MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT FOR IMPROVING WRITING CENTER

CONSULTATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

STUDENT WRITER—a student who uses the services of a writing center.
WRITING CONSULTANT–an undergraduate student who works in the writing center.
WC—Writing Center
SLO—Student Learning Outcome
USLO—University Student Learning Outcome
UWCSLO—University Writing Center Student Learning Outcome

ABSTRACT

MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT FOR IMPROVING WRITING CENTER

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This thesis presents the spring 2011 assessment for the University Writing Center at UNC

Asheville, a small liberal arts college in Western North Carolina. It includes the results of

a study that seeks to shift the focus of assessment in the University Writing Center from

operational goals to learning goals; it interprets data related to student writers' and

undergraduate consultants' perceptions of observable cognitive development activities

during typical writing center sessions. The study grew from the University Writing

Center's response to newly developed University Student Learning outcomes (USLOs)

and the University Mission Statement.

Keywords: writing centers, assessment, critical thinking, cognitive development

activities, student writers, writing consultants.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three to five years, it has become increasingly evident that university writing centers need to establish and assess student learning outcomes (SLOs). Writing center professionals have conducted numerous studies involving pre- and post-student papers, rubrics, and faculty evaluation of papers that have been discussed in the writing center. These studies reveal an underlying assumption that writing centers should be assessed based on whether or not they help to improve student writing. This product-oriented approach to assessment, however, is not the most useful way for writing centers to assess how they support student writers. Assessment of learning goals oriented to the writing process engages student writers not only to improve written products, but also to improve students' abilities as critical thinkers and effective communicators.

In June 2009, the University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNC Asheville) Board of Trustees adopted a new Mission Statement, and in January 2010, the Faculty Senate approved a set of six University Student Learning Outcomes (USLOs). In response, the University Writing Center (UWC) revised its mission statement to reflect the new institutional mission. Under a new director, the UWC has developed new SLOs designed to link closely to institutional and program outcomes. UWCSLOs are as follows:

1) Students engage in higher-level cognitive development activities in writing center sessions, including critiquing drafts, understanding grammatical concepts, generating ideas, explaining ideas, and organizing ideas.

2) Consultants demonstrate flexibility in helping a diverse range of students develop skills necessary for success with different parts of the writing process.

3) Upon checking out of the center, students express confidence in their ability to revise future texts.

Previous assessments in the UWC included client satisfaction evaluations, tutor observations, and tutor self-reflective practices, all focused on now outdated SLOs. UNC Asheville's UWC has long established methods of quantitatively capturing operational data and incorporating qualitative assessment data into annual reports; operational data linked to operational goals. This six-week, spring 2011 assessment, which captured data from 182 writing center sessions, is one of the first conducted in the University Writing Center at UNC Asheville that attempts to interpret quantitative and qualitative data for the newly established learning outcomes.

The study aims to examine the cognitive development activities that undergraduate consultants and student writers observe happening during a writing center session. It also attempts to find out how typical writing center sessions link UWCSLOs with three university SLOs:

| Table 1: University and University Writing Center Student Learning Outcomes	
University SLOs:	**University Writing Center SLOs:**
Outcome 1: Students develop skills in critical thinking, clear and thoughtful communication, creative expression, and honest open inquiry. Outcome 3: Students develop respect for the differences among people and ideas, and learn to clarify and articulate their own values. Outcome 6: Students are prepared to engage in lifelong learning.	Outcome 1: Students engage in higher-level cognitive development activities in writing center sessions, including critiquing drafts, understanding grammatical concepts, generating ideas, explaining ideas, and organizing ideas. Outcome 2: Consultants demonstrate flexibility in helping a diverse range of students develop skills necessary for success with different parts of the writing process. Outcome 3: Upon checking out of the center, students express confidence in their ability to revise future texts.

In order to examine the cognitive development activities that occur in the writing center, I adapted a survey designed by Jennifer Kunka for the University Writing Center at Francis Marion University, which draws from Lorin Anderson et al.'s 2001 *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2001). Figure 1 succinctly summarizes Bloom's original taxonomy and Anderson's revised version of Bloom's taxonomy:

Figure 1: Anderson's revised version of Bloom's taxonomy
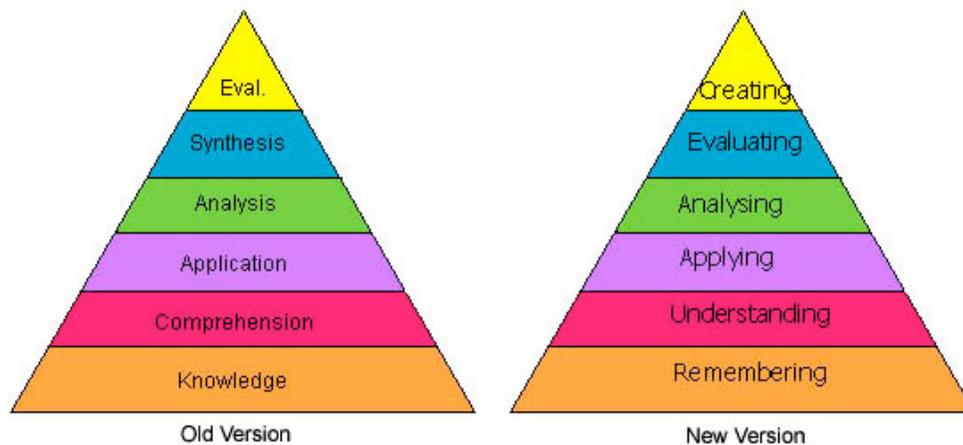
Source: http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/Bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm

While some critics argue that Bloom's taxonomy is limited, it is also considered a "major historical source on critical thinking ... The top three categories (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) are often equated with critical thinking" (Kennedy 13). As Kunka states in her 2007-2008 annual report for Francis Marion's UWC, Anderson's revised version "has relevance for writing center assessment in that it provides a language and mechanism for describing the cognitive development activities in which student writers engage during tutorial interactions" (3). The observable cognitive development activities are equivalent to critical thinking. Bloom's revised taxonomy also provides students with a vocabulary for talking about writing as a recursive process. This outcomes-oriented assessment has the potential to demonstrate not only the cognitive development that occurs in the writing center, but also how the work that takes place there links to the university's SLOs and overall mission.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As many writing center professionals design innovative assessment instruments and implement assessment practices to satisfy institutional accreditation requirements, a growing body of research about writing center assessment exists. To develop their place within the academy, writing center professionals address multiple stakeholders with various purposes and make important decisions about which types of assessment to implement. While students benefit most from assessment that improves the instruction they receive, faculty often disagree about best practices in writing instruction. Additionally, while college and university administrators prefer broad, quantitative measures, writing center professionals often need in-depth qualitative assessment to improve practice. Neal Lerner and Harvey Kail's "A Heuristic for Writing Center Assessment" succinctly outlines some writing center assessment methods (Appendix 1).

Emphasizing the importance of assessment that comes from within the writing center, four writing center professionals, Emily Donnelli, Joan Hawthorne, Lori Salem, and Harry Denny discuss the details of overall assessment design. In 2003 Emily Donnelli, at the University of Kansas Writing Center, urges writing centers to adopt the best practices of assessment and conduct qualitative and quantitative, direct and indirect measures of effectiveness in order to answer difficult questions from faculty, administrators, and accrediting agencies alike. Donnelli turns to Cindy Johanek's research, which emphasizes the importance of context. Donnelli argues that "The rich results of Johanek's research, enabl[e] the challenging of dichotomies between quantitative and qualitative methods and the subsequent production of unique, multi-voiced assessments—assessments that most accurately capture the complex work of a

writing center" (16). She looks back to Stephen North's (1984) call for writing centers to "produce better writers, not better writing" (17) as a demand that writing center professionals can only measure through multiple perspectives, "with stories and numbers coming together to accomplish what neither can do alone" (17). In choosing one assessment type over another, writing center professionals run the risk of diminishing the richness of the conversations that occur within the writing center. She suggests that writing centers conduct many smaller assessments from multiple points of view to examine the impact of the writing center on multiple audiences: students, faculty, and institutions (16). Johanek's multi-faceted approach to assessment reaches beyond the limits of singular research methods to find methods for improving practice from within.

