for us), use light humor, and make more precise statements than the first tutor, making for what Mackiewicz believes to be a much stronger and more effective tutoring session (Mackiewicz 325, 327). While this study is important to my understanding, one limiting factor is the fact that her sample size was very small; therefore, these results may not be generally applicable.

In a different study at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada, Bill Marr and Emmy Misser found more positive results for non-business writing tutors when working with business students in an economics course, EC 381 (Marr and Misser 22). In their study, they required business majors in an upper level economics course to meet with a course-designated writing tutor for help on their final 30-page research paper (Marr and Misser 22). Three senior English students who worked for the on-campus writing center were hired as course-designated tutors. Each of the EC 381 students met with the one of the tutors at least once for 20-30 minutes to discuss literary aspects of their draft. This was supplemented by a required meeting of the same length with the students' professor for suggestions related to the content (Marr and Misser 27).

At the end of the semester, the students were administered surveys concerning their experiences with the course-designated tutor. The results were overwhelmingly positive. In fact,

> 99% of the students agreed to strongly agreed that they were more
> knowledgeable about the structure and organization of a literature review
> and the introduction of a research proposal after taking part in the writing
> tutor system. Related to this fact, about 98% of the students indicated that

they were more confident about writing a literature review and an

introduction to a research proposal (Marr and Misser 30).

This experimental program was so successful that the Dean of the School of Business and

Economics approved funding for course-specific tutors in other business courses. Again,

this survey is based on a small sample size, meaning its results may differ in other

classes.

III.

When tutoring student athletes, as mentioned, some of the major focuses of

individual tutoring sessions should be to establish trust in the tutor-tutee relationship,

build the writer's confidence, and show them the value of their academic work. If a

student athlete is reluctant to share his or her writing or is intimidated by the idea of a

lengthy research paper, Marie Sandoval Lamb writes that if student athletes can write

about their passion - their sport - they will be more motivated to begin the writing

process. Another option she offers is to have student athletes read sports writing, such as

recent newspaper or magazine articles, and ask them to offer their analysis and critique of

the writing (Lamb 63). By pulling sports into the academic sphere, student athletes may

show more academic motivation. Additionally, their confidence builds when they read

about something they know and understand deeply, which can carry over into different

assigned texts (Lamb 65). When student athletes see that the analytical skills they use

during a game can be applied in the classroom, they begin to see progress in their own

academic development.

Researching at the University of Arizona, William Broussard and Nahal Rodieck

studied the tutor interactions between student athletes and saw that student athletes

primarily need active, positive motivation in tutoring sessions. Often when student

athletes attend tutoring sessions, they are mentally and physically exhausted and pressed

for time, creating an already challenging environment for the tutor (Broussard and

Rodieck 2). In these situations, student athletes were noted to have more productive

sessions when the tutor acted as an energized "coach" who showed enthusiasm for the

session and set goals within the tutoring session (Broussard and Rodieck 2). Student

athletes reported that they accomplished the most in a session when their tutor "got after

me...stir things up, jolt me a bit" to keep them focused on the task at hand and not worry

about outside distractions such as their upcoming game, a test in a different class, etc.

(Broussard and Rodieck 3).

Another way to frame the session for student athletes who are reluctant to work

on a writing assignment is to reframe the writing assignment. Tutors can show student

athletes how writing can be an emotional exercise or a tool for communication rather than

an academic chore (Broussard and Rodieck 3). In order to show student athletes how

writing can be more enjoyable and as an exercise to increase the writing student athletes

produce, tutors can encourage short, private writing assignments such as journal entries

or personal reflections. Broussard and Rodieck stress that at the core of tutoring sessions

with student athletes, tutors need to be positive motivators who praise the student when

he or she shows progress, because in a worst case scenario, these tutoring sessions may

be the most positive interaction the student athlete has with academic instructors

(Broussard and Rodieck 5).

IV.

Advanced students also require different tutoring sessions than traditional students. Advanced students can be reluctant to use tutoring services or visit writing centers because in order to remain in advanced programs, they are often making high grades and do not think additional help is necessary. For this reason, advanced students - especially those who are required to attend tutoring sessions - may be reluctant to accept advice. However, tutors can also become disgruntled in these sessions if they try to assume they are more knowledgeable and make their advice dominate the session (Mackiewicz 317). In the study with the engineering students, Mackiewicz concluded that when advanced students were working on an assignment in a higher-level course, students benefited most from a tutor who understood the content of the assignment because they engaged in a more collaborative session. In contrast, with tutors from a different major who attempted to steer the conversation to areas where they were the expert, ignoring the student expertise over the content (Mackiewicz 317). When working with advanced students on advanced subject matter, it is best to make sure a collaborative session takes place, or else it could possibly turn into a battle with each side trying to argue and validate their suggestions.

In Sigmar and Hynes's study of business students who participated in a survey by writing a business memo, they found that even the most advanced students with a strong grasp of the content still struggled with grammar and mechanics (Sigmar and Hynes 133). This study, as well as others, shows that even if students understand the point they are trying to make, they cannot communicate it as effectively if they are lacking the grammar and mechanics to do so. In this case, tutors may not need to thoroughly understand the

content as long as they can help students make sure their point is coming across in the way they want it to. By focusing on more global revisions first and then moving to grammar line-edits, students can maintain authorship of the content while also receiving help and instruction in tweaking the literary aspects of their writing.

One issue Pavel Zemliansky noticed when observing tutoring sessions with advanced students is that they do not see the value of writing as much as they do with lectures, research, and experimentation done in their classes. They often view writing as a chore and a product that needs to be turned out to show that learning has taken place (Zemliansky 85). Tutors can change this perception by showing writing as an important mode of communication. It does not matter how much students have learned if they cannot prove that learning or offer a full analysis of research through their written communication. In general, younger students are more receptive to tutor suggestions, but tutors can still assume a bit of authority in these sessions to help advanced students with the literary aspects of their assignment and ask for clarification if they do not understand key concepts of the content (Zemliansky 85).

Zemliansky does address the concern that there is much more room for miscommunication and incorrect suggestions when a tutor does not understand complex subject matter (Zemliansky 87). However, if a writing center were to work to train tutors in specific subject areas or work actively to hire students from diverse academic backgrounds, it would still be a logistical nightmare of scheduling and training (Zemliansky 88). He argues that when working with advanced students there are still great opportunities to help students with their writing, which often starts by asking students what their goals are and where they feel least confident in the writing process.

This way the advanced student feels a sense of control by setting the course for the session, while still allowing the tutor some authority to make suggestions. Tutors can also ask the student to give them a brief synopsis of their essay and prod for more sophisticated analysis (Zemliansky 93). This ensures more of a collaborative session rather than one person or the other taking control.

Conclusion

I have broken my research down into four different categories: business students, student athletes, AP students, and writing tutors. More specifically, I found that recent business graduates were producing poor writing, which indicates a failure of high schools and universities to teach proper writing skills. By introducing a more writing-heavy curriculum, having smaller class sizes, and individual tutoring opportunities, business students have more of an opportunity to develop strong writing skills.

Student athletes are a special subset of college students who feel pressure to succeed in both athletics and academics, yet fear failure, specifically in the classroom for fear of confirming the "dumb jock" stereotype. This has resulted in low academic motivation, a struggle to understand their identity off the field, and an increased focus on becoming a professional athlete while letting their grades slip significantly. These factors have been studied and could be mitigated through individualized tutoring, positive reinforcement of academic identity, and a more open-minded attitude from faculty and peers in the classroom.

The debate on whether AP exam scores should be grounds for exempting first year college courses has centered on whether these high school classes are similar enough

to their college equivalent to count for credit. Research shows these two classes to be more different than similar because AP exams and college exams are often testing different objectives. Therefore, the syllabi are centered around these exams, creating different classroom environments. With more collaboration between high schools and universities, these problems could be mitigated; however, it would also take significant change on behalf of the College Board to change the nature of the AP exams administered each spring.

Finally, I researched specific tutoring strategies for each of these groups: business students, student athletes, and advanced students. By researching the nuances of these groups of people, tutors are better able to focus their tutoring strategies to ensure an efficient and productive session. However, the bottom line is that no matter the tutoring strategies employed, students benefit from individualized tutoring because it creates a safe, non-judgmental space for writing to be shared and collaborative editing to take place.

The research conducted for my thesis is extensive, but nowhere near exhaustive. Each of these categories is broad enough for a research project of its own. However, even with this research, I still discovered that there are not many studies similar to the one I conducted - on testing the perception of business students (including student athletes and former high school AP students) concerning their writing skills and how prepared they are for the writing expected of them in the workplace. I am excited to add my research and conclusions to the current scholarship and I hope my research inspires other institutions to conduct similar studies for assessing their curriculums to ensure that an adequate writing education is being administered.

RESEARCH METHODS

For my research, I chose to use an anonymous survey format through the online program Qualtrics. After spending over two semesters researching the studies and surveys conducted by other scholars for my literature review, I decided on an anonymous online survey administered through email because it would be the most efficient way for me to reach a maximum number of students. My survey is designed to test business students' perceptions of their writing skills and how prepared they feel for the writing expected of them in the workplace. Additionally, I have sections asking students about their experiences with high school AP courses, UM courses, and tutoring sessions either at the Oxford Writing Center, FedEx Writing Lab, or if they have met individually with a professor. I also ask the students about their grades in certain courses so I can see if there is a correlation between grades received and perception of writing skills/preparedness.

Before beginning work on my survey, I completed training through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This training consisted of several different modules, which contained instructional information about using human subjects for research, which was then a followed by a short quiz. Once my IRB training was complete, I was able to begin working on my survey. As a student at the University of Mississippi I was able to use Qualtrics to create and administer my survey. At first, Qualtrics seemed daunting and a bit confusing. There was a plethora of options for how to ask questions and frame answers ranging from clicking a simple bubble, to using different scale variations. Some answers were numerical in style, others included Likert Scales, and

others let respondents use sliding bars to indicate if they were between options. My survey consists primarily of single or multiple option selections and also incremental scales ranging from "extremely well" to "not well at all." There are a few questions with a text box option so that the student could type his or her response. Additionally, I chose to make many of the questions mandatory so that students could not proceed to the next question without answering the one they were on.

One of the main reasons I made several questions mandatory was that many of my questions in the survey were programmed with "skip logic." This means that depending on which answer a student selected, he or she would skip to a certain series of questions. For example, one of my questions asks: "Have you completed Business Communications (BUS 271) at Ole Miss? Yes or No?" From there if the student selected "Yes," he or she would be redirected to a series of questions asking about their experience with the course and what grade they made. But, if the student selected "No" they would skip those two questions and instead be directed to the question, "Have you taken a 200 level English or Writing Course at Ole Miss? Yes or No?" to which a similar skip logic followed. My survey is 52 questions total; however, it is unlikely that a student will answer all 52 questions, especially considering that the last five questions are for student athletes only - a small percentage of the survey pool.

I consider my 52-question survey, which is estimated to take between 8 and 15 minutes - depending on the skip logic - my primary survey. However, I do have a second follow-up survey, which consists of one question. One of the questions in my primary survey asks if students would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. If they select yes, they click on a link redirecting them to my second, one-question survey,

which asks them to enter their email address in the case that I contact them for a follow-up interview. Originally, this was in my primary survey; however, IRB reviewers suggested I make this a separate survey in order to protect the anonymity of the student's original survey responses.

Once I finished building my survey on Qualtrics, I took it several times myself to test out the several different skip logic options - and also bullied my roommates and friends into testing it out so I could see if any of my language was unclear. To clarify, these "test" responses were kept separate from the actual survey responses. Once I was satisfied with my survey, I sent my application and survey to the IRB at The University of Mississippi. They made a few different suggestions to make the survey more anonymous. The time it took for my survey to be approved was longer than I anticipated, so even though I had plans to email my survey out the first week of November, 2017, I did not receive approval until right before Thanksgiving break. Therefore, the IRB suggested I push the date to the beginning of the 2018 spring semester because students would be less likely to respond around final exams, which were at the beginning of December. I agreed and pushed the date back to the last week of January, one week after classes had begun to ensure maximum participation. I chose this week because students would be back in the swing of classes, while not yet being bogged down with projects, tests, and papers and would have the time to take my survey.

After revisions, I worked with a man in the Office of Institutional Research to send out my survey. Upon meeting with the Office of Institutional Research, I gained access to the pool of student email addresses, of which 2,000 were selected at random to be participants in my survey. I was able to upload my official email solicitation text to

Qualtrics and the email addresses were downloaded to Qualtrics by the Office of Institutional Research so that I would not see any of the addresses, therefore ensuring anonymity of the participants. The survey was set to run for 14 days with two reminder emails spaced out over the two weeks. The survey was sent out January 23, 2018, at 4:00 PM.

Unfortunately, I hit a bump in the road with my survey. The next morning when checking my email, I had several different emails from students wanting to participate in my survey, but expressing doubt over whether or not they should participate because many of the questions did not apply to them. The main theme throughout these email responses was that their major was not listed and they had taken no business courses. In a panic, I emailed the Office of Institutional Research and found that a major mistake was made - the survey was sent to 2,000 randomly selected undergraduates at UM instead of 2,000 randomly selected students in the School of Business Administration. The Office of Institutional Research was helpful throughout this process and helped me close my original survey so that I could start over with the correct population. Even though the survey was only live for a few hours, it generated 153 responses, though almost all of these responses were not from business students and had to be discarded.

Two days later, after correcting the mistake of the survey population and uploading a new pool of email addresses, I re-sent out a new version of the survey (the same questions, merely new email addresses) on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 1:30 PM. I scheduled an automated email to be sent to students who have not started or only partially completed my survey for Wednesday, January 31, 2018, at 10:30 AM, and then another one for Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at 2:45 PM. The survey was closed on Friday,

February 9th at noon. This way the survey was live for 16 days, 12 of those being business days. By alternating the days of the week and the times the email reminders were sent, I hoped to reach the maximum number of students at a favorable time so that they would be able to complete my survey.
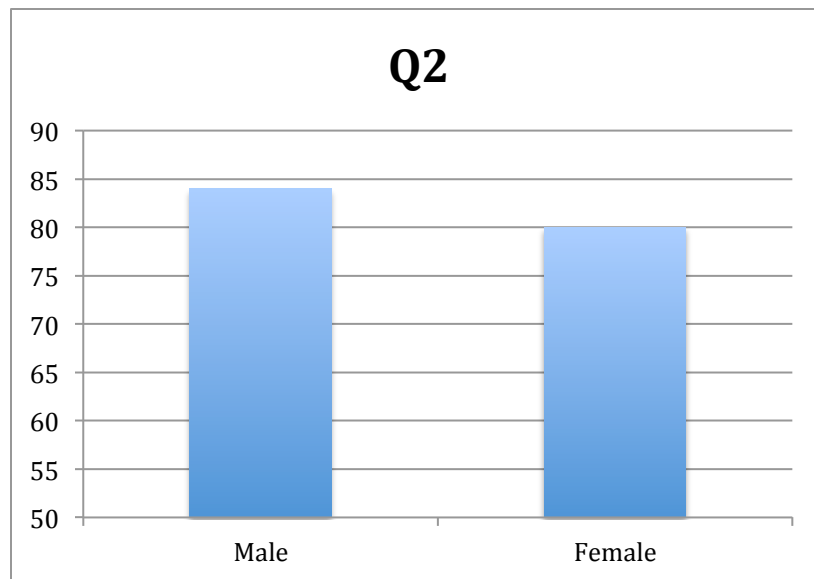
DATA TABLES AND GRAPHS

Question 1: Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up survey?

Yes	34
No	123
No Answer	7
	164

Q1

Value	
140	
120	
100	
80	
60	
40	
20	
0	

Yes — No — No Answer
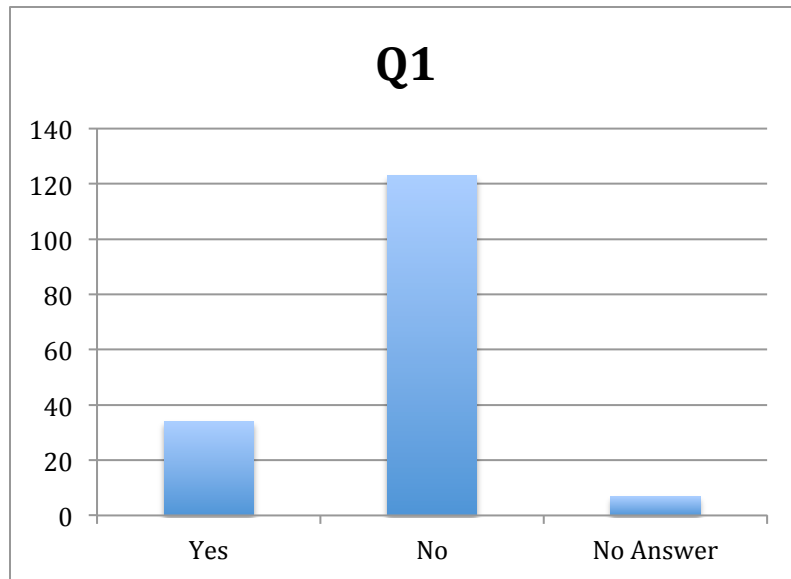
Question 2: What is your gender?

Male	84
Female	80
	164

Q2

90	
85	
80	
75	
70	
65	
60	
55	
50	

Male   Female

Question 3: What is your major?

Banking and Finance	7
Managerial Finance	28
Risk Management and Insurance	6
Marketing and Corporate Relations	12
Management Information Systems	5
Management	32
Marketing	39
Entrepreneurship	6
Real Estate	5
General Business	26
Economics	12
	178
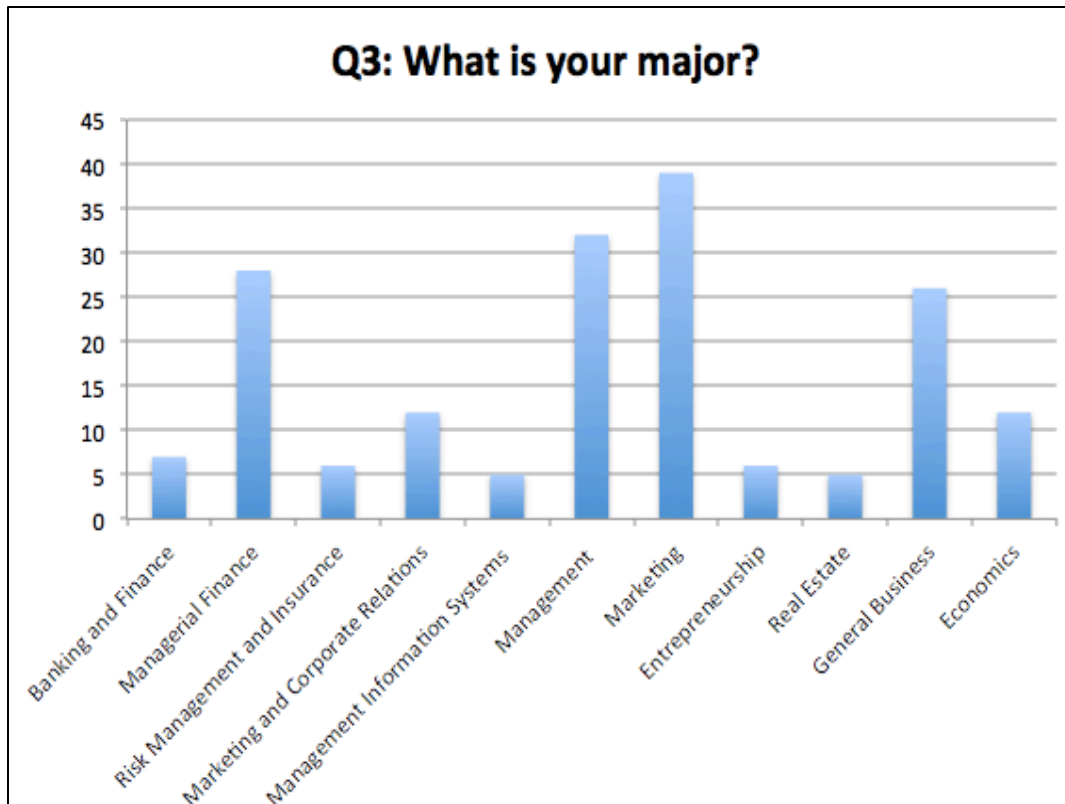
Question 4: What year in college are you?

