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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Writing Center Classroom Visits: An Evidence-Based Approach

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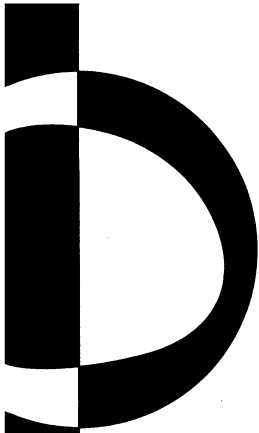# Evaluating the Effectiveness of Writing Center Classroom Visits: An Evidence-Based Approach

Abstract

Writing center professionals often spend significant resources on classroom visits intended to promote writing center services to the campus community. However, no published empirical research has been conducted on these visits to determine if they are effective at changing student perceptions of the writing center. In this study, researchers test three different kinds of classroom visits against a control group to establish the most effective approach to the classroom visit. Research findings suggest that classroom demonstrations that use active learning techniques are most likely to change student perceptions of the writing center and alter the students' indicated likelihood of making a visit to the writing center. These results are significant because they suggest that classroom visits are a prudent use of resources assuming they are carried out in an active and engaging manner.

As an almost perennial task, writing center professionals organize and implement classroom visits to promote their services to student-writers. These visits typically aim to "acquaint students and faculty with [the] location, hours, services, and policies [of the writing center]" (Jones, Lee, & Leit, 2007, par. 5). In addition to raising awareness, these visits presumably forge a connection—or at least name-to-face recognition—between the students in the class and the writing center staff, thereby lessening any anxiety or confusion students might have about tutoring.

While classroom visits are a mainstay of writing center practice, virtually no scholarship has examined their effectiveness. Instead, many scholars assume that any face-to-face contact will lead students to visit the writing center. Andrew Jones, Michelle Lee, & Lisa Leit (2007) argue anecdotally that their classroom presentations are effective since they have the advantage of a human presence. They write, "Undergraduates' lives are filled with many competing demands for their time, and when we have their attention for ten minutes, we can divulge a great deal of information about the UWC and hopefully leave a more positive impression than simply handing out a brochure would" (par. 10). Others have made similar claims in their arguments for classroom-based visits. Steven J. Corbett (2002), after explaining the nuances of his classroom visits, simply writes, "The more we, as peer tutors, visit classrooms, the better" (p. 11). By "better," Corbett suggests that these visits open the lines of communication between students and the writing center. However, Corbett does not address the labor-intensive nature of these visits. Given the amount of time and resources devoted to visits, it is imperative to know whether they actually are better than other, less resource-intensive classroom interventions.

In fact, no data exists on how many writing centers conduct classroom promotional visits, yet anecdotal evidence from WCenter listserv and from writing center websites indicates that a significant number of us are visiting classes. Even though we spend time and resources on this promotion, no research indicates whether the visits actually achieve what we hope they will. In a time when budgets are stretched thin and campuses are pushing for more online resources and/or teaching, writing center administrators must be able to argue for the value of these face-to-face interactions. This article is the first step in systematically interrogating the practice of classroom visits. The project is informed by the overall research question: Are classroom visits effective at promoting the writing center? More specifically, we asked three questions of our data:

1. Which intervention is most effective at informing students about how the writing center supports students?

2. Which intervention is most effective at changing students' likelihood to visit the writing center?

3. Which intervention is most effective at changing students' behavior? In other words, which intervention correlates most strongly with actual writing center visits?

We offer our findings as evidence that classroom promotional visits can, with the proper approach, improve students' understanding of our services and increase their likelihood to use the writing center.

To investigate this research question, we designed a study with four different types of classroom interventions: a podcast, a demonstration, a presentation, and a control. These interventions offer various levels of active learning, which we define broadly as instruction that engages students in the learning process (Prince, 2013). In the podcast intervention, students listen to a podcast created by the writing center staff. This intervention is the most passive, as students are only required to listen to information. The writing center presentation given by a staff member allows students to ask questions about the information presented to them, making this intervention more active than the podcast. Finally, the demonstration of the first five minutes of a tutoring session requires significant engagement in the process because a student-volunteer participates in the demonstration.

Method

Recently, writing center scholarship has raised the need for more empirical research that will help us to better understand and validate our practices. In *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice,* Rebecca Day Babcock & Terese Thonus (2012) repeat a call made by Harris (1999), Haswell (2000), Johanek (2000), and others to supplement our practitioner lore and "humanistic" or "artistic" scholarship with scientific, evidence-based research (Babcock & Thonus, 2012, p. 3). They write, "while theoretical investigations build the foundation for writing center studies, and anecdotal experience points in the direction of best practices, empirical research will create a *credible* link between the two" (p. 3, emphasis ours). Empirical research produces the evidence that supports our actions. Dana Driscoll & Sherry Wynn Perdue (2012, 2014) also call for a shift toward empirical research. They argue that "the field must embrace such change to validate our practices and to secure

external credibility and funding and to develop evidence-based practices" (2012, p. 29). The use of the word credible in both texts is striking here because it invokes the particular need for writing center directors to make their work visible in ways that both *count* and highlight writing center professionals' expertise.