In 2006 Joan Hawthorne urges writing centers to focus on student-oriented learning outcomes to consider cognitive, affective, attitudinal, and process goals, providing a shift away from evaluating final written products or levels of student confidence about writing. Hawthorne, like Johanek, emphasizes the importance of conducting assessment from within the writing center and recommends choosing one to two research questions and assessment methods per year. Focusing on outcomes-oriented assessment, she argues that to write research questions, writing center professionals should invert objectives and, instead of "measuring outcomes," think in terms of "documenting outcomes," using "evidence or indicators, direct or indirect" (243). She suggests that writing center professionals triangulate results when possible, using both direct (student writers' satisfaction surveys) and indirect indicators (observations of sessions and pre- and post-session surveys). With her approach, assessment becomes an integral part of writing center work, and existing writing center documents, such as consultant session

summaries, evidence outcomes.

To consider how best to design assessment instruments, it is useful to look to a 2009 "Assessing What We Really Value" in which Lori Salem, Assistant Vice Provost and Writing Center Director at Temple University, and Harry Denny, an assistant professor of English at St. John's University, offer a set of principles to guide writing center assessment:

> (1) start with clear goals and an understanding of audience … (2) make sure your assessment reflects your institutional or educational values and purposes … (3) be proactive and investigatory … (4) anticipate results you did not expect … (5) consider the rhetorical dimension: how do we argue or present results? … (6) and, finally, collaborate …

Salem and Denny discuss assessment as situational and context specific. Salem notes that administrators frequently want quantitative data because they are interested only in broad strokes. Quantitative data, however, do not always create greater understanding of "the quality of tutoring and learning that occurred." In encouraging writing center professionals to be proactive about assessment, she remarks "if [we] own what it is [we] think [we] need to do, it's going to be better than what's going to be imposed from outside." Salem and Denny urge writing center professionals to anticipate unexpected results and to embrace those findings, thinking critically about the results and how best to improve the writing center. To ensure that research stems from actual questions that arise within the center, not from lore about writing center work, Salem and Denny advocate for consultant involvement in assessment. Finally, they recommend that writing center

professionals collaborate, looking to university-wide data, satisfactions surveys, and statistics to help support assessment efforts.

Insisting that assessment be relevant to writing center daily practices, Denny implements a 2009 tutor-led assessment, working with consultants to draft research questions for three constituent focus groups: consultants, faculty, and clients. The questions ask stakeholders about their perceptions of writing and the writing center. Throughout this study, Denny encourages consultants to move between writing center literature and consulting practice to examine their experiences, providing them with a powerful learning exercise. Interestingly, Denny's research finds frustration among consultants and students about faculty expectations and "almost no consensus among faculty about how they understood the writing process as well as what they were expecting in terms of writing." He also finds that expectations of the writing center are various and not always in keeping with the goals and aims of the writing center itself.

Writing consultants offer assistance to student writers at varying stages of the writing *process*, posing questions and offering suggestions to improve writing *products*. While university administrators typically want to see evidence of improved writing in the form of *products*, writing center professionals need ways to assess both process and product if they are to understand how best to help students develop as writers. Sheryl Fontaine, Tina Perdue, and Ellen Lavelle and Nancy Zuercher examine writing products and processes, leading writing center professionals to consider what types of assessment and instruction are needed to improve student writers.

In1995 Sheryl Fontaine suggests that collaborations between composition teachers and writing center professionals could improve portfolio assignment design, thus

improving writing center sessions that involve helping students with writing for portfolios. Fontaine argues, "portfolios reinforce the value that writing centers place on the process of drafting, revising, listening, and responding" (47) and that writing centers are not passive agents in this process. Fontaine calls on composition professionals to consider how writing centers influence student writers' processes as they build portfolios. She concludes that composition departments implementing portfolio assessment can learn from the writing center's attention to *responding to* rather than *evaluating* texts.

Though the sample size of her study is small, Tina Perdue, Associate Professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, in 2011 reports a positive experience with mining freshman composition portfolios for assessment data for the writing center. From six student portfolios, she records strong evidence that links revisions in student portfolios and improvements in written products to writing center sessions. As a result, she plans similar, more extensive future research.

In a 2001 study, Ellen Lavelle and Nancy Zuercher examine not only student writers' processes in terms of writing one paper, but how students' approaches to writing vary and what effect those various approaches have on overall scholastic achievement. They use Lavelle's Inventory of Processes in College Composition to explore their question, identifying and categorizing a few approaches and acknowledging that the students are complex, exist at varying grade levels, come from varying contexts, and possess various education backgrounds. The inventory allows the researchers to examine writing as an integrative process. In it, students respond to 119 items regarding writing strategies and writing motives. Five factors that are "reflective of writing approaches" emerge from the study: elaborative (i.e., the approach is very detailed and complicated),

low self-efficacy, reflective-revision, spontaneous-impulsive, and procedural. The authors discuss the relational nature of the approaches, arguing, "the key to facilitating writing at the university level is found in designing a high quality writing climate to include deep tasks, emphasis on revision and meaning, scaffolding, modeling and integrating writing across content areas" (384). The authors' approach is appropriate to the complex contextual situation present during writing center sessions. Numerous considerations, such as writing assignment design, professor and peer feedback, students' skill and ability as researchers and writers, influence the situation. Writing centers must implement various means of assessment in order to acknowledge the complex, recursive, and integrative nature of the writing task.

Overall, evaluating products for which many other influences, such as instructor feedback, classroom peer workshops, and other outside reviewers, come into play may prove impossible and does not provide accurate "evidence" of effectiveness. Likewise, evaluating student writers' overall writing process from the limited vantage point of the writing center may prove impossible as well. Connecting writing center use to student paper or course grades fails to acknowledge the recursive nature of writing as well as the layers of peer and instructor feedback that students receive on their writing outside the writing center. Writing center professionals must assess student writers as writers engaging the process to create the product; they will need creative ways to present assessments of both process and product in order to help administrators and faculty begin to recognize evidence of improved writers as well as improved products.

Many writing center assessments focus on the question of whether frequent visits to the writing center not only improve written products, but overall grades or academic

achievement. In a 2008 podcast Neal Lerner, Writing Center Director at MIT, and Jason

Mayland an educational researcher and statistician at Lansing Community College,

discuss such assessments. Mayland compares grades of first-year composition students

who visit the writing center to grades of those students who did not, measuring frequency

of visits. In his results, he connects the threshold of three visits to the writing center to

improved grades. Both Mayland and Lerner discuss the difference between *establishing*

causal relationships between writing center use and student achievement and

understanding the strength of those relationships. They point out that many variables

aside from writing center use may influence what really lies beneath student

performance. Mayland suggests that writing center professionals shift away from

examining grades and move to measuring outcomes. He calls for research about the

writing center's impact within the institutional framework. For instance, he asks, What is

the role of the writing center in student retention? What do writing center directors need

to do to meet the needs of specialized student populations? He suggests that writing

center professionals collaborate with institutional research and/or mathematicians or

statisticians to establish the importance of the writing center's role. Lerner supports

Mayland's conclusion, suggesting that the question is not about an improved written

product, but an improved student writer. He asks, How can we quantify whether a student

writer has improved? Lerner urges writing center professionals to "go deeply, look at one

student who visits regularly, interview students at intervals, and interview faculty,"

advice that reflects the need for multiple measures.