Freshman	29
Sophomore	19
Junior	43
Senior	73
	164

Q4
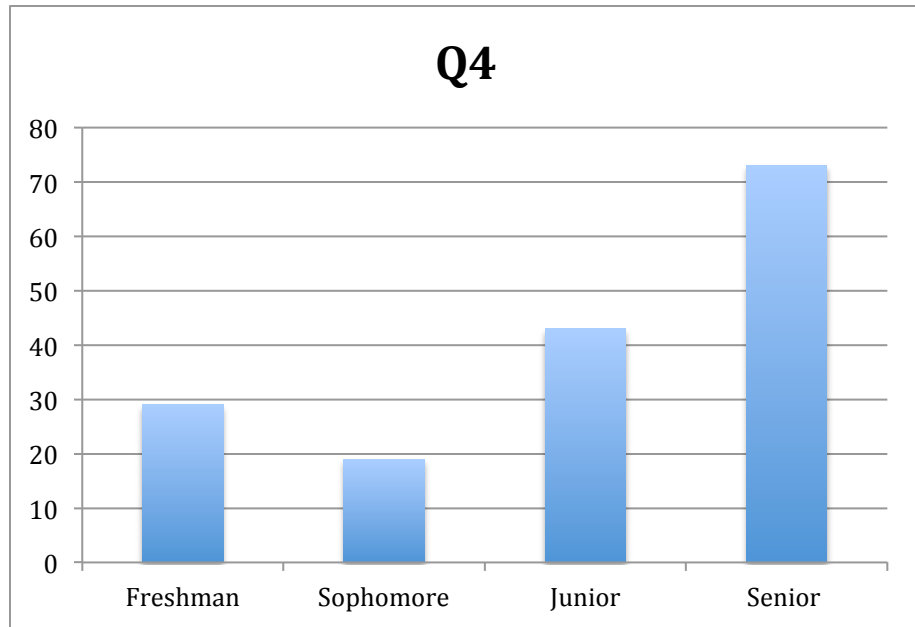
Question 5: What is your Ole Miss GPA?

0.0-1.0	0
1.0-1.9	0
2.0-2.5	14
2.6-2.9	20
3.0-3.5	64
3.6-4.0	30
Prefer not to answer	36
	164
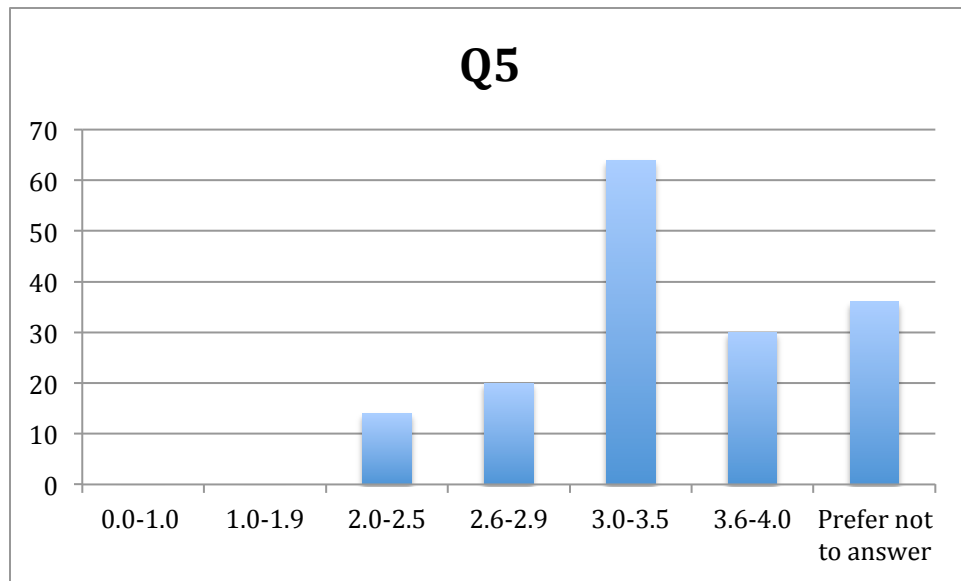
Question 6: Did you take or are you taking WRIT 100, WRIT 101, or ENG 101 at Ole Miss?

Yes	84
No	80
	164

Q6

90	
85	
80	
75	
70	
65	
60	
55	
50	
	Yes	No
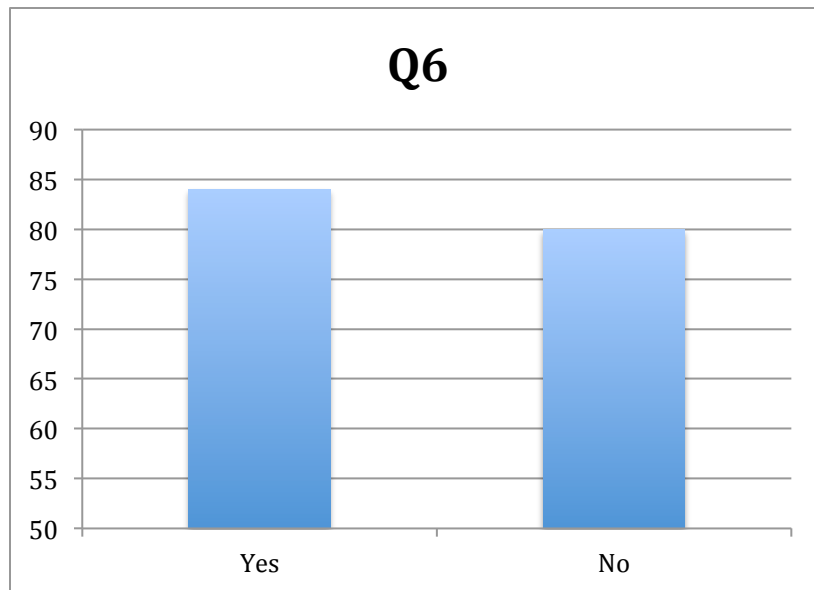
Question 7: What grade did you make in either WRIT 100, WRIT 101 or ENG 101 at Ole Miss?

A	30
B	42
C	10
D	0
F	1
Currently taking the class	0
I don't know	0
Prefer not to answer	1
	84

Q7
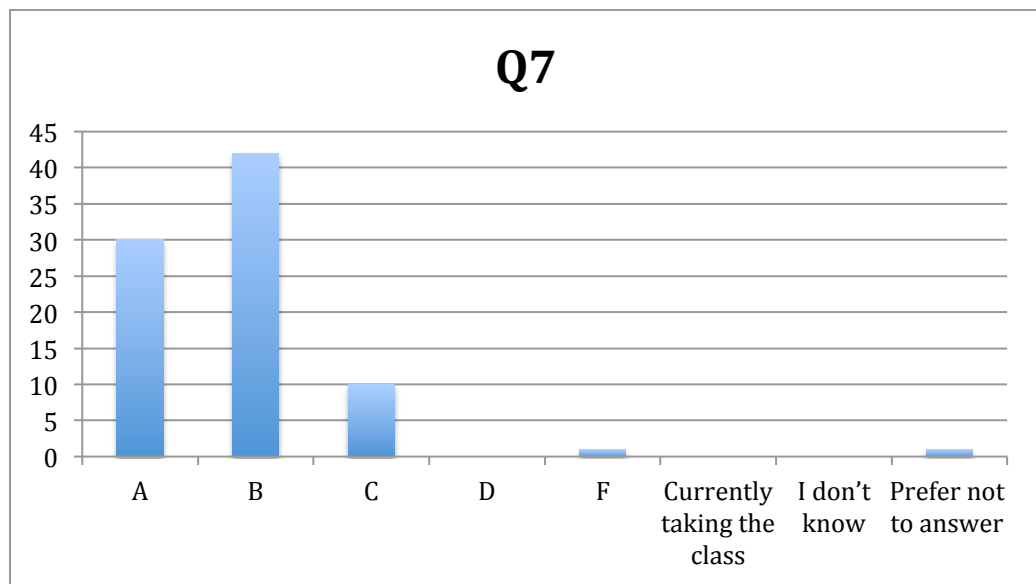
Question 8: Why did you not take WRIT 100, WRIT 101, or ENG 101 at Ole Miss?

Taking this class in the future	0
Took this class at a Junior College	21
Took this class at a different University	10
Took this class through dual enrollment during high school	14
Tested out by taking an AP exam	30
Other	5
	80

Q8
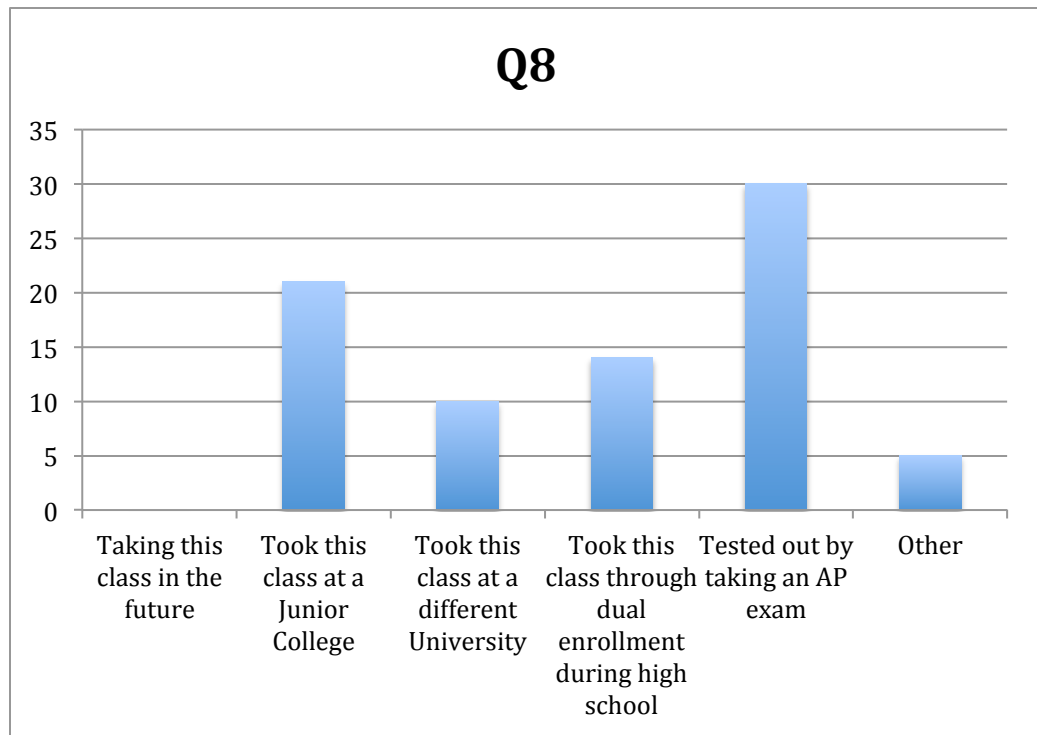
Question 9: If yes to "tested out by taking AP Exams", what score did you make on the English Literature/Language and Composition AP Exam?

3	8
4	13
5	6
I don't know	0
Prefer not to answer	3
	30
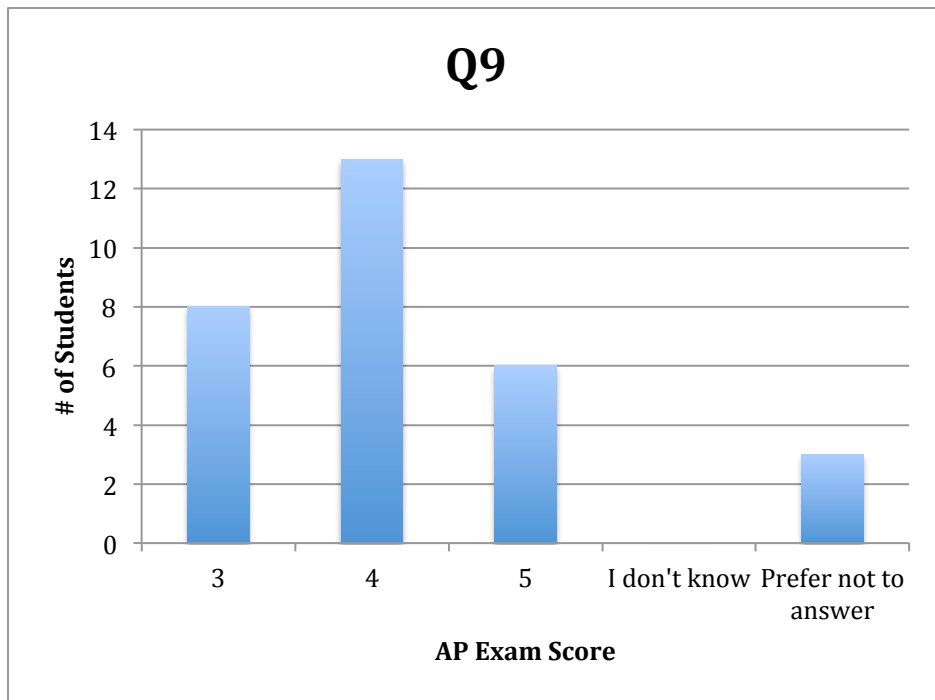
Question 10: How well do you feel that your high school AP classes prepared you for collegiate writing?

Extremely well	11
Very well	11
Moderately well	8
Slightly well	0
Not well at all	0
	30

Q10
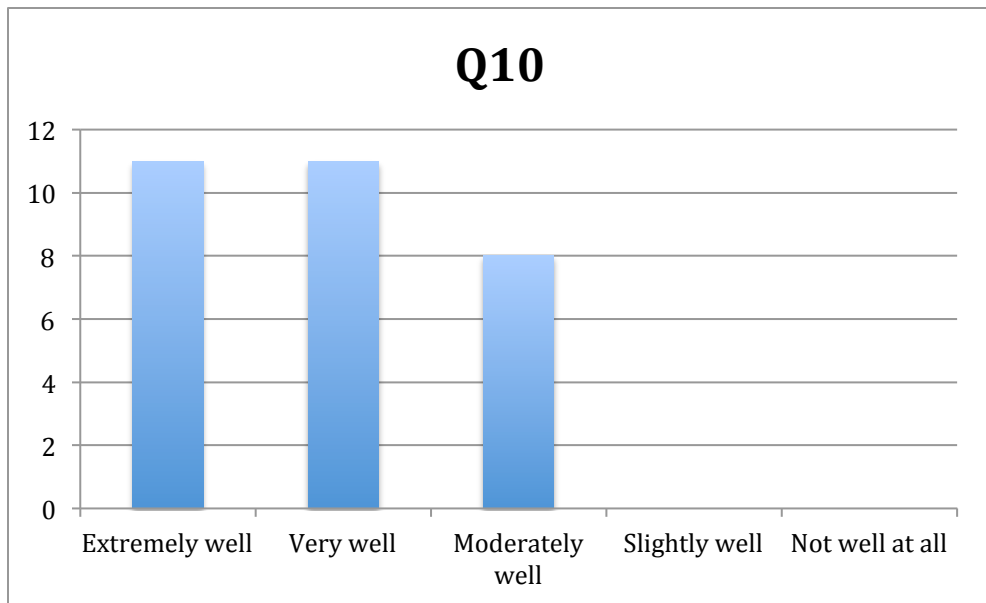
Question 11: Did you take or are you taking WRIT 102, ENG 102, or LIBA 102 at Ole Miss?

Yes	99
No	65
	164

Q11

A bar chart titled "Q11" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 120 in increments of 20. The "Yes" bar reaches approximately 99 and the "No" bar reaches approximately 65.
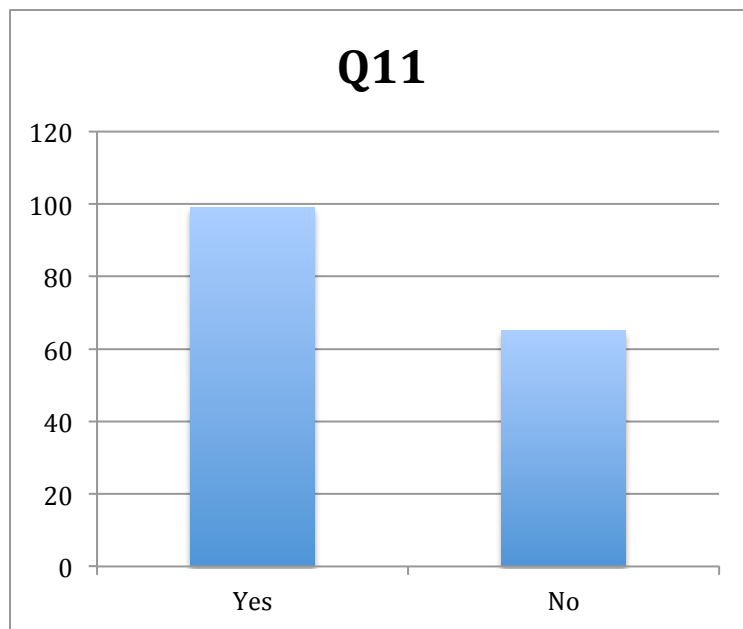
Question 12: If yes, what grade did you make in either WRIT 102, ENG 102, or LIBA 102 at Ole Miss?

A	34
B	36
C	8
D	1
F	0
Currently taking the class	18
I don't know	2
Prefer not to answer	0
	99

58
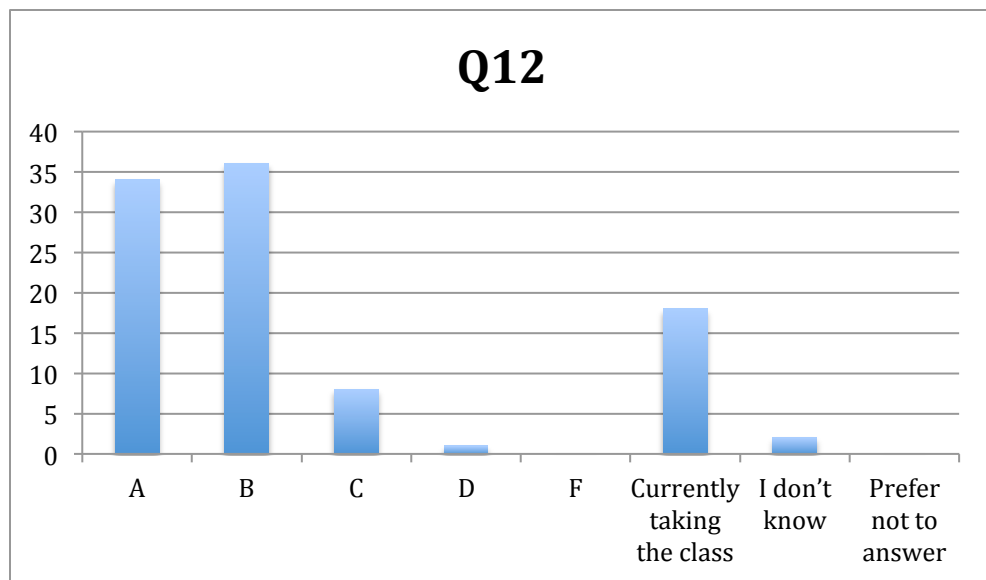
Question 13: How well do you feel your Ole Miss writing class or classes prepared you by giving you a strong foundation of writing skills?

Extremely well	5
Very well	29
Moderately well	44
Slightly well	13
Not well at all	8
	99

Q13
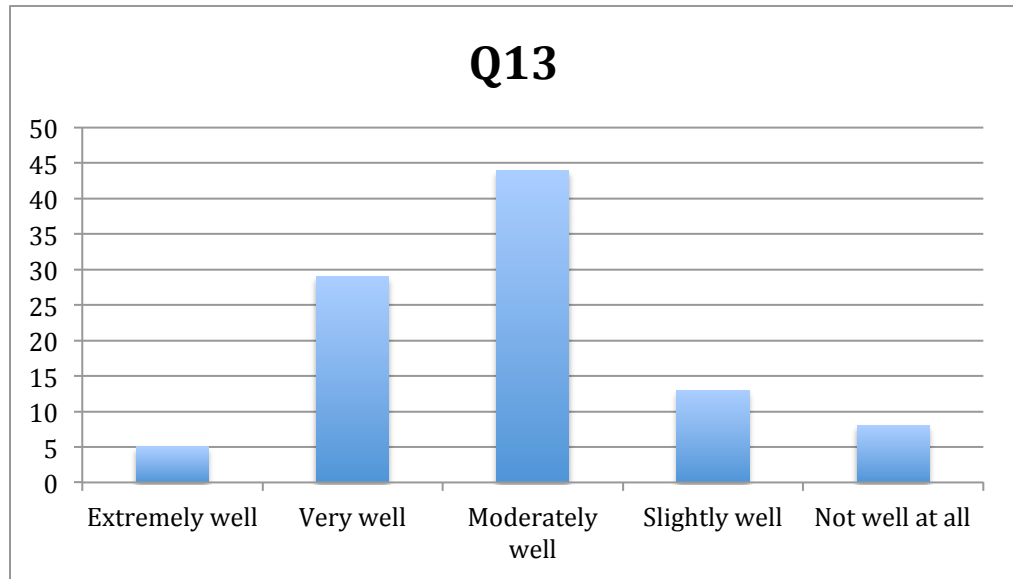
Question 14: How challenged did you feel in your Ole Miss writing course or courses?