Echoing this call, Kerri Jordan in her keynote address at the 2013 Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association conference prompted attendees to ask themselves, "What evidence do you have that [what you believe] is true?" Evidence is a tricky concept because, as writing center professionals know, disciplinary conventions, epistemology, and audience expectations shape which evidence is effective for an argument. One way to think about evidence is to consider what kinds of methodologies produce what kinds of evidence. Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, & Steve Price (2012) create a three-tiered taxonomy of writing center research inquiries: Practitioner Inquiry, Conceptual Inquiry, and Empirical Inquiry (p. 55). Careful not to privilege any one methodology over another, Liggett, Jordan, & Price treat each kind of *knowing* as valuable and argue for a methodological pluralism. In the spirit of these conversations about methodology, inquiry, and evidence, this article offers empirical evidence supporting our practice of promoting the writing center through classroom visits.

This study, conducted during the fall 2011 semester at a small regional campus of a multi-campus state university, surveyed students enrolled in one of three first-year composition courses: basic writing, first-year composition, and honors composition. During that semester, the writing program offered 14 sections of basic writing, 26 sections of traditional first-year writing, and 1 section of honors writing, for a total of 41 writing courses. This is a typical breakdown of the course offerings on this campus, although in recent semesters the number of basic writing courses has been reduced for political and procedural reasons that are not relevant to this article.

In the summer before the semester began, the writing center director emailed all 18 faculty members teaching the first-year writing courses to explain the IRB-approved project and to seek permission to visit their classes at two different times: once to inform students about the project and to collect initial survey data and again to perform an intervention and to distribute and collect a follow-up survey. With instructor permission, the director visited 8 (64%) of basic writing courses, 26 (100%) of traditional writing courses, and the 1 (100%) honors course. Two faculty instructors who both taught basic writing (for a total of 5 sections or 36% of basic composition) declined to participate or did not respond to the request to visit the classes.

For consistency and to avoid any confounding factors in the results, the writing center director made all visits and performed all interventions. No other staff member participated in the outreach. In addition, to avoid any conflicts of interest, she received a course release through a research grant and did not teach any of the composition courses that semester.

In the first round of classroom visits, the writing center director introduced herself and informed the students that she was conducting a study of students' attitudes toward the writing center to learn how the staff can improve its services. Students were provided with informed consent documents, asked to volunteer to participate, and, upon their agreement, to complete a survey. Some students chose not to participate. The first survey was conducted close to the beginning of the semester, to reduce the possibility that students might have learned about the writing center through other means. Nevertheless, prior acquaintance with these services could not be completely eliminated. Some students were not first-year students and already knew about the writing center from previous experiences on campus. In addition, new students are informed during orientation about campus tutoring services.

In the second round of classroom visits, the writing center director performed one of four interventions. (See below for descriptions.) After the intervention, she gave students the follow-up survey. (See Appendices for the surveys.) An intervention is defined as an activity intended to change or intervene in the learning process. The study used a cluster randomization experimental design whereby classes, rather than individuals, were randomized into four intervention groups. This random assignment eliminates problems with self-selection. The pre-/post-testing design of this study allows us to measure changes over time. Only students who completed the first survey were allowed to complete the second one because they had provided prior consent to be part of the project.

In the design of the study, we also included a control group that was surveyed twice, once at the beginning of the semester and again approximately one month later. It is possible that simply spending more time at a university might acquaint students with writing center services and impact their likelihood of seeking them out, independent of any classroom intervention.

Including this control allowed us to compare the results of the intervention to any changes in attitudes or behavior around the writing center that might happen incidentally over the course of a semester. Students in the control group received no intervention prior to completing the second survey. However, after finishing their responses, we offered

a presentation about the writing center, followed by a question and answer opportunity. In this way, every student involved in the project received some informational benefit, without influencing the outcomes of the study.

Interventions

Presentation. Presenter stands in front of the classroom and provides students with two types of information about the writing center: first, the logistics of a writing center appointment, including how to sign up, what to bring to the session, and what to expect; and second, a description of the writing center's philosophy, including statements about the value of outside readers and why students should sign up. The presentation ends with an open question and answer session. The presentation lasts approximately 8–10 minutes, although it might run longer, depending on the number of questions asked.

Podcast. A 5-minute audio recording, created by peer tutors, of a dialogue between two students. In the conversation, one student who has been to the writing center tells the other about her experience. This podcast (script and recording) was created by undergraduate tutors. To perform this intervention, the presenter arrives, introduces herself, and informs the class that they will listen to a podcast and then complete a survey. Using the technology podium in the classroom, the director plays the podcast from her flash drive. This intervention has neither visuals nor a question and answer session. This intervention lasts approximately 6 minutes, including set-up time.

Demonstration. An interactive demonstration of a visit to the writing center. The presenter asks for a volunteer from the class to pretend they are visiting the writing center. The director assumes the role of a peer tutor and takes the writer through the first five minutes of a session, asking questions about the assignment, asking the writer to say what they want to work on, and outlining a plan for the session. If the class has a paper due soon, the volunteer discusses a real assignment. If not, the volunteer makes up an assignment or remembers one from a previous class. Following the demonstration and applause for the volunteer, the presenter gives some additional information about the writing center (specifically on how to make an appointment) and then opens up a question and answer opportunity. In some demonstrations, the volunteer

is asked to describe their experience in the mock session. The demonstration lasts approximately 20–25 minutes.

Control. No activity. Students receive a survey and one month later a similar survey. Following completion of the second survey, students then listen to a presentation as described above.

Survey

The first survey consists of 21 questions, a mix of open-ended, check-boxes, and rating-scale answer options. (See Appendix A.) The questions ask students to evaluate their writing, to speculate on the types of writing for which the writing center offers help, and to describe their previous knowledge about the writing center and tutoring experiences in general. The survey also asks students to rate their likelihood of visiting the writing center. Finally, the survey requests that students provide their names and demographic information (race, age, gender, and languages they use and are learning).