    Throughout examinations of writing products and processes and student

achievement, questions arise about whether these things can in fact be quantifiably

assessed. Luke Niiler's 2005 study, "The Numbers Speak Again: A Continued Statistical Analysis of Writing Center Outcomes," explores whether "statistical analysis enriches the way we describe our work; helps us understand how tutoring impacts the writing process; confirms what we already know through more qualitative means; and helps us communicate what we know to be true about our work to those outside the discipline" (13). In his study, Niiler isolates global (idea development, organization, clarity, etc.) and local (grammar and mechanics) improvements in writing, and three faculty members blind evaluate 38 pre- and post-writing center papers. Niiler notes several risks with quantitative assessment especially that determining when and how improvements occur proves difficult because other variables, such as instructor or peer comments, are not always measureable.

Neal Lerner takes a quantitative research approach to writing center assessment in his 1997 study "Counting Beans and Making Beans Count" and ends up questioning whether writing center professionals can in fact quantifiably assess writing centers. In examining how the use of the writing center use improves student writing, Lerner compares course grades of students in first-semester composition who use the writing center and those who do not. He uses SAT scores to equalize writing center users and non-users. He concludes that students with the weakest starting skills came to the writing center most often and benefit the most. In his subsequent study "Choosing Beans Wisely" (2001), Lerner critiques his own work, recognizing that his study ignores the fact that students have different starting points. He also found that SAT Verbal scores do not correlate with grades in freshman composition; in fact, a stronger correlation exists between SAT Math scores and composition grades. He concludes that final comp grades

do not correlate with students' writing ability and that "teacher effects" shape grades. In his conclusion, Lerner calls for writing center professionals to do the following:

> [Conduct] more research—quantitative and qualitative—that examines effects with far more impact than course or paper grades. I believe we need to link writing center outcomes to larger writing center values and theories, as well as to college/university-wide goals. … I call for us to be evaluated on our own terms, to lend our expertise to discussions of outcomes assessment, and to pursue our goal to make writing—and writing centers—central to improvement of teaching and learning. (3)

He also urges that studies must be "statistically and logically sound" and should ensure that assessment is "tied to our values and theories, as well as to larger institutional goals as described in college or departmental strategic plans or mission statements" (4). Denny and Salem echo this call in later scholarly work. Lerner's work helps writing center professionals understand the importance of multiple measures.

In 2001, Casey Jones summarizes a number of quantitative studies of writing centers that measure improvement directly and indirectly and outlines methodological research problems. In answering whether writing center use improves student writing, he takes into consideration types of writing centers, diverse students, and diverse writing genres. Jones does not try to measure direct improvement, but examines, "ways in which writing center activities can influence writing performance, and the delicate line between measurable and intangible outcomes that researchers tread in this field" (5). He states that it is difficult to control "for the influence of confounding factors" (6) from samples of diverse students, in diverse centers, who use writing centers on an irregular basis.

Further, a shift in composition studies from product-oriented work to process-oriented work makes it seem irrelevant to evaluate student products, which may vary from paper to paper even from the same student in the same class (5). Jones argues that while it may be hard to quantify the impact of writing center use, the testimony of people who use writing centers is proof of their effectiveness. Jones' study indicates the need for writing centers to shift away from the product-oriented assessments that administrators often request, to assess if and how writing centers are helping student writers develop as critical thinkers.

Whether quantitative or qualitative, most writing centers assess student writers' satisfaction with their services or whether visiting the writing center increases student writers' confidence about writing. Numerous examples of measurement tools in such studies are available from various sources; end-of-session evaluations are the most common. However, writing center director Beth Kalikoff (2001) writes about a history of failed end-of-session evaluation within the writing center at The University of Washington's Tacoma campus. Kalikoff argues that end-of-session surveys are unhelpful because student writers do not take time to fill them out accurately and those who do are always positive. The surveys do not provide any useful way for thinking about improving the writing center. Her center put other types of measures in place, including a faculty focus group, as well as client and tutor surveys. She proposes a "mosaic strategy"—using three to five evaluation methods geared toward different audiences—for assessment, and outlines five reasons to develop the strategy. According to Kalikoff, mosaic evaluation strategies are "tools for teaching and learning as well as for evaluation" (7), which allow writing center professionals to discern and analyze patterns of response with some degree

of confidence; provide a richer understanding of how our work is perceived through a combination of quantifiable and ethnographic data; practice our collaborative pedagogy; collect data and gain the opportunity to study quantifiable and ethnographic results in relation to each other and to scholarly questions of pedagogy and assessment (7).

In 2001, Peter Carino and Doug Enders research whether frequency of visits to the writing center increase student satisfaction with writing center services. They hypothesized that the level of satisfaction would increase as the number of visits increased. They designed surveys to collect quantitative data and included 399 students in a sample from three different required writing courses. Some of their findings are statistically significant, but none are statistically strong. Frequency of visits did not affect student satisfaction or students' perceptions of consultants' ability to help them do their own work; it did influence students' perceptions of consultants' knowledge, students' confidence, and their perceptions that their writing improved (96).

Salem talks about her work to reinvent student satisfaction surveys at Temple University in a 2009 podcast. She states that her center always "thought we had to [conduct satisfaction surveys], but didn't give too much thought as to what we wanted to learn [from] it." Working with statisticians at Temple, Salem's new survey examines factors that contribute to or detract from student satisfaction. By way of fifteen attitudinal questions, she asks whether the writing center's agenda of putting the writer's long-term development—"future development agenda"—over short-term goals for individual papers affect student writers' levels of satisfaction. Salem then conducts factor and cluster analysis to determine a relationship between the future development agenda and student satisfaction. In her results, dissatisfaction occurs when a poor fit exists between

the client's desire to improve this paper and the tutor's desire to help them grow as a writer. She reports 31% of student writers indicate satisfaction because of the future development factor; 60% indicate satisfaction that the session addressed their concerns about the current paper; and 9% indicate dissatisfaction with the future development agenda. As a result, her staff realize they want to be more explicit about the future development agenda.

Overall, given students' varying expectations of the writing center and attitudes toward writing assignments, student satisfaction surveys are not the most accurate way to assess the writing center. Many writing center professionals speculate that the immediate post-session timing of the session evaluation may influence the overwhelmingly positive results of these evaluations. Some professionals speculate that writers are not sure their evaluations are confidential and so are politely positive. Others speculate that students feel differently about their session in that moment, prior to receiving a grade on an assignment, than they do after receiving a grade or after some time to reflect. Focusing primarily on student writers' satisfaction at the exclusion of other audiences—faculty, administrators, and accrediting agencies—or purposes is a mistake. If writing center professionals can shift away from assessing student satisfaction and confidence toward assessing the teaching and learning from multiple points of view, it will help writing centers establish and maintain highly visible positions with colleges and universities.

In "When Hard Questions Are Asked: Evaluating Writing Centers," James Bell (2000) calls for more sophisticated evaluations from the writing center and advocates for "small-scale evaluation [which] focuses on one aspect of the program at a time" (16). Bell compares six evaluation orientations--Consumer-Oriented, Adversary-Oriented,

Management-Oriented, Naturalistic and Participant-Oriented, Expertise-Oriented, and

Objectives-Oriented—and concludes that "whether trying to improve writing processes,

increase self-confidence, foster critical thinking, or place writing at the center of higher

education, writing centers are aiming to alter behavior, and objectives-oriented

evaluations specialize in documenting behavior change" (15). Just as criteria are essential

to critical thinking, they are imperative to good assessment. For Bell, clear criteria and

performance indicators distinguish the Objectives-oriented approach from other

approaches (Donnelli 17).

In his 2003 book chapter, Neal Lerner urges writing centers to assess outcomes,

noting that writing centers have been "slow to take up this challenge, partially because of

fears that outcomes talk might reduce the complexity of the work we do to "measurable"

gains outside the goals we hold for our centers" (67). Lerner suggests that writing center

professionals think more "broadly" of assessment measures, "in terms of such things as

students' development as writers and success as college students, as well as the ways the

writing center contributes to the professional development and future success of its

tutors" (67).