Extremely challenged	4
Very challenged	21
Moderately challenged	44
Slightly challenged	22
Not challenged	8
	99

Q14
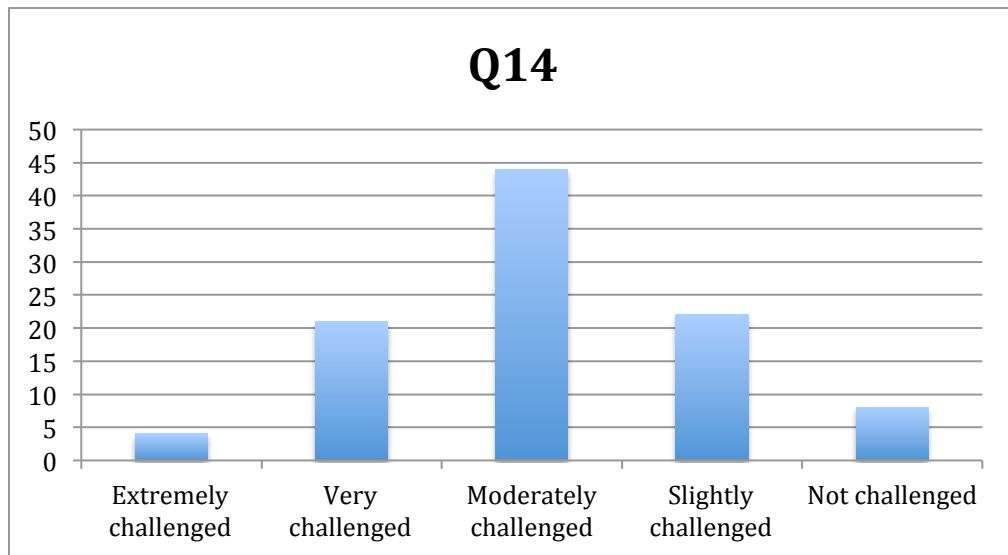
Question 15: Why did you not take either WRIT 102, ENG 102 or LIBA 102 at Ole Miss?

Taking this class in the future	2
Took this class at a Junior College	20
Took this class at a different University	9
Took this class through dual enrollment during high school	15
Tested out by taking an AP Exam	9
Other	10
	65

61
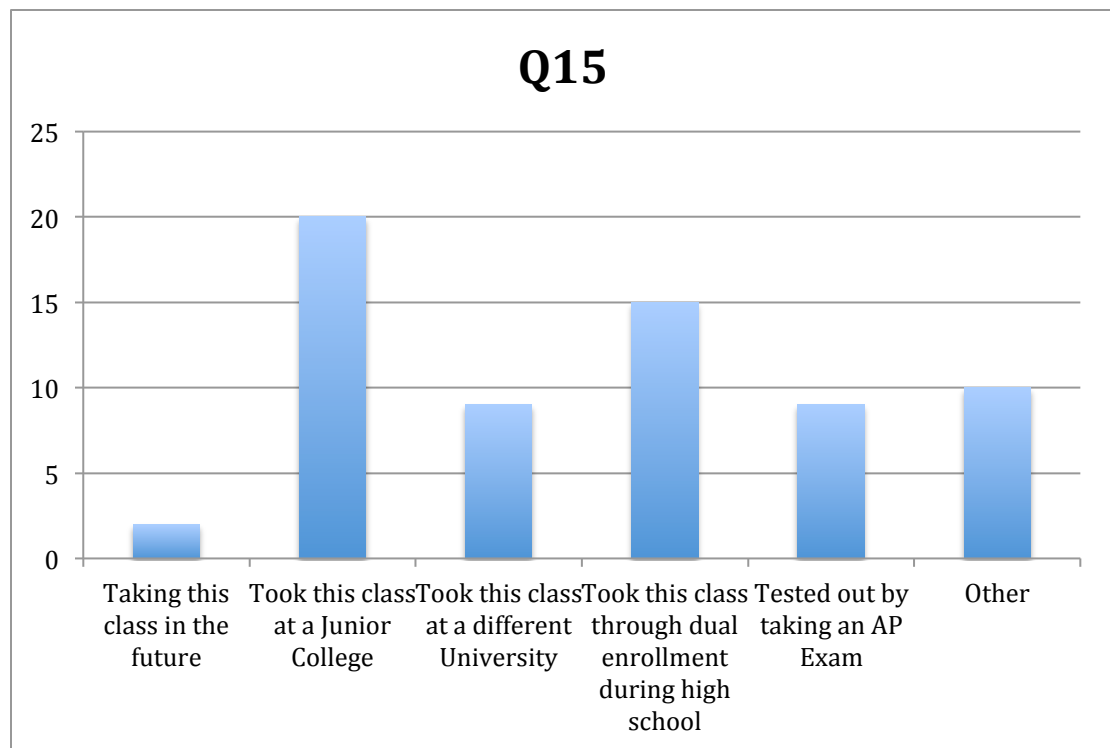
Question 16: What score did you make on the English Literature/Language and Composition AP Exam?

3	0
4	4
5	4
I don't know	1
Prefer not to answer	0
	9
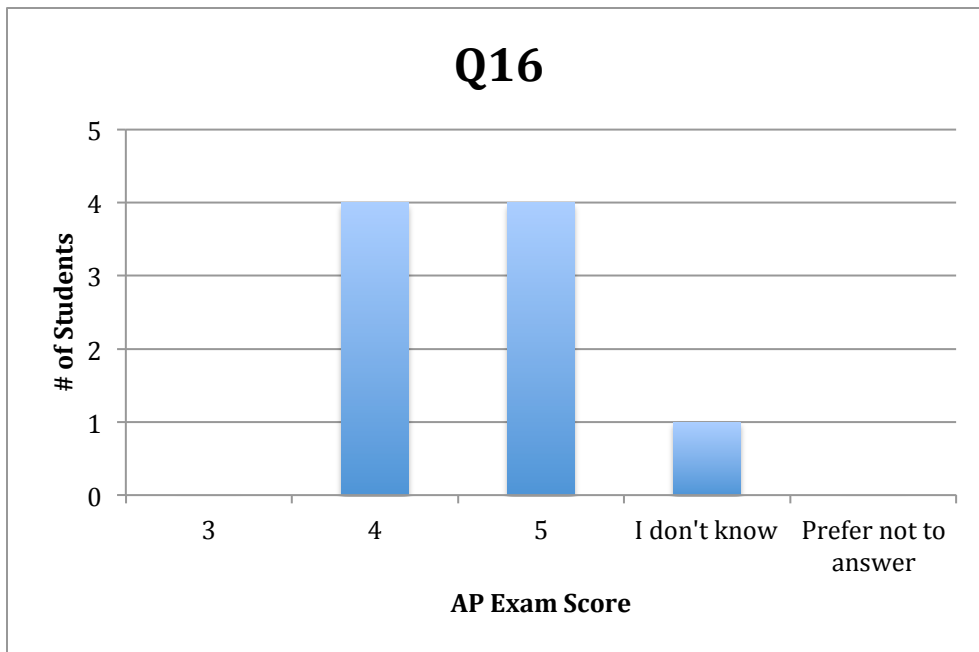
Question 17: How well do you feel that your high school AP classes prepared you for collegiate writing?

|	
Extremely well	4
Very well	5
Moderately well	0
Slightly well	0
Not well at all	0

Q17
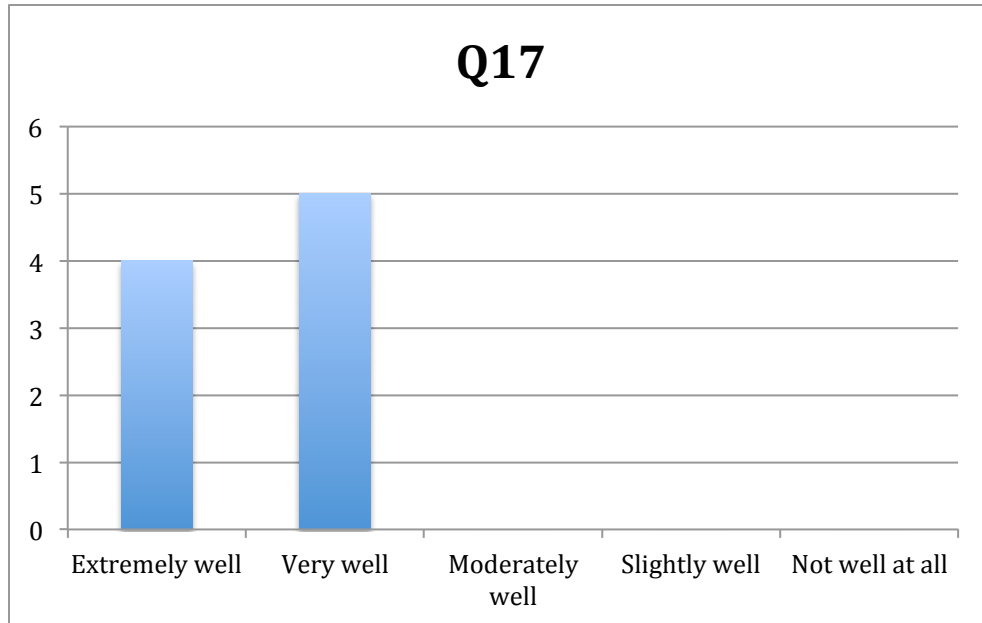
Question 18: How well did your high school English and Writing courses (non-AP) prepare you for collegiate writing courses?

Extremely well	51
Very well	50
Moderately well	37
Slightly well	13
Not well at all	13
	164

Q18
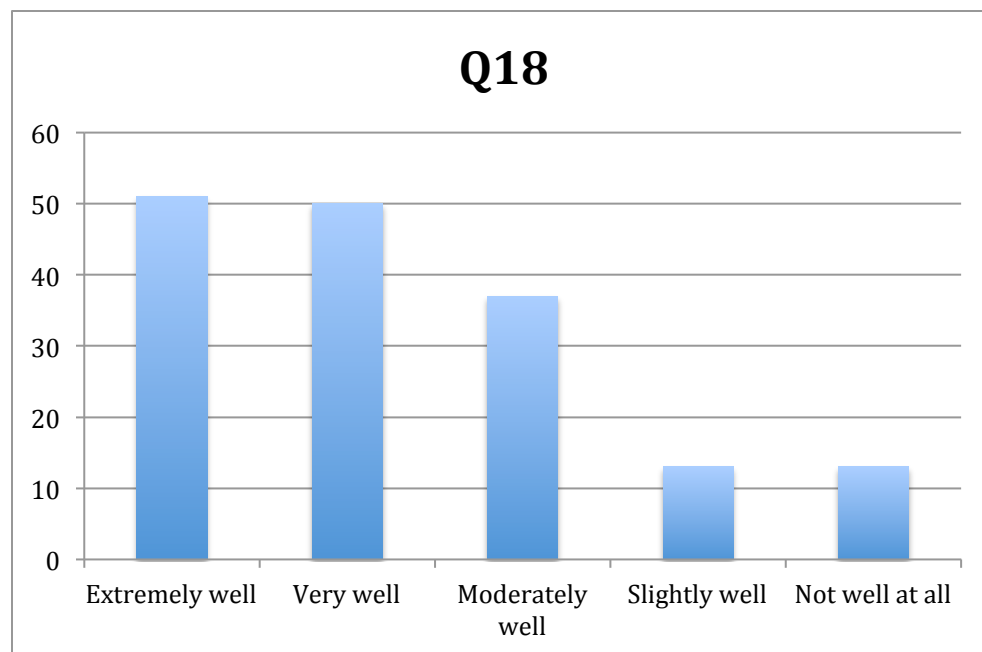
Question 19: Have you completed Business Communications (BUS 271) at Ole Miss?

| Yes	103
No	61
	164

Q19
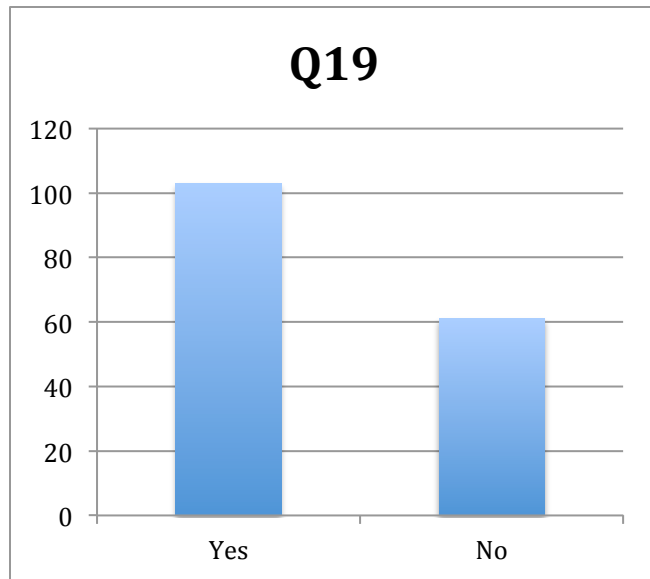
Question 20: How well do you feel that your Business Communications (BUS 271) course at Ole Miss prepared you for the writing expected in a post-graduate setting?

Extremely well	8
Very well	32
Moderately well	39
Slightly well	15
Not well at all	9
	103

Q20

Category	Value
Extremely well	8
Very well	32
Moderately well	39
Slightly well	15
Not well at all	9
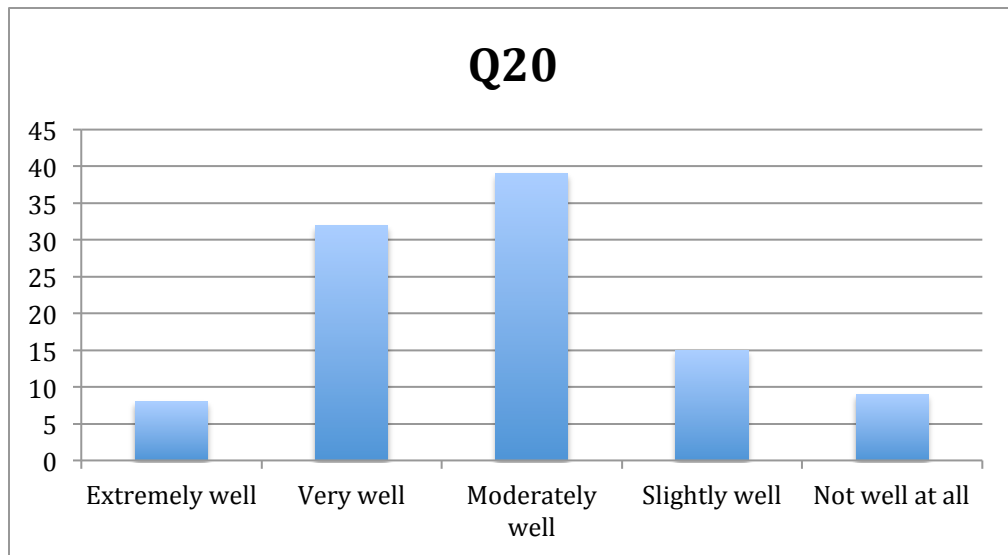
Question 21: What grade did you make in Business Communications (BUS 271)?

A	58
B	34
C	8
D	0
F	1
Currently taking the class	0
I don't know	2
Prefer not to answer	0
	103

Q21

A bar chart titled Q21 showing: A = 58, B = 34, C = 8, D = 0, F = 1, Currently taking the class = 0, I don't know = 2, Prefer not to answer = 0.
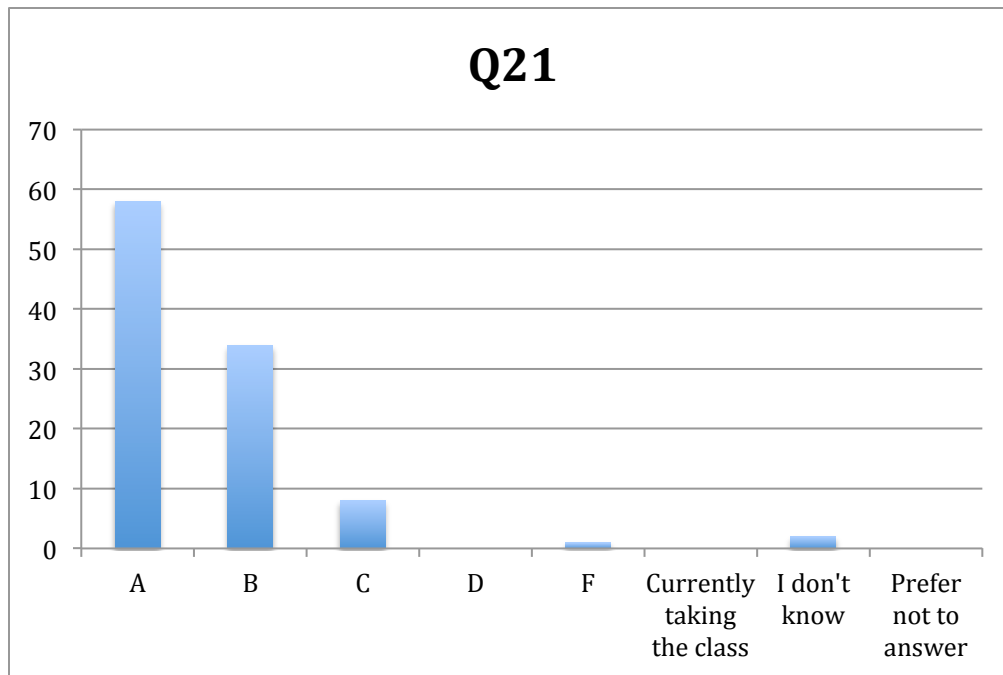
Question 22: Have you taken a 200 level English or Writing course at Ole Miss?