The second survey consists of eight questions, a mix of check-boxes and rating-scale answer options. (See Appendix B.) This survey asks students to rate the effectiveness of the intervention, indicate how likely they would be to visit the writing center, and note what kind of writing they would take to the writing center. Six of the eight questions are identical to the first survey. This survey also asks for the students' names, in order to make comparisons across surveys.

Writing Center Visit Data Collection

The university's writing center collects visit data for each client using WCOnline. At the end of the semester during which the interventions were performed, the writing center director searched the client list for all first-year students. She cross-referenced those names with the list of study participants.

Finally, the data were collected, cleaned, and coded[1] before being analyzed with Stata, a statistical software package. Our analysis proceed-

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1 Cleaning refers to eliminating errors that arose during data entry or in the completion of the survey. One common practice is to check that all data are meaningful in the sense that they take on truly possible values; for instance, if data for college students has "99" reported for one person's age, this is a red flag that something in the data is amiss. The number 99 is a common value used for "did not answer," so, in this example, that answer may be removed from the data. The most important thing here would be not to treat "99" as an actual value when calculating the average of the sample. Coding refers to labeling or combining data for the purpose of analysis and interpretation.

ed as follows. First, we tested for statistically significant changes between the first (pre-intervention) and second (post-intervention) surveys, with respect to students' understanding of the types of writing and the kinds of assignments for which the writing center offers help. We used chi-square[2] tests to determine whether the proportion of students indicating "yes" to questions about awareness of specific services changes over time. (Specific questions are found in the Appendices.) Second, we tested for statistically significant differences across interventions during the second survey using chi-square tests. Third, we tested for statistically significant differences across the interventions in students' ratings of how likely they are to use the writing center. Since these ratings range from 0 to 5, we used ANOVA to conduct the statistical test.

Due to random assignment, any preexisting differences between students in their likelihood to use the writing center are, by design, unrelated to the intervention. Nonetheless, we also estimated a linear regression model that regressed[3] the post-intervention likelihood to use the writing center on the pre-intervention likelihood and on a series of indicators for the interventions (with the controls as the referent group). Regression seeks to isolate the effect of variables of interest (such as type of intervention), by keeping other variables (such as pre-intervention likelihood to visit the writing center) constant. This setting allowed us to examine how the change in the likelihood to use the writing center between the first and second survey varies across the interventions. Finally, using the data merged from WCOnline on visits to the writing center, we used a chi-square test to determine statistically significant

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2   Chi-square tests and ANOVAs assess whether there is a relationship between two variables, a predictor and an outcome. In both cases, the predictor variable is categorical or takes a small number of values (e.g., types of papers students work on). If the outcome is also categorical or takes a small number of values (e.g., whether the student visited the writing center, which has a yes/no response), a chi-square test is appropriate. If the outcome is continuous or takes a relatively large number of values (e.g., the likelihood of visiting, on a scale from 0-5), an ANOVA is appropriate. The chi-square test is a statistical test for differences in proportions; the ANOVA is a statistical test for differences in means.

3   To regress generally means to examine the relationship between the predictor (in this case, the intervention) and the outcome of interest (the likelihood of using the writing center), while holding other factors constant. In this example, we hold constant pre-intervention "likelihood of going" to the writing center. This means that statistically those who were already likely to go to the writing center before the intervention are only compared with each other, not with those who were unlikely to go before the intervention. Without doing this, we cannot be sure of whether the intervention is related to our outcome ("likelihood of going") or if those who went were already predisposed to go and hence might have gone on their own, even without the intervention.

differences in the likelihood of visiting the writing center across the interventions. To facilitate interpretation we present most of the results in the form of figures, and we discuss the statistical tests within the text.

Results

Demographics

Of the 623 students who participated in the first survey, 523 (82%) also completed the second survey. This article reports results only for those students who completed both surveys. Fifty-five percent of the sample was male, which is consistent with the overall gender composition of this campus. The majority of respondents were white (77.69%) and 18 years of age (79.02%), reflecting that most students took the composition course in the fall of their freshman year, and most of these students were of traditional college age. A minority (8.72%) identified as English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Respondents received interventions in roughly equal proportions (See Table 1).

	N	%
Male	281	54.56
Female	234	45.44
White	390	77.69
Black	44	8.76
Hispanic	31	6.18
Asian	26	5.18
Other	11	2.19
18	403	79.02
19	74	14.51
20	12	2.35
21+	22	3.14
ESL: no	471	91.28
ESL: yes	45	8.72
Intervention: control	131	25.05
Intervention: podcast	139	26.58
Intervention: presentation	132	25.24
Intervention: demonstration	121	23.14

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Writing Support

Table 2 describes the change between pre- and post-testing for the overall sample. The biggest change was the increase in students' belief that the writing center would help them to earn better grades. Although many writing center professionals and teachers encourage students to visit the writing center to make more general improvements in their writing skills (which may not translate immediately into a higher grade), students might believe that a writing center visit will impact their grades positively.

Table 2 reveals additional changes between the pre- and post-test. There was an increase in students who believed that writing centers would help them with writing lab reports (9%), addressing assignment prompts (10%), and improving the argument of their papers (8%). For other items, students were less likely to believe that the writing center would be helpful. The percentage of students having heard that a writing center visit would help them with organization and style decreased (by 11% and 9%, respectively); students were less likely to believe it would be helpful to go to the writing center with personal essays, creative writing for class, and creative writing for other purposes (9%; 17%; and 5%).