Given the various forms (formal to informal) and uses (writing to think and

writing to communicate) of writing, compositionists have long warned against

assessment for the sake of assessment. They often argue that one student paper does not

reflect one student's overall ability as a writer. Additionally, variations in instructor

teaching and evaluation styles prevent educators from making strong conclusions about

the teaching and learning that occurs in such papers or courses. Compositionists call

instead for evaluation, both in the classroom and in departments or programs, which

contributes to and does not impede learning. In 1993, Peter Elbow posits "evaluation harms the climate for learning and teaching… constant evaluation by someone in authority makes students reluctant to take the risks that are needed for good learning…" (197). Evaluation for the sake of evaluation can diminish learning. However, evaluation for the sake of learning on the part of educators and students alike can be extremely fruitful. This type of evaluation can, as Lerner says, have "far more impact than course or paper grades" (3).

Building on this idea, in a 2002 article, "Toward a New Theory of Writing Assessment" Brian Huot argues that assessment should be used as a means of teaching students about writing, arguing that "seeing the ability to assess as a process links it to the writing process and embeds assessment within the process of learning to write" ("New Theory" 177). Assessments of cognitive development in the writing center not only place a value on writers' various, complex processes, but they also follow Huot's call in another 2002 article, "Toward a New Discourse of Assessment for the College Classroom," that assessment practices "reflect the values important to an understanding of how people learn to read and write" ("New Discourse" 549). To that end, assessment design should recognize the importance of context and create an "environment for reading and writing that is sensitive to the purpose and criteria for successful communication in which student ability in writing becomes part of a community's search for value and meaning" ("New Discourse" 563). This search requires student writers to develop the ability to summarize, synthesize, and analyze material, while recognizing opposing points of view and attempting to develop their own arguments or to solve problems. Huot argues, "currently, new ideas in measurement theory are being supported

by the same theoretical movements in the social construction of knowledge that are used to explore and explain written communication in a postmodern age" ("New Discourse" 550). Assessing cognitive development activities acknowledges that the student writer/consultant relationship manifests the socially constructed nature of critical thought and knowledge.

Numerous composition scholars espouse the importance of recognizing the social construction of knowledge. Kenneth Bruffee asserts a need for universities "to create and maintain a demanding academic environment that makes collaboration—social engagement in intellectual pursuits—a genuine part of students' educational development" (652). Donald Bushman, among others, has noted that Andrea Lunsford discusses the writing center as a "Burkean parlor" encouraging the collaborative construction of knowledge. Bushman argues the following:

> At the time it was written, Lunsford's essay helped to reinforce our view of the writing center as a site for learning consistent with the dominant paradigm in composition studies, the view that knowledge is socially constructed. Lisa Ede, too, suggests that the social-constructionist model provides a 'theoretical foundation' for the work that goes on in writing centers. (6)

Writing center practice should be assessed with its foundation in the theory of a social construction of knowledge in mind.

It has long been established that those who teach writing in any discipline should consider these theories. In 1987 Mark L. Waldo writes:

> It makes sense to me to go to a less-discipline-controlled theoretical base, evolved from the developmental research of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner,

the psychology of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, the linguistics of

Noam Chomsky, William Perry's findings on critical thinking in college-

aged students, and research into writing and thinking done by Geroge

Hillocks, Arthur Applebee, and Judith Langer, to name a few. Just one of

many possible theoretical frames, this one has an important advantage. It

is bound, not by what one discipline values about writing, but by insights

into human development and learning, especially with regard to language

and thinking. (25)

He further suggests that the writing center is the most logical place for a writing across

the curriculum program to build this theoretical framework that encourages thought and

discovery through dialogue. Assessing learning outcomes best addresses the

collaborative, exploratory talk at the heart of the writing center.

METHODS

Grounded in these current discussions of writing center assessment, the assessment implemented in the University Writing Center at UNC Asheville during the spring 2011 semester sought to do the following: 1) link UWCSLOs to University SLOs 2) consider writing process over product 3) capture quantitative data that would be useful to the university administration as well as the Writing Center Director 4) reflect the Writing Center's contribution to critical thinking on campus 5) reflect best theory and practice of current research.

The study examined students' perceptions of higher- and lower-level cognitive development activities that take place in a typical writing center session. The categories that Kunka developed (in conjunction with English faculty at Francis Marion University), based on Anderson's revision of Bloom's taxonomy, "generally measure student writers' activities in understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating conceptual and procedural knowledge" (10). The aim was to capture data about higher- and lower-level cognitive development activities that take place.

UNC Asheville Writing Center typically serves 400-500 students during the spring semester. The study, conducted during the busiest six weeks of the spring 2011 semester (March 21 to April 22), included 182 writing center sessions between undergraduate consultants and student writers. All student writers who came to the writing center during this time were asked to participate in the study. If they agreed, they were asked to sign and submit consent forms (Appendix 2). Data were collected from two hundred sessions. Of the two hundred sessions, 182 were followed from intake to post

session. Ninety-two sessions were followed through to a follow-up survey. Sessions ran

between 10 minutes and 150 minutes, with a mean of 46 minutes, a typical range.

Assessment tools included the following:

1) Appendix 2 – CLIENT CONSENT FORM

2) Appendix 3 – CONSULTANT CONSENT FORM

3) Appendix 4 - INTAKE FORM (completed by student writer).

4) Appendix 5 - CONFERENCE SUMMARY (completed by consultant).

5) Appendix 6 - SESSION EVALUATION (completed by student writer).

6) Appendix 7 - FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SURVEY (sent one week after sessions

and completed by student writer).

A comparison between response items on Intake forms, Conference Summaries,

Client Evaluations, and Follow-up Interviews allowed an examination of student writers'

pre-writing center session comprehension of the writing task and post-writing center

session comprehension of the task. For the purposes of the study, response items

consistent with well-established parts of the center's practices were added to Intake and

Conference Summary forms. A Session Evaluation form was revised for purposes of this

study, and a Follow-up Email Survey was created specifically for this study. The

response items correlated to a variety of cognitive development activities that students

engage in during writing center sessions. Measures taken at intake and post-session

allowed for consideration of what students might have learned about the areas of writing

that need development. With the exception of the Follow-up Email Survey, all forms

contained the same response items.

The design of the study required student writers to select checkboxes on an Intake

form that indicated what they thought they needed to focus on in their writing. At the conclusion of sessions, consultants selected the cognitive development activities that they observed writers perform during tutorials on a Conference Summary form. Additionally, student writers selected activities they engaged in during sessions on a Session Evaluation form. The Session Evaluation form also asked them to respond to two scaled items: "I have a better understanding of my writing task after my tutorial" and "As a result of my tutorial, I have a plan for the next step in my writing process." This form also gave students the opportunity to provide comments after each scaled item. A number was assigned to each session, and consent forms, signed by both student writers and consultants, were kept separately in a private file available only to the Principal Investigator and Director of the University Writing Center throughout this project.

While it did examine students' confidence about their ability to produce and revise written products, the study did not include an assessment of students' satisfaction, written products, or overall academic achievement.

RESULTS

The study included students from across grade levels as reflected in Table 2. The study

sample is representative of overall WC clients in a typical spring semester. The Writing

Center served 536 unique visitors (149 freshman, 79 sophomores, 95 juniors, 138 seniors,

and 82 others, i.e. MLA, alumni, WCU students). Usage statistics for the UWC during

the 2010-2011 year show that freshmen accounted for 31% of usage; Sophomores 15% of

usage, Juniors 23% of usage, and Seniors 20% of usage, which is similar to the class

level distribution for study participants. Significantly, the highest usage percentage came

from Freshmen who were required to take an introductory colloquium and an

introductory composition course (unless they placed out of it).

Table 2: Writing Center Usage by Class Standing		
	Spring 2011 Usage by Class Standing	**2010-2011 Usage by Class Standing**
Freshmen	38%	31%
Sophomore	11%	15%
Junior	28%	23%
Senior	20%	20%
Faculty/Staff	0%	0%
Graduate	3%	6%
Other	0%	5%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

As shown in Table 3, students taking courses in the Humanities accounted for 55% of

client visits. Students from more than 38 majors and academic programs utilized the

UWC. The highest percentage of use came from within the Humanities.

