3-2011

360 Degrees And 3-D: Holistic Assessment of Writing Centers

Alicia Alabbas  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Mary Arnold Schwartz  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne, schwartm@ipfw.edu*

Jane Ehle  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne, ehle@ipfw.edu*

Bruce Busby  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres](http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres)

Part of the [Higher Education Commons](http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres)

Opus Citation

Alicia Alabbas, Mary Arnold Schwartz, Jane Ehle, and Bruce Busby (2011). *360 Degrees And 3-D: Holistic Assessment of Writing Centers.* Presented at East Central Writing Centers Association Conference, Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, Michigan).  
[http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres/20](http://opus.ipfw.edu/studentaffairs_pres/20)

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Presentations by an authorized administrator of Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. For more information, please contact admin@lib.ipfw.edu.
360 DEGREES AND 3-D: HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF WRITING CENTERS

East Central Writing Centers Association Conference
March 4-5, 2011

Alicia Alabbas, Writing Consultant
Mary Arnold Schwartz, Writing Center Coordinator
Jane Ehle, Associate Director of CASA
Bruce Busby, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Success
WHERE IS THE IPFW WRITING CENTER?

- Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne
  - Enroll 14,192 undergraduate and master’s level graduate students
  - Northeast Indiana (most), Indiana (94%), all states but 8, and 252 countries

- Student Affairs
  - Academic Success Center—Bruce Busby, Associate Vice Chancellor
    - First Year Experience
    - Mastodon Advising Center
    - Center for Academic Support and Advancement (CASA)

- CASA—Jane Ehle, Associate Director
  - Learning Center—Jane Ehle
  - Writing Center—Mary Arnold Schwartz, Coordinator
    - Consultants—Alicia Alabbas, Graduate student in Communication
  - Math Test Center
360 Degrees and 3-D

University: The Globe
WE ASSESS TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE
360 Degrees and 3-D: Writing Center’s World
IN OTHER WORDS,

- Writing Center programming is always part of the student’s larger experience of the university.

- Writing Center operates always as part of the university’s contribution to student learning.
AGENDA

- Assessment is to improve
  - Programming effectiveness
    - Are we doing what we should and could be doing?
      - Do students’ learning during the consultation reflect the university’s goals for their learning? (Alicia Alabbas)
      - How do our consulting practices reflect disciplinary writing standards and our writing center discipline’s standards?
      - How does consulting with the Writing Center affect student learning? (Mary Arnold Schwartz)
      - How is our programming perceived and understood? (Jane Ehle)
      - What opportunities for programming can we consider? (Jane Ehle)
      - How can the university use Writing Center assessments? (Bruce Busby)
  - Programming reach
    - Are we reaching a sufficient percentage of the student population?
      - Our challenge
DO STUDENTS’ LEARNING DURING THE CONSULTATION REFLECT UNIVERSITY GOALS FOR THEIR LEARNING?

- Writing Center Observation form
Baccalaureate Degree Framework

- Acquisition of Knowledge
- Application of Knowledge
- Personal and Professional Values
- A Sense of Community
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication
SIX DEGREES OF CONNECTION

- Promoting student engagement
- Fostering a multicultural and international campus community
- Facilitating opportunities both inside and outside the classroom for student/faculty interaction
- Assisting students in identifying and acting on motivation for graduation
- Developing academic and social capital in our students
- Supporting a well and caring campus community
How do our consulting practices reflect disciplinary standards for writing?

- Standards for what we share about writing is strongly informed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ *WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition*.

- This statement also is used to establish standards for teaching in the IPFW Writing Program.
IPFW Writing Outcomes
(from WPA Outcomes)

Students shall be able to demonstrate measurable learning in the following categories:

- Rhetorical Knowledge
- Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
- Writing Processes (including the use of electronic resources, communication media, and word processing features)
- Knowledge of Conventions
WRITING CENTER MISSION

“The mission of the IPFW Writing Center is to help writers learn to use language more effectively, produce clear writing appropriate to their purposes and audiences, and develop positive attitudes about writing and about themselves as writers.”
HOW DO OUR CONSULTING PRACTICES REFLECT DISCIPLINARY STANDARDS FOR WRITING CENTERS?