	Pre-Test (%)	Post-Test (%)	Difference
Elements writing center helps with:			
A better grade	52	80	28***
Assignment prompt	33	43	10***
Argument	37	45	8**
Thesis	68	68	0
Organization	68	57	–11***
Style	50	41	–9***
Editing	75	71	–4
Sources	46	45	–1
Introductions	52	51	–1
Conclusions	51	52	1
Materials writing center helps with:			
English papers	94	92	–2
Resumes	58	60	4
PowerPoint	20	21	1
Lab reports	27	36	9***
Personal essays for applications	66	57	–9***
Creative writing for class	63	46	–17***
Creative writing other	29	25	–5*

*=p≤.05 **=p≤.01 ***=p≤.001

**Table 2: Descriptives of Outcomes, Pre- and Post-Tested N=522**

Changes by Intervention

Figure 1 displays changes between pre- and post-testing by intervention for selected services. We focused on these services because we wanted to know whether the interventions taught students that the writing center can be useful for assignments outside of English/humanities courses and that the writing center offers help with writing beyond proofreading. All students, regardless of whether they received an intervention, or the type of intervention they received, were more likely to believe at post-test that a visit to the writing center would improve their grades. A chi-square test revealed no statistically significant differences by intervention.

All students who received an intervention were more likely to believe that the writing center would help them with forming arguments. Chi-square tests revealed significant differences by intervention, with students who received the demonstration being the most likely at post-test to believe that the writing center would help them to form arguments. For the control group there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test.

Similarly, all students receiving an intervention were more likely at post-test to believe that the writing center would help them with lab reports. The control group showed no significant change. Chi-square tests again revealed that students receiving the demonstration were the most likely to believe at post-test that the writing center would help with lab reports.