Table 3: Writing Center Usage by Academic Discipline		
	Spring 2011 Usage by Academic Discipline	2010-2011 Usage by Academic Discipline
Biology	3%	3%
Business	0%	1%
Education	2%	3%
Fine Arts	3%	2%
Graduate	1%	1%
Health and Wellness	0%	4%
Humanities	64%	55%
Journalism	5%	3%
Mathematics	0%	1%
Other	8%	12%
Philosophy	2%	2%
Physical Sciences	4%	5%
Psychology	1%	1%
Social Sciences	8%	7%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Table 4 lists cognitive development activities in order from higher-level concerns to lower-level concerns and outlines the response difference between areas of writing that student writers expected to focus on upon entering a session and the areas of writing they reported focusing on post-session, as well as the consultants' reported areas of focus:

| Table 4: Cognitive Development Activities					
Cognitive Development Activity	Student Intake (Pre-Session)	Student Session Evaluation (Post-session)	Response Difference Between Student Writers' Focus – Pre- and Post-Session	Consultant Summary Report (Post-Session)	Response Difference Between Student Writers' and Consultants' Focus Post-Session
Generate ideas	42.9	57.1	14.2	41.8	15.3
Explain my ideas	30.2	51.6	21.4	42.3	9.3
Organize my ideas	68.7	66.5	-2.2	63.2	3.3
Create a thesis	25.3	31.3	6	27.5	3.8
Critique my draft	63.7	61	-2.7	67	-6
Understand my assignment	16.5	29.1	12.6	22	7.1
Analyze sources	12.1	13.2	1.1	12.1	1.1
Summarize sources	7.7	6	-1.7	4.9	1.1
Apply writing conventions	26.4	31.9	5.5	33.5	-1.6
Understand grammatical concepts	25.3	31.9	6.6	36.8	-4.9
Use citation formats	25.3	18.1	-7.2	15.9	2.2

Post-session, over 60% of student writers indicated "critiquing my draft" or "organizing my ideas" as focus areas, while over 40% indicated "generate ideas," and 30% indicated "explain my ideas."

As seen in in Figure 2, student writers frequently reported completing higher-level cognitive development activities at higher rates than they requested on intake. They reported "generating ideas" 14% more than requested on intake, "explaining ideas" 21% more than requested on intake, and "understanding my assignment" 13% more than requested on intake.

Figure 2: Changes in Higher-Order Cognitive Development Activities

Generate ideas
- Expected, 43%
- Experienced, 57%
- Reported, 42%

Explain my ideas
- Expected, 30%
- Experienced, 52%
- Reported, 42%

Understand my assignment
- Expected, 17%
- Experienced, 29%
- Reported, 22%

(x-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%)
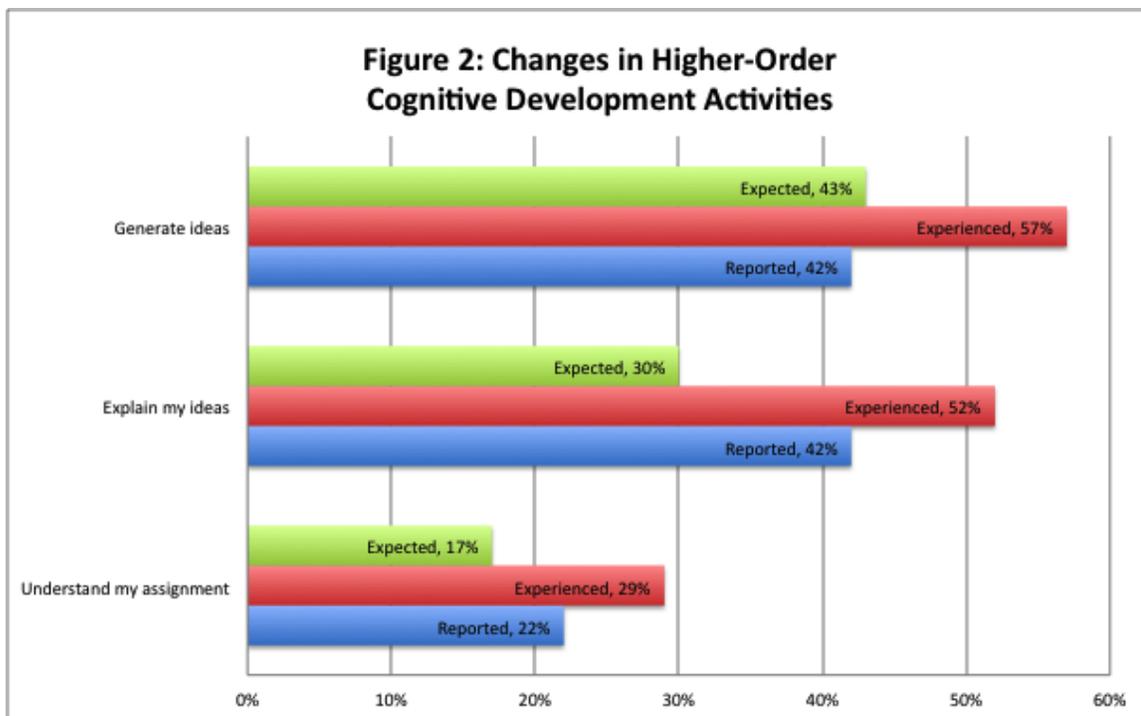
Between pre- and post-session, student writers' reports of needed focus on lower-level activities, such as "use citation formats" dropped 7% while "apply writing conventions" increased 6% and "understand grammatical concepts" increased 7%.

Figure 3: Changes in Lower-Order Cognitive Development Activities

Use citation formats
- Expected, 25
- Experienced, 18
- Reported, 16

Understand grammatical concepts
- Expected, 25
- Experienced, 32
- Reported, 37

Apply writing conventions
- Expected, 26
- Experienced, 32
- Reported, 34

(x-axis: 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40)
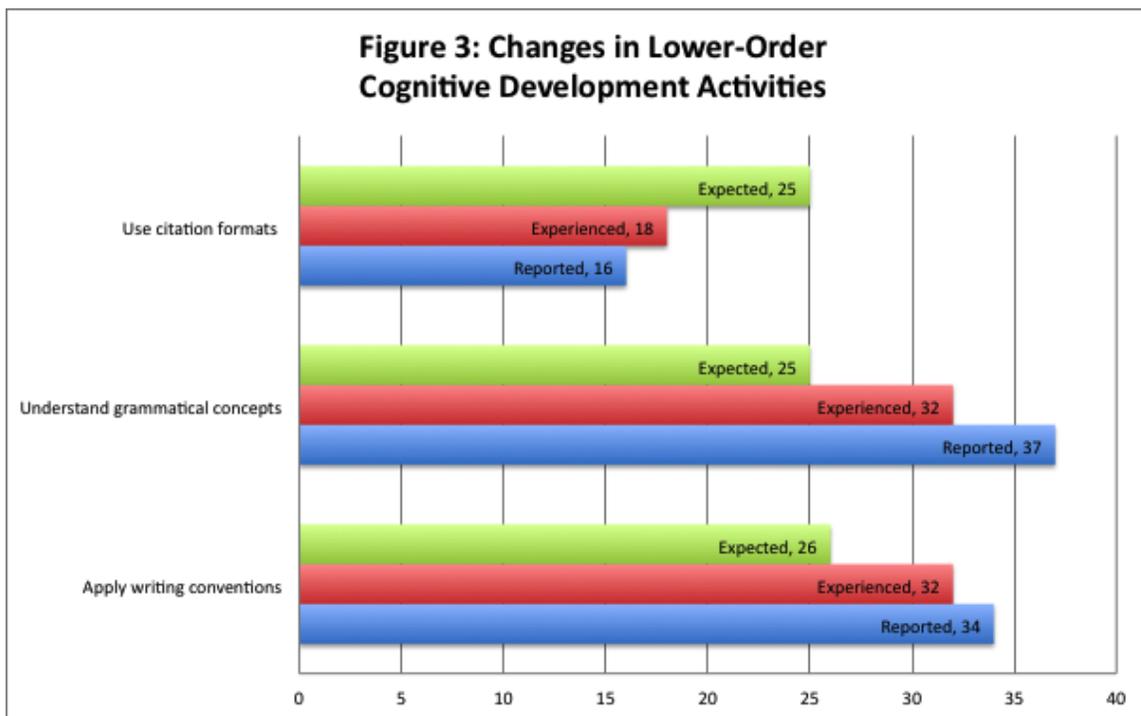
The two questions asked on the Session Evaluation forms sought to assess whether students were reaching the third learning objective established for the writing center: "Upon checking out of the center, students express confidence in their ability to revise their texts." Respondents indicated high levels of agreement that they have a better understanding of their writing task (97% checked "strongly agree" and "agree.") and a plan for the next step in their writing process (99% checked "strongly agree" and "agree") as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Session Evaluation Comments					
	% Agree or Strongly Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
Response Item 2: I have a better understanding of my writing task after my tutorial.	97.2	58.6	38.7	2.2	0.6
Response Item 3: As a result of my tutorial, I have a plan for the next step in my writing process.	99.4	70.6	28.9	0.0	0.6