- Staff education not tied to the English Department

- What are our field’s standards for consultant education?
  - Indiana Writing Centers meeting, November, 2009
  - Follow up meetings at IWCA @ CCCC, (2010) and ECWCA (2010)

- Incorporating visits from professors who discuss writing in their disciplines with the Writing Center staff during education meetings.
HOW DOES CONSULTING WITH THE WRITING CENTER AFFECT STUDENT LEARNING?

- Tables of information about our effectiveness with writers in first year composition
- What these tables suggest—we are quite effective with the writers who visit us.
How is the programming perceived and understood?

Contributors:
- Students
- Writing Center
- University Community

The Assessment:
- Who
  - Review participants
    - Ball State University 4 year doctorial granting institution
      - 18,000+ residential students
    - IPFW 4 year masters institution
      - 12,000 (700 residential students and remaining are commuting students at the time of review)
    - Rhodes State College – community college
      - 4000 students on quarter system
  - Stakeholders questioned
    - Students who use the services
    - Students who do not use the services or work for CASA
    - Students who work for CASA
    - Staff in other departments
    - Faculty
    - Administrators
- How:
A focus group is a guided discussion whose intent is to gather open-ended comments about a specific issue.

For student learning assessment, “specific issue” usually means student learning objective.

Usually involves a moderator, and between six and twelve participants who are chosen from a specific area of interest.

Requires careful creation of an interview guide after consultation with the interested parties (department chairs, etc.)

Requires careful content analysis.

Often used as a qualitative method of assessment in combination with other assessment methods (questionnaires, field observations, etc.)

Appears simple, but actually involves much work and coordination.
HOW IS THE PROGRAMMING PERCEIVED AND UNDERSTOOD?

• What:
  ○ 3 questions
    ○ What is your impression of the CASA Centers and their services?
    ○ What would the ideal academic support center look like?
    ○ How could CASA better market current or future support services?
  ○ The review
THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAMMING

• The assessment provided
  ○ Multiple inputs
  ○ University
  ○ Professionals
  ○ Goes beyond facts
  ○ Continuing programming
  ○ Benefits beyond programming
HOW CAN THE UNIVERSITY USE WRITING CENTER ASSESSMENTS?
Is the Writing Center reaching a sufficient number of students?

- Programming reach: Our Challenge at IPFW

- Reaching what percentage of the student body will satisfy us?
## Enrollment at IPFW—Fall Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>5,097</td>
<td>5,021</td>
<td>4,639</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>2,744</td>
<td>2,658</td>
<td>2,558</td>
<td>2,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>1,549</td>
<td>1,491</td>
<td>1,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2,346</td>
<td>2,255</td>
<td>2,099</td>
<td>1,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,836</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,168</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,472</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,340</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND-UG</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND-Grad</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,192</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,675</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,338</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,943</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Visits to WC—Fall Semesters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Visits</td>
<td>2487</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>1524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>1487/60.0%</td>
<td>831/39.8%</td>
<td>298/17.7%</td>
<td>338/22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>341/13.7%</td>
<td>555/26.6%</td>
<td>402/23.8%</td>
<td>236/15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>268/10.8%</td>
<td>224/10.7%</td>
<td>398/23.5%</td>
<td>288/19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>275/11.1%</td>
<td>358/17.2%</td>
<td>492/29.2%</td>
<td>562/36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>115/4.6%</td>
<td>115/5.5%</td>
<td>83/4.9%</td>
<td>81/5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Percentage of Student Body Consulted (as a % of Fall Degree-Seeking Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of Total Degree-Seeking Enrollment</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Total Enrollment</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

- Writing Center assessment should always involve looking at
  - Our consulting practices with student writers (including consultants) as individuals—and
    - How consulting practices effect the university’s plans for students’ learning
    - How the consulting practices (and center programming) reflect disciplinary and field standards (and variation in programming)
  - The learning outcomes of all the students visiting compared with those not visiting the Writing Center
  - How the Writing Center’s programming is perceived by its stakeholders and how to incorporate their suggestions
  - How the Writing Center’s programming and assessment contribute to the mission of the university
DISCUSSION

Feedback? Questions?

Potential discussion questions

What purposes for assessment does your center have that we have not addressed?

What other approaches do you use to assess your writing center’s effectiveness and reach?

How will you use our discussion when you return home?