Finally, all groups showed a decline in belief that the writing center would help them with creative writing projects. There were no statistically significant differences by intervention. Taken together, interventions seemed to matter the most for acquainting students with the writing center's ability to help them to form arguments and to write lab reports. For both of these services, demonstrations produced the greatest effect.
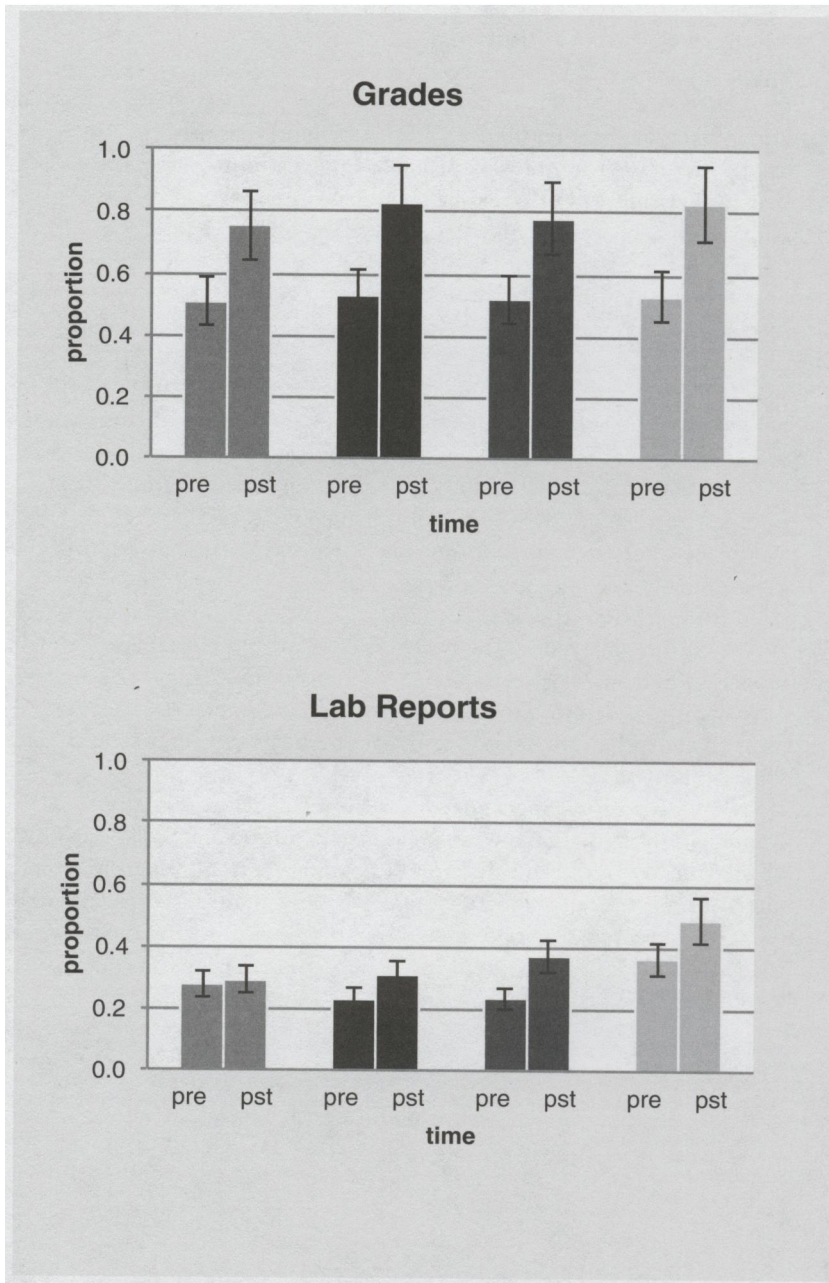
Figure 1: Pre- and Post-Test Change in Awareness of Writing Center Services by Intervention
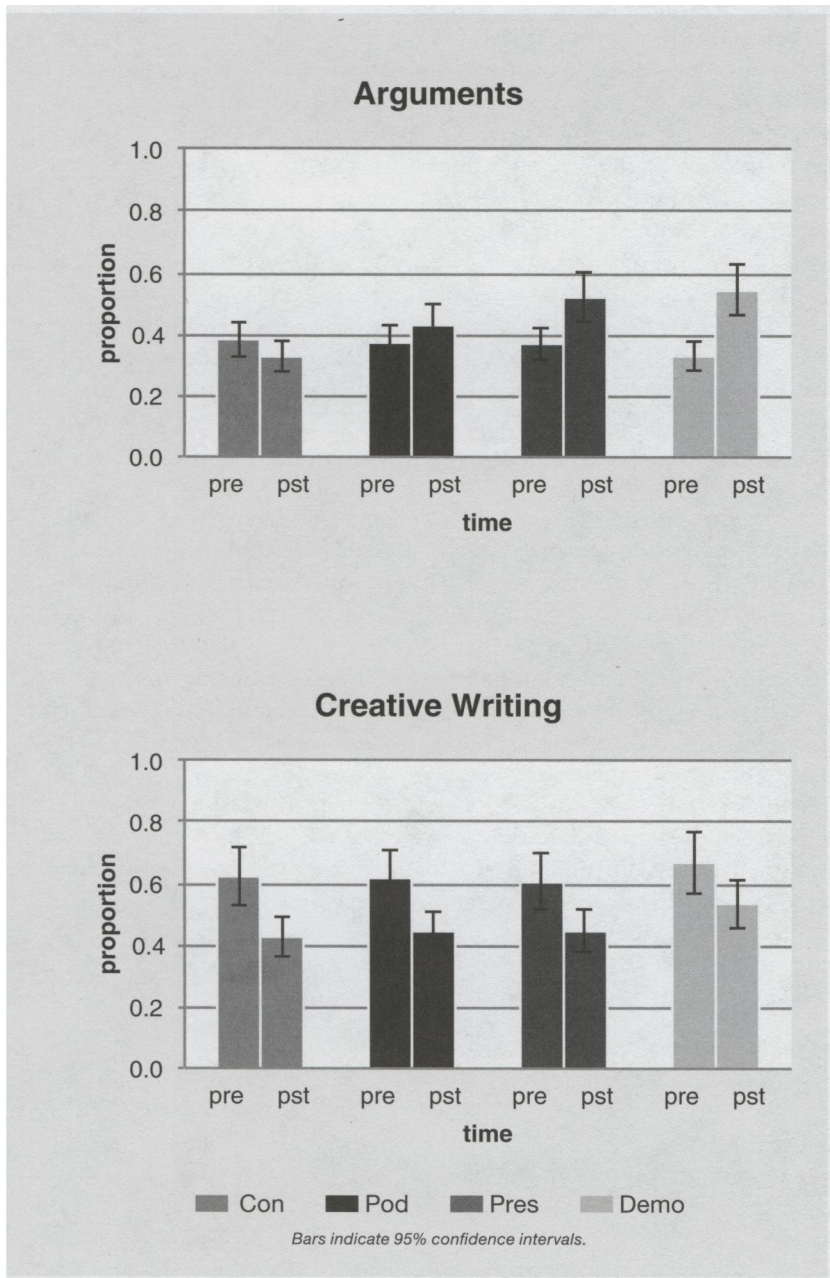
Figure 1 Continued: Pre- and Post-Test Change in Awareness of Writing Center Services by Intervention

Likelihood of Visiting Writing Center

In addition to exploring students' understanding of writing center services, we also wanted to know how interventions would affect students' likelihood of visiting. We measured this in two ways: first, by asking how likely they thought they would be to visit the writing center; and second, by using writing center visit data to determine whether they did in fact have a session with a tutor during that semester. We believe that both measures are important because of the relatively short span of time under consideration. While ultimately the goal of classroom interventions is to get students to visit the writing center, the nature of their courses and assignments (not to mention their other commitments) in any given semester may also affect their likelihood to visit during the timeframe under study. It is important to remember that even if a student does not come during the short span of time under study, they might visit in the future.