Organized by the cognitive development activity they relate to, comments on response item 2 of the Session Evaluation, "I have a better understanding of my writing task after my tutorial," included the following:

Generate ideas
- This session was extremely helpful. [My consultant] helped me generate my thoughts/ideas in outline formation.

Explain my ideas
- [My consultant] really helped me think more abstractly about my paper and develop my ideas.
- I received benefit from hearing myself explain ideas and having them reflected back, plus the feedback.
- Have a better idea of where I am going with paper. More ideas for advantages and disadvantages.

- Really helped me generate good ideas.

Organize my ideas
- This helps me be a better writer and make a thorough argument.
- Made me see some things I was missing in my outline. Helped me organize outline to better form a thesis.
- I learned a lot about organizing a paper.
- Yes! I understand how my paper should flow now and how I should organize the paper.
- I have an outline!
- Helped me decide on organization issues.
- It was great! It helped me organize everything and understand comments from my professor for my assignment in order to better it.
- I consider myself a strong writer, but had problems figuring out the best way to frame my response.
- He did a really great job with helping me structure and organize my ideas!
- This meeting is helping my ideas to cohere efficiently.
- This meeting helped me form my paper.

Create a thesis
- I have created a thesis and have a clearer idea of the direction of my paper.

Understand my assignment
- I was unsure about the assignment, now I understand what I need to write about.
- Outstanding session. I am ready to go and write my paper. Through [my consultant's] help, I now have a more reasonable understanding of how my paper should be laid out and how to accomplish my task to the best of my abilities.

Analyze sources
- I feel more motivated to complete my paper with strong evidence of the points that I make.
- [My consultant] helped me see what I had to before I write: gather quotes, find them, and formulate the ideas I had into the paper.
- I feel more motivated to complete my paper with strong evidence of the points that I make.
- Yes, he showed me some points that I need to expand upon.
- This really helped me get my ideas down. Worked with me to plan other avenues to consider, presented more possibilities.

Understand grammatical concepts
- Any questions were explained and she helped me understand why/where corrections were being made.
- I have a better grasp of the checking over process for grammatical errors and research structure.

- I know how to address scholarships.

Kudos
- I really missed a lot and after my session I really figured it out.
- I had a lot of help and I feel my paper is a lot better than before.
- Really helped. I'm glad I came.
- She did well & caught a few things I had missed. She was great.
- I know exactly what I have to do to make my paper an A.
- This has been a lifesaver for me. I now know exactly what I am going to write about and how I am going to use it.
- I now have a much more concise and defined paper.
- Helped me clarify my goals and my strengths and weaknesses.
- Just offers clear picture of what good writing is and specific know how on the ways to make it happen.
- Extremely helpful sorting through the mess that is my writing style.

Organized by the phase of the writing process they relate to, comments on response item

3 of the Session Evaluation, "As a result of my tutorial, I have a plan for the next step in

my writing process," included the following:

Begin Writing
- Find a couple of sources and analyze specific scenes of the movie more intently, then start writing.
- Begin writing
- Talking through my ideas and thoughts will help me generate more ideas for my paper as well.
- I have an outline!
- I will follow the previously discussed to format and write.
- I have an outline of what my essay should look like, and I now just have to plug in the information.
- I know what sources I need to find.
- Decide what I want to focus on.
- I now have a rock solid plan on what I am going to do.
- Start writing the paper
- Yes, created a plan, had a "lightbulb" moment.
- Gonna go write it now.

Revise
- With comments I'm going back and editing the suggestions.
- The feedback was great! Now I know what I want to do for my novel!

- My tutor was very helpful in critiquing my draft and helping me to refine my paper. I now have a good idea of what to correct for my final revision and have learned a lot. Thank you Writing Center!!!
- Revise and edit!
- I already had a good idea, but she helped clarify my thoughts.
- Helped me understand the direction I needed to go next.
- Revise again.
- Fix what issues I have in my draft.
- I now know how to edit my paper and what to look for during the process.
- Usually, when writing a paper, I always hit a dead end where I have no idea what to do with it next. The Writing Center is always extremely useful for generating new ideas and organizing your thoughts so you can proceed to the next step.
- I received good assistance with the development of my research paper's introduction.
- Received help for half of paper. Will be back.
- Make a progressive outline.
- The outline that we created definitely helped me understand the next improvement I will make to my paper.
- I will be returning for help on my draft.
- A lot of solid ideas to help me improve my paper.
- Work on what we talked about and meet back on Monday to go over everything.
- I will definitely be back.
- Oh yes! All I need to do is revise and I'm done.
- I plan to edit, factoring in the above insights gained from my session.
- I have direction for my work now.
- Yes! I understand how my paper should flow now and how I should organize the paper.
- Write my Intro!

Turn it in
- I am finished!
- Turning it in!
- My paper is already done.
- I really think after all my paper adjustments that I have a chance to get an A.
- Re-read, then submit.

As shown in Table 6, ninety-two student writers also completed follow-up surveys by email (a 49% return rate). Of those students, 99% "agree" or "strongly agree" that they were able to apply concepts learned during the conference to their current assignment, 92% "agree" or "strongly agree" that they were able to apply concepts to this

and other courses during the semester, and 97% "agree" or "strongly agree" that they would be able to apply the concepts learned during the session to future writing situations.

Table 6: Follow-up Email Survey					
	% Agree or Strongly Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
Response Item 1: I was able to apply the concepts I learned during the conference to the assignment I worked on.	98.9	60.9	38	1.1	0
Response Item 2: I will be able to apply the concepts I learned to writing in this and other courses this semester.	92.4	52.2	40.2	6.5	1
Response Item 3: I will be able to apply the concepts I learned in future writing situations.	96.7	57.6	39.1	3.3	0

DISCUSSION

Learning outcome assessment is useful not only for improving student writing products, but for speaking to the concerns of writing center directors, consultants, student writers, faculty, and administrators alike. Examining usage statistics' relationship to the operational goals of the writing center is essential if writing centers are to establish and maintain the importance of their place in academic culture; operational data often answers the broad questions that university administrators pose. However, writing center assessment should not stop at these operational goals; it can and must begin to incorporate more assessment of learning outcomes into its practices.