Yes	84
No	80
	164

Q22
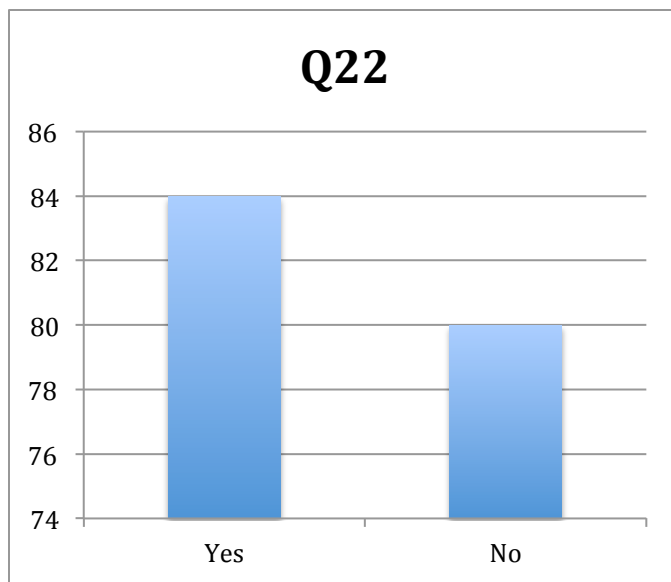
Question 23: Which course or courses did you take? Please select all that apply.

|	
ENG 221	6
ENG 222	7
ENG 223	9
ENG 224	25
ENG 225	9
ENG 226	21
I don't remember	9
Other	2
	88

Q23
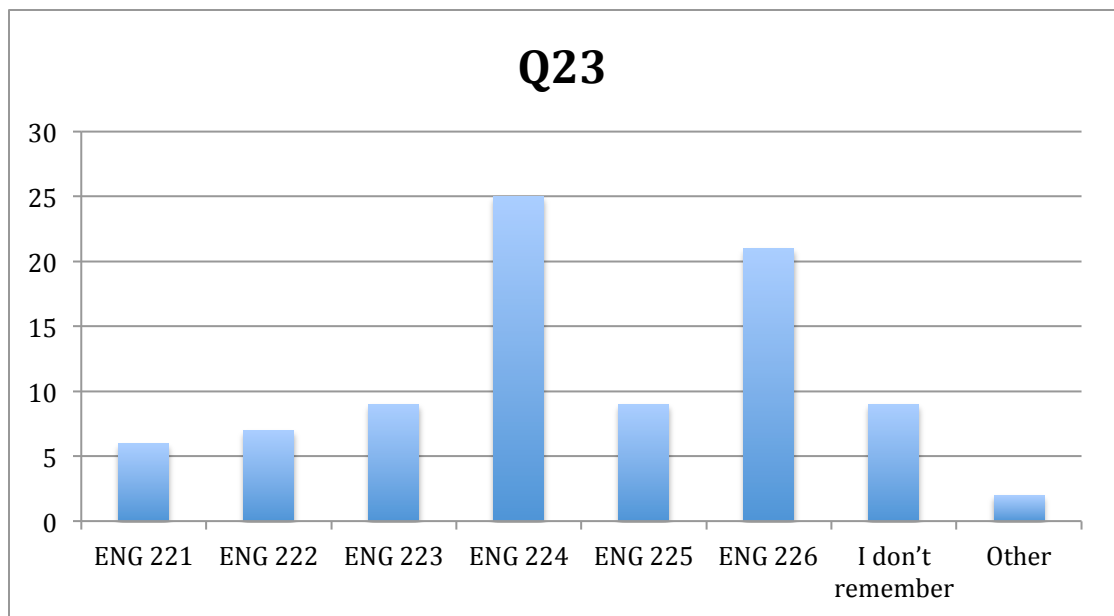
Question 24: In your opinion, how prepared did you feel for the writing expected in a 200 level Ole Miss English course?

Extremely prepared	12
Very prepared	28
Moderately prepared	33
Slightly prepared	7
Not well prepared	4
	84

Q24
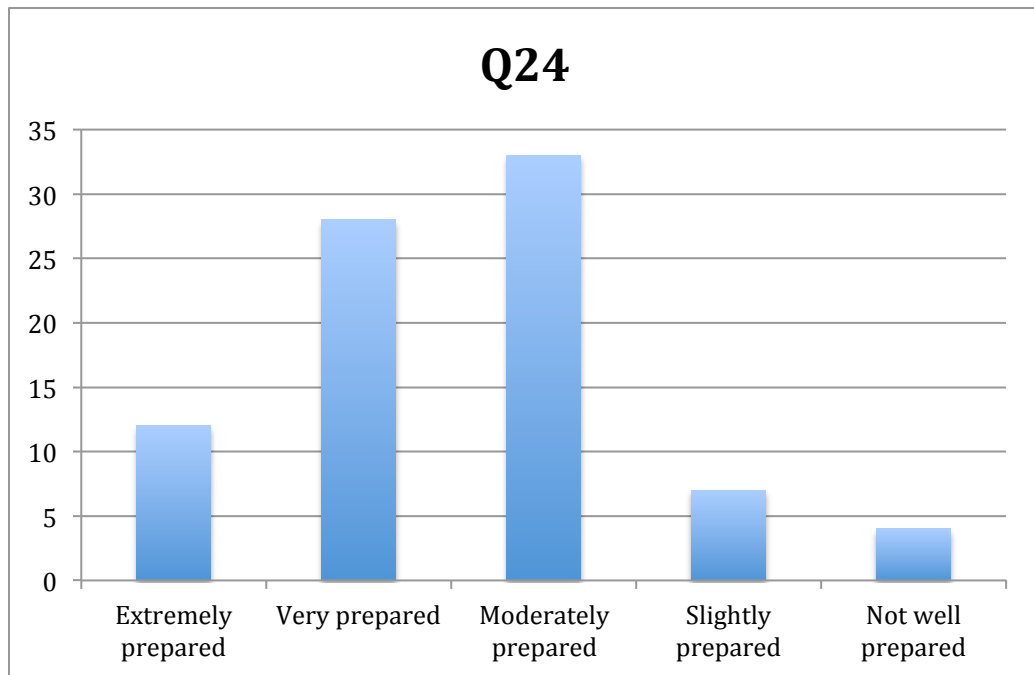
Question 25: Did you take one or more 200 level Ole Miss English courses online?

| Yes	9
No	75
	84

Q25
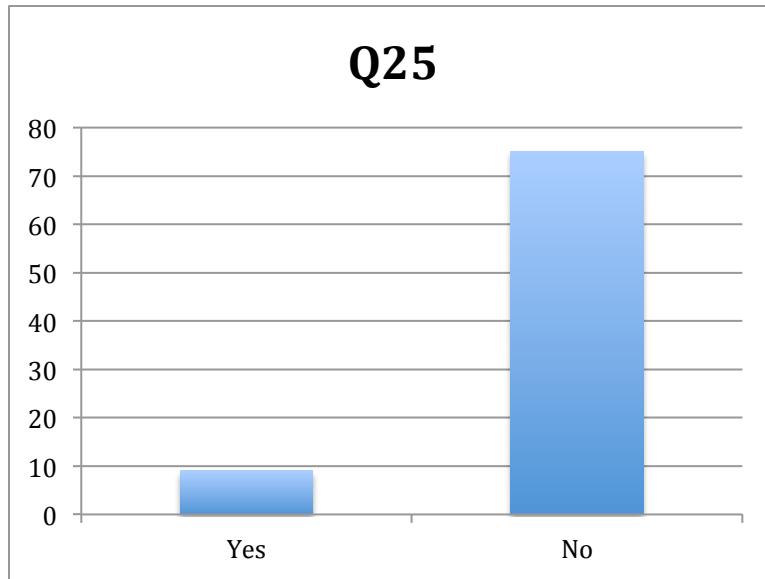
Question 26: What grade or grades did you make in your English course/courses? Please select all that apply if you have taken multiple 200 level Ole Miss English courses.

|	
A	32
B	32
C	8
D	1
F	1
Currently taking the class	10
I don't know	1
I don't remember	0
	85
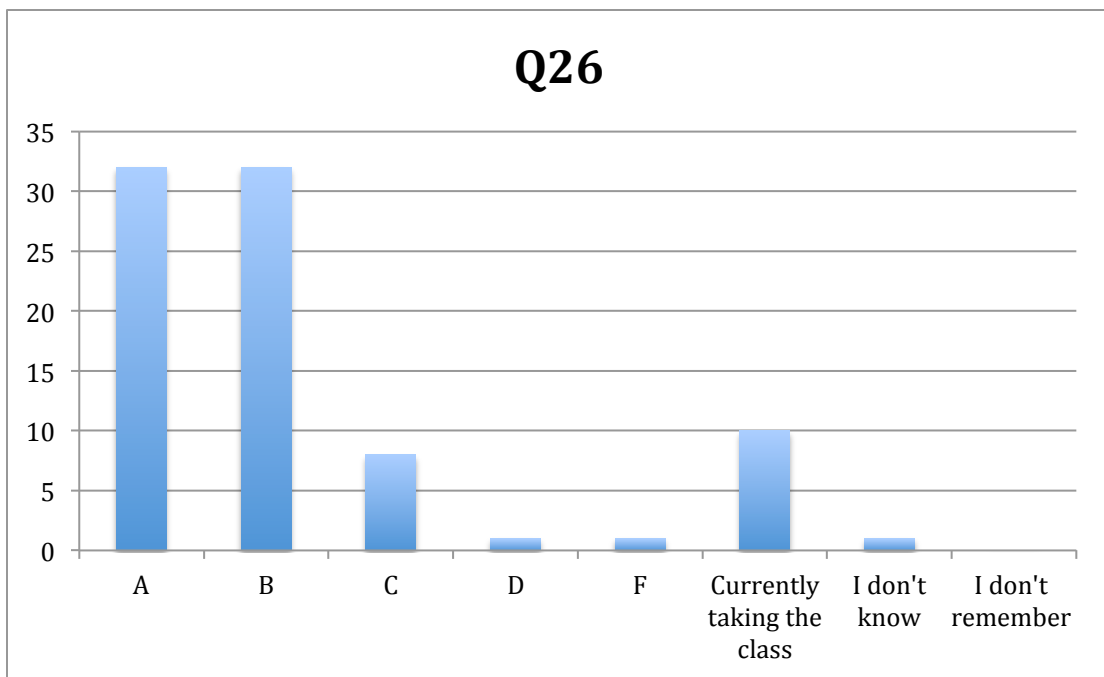
Question 27: Why have you not taken an English Literature course at Ole Miss? Please select all that apply.

| Plan to take one or more in the future	29
Took one or more 200 level English classes at a Junior College	14
Took one or more 200 level English classes at a different University	3
It is not required for my major	24
I took foreign language instead	8
Other	12
	90

Q27
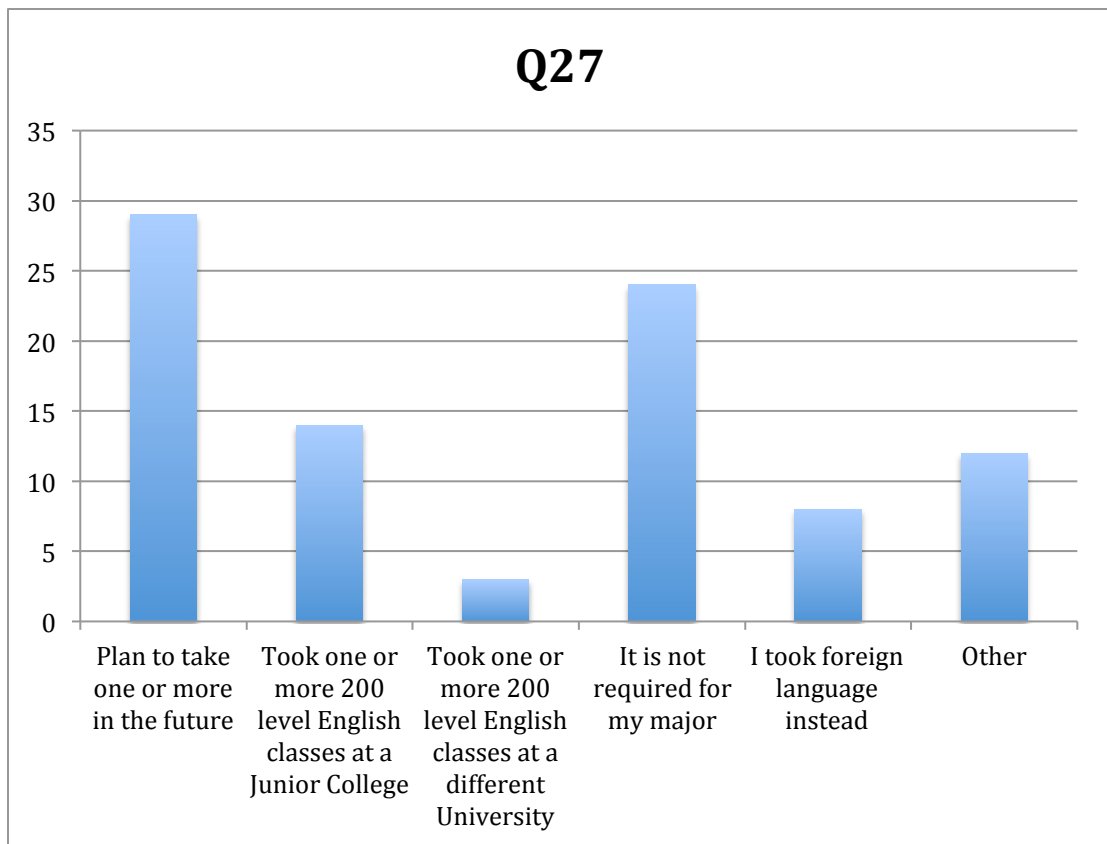
Question 28: Would take an additional English or Writing course, besides the required hours, as one of your non-business elective courses?

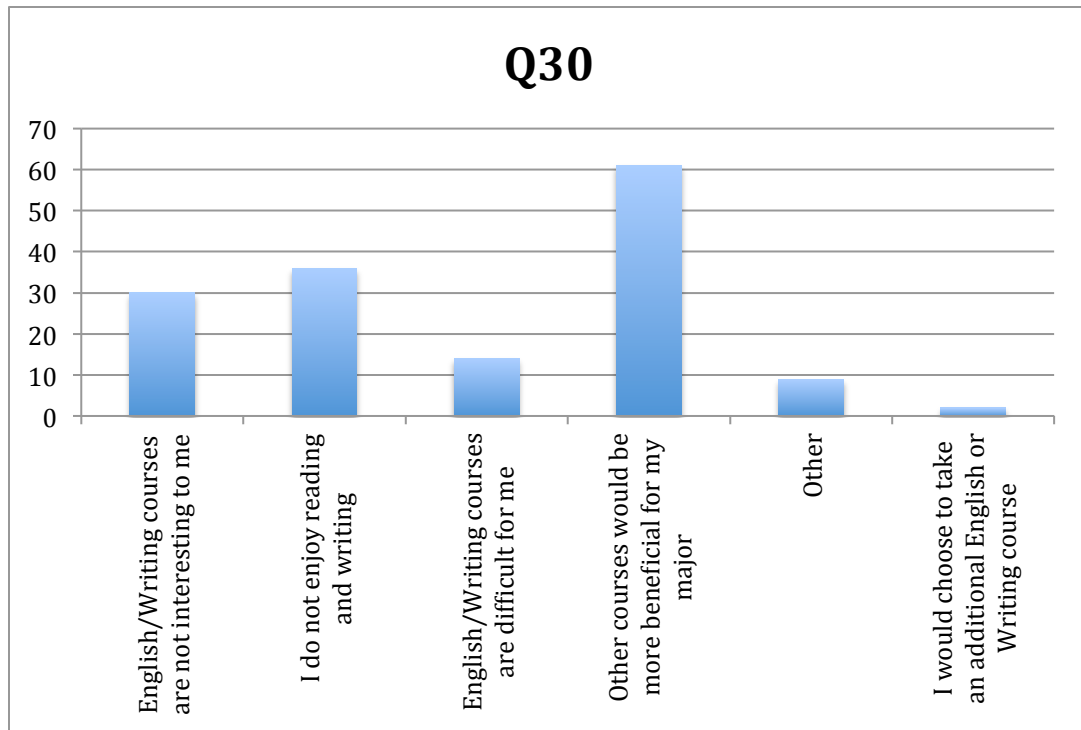| Yes	18
Maybe	34
No	112
	164

Q28
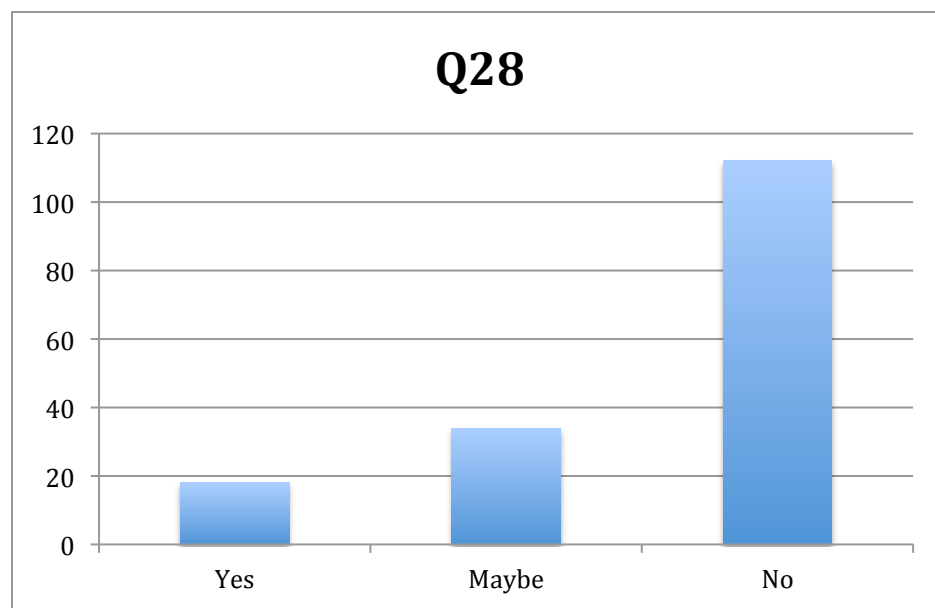
Question 29: Why would you take an additional English or Writing course? Please select all that apply.

| English/Writing courses are interesting to me	16
I enjoy reading and writing	20
English courses are easy to me	16
I want to strengthen my reading and/or writing skills	28
Other	5
	85

Q29
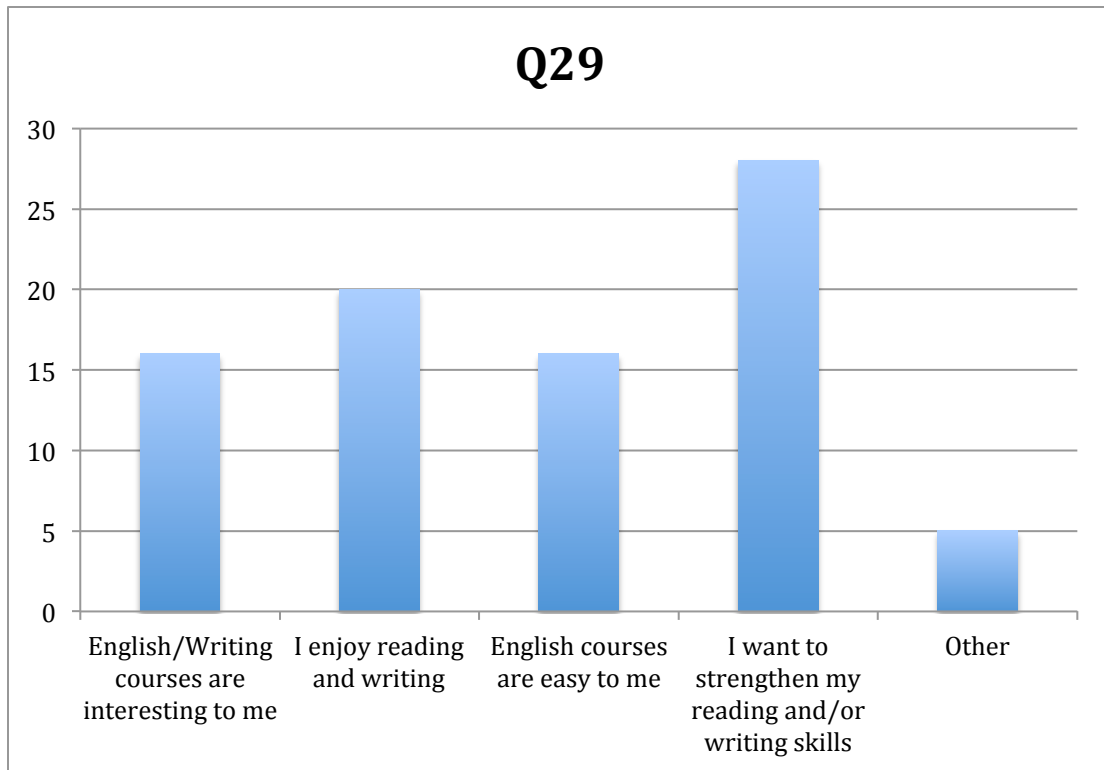
Question 30: Why would you choose not to take an additional English or Writing course? Please select all that apply.

English/Writing courses are not interesting to me	30
I do not enjoy reading and writing	36
English/Writing courses are difficult for me	14
Other courses would be more beneficial for my major	61
Other	9
I would choose to take an additional English or Writing course	2
	152

Q30

|	
English/Writing courses are not interesting to me	30
I do not enjoy reading and writing	36
English/Writing courses are difficult for me	14
Other courses would be more beneficial for my major	61
Other	9
I would choose to take an additional English or Writing course	2

Question 31: Have you completed an additional English or Writing course/courses as one or more of your non-business elective courses?

| Yes	14
No	145
	159

Q31
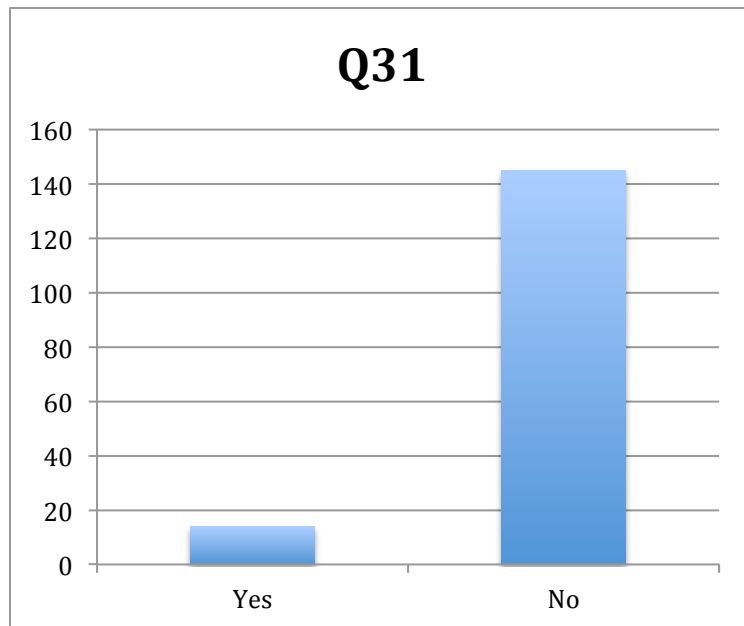
Question 32: Which course/courses did you take? Please select all that apply.

| An additional 200 level English or Writing course | 11 |
| A 300 level English or Writing course | 2 |
| A 400 level English or Writing course | 0 |

Q32
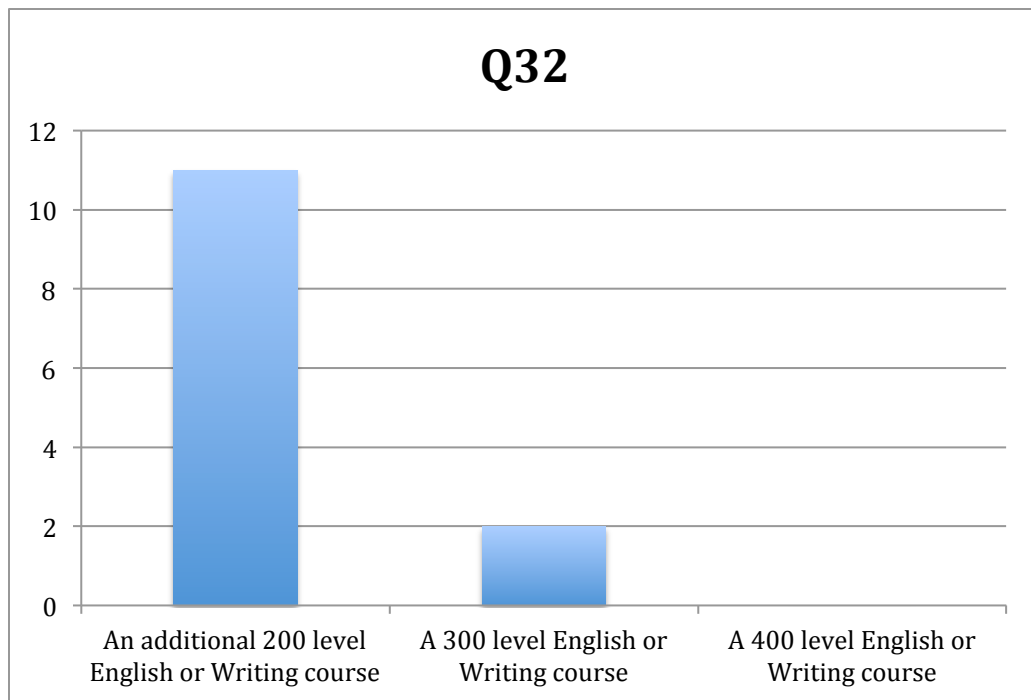
Question 33: What grade did you make in this course or courses? Please select all that apply if you have taken multiple courses and received different grades.

A	7
B	4
C	0
D	1
F	0
Currently taking the class	0
I don't know	1
Prefer not to answer	0
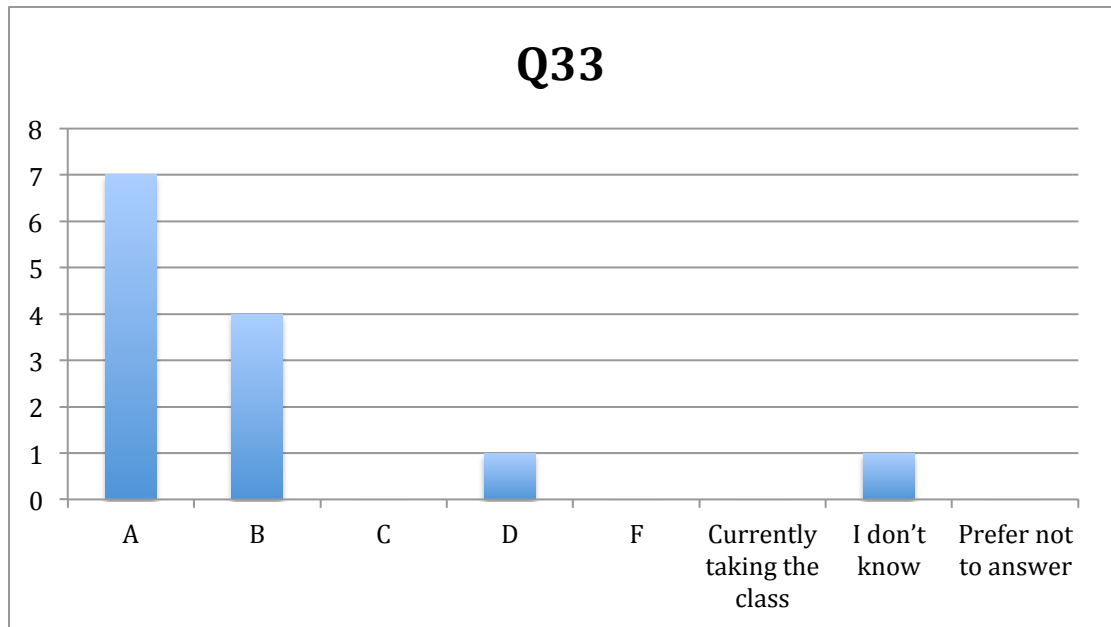
Question 34: In your opinion, did your additional English and/or Writing course(s) increase your confidence in your ability to meet challenging writing tasks in your future work?

Definitely yes	6
Slightly yes	4
Might or might not	2
Probably not	1
Definitely not	0
	13

Q34

Bar chart showing responses: Definitely yes = 6, Slightly yes = 4, Might or might not = 2, Probably not = 1, Definitely not = 0.
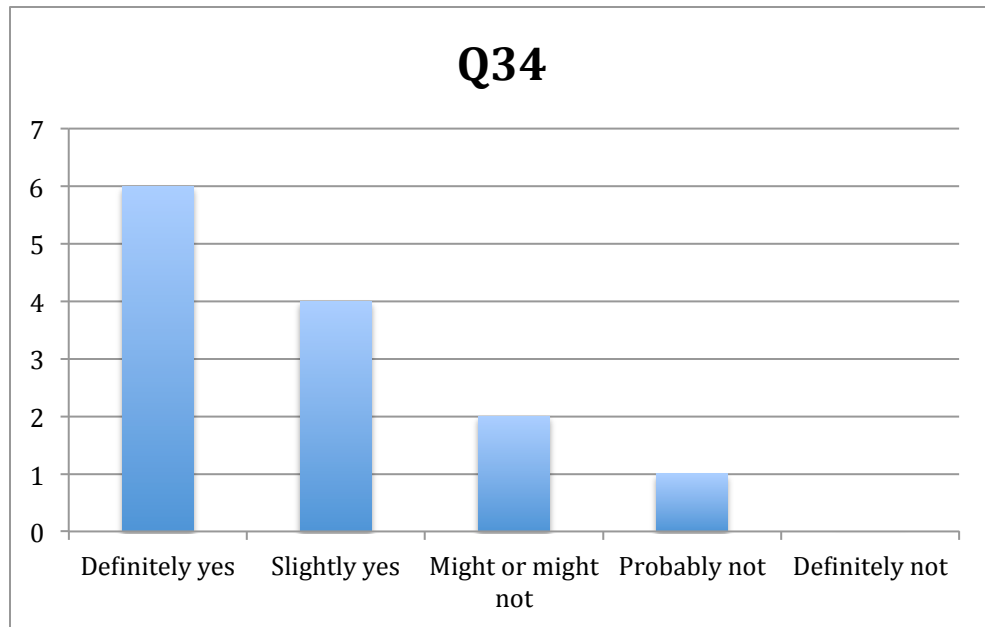
Question 35: Have you ever visited the Writing Center on campus?

Yes	74
No	84
	158

Q35

(Bar chart: Yes ≈ 74, No ≈ 84; y-axis from 60 to 90)
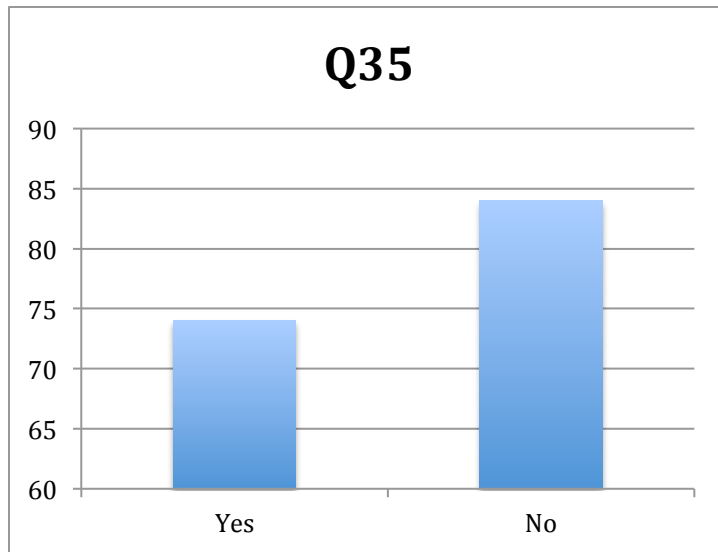
Question 36: How helpful was the writing consultant?

Extremely helpful	12
Very helpful	22
Moderately helpful	23
Slightly helpful	11
Not helpful	6
	74
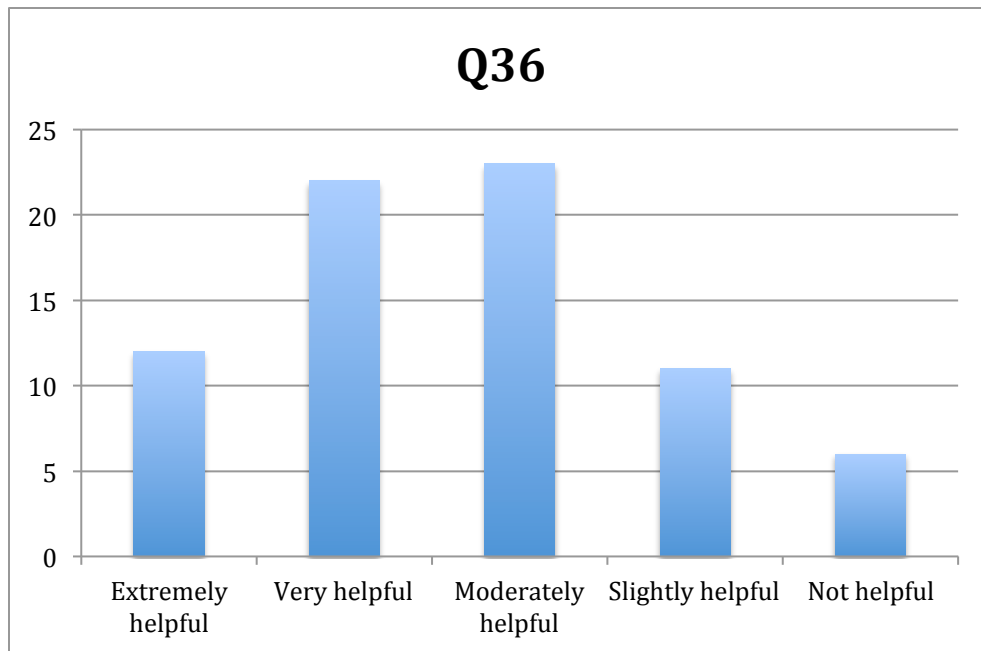
Question 37: When you visited the writing center for help on an assignment, which class or classes was the assignment(s) for? Please type all classes that apply.

WRIT	44
ENG	7
BUS	10
EDHE	4
HIS	6
Other	2
	73

Q37

A bar chart titled Q37 with the y-axis ranging from 0 to 50. Bars: WRIT ≈ 44, ENG ≈ 7, BUS ≈ 10, EDHE ≈ 4, HIS ≈ 6, Other ≈ 2.
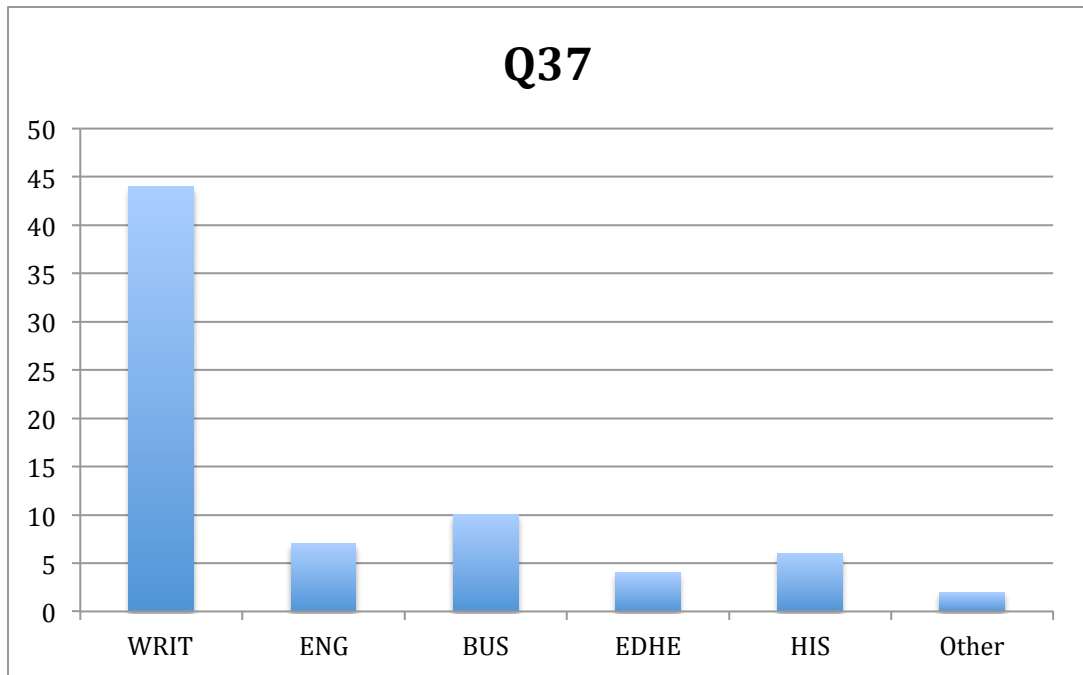
Question 38: Why have you not visited the writing center? Please select all that apply.

Did not know about it	6
Did not need the additional help	75
It was not required	21
Too hard to make an appointment	5
	107

Q38

Category	Value
Did not know about it	6
Did not need the additional help	75
It was not required	21
Too hard to make an appointment	5
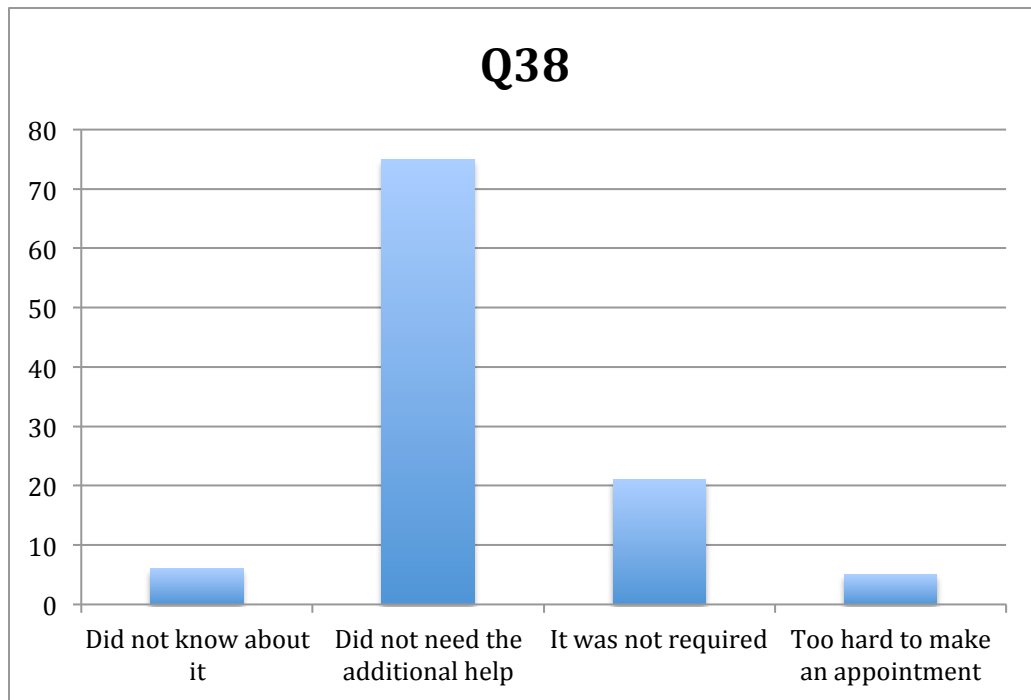
Question 39: Have you ever met individually with a professor to discuss your writing on an assignment?

Yes	101
No	57
	158

Q39
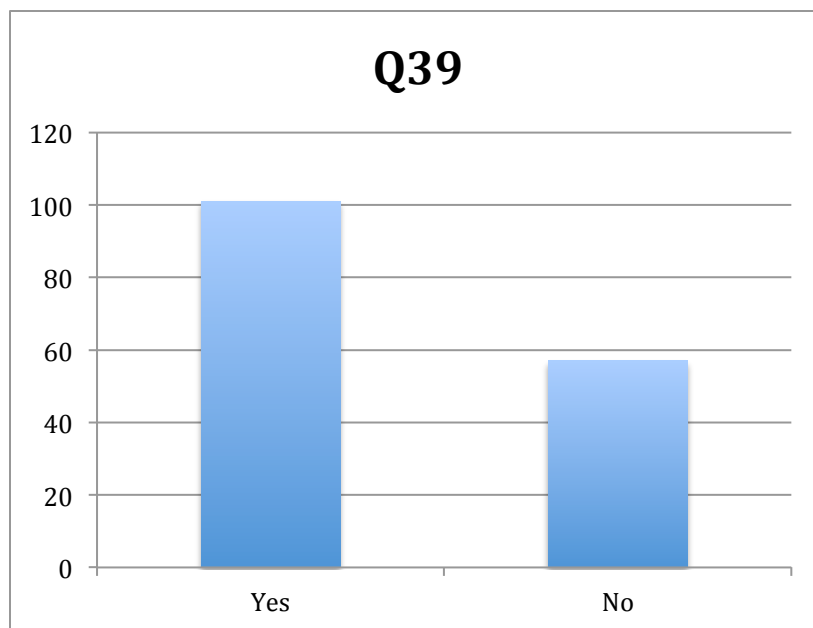
Question 40: Why did you meet individually with a professor to discuss your writing on an assignment? Please select all that apply.

I was required to	27
It was for extra credit	11
I did not understand the nature of the assignment	19
I wanted the professor to read over a draft	68
I wanted to build rapport with the professor	34
Other: 4	4
	163

Q40
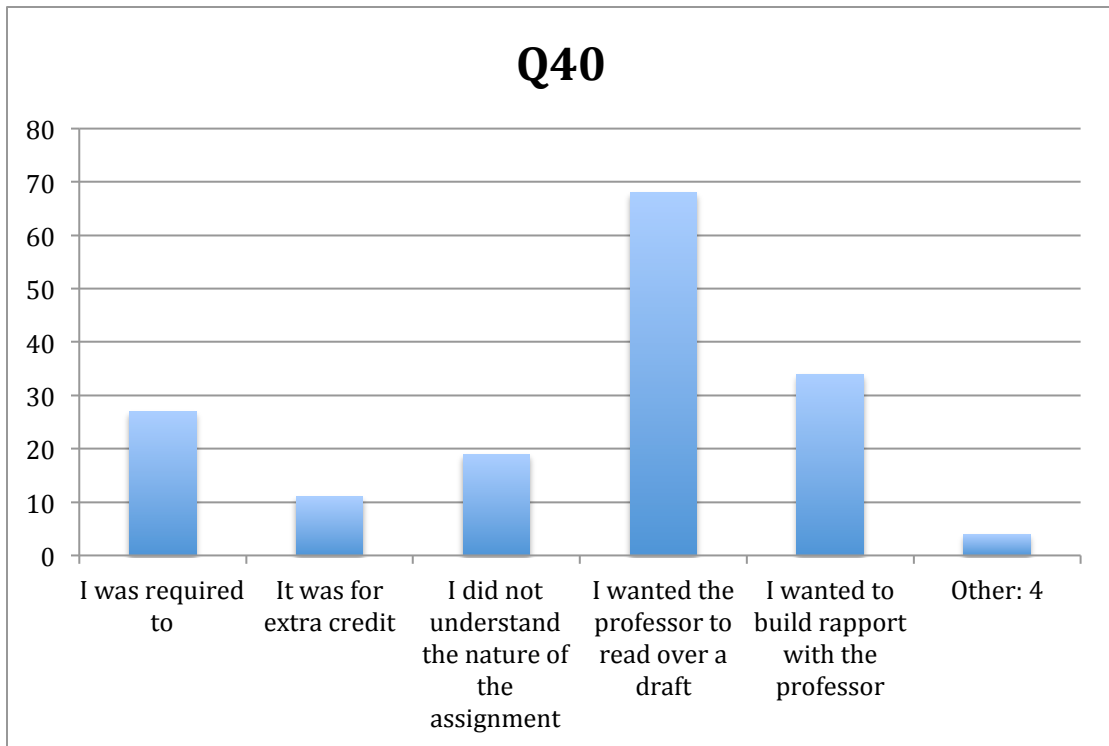
Question 41: How helpful was the professor in addressing your concerns?

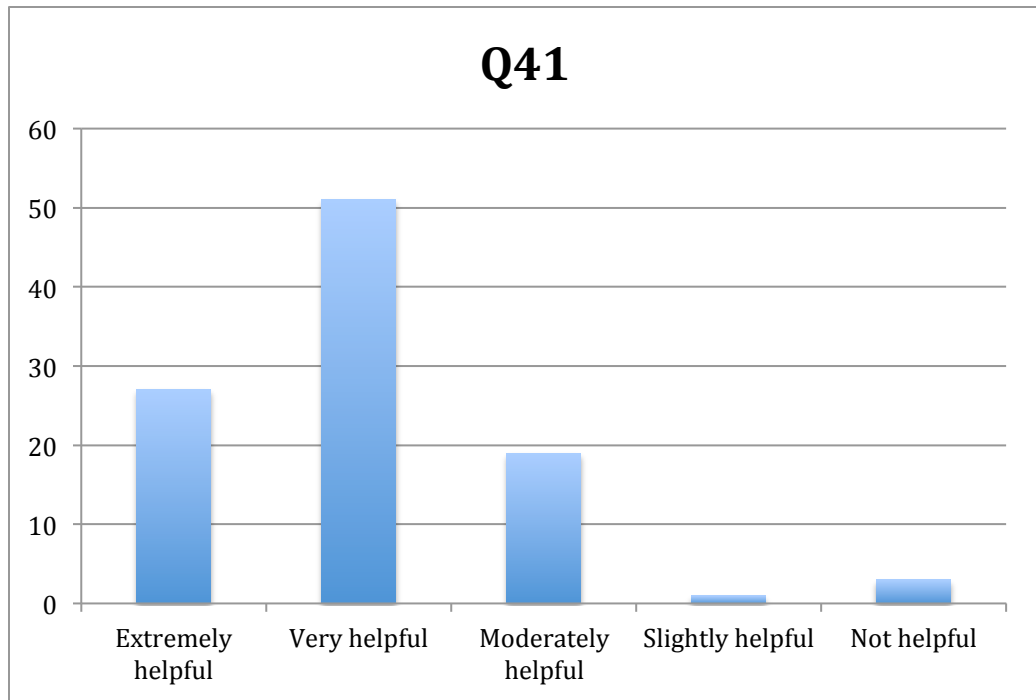|	
Extremely helpful	27
Very helpful	51
Moderately helpful	19
Slightly helpful	1
Not helpful	3
	101

Question 42: Why have you not met individually with a professor to discuss your writing on an assignment? Please select all that apply.

It was not required	34
Uninterested in having a professor proofread a draft	14
Too intimidated/nervous to share my writing with a professor	4
Could not schedule a meeting time	2
Procrastinated the assignment	9
Other	9
	72

Q42
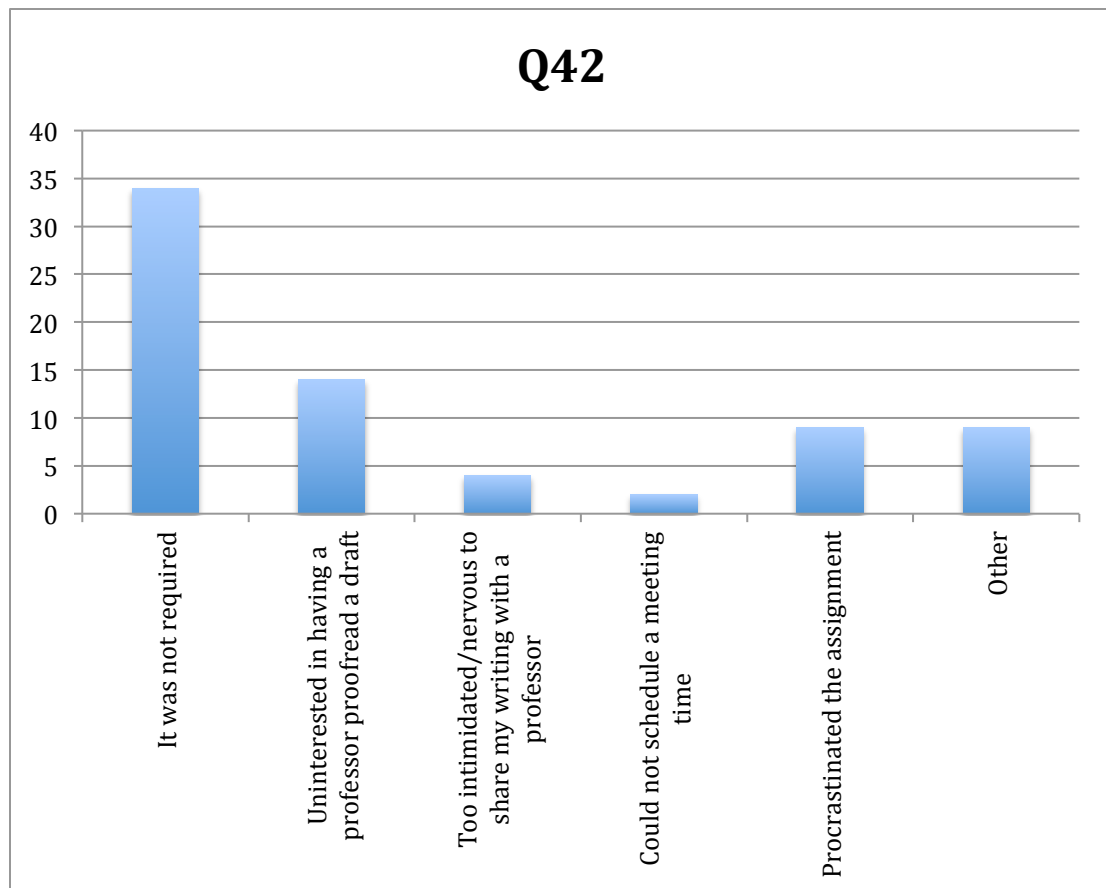
Question 43: How important do you think strong writing skills are for your major?

Extremely important	34
Very important	64
Moderately important	52
Slightly important	6
Not at all important	2
	158

Q43
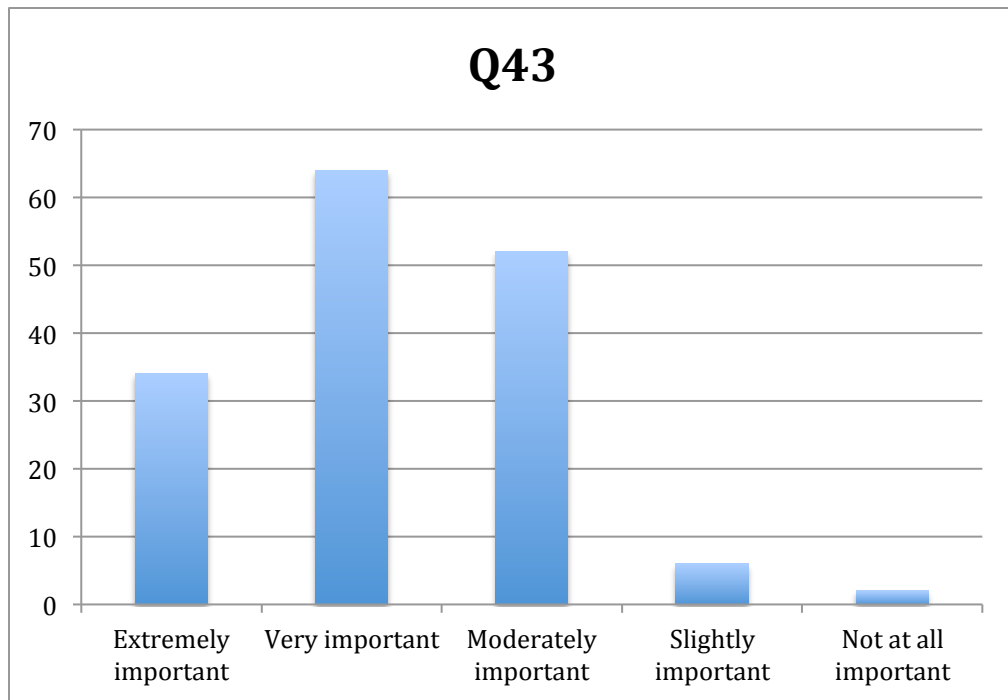
Question 44: How important do you think strong writing skills will be in your future job?

Extremely important	44
Very important	61
Moderately important	42
Slightly important	10
Not at all important	1
	158

Q44

A bar chart showing responses to Q44. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 70. Bar values: Extremely important ≈ 44, Very important ≈ 61, Moderately important ≈ 42, Slightly important ≈ 10, Not at all important ≈ 1.
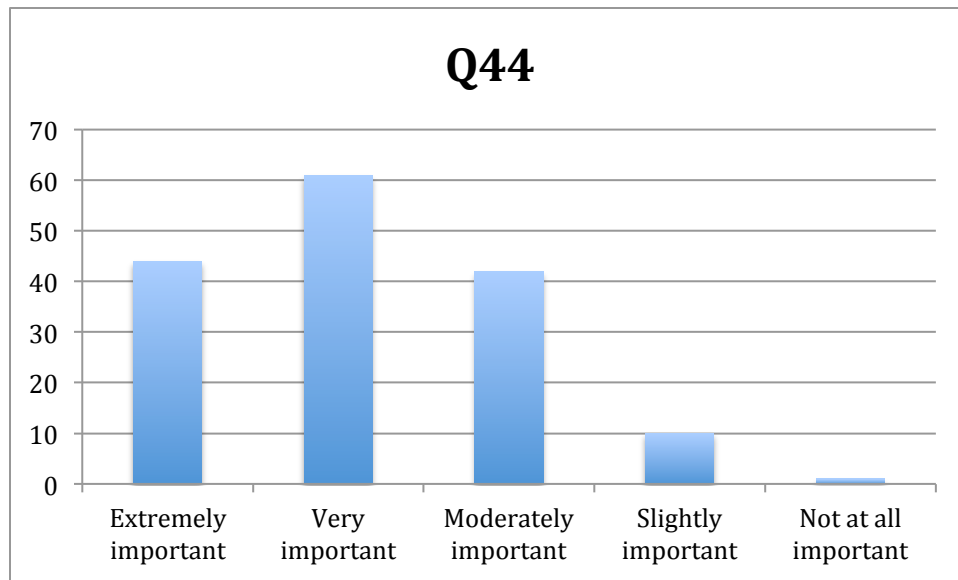
Question 45: How prepared do you feel for the writing required in your future job?

Extremely prepared	26
Very prepared	62
Moderately prepared	61
Slightly prepared	6
Not prepared	3
	158
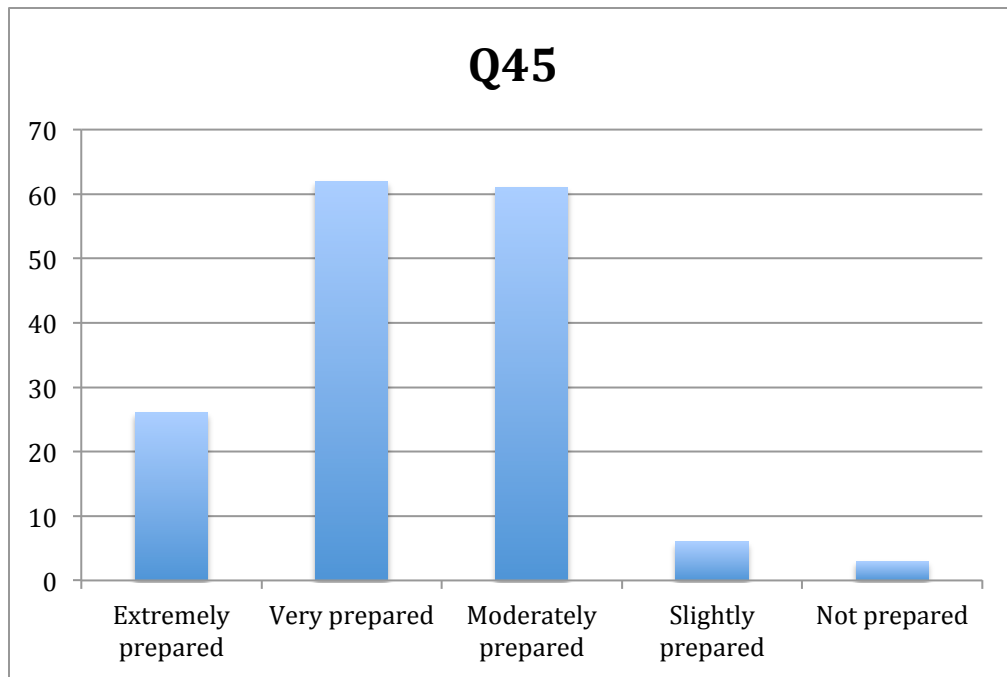
Question 46: Are you a student athlete?

Yes	4
No	154
	158

Q46
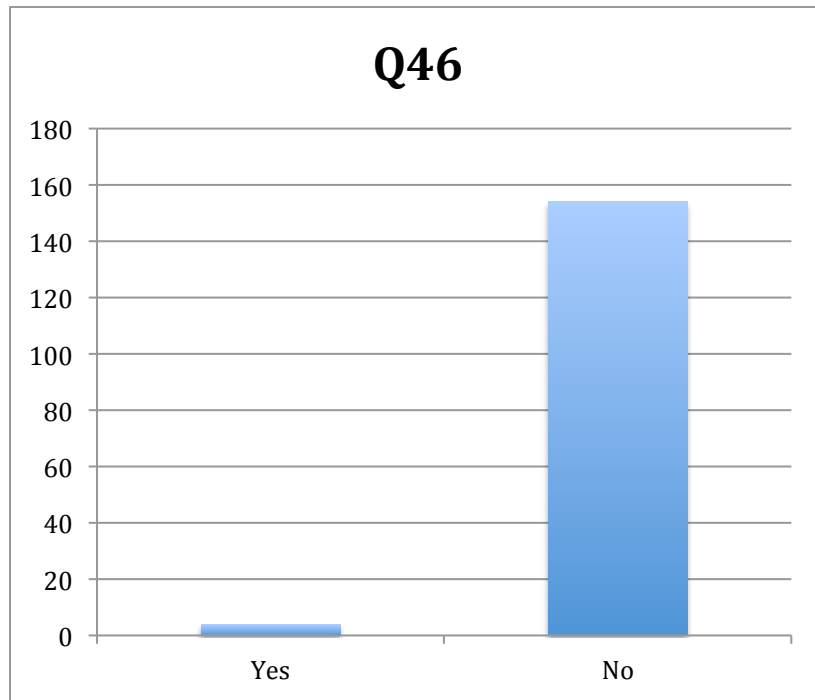
Question 47: Have you worked with a writing consultant in the FedEx Writing Lab?

Yes	2
No	2
	4
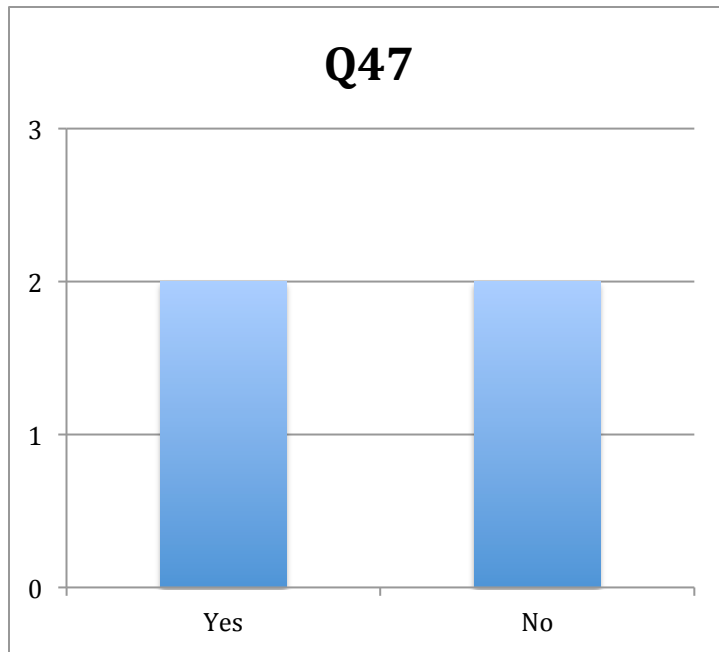
Question 48: How helpful was the writing consultant in addressing your concerns?

Extremely helpful	2
Very helpful	0
Moderately helpful	0
Slightly helpful	0
Not helpful	0
	2

Q48
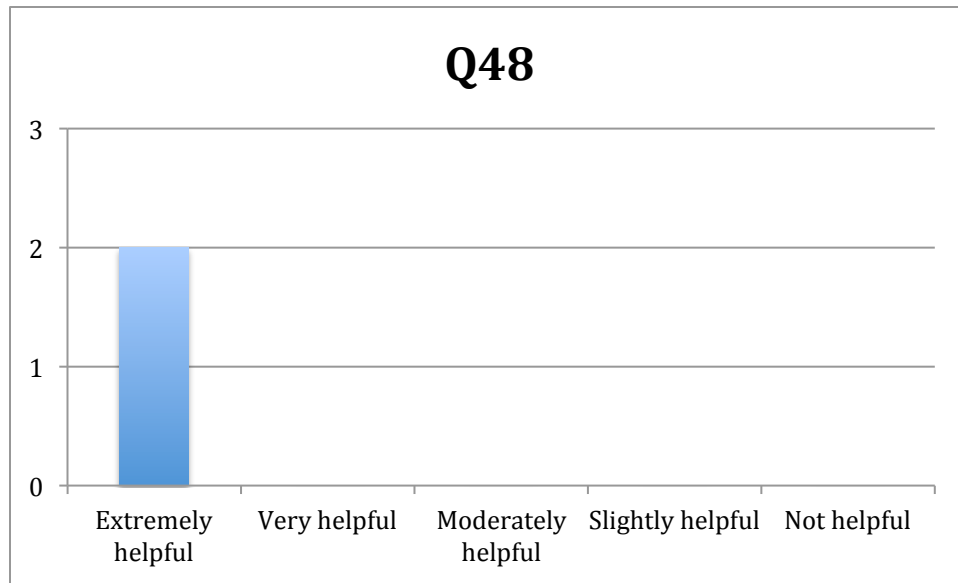
Question 49: Why have you not worked with a writing consultant in the FedEx Writing Lab?

Did not know about the writing consultants	0
Intimidated/nervous to share my writing	0
It was not required	2
Not enough time	0
Other	0
	2
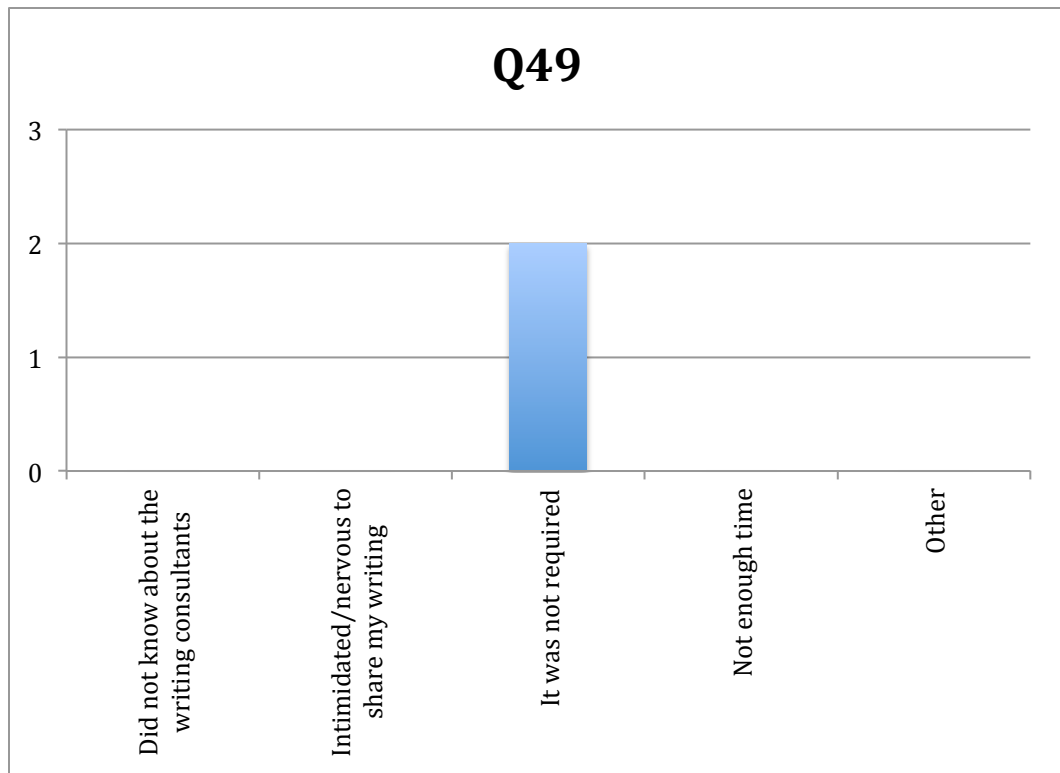
Question 50: How do you feel professors perceive your academic work, either positively or negatively because you are a student athlete?

Extremely positive	0
Moderately positive	1
Slightly positive	0
Neither positive nor negative	2
Slightly negative	1
Moderately negative	0
Extremely negative	0
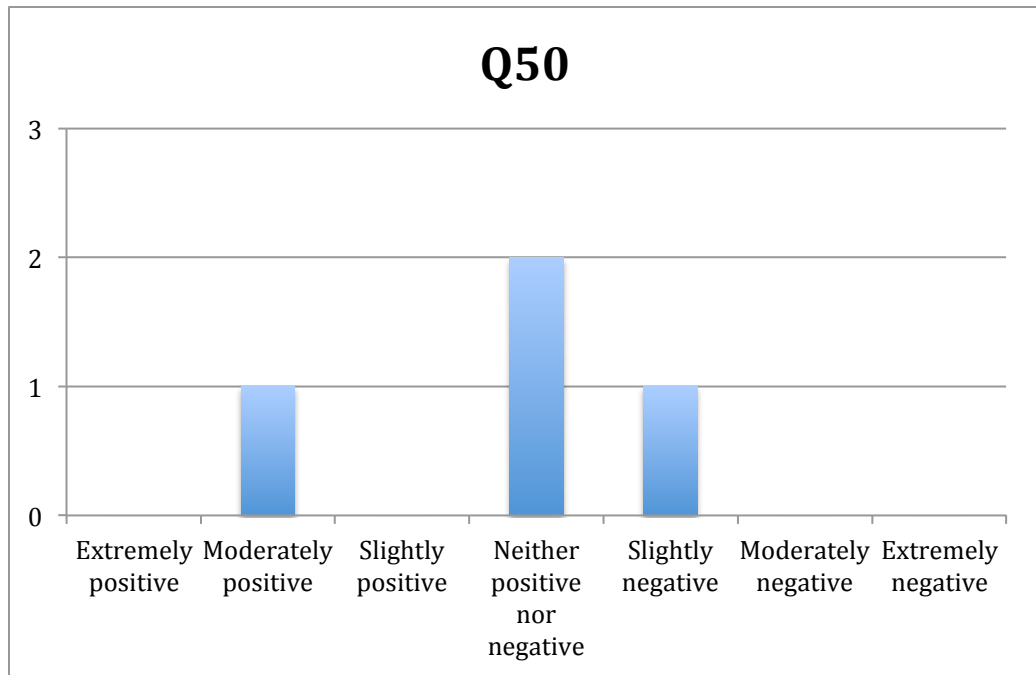
RESULTS

After about two weeks of running my Qualtrics survey, I was pleasantly surprised at the number of respondents who took my survey. I chose not to include any respondents from the first flawed survey. While there was the possibility of a few responses being accurate for my survey, I chose not to use any of that data as it was emailed to many non-business majors. I was told that a good return rate on Qualtrics surveys was 6-8% and was expecting about the same for my survey. Out of 2,000 possible respondents, I had 262 people take at least part of the survey with 211 respondents completing the full survey. This comes out to a 13.1% response rate and a 10.6% rate of completion. Once I began going through the survey responses, I was a bit disappointed to find that a group of those completed surveys were marked as fully complete even though the respondents only answered the first question, "Are you 18 years of age or older" as "No." Therefore, of the 211 completed surveys, 164 respondents were 18 or older and answered beyond the first question. Also, from those 164 respondents who were 18 or older, 7 only answered between 23% and 60% of the survey, meaning only 157 respondents 18 or older fully completed the survey. So, with 157 completed surveys to draw data from I come out with a response rate of 7.85%. From this data I can still draw statistically significant conclusions for most questions.

While this section will not go into full details of the data from every question, I have included tables and bar charts of each of the questions for a visual representation of the results. Another key point to mention is that many of the questions used "skip-logic."

This means that if students answered "yes" versus "no" on a certain question, they are led to a different line of questions. Therefore, many of the responses are not X out of 164 or 157, but have smaller denominators because not all students were given the option to answer that question. In fact, some of the questions received very few responses, and in those cases, it is hard to draw statistically significant data as the number of responses fell under 30. This was a bit disappointing, especially for the line of questioning for student athletes. However, it was still helpful to my research to see the results of each question to gather a better profile of my respondents. Additionally, several questions let students "select all that apply" making it so that there are well over 157 responses because students could select multiple answers as true. For this reason, rather than discuss the raw numbers X out of Y, I will focus primarily on percentages.

My first question, after determining whether the student was allowed to take the survey based on being 18 or older, was whether the student would want to be contacted for a follow-up interview. If they selected yes, they were given a link to an additional one-question survey where they would enter their email address. This was done to ensure anonymity so that I could not link their long survey responses with their email address. However, this was likely not the best way to do this because 34 out of 157 respondents said "Yes" they would be willing to be contacted, yet 0 students followed the link to submit their email address. Therefore, I was not able to contact any of the students for a follow-up interview. Despite this, I can garner much information from the primary survey alone without additional follow-up interviews.

The next four questions were basic informational questions about the respondents. In Question 2, my results showed 51.2% of the respondents were male and 48.8% were

female. Question 3 determined the breakdown of majors in the UM School of Business Administration. There were at least 5 students represented in each of the majors with the largest percentages being Marketing (21.9%), Management (18.0%), Managerial Finance (15.7%) and General Business (14.6%). With no major being represented over 25%, it gives a fair evaluation of responses for the entire School of Business Administration. Question 4 asked about the year in school of the respondents, which broke down as follows: Freshmen (17.7%), Sophomores (11.6%), Juniors (26.2%), and Seniors (44.5%). This shows that the survey is weighted more heavily towards upperclassmen. However, this should not be an issue as many of the questions regard classes taken in junior and senior years of college. Finally, Question 5 rounds out the basic informational questions by asking respondents to report their Grade Point Averages (GPAs). The most respondents, 39.0%, said their GPA fell between 3.0 and 3.5. My respondents as a whole are highly academically motivated with 57.3% claiming a GPA above 3.0.

The next group of questions asks about students' experiences with first semester first-year writing courses, WRIT 100, WRIT 101, and ENG 101. Of the students who responded, 51.2% of students took one of these courses at UM. Of those students, 35.7% made an A, 50% made a B, and the remaining 14.3% made a C or lower. This still leaves 48.8% of students who did not take one of these mandatory, first-semester first-year writing courses. There was no clear majority in the answer responses for why these students did not choose to take one of these courses at UM. The answer with the most responses, 30 students (37.5%), was for students who tested out of this course through their AP Exam scores. However, there were significant numbers for "Took this class at a Junior College," and "Took this class through dual enrollment during high school."

Of those 30 students who did test out of this course due to AP Exam scores, most students scored a 4 (43.3%) with the others either earning a 3, 5, or selecting "Prefer not to answer." For reference, the AP Exam scores fall on a scale from 1-5 and the University of Mississippi will not let any students test out of first-year writing courses with a score lower than 3. Additionally, these 30 students spoke highly of their high school AP classes with the results on Question 10 showing that all of the students believed that their AP high school course prepared them for collegiate writing between "moderately well" to "extremely well" with no students responding "slightly well" or "not well at all."

The next group of questions follows a similar pattern, but instead of asking about the first-semester, first-year writing courses, it asks about the second semester writing course. UM students have the option to take either WRIT 102, ENG 102, or LIBA 102 to fulfill their second-semester, first-year writing requirement. It was interesting to see more students taking this course than the first semester writing course. This time, 99 students (60.4%) said they did take one of these second semester writing courses at UM while 65 (39.6%) had not. Of the 99 students who had taken one of these courses at UM, the grade breakdown was similar to the first semester writing courses with 34.3% making an A, and 36.3% making a B. The remaining students either made a C or lower, or were currently taking the class during the time of the survey. When looking at how well these students perceive UM writing courses to have given them a strong writing foundation, most students said the courses prepared them only "moderately well" (44.4%) with only 5.1% answering "Extremely well" and 21.2% answering between "Not well at all" and "Slightly well." This is interesting as over 70% of the students taking these courses were making an A or B. The breakdown when asking in Question 14 how challenged these

students felt in UM writing courses looks like a bell curve with 44.4% saying they were "Moderately challenged" and the breakdowns being almost even on either side.

Even though 99 students did take one of the second semester first-year writing courses at UM, that still leaves 65 students who did not. When asking in Question 15 the reason they did not, the data was spread out over several different reasons. The two most popular answers were "Took this class at a Junior College" (30.8%) and "Took this class through dual enrollment during high school" (23.1%). There was a much smaller number of students who tested out of this second-semester course through AP Exams – 13.8% versus 37.5%. UM policy is that a student cannot test out of both semesters of first-year writing courses unless they earn a 5 - the top score - on the English Language/Composition AP Exam, accounting for the lower numbers here.

The results here are a bit conflicting though because of those 9 students who said they tested out of this second semester writing course through AP exam scores, only 4 students reported receiving a 5 on their AP exam for Question 16. One explanation for this would be false reporting on behalf of the students. Once again, the 9 students who claimed they tested out of this second semester course reported positively about their high school AP courses with all 9 respondents responding that their high school AP course prepared them either "Extremely well" or "Very well" for collegiate writing on Question 17. However, because this number is less than 30, the results may not be generally applicable. As for non-AP high school courses, according to Question 18, most respondents (84.1%) answered that their non-AP high school English courses prepared them from "Moderately well" to "Extremely well."

The next few questions regard the UM Business curriculum, specifically the communications course required for all business majors, Business Communications (BUS 271). Out of my respondents, 62% are currently taking or have completed BUS 271 at UM, with 89.3% of those students making either an A or a B in the course. However, when asked how well they felt BUS 271 prepared them for writing in a post-graduate setting, only 7.8% felt it prepared them "Extremely well" with 52.4% answering "Slightly well" to "Moderately well" in Question 20.

Along with introductory writing courses and Business Communications, all but three majors - Risk Management and Insurance, Real Estate, and General Business - in the UM School of Business Administration must take 3 hours of a 200 level English course. Of the respondents in my survey, 51.2% were currently taking or have taken a 200 level English course. Of the six different English courses offered, the two most popular courses business students selected were ENG 224: U.S. Literature since the Civil War (28.4%), and ENG 226: Survey of British Literature since the Romantic Period (23.9%). Question 24 asked how prepared the students felt for the writing expected in a 200 level English course. 39.3% responded they felt only "Moderately prepared" however 33.3% responded "Very prepared" and only 13.1% felt between "Not prepared at all" and "Slightly prepared." Additionally, 89.3% of students took this course in a face-to-face lecture coupled with a small group discussion section as opposed to taking the course online. Corresponding with the level of preparedness, 75.3% of the respondents made either an A or a B in their 200 level English course according to their responses on Question 26.

As for the 80 students who had not taken a 200 level English course, their answers were all over the board for why they have not, with the most popular answers being, "I plan to take one or more in the future" at 32.2%, and "It is not required for my major" at 26.7% indicating the latter was likely the response of Risk Management and Insurance, Real Estate, or General Business Majors. To clarify, General Business Majors have the option to either take English or a Foreign Language, yet in Question 27 only 8.9% of students indicated they chose to take a foreign language. While only three hours of English are required (for most majors), I asked whether business students would consider taking another English or writing course as one of their required 12-18 hours of non-business electives to which an overwhelming 68.3% answered "No," 20.7% replied "Maybe" and only 11.0% responded "Yes." As for the "Yes" and "Maybe" respondents, they cited many reasons for why they would consider taking another English or writing course as can be seen in Question 29, with the most responses being: "I want to strengthen my reading and/or writing skills" at 32.3%. When asking the "Maybe" or "No" respondents why they would not take an additional English or Writing course in Question 30, their answers were also divided between several reasons with the two most popular answers being, "Other courses would be more beneficial for my major" at 35.7% and "English/Writing courses are not interesting to me" at 28.7%.

Even though 31.7% of students responded either "Yes" or "Maybe" to taking an additional English or writing course as an elective, according to Question 31 only 14 students (8.8%) responded that they had completed one of these courses for a non-business elective. Of those students, almost all took an additional 200 level English or writing course with only 2 students taking an additional 300 level English or writing

course, and none taking a 400 level. For the most part, these 13 students (originally 14 but it seems one person from Question 31 stopped responding) excelled in this additional course with 7 students earning an "A", and 4 students earning a "B." The last follow-up question for these 13 (originally 14) students was whether they thought this additional course increased their confidence in their ability to meet challenging writing tasks in their future job. 10 of the 13, 76.9% responded "Definitely Yes" to "Slightly Yes" with the remaining three voting either "Might or Might Not" or "Probably Not." Once again, with less than 30 respondents for this string of questions, it is hard to say if these results would be statistically significant. However, it is significant to show that out of 157 completed surveys, only 14 students took beyond what was required in English and/or writing.

The next portion of the survey questions students about one-on-one writing tutoring sessions either with consultants at the Oxford Writing Center or in an individualized meeting with a professor. Question 34 begins by asking if the student has ever visited the Oxford Writing Center and 46.8% of students had visited at least once. Of those students who went, most had a positive experience with 60.8% claiming that the writing consultant was either "Moderately Helpful" to "Very Helpful." Also, of the students who visited the Oxford Writing Center, 60.3% went for help on assignments for writing courses, but there were also responses for students who went for help with English, business, EDHE, history, and a few other courses in Question 37. When asking why the remaining 53.2% of students had not visited the Oxford Writing Center, the majority of students, 70.1%, claimed they had not visited because they "Did not need the additional help."

Aside from the Oxford Writing Center, I asked if students had met individually with a professor to discuss their writing. This number was much higher than the Writing Center, with 101 students responding "Yes" in comparison to the 74 students who had visited the Oxford Writing Center. Question 40 asks why the student chose to meet with his or her professor and there are several votes for each of the different answer options with the most votes for: "I wanted the professor to read over a draft" at 41.7% and the next leading answer being: "I wanted to build rapport with the professor" at 20.9%. There were more positive results for meeting with a professor versus meeting with a writing consultant at the Writing Center. In Question 41, 77.2% of students responded their professor was "Very helpful" to "Extremely helpful" as opposed to only 45.9% who answered in the same range concerning the helpfulness of the writing consultants at the Oxford Writing Center.

Of the remaining 36.1% of students who had not met with their professor before, the most popular answer for why they had not met with their professor before to discuss their writing was because "It was not required" at 47.2%. I was interested to see if the same students who had not visited the Oxford Writing Center were also the students who had not met with their professor to discuss their writing and found that of the 84 students who had not visited the Oxford Writing Center, 38.1% had also not visited their professor for help. This means that of the respondents in the survey, 32 students have not received individualized writing tutoring either from the Oxford Writing Center or by meeting with a professor. However, looking at the other side of the data, it is encouraging to see that the other 126 respondents have worked individually either with a writing consultant, their professor, or both.

Question 43 shifts the survey away from specific UM academic experiences and asks, "How important do you think strong writing skills are for your major?" The answers were almost all positive with 94.9% of respondents saying writing skills were "Moderately important" to "Extremely important." Question 44 was similar in that it asked, "How important do you think strong writing skills will be in your future job?" Once again, an overwhelming majority of 93.0% said strong writing skills were "Moderately important" to "Extremely important." Additionally, in the next question 94.3% of students answered that they believed they were at least "Moderately prepared" for the writing expected of them in their future jobs.

The last few questions focus on student athletes specifically. Unfortunately, only 4 respondents were student athletes so the data set is very small. Question 47 asks if these student athletes had worked with a writing tutor in the FedEx Writing Lab, which is reserved for only student athletes. The results were 50/50 with two students having worked with a tutor. Of those two students, they both responded that the tutor was "Extremely helpful" in addressing their concerns. Of the two student athletes who had not worked with a tutor in the FedEx Writing Lab, they both said their reason for not visiting was that "It was not required." The last question of the survey asked how student athletes believed their professors perceived their work, whether positively or negatively as a student athlete. One student answered "Moderately Positive," two answered "Neither positive or negative," and the fourth answered, "Slightly negative."

Overall, I was pleased with the results of my survey. I would have hoped for more responses, especially because some lines of questioning had very few respondents. Specifically, I was hoping for more responses from student athletes, but because a

random 2,000 surveys were selected from the entire School of Business Administration, and only 86 student athletes are members of the School of Business Administration, it was unlikely that many student athletes would have even received the survey in the first place. However, despite the response rate, I feel that great conclusions can be drawn from this data in understanding the perceptions of the writing skills of UM students in the School of Business Administration.

CONCLUSION

After the completion of my Qualtrics survey and after reviewing the data, I feel as though I am able to draw a few major conclusions about the perceptions of UM students in the School of Business Administration. Initially, the idea for this research project stemmed from observing that many of my friends who were business students felt as though, when it came time to write a paper during our junior and senior years of college, they were unprepared. After going so long without having to write a lengthy analysis, they were at a loss for where to start or how to revise their drafts. Therefore, my hypothesis going into this research was that UM students in the School of Business Administration do not take writing as seriously as other skill sets because there are few writing requirements for their majors. Also, they do not perceive writing as an integral part of their future careers, hence they place a minimal focus on the development of their writing skills. While some aspects of my hypothesis are proven true regarding perception, there is also data to suggest that, in contrast, some of these students do feel prepared and perceive they are making satisfactory progress in their English and writing courses. In order to look more closely at the conclusions drawn and be able to make a recommendation based on my research, I have structured the conclusion similarly to the data results, by analyzing individual blocks of questions from my survey.

Many respondents were under the age of 18 and unable to complete the survey, but it was not a very consequential issue in the end because the assumption is that those under 18 were freshmen. While freshmen responses would have been helpful for the first

part of the survey asking about first year writing courses and AP examinations, as students who had only completed one semester of college, freshmen respondents would not have been able to answer many of the questions about higher level courses. In the initial background questions I was glad to see that there was almost an even number of male and female respondents as well as representation from each of the majors within the School of Business Administration. As for the year of classification breakdown, there were definitely more juniors and seniors who completed the survey than underclassmen, but as I mentioned before, this does not hinder my results because I ask several questions about upper level classes that freshmen and sophomores might not have had the opportunity to take yet.

The last question on the first page asked students to report their GPAs. I was a bit surprised to see that the majority of respondents had over a 3.0 GPA, which is fairly high. This can be seen in later questions where most of the students report making "A"s and "B"s in almost all of the classes I ask about. One conclusion that could be drawn from this is that a certain type of student, often a high-achiever, is actively sitting down to take this survey, whereas less motivated students making lower grades may not have the time or motivation to take a voluntary survey without any incentive. Also, while there is no reason for students to lie about their grades in a survey that was explicit in stating anonymity of the survey, students may overinflate or undervalue their grades for other reasons.

In my solicitation email with the link to the survey, I mentioned I was interested in hearing opinions of students who had taken AP exams in high school. I did receive a few emails from concerned students who told me they did not take AP exams in high

school and were not going to complete the survey. While I encouraged these students via email to still participate, I have no way of knowing if they did. This could have been an error on my part that misled non-AP students from participating. Because AP students are generally strong students who make good grades and are highly motivated, this could explain the high GPAs.

The next set of questions ask about first year writing courses. As a student who did not take either of these first year writing courses at UM, I was a bit surprised to see that only 51.2% of respondents took this first semester, first-year writing course. If I were to extrapolate this data, it would be surprising to me to think that half of the freshmen class in the School of Business Administration did not take introductory writing courses on campus. However, when looking at the results for why students did not take this course here, the majority of responses stated that students tested out through AP Exams. This was exciting data as I was interested to see how high school AP courses prepare students for collegiate writing.

At UM, the exemption policy for first year writing courses is that a score of 3 or 4 exempts students from the first semester writing course but only a score of 5 exempts students from both semesters of first year writing courses. This explains why many more respondents had taken the second semester writing course (60.3%). There were a few students who said they had tested out of both the first and second semester writing course. There was a discrepancy in the data because nine students claimed they tested out of both courses, yet only six students said they scored a 5 on their AP exam. Perhaps, this was a lapse of memory on the students' part, or perhaps they did not realize they were required to take the second semester writing course and will have to take it at a later time.

Generally, when asked about high school AP classes, the student respondents spoke highly of their high school courses. All respondents claimed they were prepared "Moderately well" to "Extremely well" by their high school AP classes. However, with the skip logic in my survey, the only students who would have seen this question were students who *tested out* of first year writing courses through AP examinations. Therefore, there may have been students who did take AP English who did not score well enough on the AP exam to test out of first year writing courses. These students may have had a more negative experience with their high school AP course because their scores were not high enough to test out. On the other hand, the reason all of these students may have had a positive response about their high school AP classes is that they all met their goal, making a passing score, and credit that to their high school AP instruction.

When asking about non-AP high school English courses, students were still generally satisfied with their instruction based on their responses of how well they believe their high school English courses prepared them for collegiate writing. The majority of students responded from "Moderately well" to "Extremely well," similar to high school AP class perceptions. However there were still 15.9% of students who answered "Slightly well" or "Not well at all." Because I only asked one question about non-AP high school courses, I cannot draw any general conclusions about high school English courses, but I was interested to see whether there was a sharp difference between perceptions of preparedness between AP students and non-AP students. Even though the AP students' data showed higher perceptions of preparedness, it is also significant to see that most non-AP students still felt as though their standard level course prepared them

appropriately. This supports the data from my literature review suggesting that AP exam scores are not necessarily predictive of college success or preparedness.

While there was a significant group of respondents who tested out of these courses through AP exams, there were also significant numbers of students who either took writing classes at a Junior College, different university, or through dual enrollment in high school. When comparing the reasons students did not take writing courses at UM, the numbers were almost identical in the categories of taking the class at a Junior College, different university, or through dual enrollment. This leads me to conclude that students who took their first semester writing course at one of these locations, likely took their second semester writing course in the same place.

As for the students who did take one or both of the first year writing courses at UM, the grades reported did not look like a bell curve by any means because most students reported making an "A" or "B." As mentioned earlier, I think there may be a correlation between the type of students who voluntarily take surveys and students who make high grades. However, when asking about the student experience in these first year writing courses taken at UM, the bar chart looked more like a bell curve, with the majority of students claiming they felt "moderately well" about the writing skills developed, with students on both sides of this middle answer - those who felt "Extremely well" about their level of preparation of strong writing skills, but also those who felt "Not well at all."

The same distribution is true of the question asking how challenged students felt in their first year writing courses. This leads me to the conclusion that despite the high grades these students are making, there are still students who do not feel confident in

their writing skills, nor challenged in their courses. While each student is different, this is important data to consider in comparison to the data concerning grades. Perhaps the grading system in these courses is not an accurate measure for understanding and preparation for future writing assignments. As a side note - one error I made in my survey was not including HON 101 and 102 in the list of first year writing courses. I believe the students who selected "Other" were honors students who did not take WRIT 101 or 102 at UM.

The next group of questions asks about the one business writing course, Business Communications (BUS 271). Out of my respondents, over half (62.8%) had taken BUS 271 at UM. This is logical considering the majority of my respondents were upperclassmen. When asked how well students perceived BUS 271 prepared them for writing in a post-graduate setting, the distribution fell primarily between "Very well" and "Moderately well" with answers on either side. BUS 271 is meant to be a more practical skills class with writing assignments that would be expected in the workplace; therefore, it was good to see that most students, 68.9%, felt good about their level of preparation. I was expecting to see lower levels of preparedness based on hearing personal experiences of some students who had taken this course. However, seeing that 89.3% of students were making either an "A" or "B" could explain why these students perceive they are well prepared. While most, if not all, of these students have never had a job where they had to produce writing in a professional business setting, they cannot know for sure their level of preparedness. However, when students see they received a high grade they expect that grade to reflect their learning and level of preparedness.

Most of the majors require three hours of a 200 level English course, so I developed a series of questions to ask about the experiences of students in these courses. About half of the students in my survey had completed a 200 level English course. There are several 200 level English course options, so I was interested to see which course was most popular amongst business students. The most popular course was American Literature since the Civil War. This is not surprising because this literature is more recognizable and easier to understand compared to other courses such as Shakespearean Literature. Another largely popular course was British Literature since the Romantic Period. This was a bit more surprising as I expected business students to stick to the American literature courses. However, it seems that the more modern time period was the bigger factor in decision-making as both of these courses offer the most recent time period. Modern literature courses would be attractive to business students who are mainly taking these courses to meet a requirement because the language and vernacular are closest to everyday language in these more recent time periods of literature study.

I asked the students how prepared they felt for this 200 level writing on the basis of their previous writing course experience, whether that writing experience consisted of first year writing courses at UM, a different university or college, or in high school. Most students answered only "Moderately prepared," the middle choice, with a significant number who also selected "Very prepared." I hypothesized that there would have been more of a correlation between perceived preparedness and either high AP scores, or high grades in first year writing courses; however there was no strong correlation in either category.

Some students who tested out of first year writing courses through AP exams said they felt "Extremely prepared" for the level of writing expected in a 200 level English course, while others said only "Moderately prepared." The same goes for students who took first year writing courses at UM with responses on both ends of "Extremely prepared" as well as "Not well prepared." As there was no clear correlation between preparedness and high AP scores or high grades, there is not much of a difference in level of preparedness between students who took first year writing courses at UM and those who did not.

The same is true regardless of grades in first year writing courses with some students who made "As" marking only "Moderately prepared" as well as some students who made "Cs." I also looked to see if there was a difference between face-to-face class versus online 200 level English courses, and again there was no real correlation between grades or perception of preparedness. With no serious correlation between the factors I discussed, it is hard to draw a clear conclusion for why perceived preparedness levels are different, but I conclude that perception from student to student varies. Even with high grades some students may feel unprepared and nervous for writing assignments in a 200 level course while other students felt more prepared and confident in their identity as a writer.

When looking at why almost half of the respondents had not taken a 200 level English course, the results were distributed over many of the responses with the most responses being, "I plan to take one or more in the future," and "It is not required for my major." Because the only prerequisite for a 200 level English course is passing the two first year writing courses, this is a course that could potentially be put off until a student's

last semester, which is why I believe the responses were mainly, "I plan to take one or more in the future." Additionally, three majors in the School of Business Administration, Risk Management and Insurance, Real Estate, and General Business, are not required to take a 200 level English course. 37 respondents identified with one of these majors, yet there were only 24 responses for "It is not required for my major." Therefore, I can likely conclude that at least 13 students in one of these three majors have either chosen to take a 200 level English course, or they answered one of the other reasons for not taking one of these courses.

It is disconcerting to think that these three majors do not require an English course because if these students tested out of both first year writing courses, then their only required writing course would be Business Communications. Therefore, out of 120 credit hours only 3 hours are spent working primarily on writing skills, a fundamental skill needed in any job. Writing is an essential tool of communication that is used in offices every day, ranging from simple emails to clients to potentially writing a report on an insurance claim. A curriculum that requires students to spend less than 3% of their class time on writing seems to me a severe shortage. Not to mention, even if a student completes both first year writing courses, Business Communications, and one 200 level English course during their college career, that still only amounts to 10% of a student's class time. I would argue that for such a fundamental skill, there should be double the writing requirements, or at least additional writing assignments within the other business courses.

However, with 12-18 elective hours required depending on the major, students do have the opportunity to take additional English or Writing courses to strengthen their

writing skills. But when students were asked if they would consider taking an additional

English or writing course as one of their electives, only 11% of respondents said, "Yes."

This result is in line with my hypothesis. Students do not take English or writing courses

as seriously as business courses considering they believe, "Other courses would be more

beneficial for my major" when selecting elective courses.

Question 29 shows that some students do see the merit in taking additional

English or writing courses. 52 students answered "Yes" or "Maybe" to taking an

additional English or Writing course because they "Wanted to strengthen their writing

skills," yet only 14 students in the survey went on to take one of these courses as an

elective credit. I predicted few students would take beyond what was required. I think

students who do not have to produce much writing in college believe they will not have

to produce much writing in the workplace. Therefore, they spend more time and energy

in business classes. However, poor writing cannot be ignored and stifles productivity in

the workplace, angering employers. Perhaps future employers should encourage writing

samples with job applications, and universities should require more writing courses and

more writing assignments in business courses to make up for this deficit, as suggested by

scholars in my literature review.

There were 14 students who responded that that they did take an additional

English or writing course as one of their electives; however, it is difficult to draw

generalized conclusions based on only 8.5% of the respondents. In their sequence of

questions, almost all 14 of these students took an additional 200 level course with only 2

students taking a 300 level course. Of those students, all but two made either an "A" or

"B," and 10 believed that the skills strengthened in this additional course would be

beneficial for them in their future job. While I think that more students would agree that additional writing courses would be beneficial for strengthening skills that will be necessary in their future job, I do not think students will be willing to take additional English or writing courses without an incentive. There is too much of a stigma that these courses are difficult, require a heavy workload, and that students could be taking easier courses to fill their schedule. The Business Department should put more of an emphasis on additional writing courses, so that students might understand that stronger writing skills could lead a better job after college, a higher salary, and opportunities for promotion later in life.

The next part of my survey shifted to see what experiences students had with individualized tutoring. As concluded in my literature review, many scholars believe one of the best ways to grow and develop stronger writing skills is through one-on-one writing tutoring. I started by asking if the respondents had ever visited the on-campus Oxford Writing Center and found that 46.8% of respondents had visited at least once. It was interesting to see that the votes were all over the place when asking how helpful the writing consultant was. Most of the responses fell into the categories of "Very helpful" or "Moderately helpful" but there was still 30.0% who said the writing consultant was only "Slightly helpful" or "Not helpful."

At first, I came to the conclusion that perhaps students were not having the best experiences because they were writing advanced business papers and there were miscommunications with tutors who were not business majors. However, only 13.7% of students claimed they came for help on a business assignment, while 69.9% came for help on either an English or writing assignment. There were still many positive responses

regarding tutoring at the Oxford Writing Center, but I conclude that there could be improvement at the Writing Center so that more students are leaving with new understanding and a more positive perception of the tutoring session. A major theme throughout the literature review was that students were less receptive to tutoring if it was required, so perhaps the negative experiences could be mitigated if all sessions were voluntary. If this survey were to be replicated, I would add follow up questions asking why a student viewed the session as positively or negatively to gain a better understanding of the student experience.

As for the students in the survey who had not visited the Oxford Writing Center, most students claimed they did not go because they "Did not need the additional help." In-class peer review and revision are extremely helpful tools in the writing process and it was disconcerting to see that over half of the respondents had not visited the Oxford Writing Center for help. However, many of these students chose instead to visit their professor for help. Perhaps students prefer this method because they would rather receive feedback from the person who will actually be grading their work. Additionally, students may want to receive help from a more authoritative figure with advanced degrees rather than a student their own age.

When asking students why they met with their professor, the most common answers were that they "Wanted to have the professor read over a draft" and that they "Wanted to build rapport with the professor." I believe these two are the most popular answers because students want to receive the best grades possible on writing assignments and feel there is more benefit from meeting with their professor, rather than a student who is likely not in that class and may not know exactly what the professor is looking for

in terms of content and style. Perhaps this is why students had more positive responses when asked how helpful an individualized meeting with their professor was compared to a tutoring session at the Oxford Writing Center.

Building rapport is also a top answer because students who are looking to make top grades on an assignment are likely trying to build their GPA for a competitive job or graduate school, both of which may require a letter of recommendation from a professor. Therefore, by having a professor read over a draft they are hoping to achieve a better grade while also building that professional relationship that cannot be achieved by visiting the Oxford Writing Center, staffed by student writing consultants. One method or form of individualized tutoring is not necessarily better than the other. However depending on the goals of the student or the level of insecurity the writer has, he or she may prefer one setting over the other.

The survey then shifts to more straightforward questions asking about student perceptions of the importance of writing. Question 43 asks, "How important do you think writing skills are for your major?" to which 94.9% of students answered from "Moderately important" to "Very important." The answers look almost identical for Question 44 which asks, "How important do you think strong writing skills will be in your future job?" I predicted that these numbers would be lower based on research suggesting that Millennials who are new hires are not producing adequate writing in the workplace, stemming from a lack of writing in college. However, it seems that my respondents do have a strong grasp of the importance of writing. In addition, the next question asks about students' perceived level of preparedness for writing in the workplace and again, 94.3% of students answered within the range of "Moderately

prepared" to "Extremely prepared." This was a bit surprising to me because back on Question 20, most students answered that they felt that their Business Communications only prepared them "Moderately well" for future writing in the workplace.

One explanation for the difference in answers is that students may have felt that their Business Communications course only gave them a moderate sense of preparedness, but coupled with the three other courses between English and writing requirements, they perceive that they are prepared for the level of writing they may one day need. Again, this sample of students may not be fully representative of the UM School of Business Administration because these are students with above average GPAs, and because of the academic confirmation that they are doing well, their perception is altered to make them believe they are good writers, good students, and will soon be good employees. Additionally, a major limitation of the survey is that it was voluntary and based on self-reporting. This gives respondents the ability to lie without really being caught. Also, when self-reporting, respondents are likely to either undervalue or overvalue themselves in qualitative questions, such as those asking about level of preparedness, which may have skewed some of the responses. On the other hand, Millennials do seem to be more open and self-aware about personal weaknesses in contrast to older generations who were more active in hiding their weaknesses and reluctant to ask for help. For this reason, I would like to believe these responses were thoughtful and honest.

The last five questions of the survey were intended for student athletes; however, only four respondents were student athletes. As student athletes, they have access not only to the Oxford Writing Center but also the FedEx Writing Lab with tutors available for walk-in appointments. Only two of the student athletes had worked with a tutor in the

FedEx Writing Lab but both had positive experiences, claiming they felt that the tutor was "Extremely helpful." With voluntary walk-in appointments, the atmosphere is a bit more laid back than the Oxford Writing Center and there are not the same time constraints on sessions, which may have had an impact on the very positive reactions.

When asked why they had not worked with a tutor in the FedEx Writing Lab, the other two students responded, "I was not required to." In the busy schedule of a student athlete, they may already be meeting with a professor, coach, or academic specialist. Therefore, it is likely they are still having someone review their writing, especially as the grades of student athletes are so closely monitored to ensure eligibility.

The final question asked if being a student athlete affected professors' perceptions of the students, either positively or negatively. I was most interested to see how the student athletes responded in this question because a great amount of scholarship exists stating that often the root of academic problems for student athletes stems from poor perceptions by faculty members. Even though there were only four responses, they were equal on both sides with one respondent saying professors viewed his or her student athlete status as a positive, one that said he or she felt professors viewed him or her negatively, and the remaining two picked the middle option, "Neither positively or negatively." Overall with these last five questions, I cannot make any generalizations as only four student athletes answered. However, it is still four valid responses and this research and data could perhaps influence further research specifically on student athletes - perhaps not limited to those who are in the School of Business Administration.

When comparing the data to my hypothesis, I can conclude that I underestimated students' perceived levels of preparedness. The data does suggest at times that students in

the UM School of Business Administration do not necessarily enjoy taking English or writing courses and primarily stick only to what is required, but the data also suggests that these students understand the importance of strong writing. Often these students perceive that they are strong writers and are prepared for the writing expected of them in their future workplace. I predicted individualized tutoring would be a major way to help build these skills and it seems that prediction was partially correct because there were still 30% of students who were not satisfied with their experience at the Oxford Writing Center. Only 32 students in this study, 19.5%, answered that they had not worked individually with either a writing tutor or with a professor. This likely correlates to the high grades these students reported over and over in English and writing courses, proving that individualized tutoring does help students improve and make good grades.

While I think my hypothesis may have been a bit dramatic, there is still a disconnect between how students perceive their preparedness and how future employers perceive the writing skills of new employees. Under the time constraints of an undergraduate thesis, I was not able to survey students on their level of preparedness and then follow them for the first few years of their jobs in order to see how accurate their perceptions were. However, even though most students in the UM School of Business Administration felt at least a moderate level of preparedness for writing expected in the workplace, the data from other surveys suggests employers do not feel the same. If I had the time and resources, I would have liked to continue this research to decipher what is causing this disconnect, or if this disconnect even exists amongst UM business students and their employers.

I am pleased with my survey results and feel that my thesis provides valuable information for the UM School of Business Administration. I do hold the view that these respondents may be more high achieving because they are receiving above average grades; therefore, they may not be entirely representative of UM business students. Additionally, even though these students largely answered that they felt they were well prepared for the writing expected of them in the future, I still believe there should be at least one additional English or writing requirement, especially if students test out of their first year writing courses. If this asks too much, then another way to strengthen writing skills is to introduce more writing into the existing business curriculum with writing sections on exams, essays, or daily writings to improve the writing and critical thought necessary in any job.

I hope that my research will not only inspire students to think more seriously about English and writing courses as tools to develop strong writing skills that will benefit them all their lives, but also that it may spark future research at UM or other universities. I isolated for the UM School of Business Administration, but this research could be valuable for many other departments at the University of Mississippi as well as college campuses all over the United States. Writing is a fundamental skill that when neglected, can hinder success. Basic human communication happens through writing now more than ever, so if students can establish strong writing skills in high school and college, it will create stronger employees, a more educated workforce, and a productive society.

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