Figure 2 describes changes in students' reports of their likelihood to visit the writing center by intervention. While all students reported a greater likelihood at the time of the second survey, this difference was not statistically significant for the control group or for students who received the podcast. An ANOVA test showed that the students receiving the demonstration had the highest likelihood at the time of the second survey to visit the writing center. A linear regression analysis that took into account the likelihood at the time of the first survey revealed that the demonstration group experienced the greatest increase in likelihood. Therefore, the demonstration emerged as the most effective intervention for increasing students' awareness of writing center services and their reported likelihood of actually visiting. By contrast, students who received the podcast were no more likely to consider visiting than students in the control group.
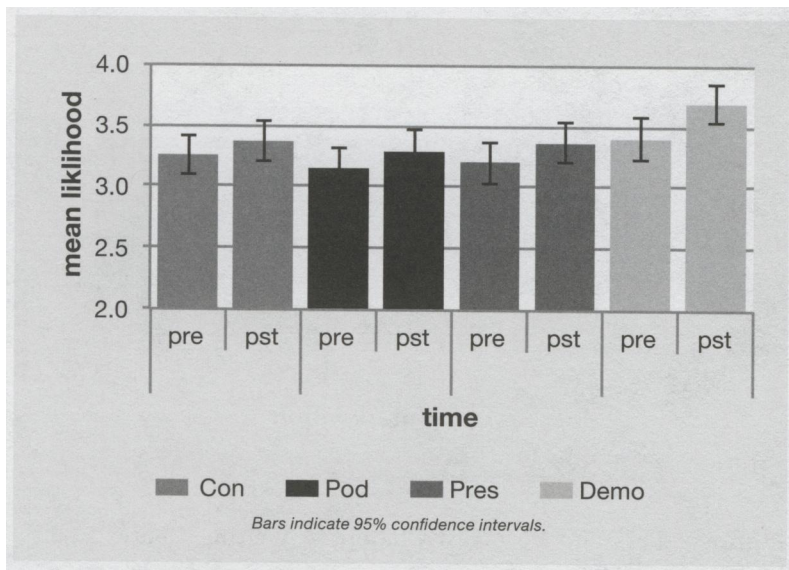
Figure 2: Pre- and Post-Test Change in Likelihood of Visiting Writing Center by Intervention

Attendance in the Writing Center

Finally, we wanted to know how interventions might affect students' behavior—that is, whether they actually visited the writing center during the period under study (one semester). Figure 3 reports proportions of students who actually visited the writing center based on WCOnline data, broken out by intervention. Twenty percent of students who received the demonstration came to the writing center during the semester, while 12% of students who were in the control group attended the writing center. Given the small sample size, however, we are unable to say that this gap between 20% and 12% is a statistically significant difference. While the interventions had at least some impact on the likelihood of visiting the writing center, if this study were conducted over a longer period of time, statistically significant differences between the demonstration group and the control group might emerge.
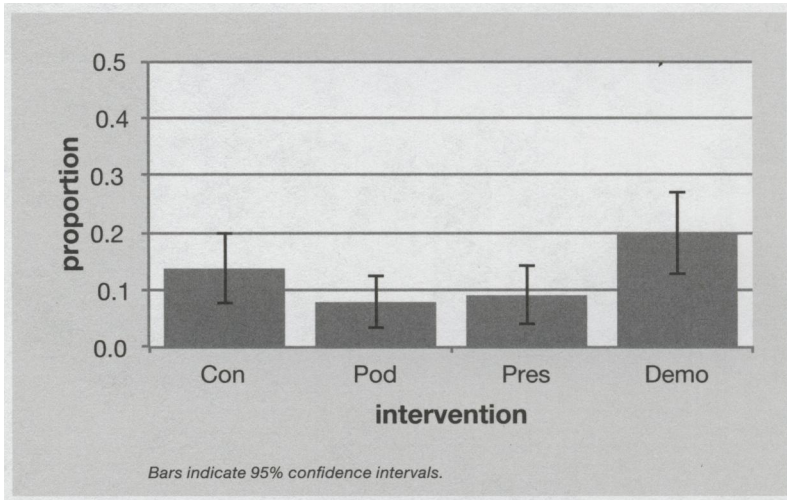
Figure 3: Pre- and Post-Test Change in Writing Center Visits by Intervention

Discussion

In this study we examined the effectiveness of three types of interventions aimed at generating awareness of writing center services and encouraging students to visit. More specifically, we wanted to know which interventions were most effective in: (1) informing students about the kind of support the writing center offers; (2) generating the greatest likelihood to visit; and (3) leading to an actual visit during the period under study.

To test the effectiveness of interventions to inform students, we focused on four services the writing center offers. Help with lab reports and creative writing are services that writing centers provide, but we believe students are typically unaware of such support. In addition, we wanted to know whether interventions would increase awareness that writing centers offer support for crafting arguments because this is a central intellectual task required in any discipline. Finally, because of the dramatic increase between pre- and post-test in students who believe that going to the writing center will help with grades, we decided to investigate which intervention was most related to this increase.

We found that all interventions increased students' understanding that the writing center helps with crafting an argument, regardless of discipline. Since the control group had no statistically significant change

in this area, we can be confident that the interventions influenced this awareness. A specific component of each intervention is a focus on how the writing center can provide feedback on arguments and on how well a writer communicates their ideas to the reader. In each intervention we hoped that the key message that "writers need readers to help make better arguments" came through. These findings suggest that it did.

We also wanted to know whether interventions increased students' likelihood of actually visiting the writing center. We found that students who received a presentation or a demonstration were significantly more likely to indicate that they would visit the writing center at some point.

Of these two interventions, the demonstration was significantly more effective. There was no change between surveys for the control group or the students receiving a podcast. However, in the period of time under study, the students who received an intervention were not more likely than students in the control group to visit the writing center. It seems possible that visits happened after the study ended; additional research is needed to determine whether interventions are more likely to generate visits to the writing center in the long term.

We had two unanticipated findings that suggest that our intervention message may need additional clarification. First, in both the presentation and the demonstration, the writing center director emphasized that the writing center did not guarantee better grades, *per se*, but would help to create better writing. One possible reason for the across-the-board increase in the belief that visiting *would* improve grades is what Muriel Harris (2010) explains (using Ruth Mayo's work): Negative messages, over time, can sometimes be remembered as positive messages (p. 55). By focusing on what we do not do in the writing center (guarantee better grades), students might have reinterpreted the message. It is possible that students genuinely believe that visiting the writing center will help them to become better writers, which will ultimately lead to higher grades. It is also possible that the writing center benefits from a selection effect: Students who are proactive and seek out help would be expected in general to get higher grades, and students might also consider friends of theirs who visit the writing center and also earn high grades. Student interpretations of the writing center's value might account for the lack of difference among interventions and may simply be traveling through social networks, independent of writing center outreach.