Comparing student writers' areas of cognitive focus pre- and post-session indicates that student writers' awareness of higher-level concerns, such as "generating ideas," and "explain my ideas," and "understand my assignment," involved in the writing process increased during a writing center session. They also gained knowledge of lower-level concerns during writing center sessions. Significantly, student writers reported greater engagement with higher-level, idea-based activities than consultants observed, suggesting that, during the course of a writing center session, student writers gain awareness of higher-level development required in their writing. This finding illustrates the social cognitive theories at work in the writing center and evidences the importance of the role of conversation in creating connections between thought and language, which come together to create knowledge. The higher rate of cognitive development activity student writers report shows that writing center sessions may act as a catalyst for increasing student writers' awareness of writing terminology and writing conventions and proficiency in thinking and learning. Connecting the results of this study to both

demographic information and written products, such as e-portfolios of student writers' work would further strengthen its evidence.

The levels of cognitive development activity experienced by student writers suggests that students shift away from lower-level cognitive developmental activities toward higher-level cognitive development activities during writing center sessions. They also suggest that an increase in awareness of grammar and mechanics occurs. Additionally, while students often come to the writing center to request help with citation only, they frequently engage higher order cognitive development activities.

Student writers' post-session reports and consultants' session summaries suggested that perceptions of what happens during a session differ between student writers and consultants. As seen in Figure 2, student writers indicated a higher rate of cognitive development activities in writing center sessions than the consultants observed. Additionally, consultants demonstrated flexibility in responding to requests noted on Intake forms as well as to areas of needed focus that arose naturally during the session.

The results for response item 2 on the Session Evaluation forms (2. I have a better understanding of my writing task after my tutorial) suggest that nearly all student writers find writing center sessions to be productive; they take away a greater understanding of their assignments. Results for response item 3 (3. As a result of my tutorial, I have a plan for the next step in my writing process) suggest that student writers are confident in their ability to recognize and address aspects of their writing that need development. As writing center professionals develop assessment tools that accurately capture what occurs in the center and student writers' expectations of the writing center come into alignment

with UWCSLOs end-of-session surveys may yield more precise, reliable, and useful results.

Notably, the results of the Follow-up Email Surveys indicate that student writers retain knowledge gained during their sessions, apply it to current coursework, and plan to apply it to future writing situations. Developing higher-level cognitive skills prepares students to use writing as a tool for thought and communication critical for students' overall achievement. The overwhelmingly positive results seen in follow-up interviews, however, is fully reliant on self-reporting and could be highly speculative on the part of the student. More accurate ways of assessing these questions would be to follow up with focus groups and link results to student writers' portfolios.

Student expectations of the services the writing center provides are various, with many student writers asking for help with lower-level concerns, such as proofreading or editing papers. However, these student writers leave the writing center having engaged more deeply in cognitive development than expected. Giving students the language to recognize the types of cognitive development they engage during various writing tasks helps to give consultants and student writers a common language for talking about writing. As student writers begin to be familiar with this language, they gain a better understanding of what to expect from the writing center. In their session summary reports, consultants also begin to provide faculty with the same common language.

Furthermore, this study begins to link writing center learning outcomes with university learning outcomes. That undergraduate consultants and student writers engage in higher-level cognitive development activities during writing center sessions illustrates how the writing center meets the first UWCSLO: "Students engage in higher-level

cognitive development activities in writing center sessions, including critiquing their drafts, understanding grammatical concepts, generating ideas, explaining ideas, and organizing ideas." In turn, meeting this UWCSLO enables student writers' to move toward the following USLO: "Students develop skills in critical thinking, clear and thoughtful communication, creative expression, and honest open inquiry."

This study also provides some evidence of ways the writing center meets the second UWCSLO, "Consultants demonstrate flexibility in helping a diverse range of students develop skills necessary for success with different parts of the writing process." Writing center consultants assist students from across disciplines and grade levels. Capturing other demographic variables of study participants, such as gender and ethnic distribution and various types of student populations, was beyond the scope of this study. Such data could provide further insights into who uses the Writing Center, as well as how the use of the writing center contributes to overall academic achievement.

Finally, the positive results indicated on Follow-up Email Surveys show that writing center sessions help student writers reach the third UWCSLO, "Upon checking out of the center, students express confidence in their ability to revise future texts." These findings may also imply that as student writers are able to develop their cognitive skills, they will be able to perform better in their studies at UNC Asheville and in their work beyond the university. However, stronger links are needed between this learning outcome and the USLO, "Students are prepared to engage in lifelong learning." Such links would require longitudinal studies and more in-depth qualitative data reported alongside of quantitative data.

    Overall, with these results, assessment of the writing center begins to identify and

link the work to the university's student learning outcomes and mission statement as

Table 7 illustrates:

Table 7: University Mission and SLOs and UWC Mission and SLOs	
University Mission:	**University SLOs:**
Our liberal arts educational approach emphasizes life skills including critical thinking, clear and thoughtful expression, and honest open inquiry. … We encourage students to clarify, develop and live their own values while respecting the views and beliefs of others. … We believe a quality liberal arts education enables our graduates to be lifelong learners and to lead successful, flourishing lives as leaders and contributors to their communities.	Outcome 1: Students develop skills in critical thinking, clear and thoughtful communication, creative expression, and honest open inquiry. Outcome 3: Students develop respect for the differences among people and ideas, and learn to clarify and articulate their own values. Outcome 6: Students are prepared to engage in lifelong learning.
University Writing Center Mission:	**University Writing Center SLOs:**
Supporting the development of students as writers, the University Writing Center promotes academic practices based on open inquiry, critical thinking, and truth seeking through multiple perspectives. The UWC models and works with a diverse community of both students and faculty to provide a challenging education in the liberal arts. The UWC works to integrate writing with learning throughout a student's life at UNC Asheville and beyond.	Outcome 1: Students engage in higher-level critical thinking activities in writing center sessions, including cognitive development activities, such as critiquing drafts, understanding grammatical concepts, generating ideas, explaining ideas, and organizing ideas. Outcome 2: Consultants demonstrate flexibility in helping a diverse range of students develop skills necessary for success with different parts of the writing process. Outcome 3: Upon checking out of the center, students express confidence in their ability to revise future texts.

IMPLICATIONS

An important shift in the assessment practices of the UWC at UNC Asheville is represented in this study, which captures quantitative and qualitative data of newly established student learning outcomes. The data captured complement other operational and qualitative assessments currently in place. Significantly, this research illustrates the Writing Center's contribution to the development of student writers' higher-order cognitive processes as they engage various writing assignments across the disciplines. Future improvements to this assessment need to include refinement in the terminology used to describe categories of cognitive development activities. In particular, the activity "critique my draft" needs to be revised into more specific language. The broader phrasing of "critique my draft" may influence the high percentage of responses to it. Furthermore, it is not clear what student writers think "critique" means the tutor will do. Assessment instruments need to specify which aspects of the draft are being critiqued. For instance, "critique my thesis," "critique my cohesion and coherence," "critique my conclusion," or "critique my introduction," may be used instead. Additionally, low reported percentages of "analyze sources" and "summarize sources" indicate that consultants do not help student writers integrate research into writing as much as casual observation suggests. Consultants may need more in-depth training about terminology and ways to help writers with these tasks. An improved follow-up interview process is needed. In the Fall of 2011, the University Writing Center implemented a qualitative assessment of similar learning processes in both Intake and Session Evaluation forms, which will allow student writers to describe the cognitive development they perceive in their own terms. Finally, future assessments linked to this study may also implement focus groups or personal interviews.

Furthermore, this study assesses the collaborative learning and cognitive development that writing center professionals value with quantitative data that administrators recognize as valid and qualitative data useful to the center. If student writers are able to develop their cognitive skills, they will be able to perform better in their studies at UNC Asheville and in their work beyond the university. This assessment practice can help administrators see and express the benefits of the writing center within the framework of the university's learning outcomes.