Finally, we saw between pre- and post-test a decline in the number of students who agreed that going to the writing center would help them with creative writing. Again, there were no differences by intervention. Students might not have had the opportunity to do creative writing

in their classes during the semester under study and may have simply forgotten this piece of information because it did not relate to their daily lives. The finding does suggest, however, that students' default assumption was that the writing center is more appropriate for academic or professional rather than creative writing. One reason for this belief is that all of the interventions focus on writing that students do for class (the podcast creates a scenario between two students in their writing class; the presentation primarily discusses classroom writing; and the demonstration asks students to think of assignments they have written for a class). Unintentionally, these interventions may have created this false impression.

Limitations

While the design of the study increases our confidence in the results, this research has several limitations. First, we did not validate and pilot our survey. Second, it is possible that the podcast did not appeal to the students even though it was created by students; a different podcast might yield other results. In addition, this study was limited by focusing on a single university; other types of institutions may experience different dynamics. Also, the amount of time remaining in the semester, post-intervention, for an actual visit to the writing center was limited. One final limitation of our study design was that each intervention did not take the same amount of time. The podcast, the shortest intervention, is only 6 minutes; whereas the longest intervention, the demonstration, lasts 20–25 minutes. It is possible that the length of exposure to the intervention (rather than the intervention *per se*) influenced the results. Further research is needed to isolate the effects of the specific design of the intervention, including its length.

Conclusion and Further Research

For all of the labor that they require, are classroom visits worth the time and effort? This study suggests that they are. Classroom visits increased the awareness that the writing center would be able to interact with students on what is considered the core of most assignments—crafting an argument. In addition, students seemed not to know that the writing center was prepared to work with them on lab reports. Perhaps most importantly, classroom visits increased students' reported likelihood of visiting the writing center.

This study also suggests that not all interventions are equally effective. In particular, the demonstration was most effective at informing

students of writing center services and increasing their likelihood to visit. In a time when universities are embracing technology so fully, it is worth keeping in mind that the podcast in this study was overshadowed by the "human touch" of the demonstration. Of course, the demonstration also emerged as more effective than the presentation, which shares that same "human touch." This raises the question of what value the demonstration component adds. We believe that the demonstration invites students to actively engage in the classroom visit by imagining themselves in a tutoring session at the writing center. It also seems possible that involving a student in the class (i.e., rather than a writing center tutor) might have increased students' ability to identify with the demonstration, but further research is needed.

Since conducting this survey, our practices at this university have changed in response to the results. We now offer two kinds of classroom visits (the presentation and the demonstration) to teachers. While we would like to give demonstrations in every class, we realize 20–25 minutes is a significant amount of time to spend in someone's classroom. Therefore, when we email faculty to set up these visits, we give them the choice of intervention options and share with them the research findings. Many instructors, particularly those teaching basic writing courses, choose the demonstration option. While this is the more labor-intensive choice, we do believe that the results are worth the effort.

Writing centers often have limited resources, and we need to focus on promotional efforts that achieve the goals we have set. This study suggests that our resources are well-spent by offering demonstrations, but given the labor-intensive nature of these demonstrations, it would behoove us to determine whether the personal engagement is *the* reason that this intervention is the most effective. For example, would a video of a demonstration be as effective as a live demonstration? Is there something specific about the verbal rhetorical choices in the demonstration that makes it most effective? Does the writing center professional's personality change the effectiveness of the demonstration? What role do various rhetorical appeals have in the delivery of the demonstration? Answers to these questions are vital as we consider the most effective ways to publicize services to student-writers.

Appendix A: Initial Survey

Survey #1: Initial Data Gathering Survey

The Writing Center is conducting a survey to understand how first-year students think about the Center. Your participation is voluntary and you also have the option of not responding to any individual questions. Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact X at XX@YY.EDU.

1. Have you ever heard of the [school name] Writing Center? (check one)
    o Yes
    o No

1a. If yes, **where** and **when** did you hear of it? If no, skip to question 3.

1b. If yes, what tasks have you heard the Writing Center can help with: (check all that apply)
    o Getting a better grade
    o Answering the prompt
    o Argument/logical development
    o Thesis writing
    o Organization
    o Style
    o Editing (grammar and proofreading)
    o Using sources/secondary research
    o Introductions
    o Conclusions
    o Other: please list _____

1c. If yes, have you heard anything about the staff? If yes, please be specific.
    o Yes, specifically the following: _____
    _____
    _____
    o No

1d. If yes, please comment here if you have heard any additional comments about the Writing Center that have not been addressed in the above questions.

2. What kind of student do you think goes to the Writing Center? (check one)
    o High achieving students

     o Low achieving students
     o Both high and low achieving students

3. What kind of materials would you go to the writing center for help with? (check all that apply)
     o Papers assigned in English classes
     o Papers assigned in my "W" classes (these are writing-designated classes that are subject-specific. For example, Social Studies Education 430W is a senior-level education class that requires students to write several short and long papers.)
     o Papers for general education classes
     o Papers assigned for classes in my major (non-"W" courses)
     o Resumes and cover letters
     o Powerpoint or Prezi presentations
     o Communications speech outlines
     o Lab reports
     o Personal essays for internship applications
     o Personal, response essays assigned for class
     o Creative writing (poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction) assigned for class
     o Creative writing (poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction) NOT assigned for class
     o Other: please specify: _____

4. Would you consider bringing a group-authored (a paper written by two or more people) paper to the writing center?
     o Yes. Why?
     o No. Why not?

5. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not likely and 5 being very likely), how likely would you be to use the Writing Center? (circle one)
         1   2   3   4   5

6. What reasons, if any, would stop you from going to the Writing Center? (check all that apply)
     o I don't think the tutors would be helpful
     o My schedule is too busy
     o The hours do not fit my schedule
     o I am uncomfortable working with strangers
     o I am uncomfortable working with strangers on my writing
     o I don't have any papers to write this semester
     o I am already a strong writer
     o I have heard it isn't helpful
     o Other: please specify: _____

7. Have you ever been to any writing center? If so, where?
    o Yes, I went to a writing center at/in _____
    o No

7a. If yes, was it a positive experience?
    o Yes, because _____
    o No, because _____

8. Have you ever worked with a tutor for any subject?
    o Yes, the tutor was for _____(list subject(s))
    o No

8a. If so, was it a positive experience?
    o Yes, because _____
    o No, because

9. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being poor, 3 being competent, and 5 being excellent), how would you rate your writing? (circle one)
              1   2   3   4   5

10. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not interested, 3 being somewhat interested, and 5 being very interested), how would you rate your interest in writing? (circle one)
              1   2   3   4   5

11. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not difficult 3 being somewhat difficult, and 5 being difficult) how difficult is writing for you? (circle one)
              1   2   3   4   5

12. Which papers are *easiest* for you to write? (check all that apply)
    o Research papers (papers you need to incorporate library research into)
    o Literature reviews
    o Summaries
    o Analytical essays that require you to take a position on a text and use evidence (quotes from the text) to support your opinion
    o Response papers
    o Personal essays (i.e., narratives about yourself that do not require outside research and often written in 1st person)
    o Personal essays for internship applications
    o Lab reports
    o Abstracts
    o Reflective writing about your own personal experiences

o Other: please specify: _____

13. Which papers are ***most difficult*** for you to write? (check all that apply)
      o Research papers (papers you need to incorporate library research into)
      o Literature reviews
      o Summaries
      o Analytical essays that require you to take a position on a text and use evidence (quotes from the text) to support your opinion
      o Response papers
      o Personal essays (i.e., narratives about yourself that do not require outside research and often written in 1st person)
      o Personal essays for internship applications
      o Lab reports
      o Abstracts
      o Reflective writing about your own personal experiences
      o Other: please specify: _____

14. Would you be willing to participating in a focus group? The focus group will be made up of 3-5 people who have also completed the survey. The focus group will ask follow up questions to better understand the results of the survey.
      o Yes
      o No

14a. If yes, please provide your name, phone number, and email address below.
      Name:
      Email Address:
      Phone number:

Please provide the following information:
      Name:
      Gender:
      Race(s):
      Intended major (write undecided if unsure):
      Age:
      Native Language, if something other than English:

Appendix B: Follow-Up Survey

Survey #2: Post-Intervention Survey

The Writing Center is conducting a survey to understand how first-year students think about the Center. Your participation is voluntary and you also have the option of not responding to any individual questions. Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact X (X@Y.edu).

Q1. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being ineffective and 5 being very effective), how informative was the presentation/demonstration/podcast about the Writing Center (how well did it answer all of you questions)?

        1   2   3   4   5

Q2. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being ineffective and 5 being very effective), how would you rate the effectiveness of this presentation/demonstration/podcast in persuading you to use the Writing Center?

        1   2   3   4   5

Q3. What aspects of writing would you go to the Writing Center for help with? (check all that apply)

     o Getting a better grade
     o Answering the prompt
     o Argument/logical development
     o Thesis writing
     o Organization
     o Style
     o Editing (grammar and proofreading)
     o Using sources/secondary research
     o Introductions
     o Conclusions
     o Other: please list _____

Q4. What kind of materials would you go to the writing center for help with? (check all that apply)

     o Papers assigned in English classes
     o Papers assigned in my "W"classes (these are writing-designated classes that are subject-specific. For example, Social Studies Education 430W is a senior-level education class that requires students to write several short and long papers.)
     o Papers for general education classes
     o Papers assigned for classes in my major (non-"W" courses)

o Resumes and cover letters
o Powerpoint or Prezi presentations
o Communications speech outlines
o Lab reports
o Personal essays for internship applications
o Personal, response essays assigned for class
o Creative writing (poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction) assigned for class
o Creative writing (poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction) NOT assigned for class
o Other: please specify:_____

Q5. What kind of student do you think goes to the Writing Center? (check one)
o High achieving students
o Low achieving students
o Both high and low achieving students

Q6. On a scale of 1–5 (with 1 being not likely and 5 being very likely), how likely are you to use the Writing Center? (circle one)

    1   2   3   4   5

Q7. On a scale of 1–5 (with 1 being unlikely and 5 being very likely), how likely are you to bring your science papers (other than lab reports) to the Writing Center? (circle one)

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

Q8. On a scale of 1–5 (with 1 being unlikely and 5 being very likely), how likely are you to bring your lab reports to the Writing Center? (circle one)

    1   2   3   4   5

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