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Appendix 1

A Heuristic for Writing Center Assessment Neal Lerner & Harvey Kail Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors, 2004 Clark University, Worcester, MA	
Assessment Question	**Possible Methods**
How many students visited the writing center?	Count from intake forms, appointment books, and/or session forms.
Who visited the writing center?	Sort demographic data by class, year, gender, ESL/non-ESL, department/division, etc.
Why did students visit the writing center?	Survey WC clients; conduct focus-group interviews (via email or face-to-face).
Why did students *not* visit the writing center?	Survey general student population; conduct focus-group interviews (via email or face-to-face).
How satisfied were students with their writing center sessions?	Administer exit surveys; make follow-up contact (via phone, email, campus mail).
What effect did writing center visits have on students' writing?	Compare pre- and post-writing center samples; survey clients; survey faculty.
What effect do writing center visits have on students' larger academic experience?	Plug into larger academic surveys (e.g., CIRP), compare retention of writing center users versus non-users (of a similar demographic).
What have been the effects of tutoring on the tutors? Adapt each question about students above to apply to tutors.	Tutors complete self-assessments; conduct interviews; survey tutor alumni.
What is the history of the writing center?	Consult writing center records, college catalog, yearbooks, student newspapers, committee minutes (where writing center budget might have been determined).
How well does the writing center meet students' needs?	Survey students in writing-intensive classes and faculty who teach with writing.
How aligned is the writing center with the college's mission?	Examine mission/goal statements, self-studies and accreditation reports.
What is the effect of the writing center's environment on the work that goes on there?	Conduct environmental survey; alter the environment and see what happens.
How does the writing center compare to other similar ones?	Consult WCRP data (http://www.wcrp.louisville.edu/); attend regional WCA meetings.

Appendix 2 — CLIENT CONSENT FORM   **CLIENT NUMBER: _____**

Graduate Student Researcher: Joy Neaves
Title of Project: Learning in the Writing Center

I am asking for your voluntary participation in a study of the learning that takes place in the University Writing Center. Please read the following information about the study. If you would like to participate, please sign below.

The purpose of the project is to assess the learning that occurs in a typical Writing Center Session and to help the writing center improve its practices. If you participate, you will be asked to fill out an intake form, a session evaluation form, and to complete a five-minute e-mail survey a week after your visit. Total time required for participation: approximately 10 minutes. Risks: None. Benefits: No direct benefits. The information collected will appear in a thesis that will be available to the public through the WCU library. Confidentiality will be maintained. A client number will be assigned to you, and your signed consent form will be kept separately in a private file throughout this project. Only the Director of the Writing Center and the Graduate researcher will have access to these files. Your name will not be used in the study. Names will be removed to maintain confidentiality. If you request it, reports of your visits to the writing center will still be sent to faculty separately from the information gathered for this study.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact Deaver Traywick at 251-6593 or traywick@unca.edu. Or the Institutional Review Board at Western Carolina University: irb@wcu.edu or 828-227-7212.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent/assent to participate or permission for you to use my responses in your study.

Signature:_____Date:_____

Print Name: _____

Email address (for follow-up interview): _____

Appendix 3 — CONSULTANT CONSENT FORM Consultant NUMBER: _____

Graduate Student Researcher: Joy Neaves
Title of Project: Learning in the Writing Center

I am asking for your voluntary participation in a study of the learning that takes place in the University Writing Center. Please read the following information about the study. If you would like to participate, please sign below.

The purpose of the project is to assess the learning that occurs in a typical Writing Center Session and to help the writing center improve its practices. If you participate, you will be asked to enter data from an intake form and to fill out a conference summary report. Time required for participation: 5-10 minutes per writing center session. Risks: None. Benefits: No direct benefits. The information collected will appear in a thesis that will be available to the public through the WCU library. Confidentiality will be maintained. A consultant number will be assigned to you, and your signed consent form will be kept separately in a private file throughout this project. Only the Director of the Writing Center and the Graduate researcher will have access to these files. Your name will not be used in the study. Names will be removed to maintain confidentiality.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact Deaver Traywick at 251-6593 or traywick@unca.edu. Or contact the Institutional Review Board at Western Carolina University: irb@wcu.edu or 828-227-7212.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent/assent to participate or permission for you to use my responses in your study.

Signature:_____Date:_____

Print Name:

Appendix 4 – INTAKE FORM   **Session ID #: _____**

Welcome to the University Writing Center!
Please help us to help you by filling out this form.

Client Name:	Date:	Major:
Course name and number:	Instructor:	
Class Status: FR SO JR SR WCU ASU MLA UNCA Alumni **Other:**		

Is this your first session in the writing center? (Circle one):   **Y**   **N**

I would like for my writing consultant to help me (Check one or more.)

    ❑ Generate ideas   ❑ Critique my draft

    ❑ Explain my ideas   ❑ Understand my assignment

    ❑ Organize my ideas   ❑ Analyze sources

    ❑ Create a thesis   ❑ Summarize sources

    ❑ Apply writing conventions (capitalization, punctuation, etc.)

    ❑ Understand grammatical concepts (tense shift, subject-verb agreement, etc.)

    ❑ Use citation formats (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)

Would you like a summary of this session sent to your professor?   **Y**   **N**

Appendix 5 — CONFERENCE SUMMARY (completed by consultant)
Session Number: *
Class Standing: FR SO JR SR MLA ALUM WCU Community Member
Major: *
Date: *
Instructor: *   Course: *
1st Visit?: * Y N

Client's Areas of Concern: *
- ❑ Generate ideas
- ❑ Explain my ideas
- ❑ Organize my ideas
- ❑ Create a thesis
- ❑ Critique my draft
- ❑ Understand my assignment
- ❑ Analyze sources
- ❑ Summarize sources
- ❑ Apply writing conventions (i.e. capitalization, punctuation, etc.)
- ❑ Understand grammatical concepts (i.e. comma use, subject-verb agreement, etc.)
- ❑ Use citation formats (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
- ❑ Other _____

Areas Consultant Addressed: *
- ❑ Generate ideas
- ❑ Explain my ideas
- ❑ Organize my ideas
- ❑ Create a thesis
- ❑ Critique my draft
- ❑ Understand my assignment
- ❑ Analyze sources
- ❑ Summarize sources
- ❑ Apply writing conventions (i.e. capitalization, punctuation, etc.)
- ❑ Understand grammatical concepts (i.e. comma use, subject-verb agreement, etc.)
- ❑ Use citation formats (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
- ❑ Other _____

Conference Summary: *   Consultant: *   Appointment Length (in

minutes): * Send copy to instructor?: * Y   N

Appendix 6 — SESSION EVALUATION (by student). Session ID NO.: _____

Our Writing Consultants strive to provide professional assistance with all types of writing. Please help us to do our best by answering the following.

1. My consultant helped me: (Check one or more.)

- ❑ Generate ideas
- ❑ Explain my ideas
- ❑ Organize my ideas
- ❑ Create a thesis
- ❑ Critique my draft
- ❑ Understand my assignment
- ❑ Analyze sources
- ❑ Summarize sources
- ❑ Apply writing conventions (i.e. capitalization, punctuation, etc.)
- ❑ Understand grammatical concepts (i.e. comma use, subject-verb agreement, etc.)
- ❑ Use citation formats (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
- ❑ Other _____

2. I have a better understanding of my writing task after my tutorial.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

Comments:

3. As a result of my tutorial, I have a plan for the next step in my writing process.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix 7 —FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SURVEY
Email note:
Dear [Student Writer],

My name is Joy Neaves, and I am a graduate student conducting an evaluation of UNC Asheville's University Writing Center.

I'm following up on a conference you had in the Writing Center on [date]. You talked about an [assignment type] for [Professor's name and name of course].

The purpose of doing this email survey is to improve the services that the Writing Center offers to you. Your comments will be kept confidential.

Please click on the following link survey and enter your session number**.** The survey should only take a few minutes.

Thank you!

Joy Neaves

Web Form:
Session Number:

I was able to apply the concepts I learned during the conference to the assignment I worked on : *
Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Disagree**   **Strongly Disagree**

I will be able to apply the concepts I learned to writing in this and other courses this semester: *
Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Disagree**   **Strongly Disagree**

I will be able to apply the concepts I learned in future writing situations: *
Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Disagree**   **Strongly Disagree**

Do you have any comments on how the Writing Center could improve or what it's doing right that it should continue to do?: