Western Oregon UNIVERSITY

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# WOU STRATEGIC BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

## I. PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Title<br>New Position: Graduate Writing Specialist | | |
| Department<br>Writing Center | Requestor<br>K. Schmidt (with support from Graduate Committee) | |
| Requestor Email<br>schmidtk@wou.edu | Requestor Phone<br>88234 | Request Date<br>21 December 2017 |

## II. TIMEFRAME

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Proposed Dates** | Start | 1 September 2018 | End | N/A |

## III. PROPOSAL SUMMARY

*Make your summary **concise** and compelling. Avoid jargon and acronyms. A limit of 100 words is recommended.*

Graduate students need professional writing support in the evenings, on Saturdays, and online. The majority of graduate program faculty are not trained in writing pedagogy, and all exceed capacity in the area of giving specialized writing project support to their students outside of class. The Writing Center currently employs two 1.0 FTE writing specialists who serve as the primary support for specific student populations: bilingual Spanish-English speakers (15% of WOU population) and international students (6.7% of WOU population). As a result of increased usage and communication with faculty, the Writing Center has identified graduate students as an additional population in need of specialized support (8.5% of WOU population) and requests 1.0 FTE for a Graduate Writing Specialist.

## IV. PROPOSAL SCOPE

Describe the proposal and the expected outcomes if approved. Additional space available on the next page.

WOU's Enrollment Management Plan includes a 20% student-population target for graduate students by 2020, which requires thoughtful infrastructure to support both the goal and the students themselves. A Graduate Writing Specialist is essential for supporting projected growth in new areas of graduate studies. The specialist will provide professional support tailored to meet WOU graduate students' needs: in the evenings, on Saturdays, and online. The specialist will assist at every stage of the students' development as scholars and life-long writers (e.g., adjusting to and meeting graduate-level writing expectations; learning to navigate disciplinary conventions and genre; developing productive writing processes and habits; composing competitive job-application documents). Additionally, the specialist will facilitate in-class and out-of-class workshops, develop online interactive support and tutorials, and offer one-to-one coaching.

A Graduate Writing Specialist will also provide support to the Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee and the graduate programs, respectively, with goals that include interdisciplinary collaborations that focus on writing (Writing Center), research (Library), and content-specific outcomes (individual programs).

Outcomes include the following: (1) make services accessible to the majority of graduate students, (2) increase the writerly self-efficacy levels of graduate-student clients, and (3) create an active and consistent feedback and improvement loop between the Writing Center and graduate programs.

***Proposal Scope continued***

CONTEXT

The campus Writing Center's challenges in serving graduate programs are real and the direct result of a decision that was made by administration in 2015. Historically, the Writing Center has earmarked annually approximately $11,000 of tutor wages to hire professional tutors (i.e., recent graduates of WOU) to support graduate programs and high-usage disciplines, like Education and the Behavioral Sciences. In 2014, however, administration reduced Writing Center tutor wages by $11,000 because the monies were not paid to students (i.e., administrative reviewers failed to see that the monies were accounted for and spent in the temporary-employee line of the banner report). After more than one year of persistent lobbying, the Writing Center recovered the $11,000 but with one condition: the Writing Center could no longer employ professional tutors, for ease of accounting in the budget and finance offices. In an attempt to counteract the peer-tutors-only mandate, the Writing Center contacted Linda Stonecipher, the Provost, and both deans in 2016 seeking a GA position. The Writing Center was told, unfortunately, that the GA positions are for recruiting purposes, as opposed to program support. To complicate matters further, student-wages budgets have not been adjusted to accommodate the state-mandated increases, which means that student-support units are spending more while doing less. The rate summary put forward by Senate Bill 1532 includes the following for mandatory Oregon minimum wage increases: $7.95 in 2007, $10.25 in 2017, and $13.50 in 2022. A professional position would help alleviate the service strain that is being caused by the student-wages-budget flat line.

IMPACT

Like other student-worker-reliant units across campus, the Writing Center is now well into its tenth year without any increase in student wages; the Writing Center is also in its second year without professional tutors or the possibility of GAs. The result is the Writing Center lacks seasoned tutors who are well-versed in disciplinary expectations and genre conventions. With only 4 tutors who possess more than 10 months of tutoring experience and with another 7 who have not tutored more than one term, the Writing Center is struggling to meet the writing needs of the 445 graduate students (i.e., 8.5% of WOU students). Ultimately, the only foreseeable adverse primary impact to others comes from not doing anything.

SEE ATTACHED FOR THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

1. JUSTIFICATION

2. LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE FACULTY SENATE GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

3. DATA TO SUPPORT NEED/REQUEST

## V. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Describe the proposal's linkage to the university Strategic Plan.

By enhancing graduate student support services, WOU is being responsive to the needs of our non-traditional student population (I.4.3 and I.4.4).

By expanding services to include evening, weekend, and online opportunities for professional writing support and interdisciplinary writing and research modules, WOU will be explicitly supporting graduate student success and achievement and the attainment of graduate learning outcomes (II.4.3 and II.5.2).

By dedicating a professional writing specialist to graduate studies, WOU is promoting enhanced and ongoing communication and collaboration among the Writing Center, Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee, the respective graduate programs, and librarians, at a minimum (II.5.4).

## VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please include the following: implementation plan, assessment plan and the plan to sunset proposal if assessed objectives are not met in the timeframe outlined.

Spring 2018: determine scheduling needs for 2018-19.
Summer 2018: search and hire.
September 2018: position begins.

Fall Actions: make tutoring services accessible to the majority of graduate students, offer in-person and online introductions to the new service, begin collaborations with library and graduate programs, and lobby for ex-officio position on the Graduate Studies Committee.

Fall, Winter, Spring: administer PSWSES to track self-efficacy development, track usage and adjust schedules to meet needs, and track communication, initiatives, and partnerships that involve the new position.

**VII. BUDGET** Select all sources that will fund this proposal and complete form A (below) for each source. (Additional copies on pages 6-8.)

| Education & General | Grant | Self-Support Academic | Self-Support Non-Academic |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☑ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| A. Funding Source | Education & General ☑ | | | Grant ☐ | Self-Support Academic ☐ | Self-Support Non-Academic ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | One-Time Funding | | | | Base (3-yr Recurring) Funding | |
| **INFLOWS** | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 |
| **SFTE** | | | | | | | |
| **Revenue** | | | | | | | |
| **OUTFLOWS** | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 |
| **FTE** | | | | | | | |
| **Salaries** | | | | | | | 40,000 |
| **Benefits** | | | | | | | 29,159 |
| **Materials & Supplies** | | | | | | | |
| **Travel** | | | | | | | |
| **Contracted Services** | | | | | | | |
| **Capital** | | | | | | | |
| **Other Operations** | | | | | | | |
| **TOTAL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 69,159 |

| A. Funding Source | Education & General ☐ | | Grant ☐ | Self-Support Academic ☐ | | Self-Support Non-Academic ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | One-Time Funding | | | Base (3-yr Recurring) Funding | | |
| **INFLOWS** | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 |
| **SFTE** | | | | | | |
| **Revenue** | | | | | | |
| **OUTFLOWS** | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 |
| **FTE** | | | | | | |
| **Salaries** | | | | | | |
| **Benefits** | | | | | | |
| **Materials & Supplies** | | | | | | |
| **Travel** | | | | | | |
| **Contracted Services** | | | | | | |
| **Capital** | | | | | | |
| **Other Operations** | | | | | | |
| **TOTAL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| VIII. PROPOSAL SIGNATURES | | |
|---|---|---|
| Department Head | Name | Signature Katherine Schmidt |
| Division Head | Name | Signature Sue Monahan |
| Vice President | Name | Signature Stan Scher |

| IX. ACTION | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Recommended by UBC** | Yes ☐ | No ☐ | Date |
| Comments: | | | |
| **Recommended by President** | Yes ☐ | No ☐ | Date |
| Comments: | | | |
| **Final Approval** | Yes ☐ | No ☐ | Date |
| Comments: | | | |

**JUSTIFICATION: WHAT DOES THE WRITING CENTER DO FOR STUDENTS? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?**

While there has been much debate over the last three decades regarding the mission of writing centers, the fields of educational psychology and cognitive science offer a lens through which to see the work writing centers do. Researchers across disciplines argue that performance, or overt behavior, is not a sufficient measure of a person's academic capabilities; instead, executive skills and cognitive factors that internally define the student-writer's abilities serve as the foundation for external factors, like performance. Thus, a primary factor that enables writing centers to forge better writing and better writers is this: Writing centers are increasing student-writers' beliefs about what and how they can perform as writers, which is writerly self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief of being capable of performing necessary behavior to perform a task successfully (Bandura, 2001). In contrast to self-esteem, self-efficacy can be subject- or performance-area specific (McLeod, 1987). For example, an athlete would have targeted self-efficacy related to her specific sport, which may increase her self-esteem as an athlete in general. Similarly, a student could have targeted self-efficacy related to writing, which may increase her self-esteem as a student in general. While self-efficacy does, in part, influence performance, the change in performance may be delayed or affected by other internal construct variables (e.g., motivation, emotional disposition, life stress) canceling the self-efficacy effect.

The key here is that self-efficacy--whether in a sport or in writing--is an internalized construct which can be learned and developed over time through a synthesis of consistent self-evaluation, coaching, and repeated practice. Like the athlete who needs to possess a forward-thinking, growth-related, can-do perspective on future performance, the student-writer needs the same: Broadening her perspective beyond performance evaluation to include more positive beliefs about her future writing and academic performance will affect her decisions, objectives, affect, assiduity, endurance, and perseverance as a student.

The Writing Center is a prime example of a site where academic coaching, self-evaluation, and repeated practice in action are inherent. Directly identifying, challenging, and altering inaccurate self-judgments as they relate to writing are essential to the adaptive functioning and academic success of the majority of students that writing centers serve. A student's perceptions of her own competence, as opposed to her actual competence, often more accurately predicts her success in school contexts. Thus, writing centers can redirect assessment focus from actual competence indicators to perceived competence development.

Supported by grants from the Western foundation, Western Oregon University faculty development, and Western Oregon University student technology fee committee, the WOU Writing Center conducted a study with the objective to develop a college-level writing self-efficacy scale that can be used across repeated sessions in a writing center, as self-efficacy has been identified as an important construct underlying successful writing and cognitive development. A 20-item instrument (PSWSES) was developed to evaluate writerly self-efficacy. 505 students participated in the study. Results indicate that the PSWSES has high internal consistency and reliability across items and construct validity, which was supported through a

correlation between tutor perceptions of client writerly self-efficacy and client self-ratings. Factor analysis revealed three factors: local and global writing process knowledge, physical reaction, and time/effort. Clients completing three tutoring sessions showed a significant, consistent increase in overall writerly self-efficacy rating, whereas the control group did not show a significant change across three PSWSES evaluations.

These results were partially consistent with the hypothesis that the PSWSES would show a greater increase in overall writerly self-efficacy ratings for clients across multiple sessions than for the control subjects; the result that was not consistent with the original hypothesis was the evaluations of the control subjects: Those who were not engaged in tutoring with the writing center remained consistent over time. One would expect a natural increase in the writerly self-efficacy of college students as the term progresses, yet this was not the case. This fact underscores the need for writing center services for all students, from the developmental to the expert student-writer.

Writing centers are often the only academic support units on university campuses that explicitly work to promote writerly self-efficacy throughout the duration of a college student's career. Unlike many of the existing scales that are one-time/short-term and behaviorally oriented, PSWSES is meant to serve as a longitudinal tracking system to record the development of writerly beliefs. Indeed, the results of the analysis across sessions supports the longitudinal utility of the instrument. PSWSES redirects focus from actual competence indicators to perceived competence development and allows for replication, causality, and sustainability for program improvement.

The nature of PSWSES required the WOU Writing Center to reconceptualize the daily work in which it engages, and the tutors have learned to look beyond the paper and the student's writing development to something much larger: The student-writer's beliefs about writerly success in the future. As a result of this study, the WOU Writing Center learned that its most important job is to cultivate the student-writer's awareness of processes and resources that will promote her writerly success in both college and beyond, and the unit is able to provide evidence of this cultivation to administration, faculty and staff, and the student-writers themselves. See attached for results.

**DATA: GRADUATE-STUDENT USAGE IN THE WRITING CENTER**

Prior to the forced elimination of professional-tutor hiring, the Writing Center spent nearly 20% of its annual session time with graduate students. In the first year of a peer-tutors only team (2015-16), the annual graduate student usage dropped to 12%, which indicates there is a problem. Additionally, graduate faculty identified scholarly and professional writing as a challenge for students and an area in need of further attention.

The most effective way to serve graduate students as they develop as writers is to create a pattern that ensures academic coaching, self-evaluation, and repeated practice in action over time. Unfortunately, only 126 of the 731 graduate students enrolled in 2015-16 utilized Writing Center services, and only 30% of those 126 users were using the Writing Center in a way that would promote their long-term development as writers. The repeat graduate student clients (i.e.,

>4 sessions) were from ED, IS, and RMHC, with 51% of this long-term user group being international students. A Writing Specialist who is dedicated to graduate students would help increase the number of students who are using the Writing Center repeatedly and over time to develop life-long skills in effective writing practices.

Notable regarding repeat users in is the increased graduate-student usage during summer when staff drops to three employees (i.e., 2 students and the 1 full-time Bilingual Spanish-English Writing Specialist):

| | |
|---|---|
| 10.96% | Summer 2012 |
| 27.62% | Summer 2013 |
| 35.35% | Summer 2014 |
| 79.81% | Summer 2015 |
| 64.86% | Summer 2016 |
| 40.31% | Summer 2017 |

While the Writing Center is currently at capacity during summer, an additional full-time specialist would make room for new in-class and cohort summer writing-support partnerships that currently do not and cannot exist.

An additional data point worth highlighting is the number of sessions for international graduate student users, who face complex rhetorical challenges as writers. In 2015-16, the breakdown for session totals according to status included the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| 49.3% | International Graduate Students |
| 47.2% | Domestic Graduate Students |
| 3.4% | Bilingual Spanish-English Speaking Graduate Students |

A dedicated specialist would enable the Writing Center staff team to be strategic in imagining new mechanisms for not only assisting international students over time but also for educating all graduate students on the benefits of establishing individual long-term partnerships with the Writing Center.

The Enrollment Management Plan's goal of 20% graduate students by 2020 would promote the health of the university, but the plan also requires consideration of less conspicuous yet vital infrastructure services for the students, like writing support. A Graduate Writing Specialist position (along with a possible graduate writing course shared across programs) is essential for supporting WOU's projected growth in both current and new areas of graduate study.

Western Oregon
UNIVERSITY

15 December 2017

To the President's Cabinet and the University Budget Committee:

As Graduate Faculty at Western Oregon University, we endorse and support the Writing Center's request to hire staff to provide writing support specifically for graduate students. As our students often work day jobs, the Writing Center's interest in providing support online, after 5 pm, and potentially on weekends will prove very helpful and supportive for our students. A graduate writing expert would also help support our goals in increasing student scholarship, familiarity with diverse scholarly writing genres, preparing professional job applications. Hopefully they could facilitate development of useful online, in-person, and interactive support and tutorials. A graduate writing expert will help provide the additional support, training, expertise, and guidance our students need in improving their writing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,
Gregory Zobel
Chair, Graduate Studies Committee

Elisa Maroney
Coordinator, Interpreting Studies

Melanie Landon-Hays
MAT Coordinator

Mary Bucy
Chair and Professor, Division of Education and Leadership
Coordinator, MSEd Information Technology

Denise Thew Hackett
Coordinator, Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling

Alicia Wenzel
eMAT Coordinator

Vicki Darden
Faculty, Interpreting Studies

Patrick Graham
Coordinator, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Program

Maria Peterson-Ahmad
Coordinator, Special Education Program

David Foster
Coordinator, Organizational Leadership Program

Table 1.

Summary of Items and Factor Loadings for Varimax Orthogonal Three-Factor Solution for the PSWSES (N = 505).

| Item | Factor loading | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Communality |
| 1. I can identify incomplete, or fragment, sentences. | .777 | .111 | .077 | .621 |
| 2. I can invest a great deal of effort and time in writing a paper when I know the paper will earn a grade. | .329 | .074 | .702 | .607 |
| 3. I can articulate my strengths and challenges as a writer. | .516 | .200 | .475 | .532 |
| 4. I can find and incorporate appropriate evidence to support important points in my papers. | .602 | .237 | .402 | .580 |
| 5. I can be recognized by others as a strong writer. | .766 | .266 | .203 | .699 |
| 6. When I read a rough draft, I can identify gaps when they are present in the paper. | .770 | .312 | .110 | .702 |
| 7. I can maintain a sense of who my audience is as I am writing a paper. | .653 | .248 | .255 | .553 |
| 8. I can write a paper without feeling physical discomfort (e.g., headaches, stomach-aches, back-aches, insomnia, muscle tension, nausea, and/or crying). | .182 | .801 | .012 | .676 |
| 9. When I read drafts written by classmates, I can provide them with valuable feedback. | .594 | .476 | .130 | .597 |
| 10. When I have a pressing deadline for a paper, I can manage my time efficiently. | .217 | .520 | .469 | .538 |
| 11. I can attribute my success on writing projects to my writing abilities more than to luck or external forces. | .541 | .356 | .317 | .520 |
| 12. When a student who is similar to me receives praise and/or a good grade on a paper, I know I can write a paper worthy of praise and/or a good grade. | .501 | .329 | .391 | .511 |
| 13. Once I have completed a draft, I can eliminate both small and large sections that are no longer necessary. | .414 | .449 | .371 | .511 |
| 14. I can write a paper without experiencing overwhelming feelings of fear or distress. | .356 | .703 | .135 | .640 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. When writing papers for different courses (for example, Biology, English, and Philosophy classes), I can adjust my writing to meet the expectations of each discipline. | .426 | .542 | .283 | .556 |
| 16. I can map out the structure and main sections of an essay before writing the first draft. | .432 | .342 | .399 | .463 |
| 17. I can find ways to concentrate when I am writing, even when there are many distractions around me. | .205 | .671 | .249 | .554 |
| 18. I can find and correct my grammatical errors. | .672 | .315 | .033 | .552 |
| 19. I can invest a great deal of effort and time in writing a paper when I know the paper will not be graded. | .310 | .341 | .303 | .304 |
| 20. When I work with a writing tutor, I can learn new strategies that promote my development and success as a writer. | .057 | .121 | .714 | .528 |
| Eigenvalues | 5.183 | 3.505 | 2.555 | |
| % of variance | 25.92 | 17.52 | 12.78 | |

Figure 1. The mean writerly self-efficacy scores (+1 S.E.) for control and client groups.

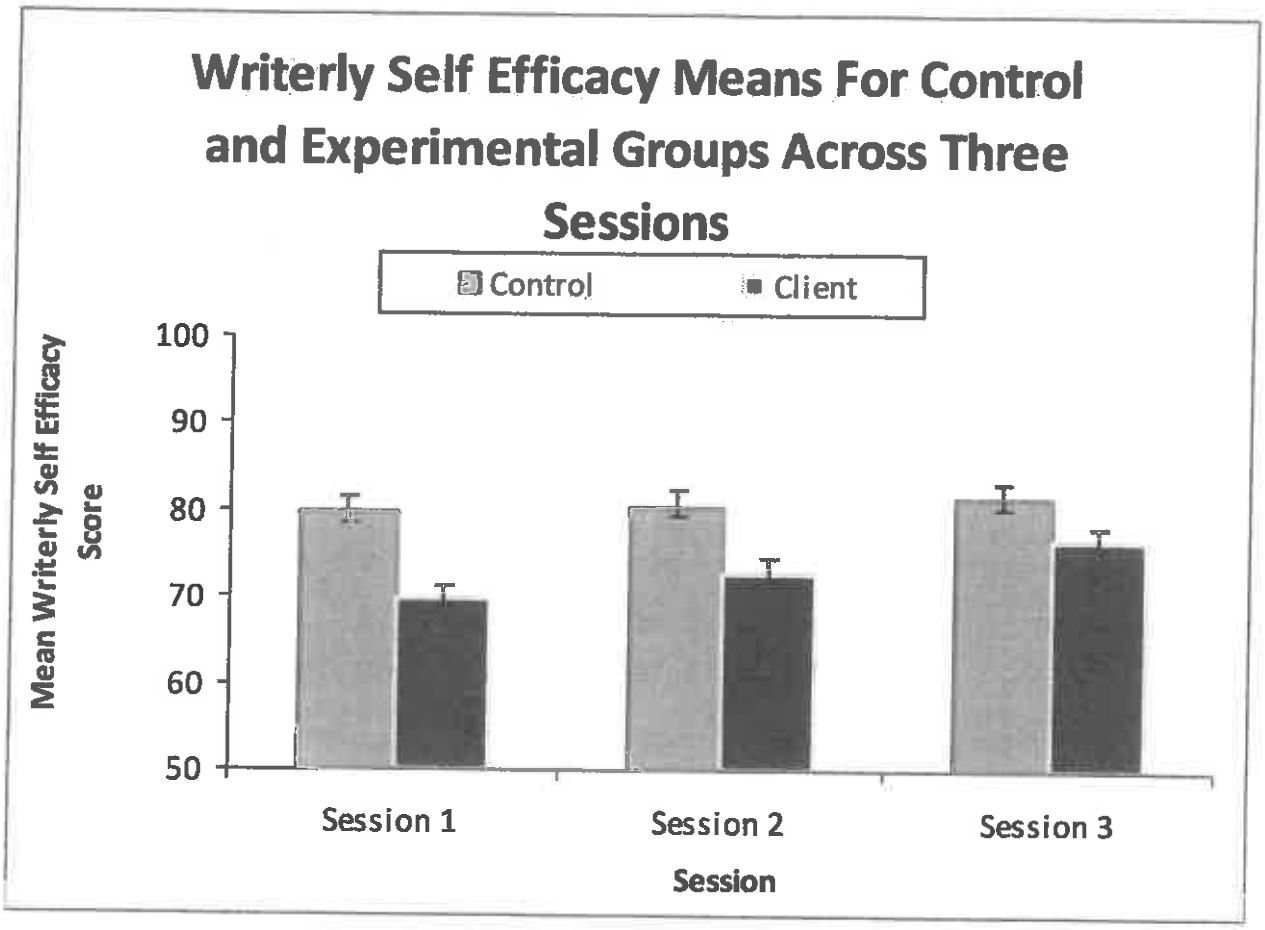
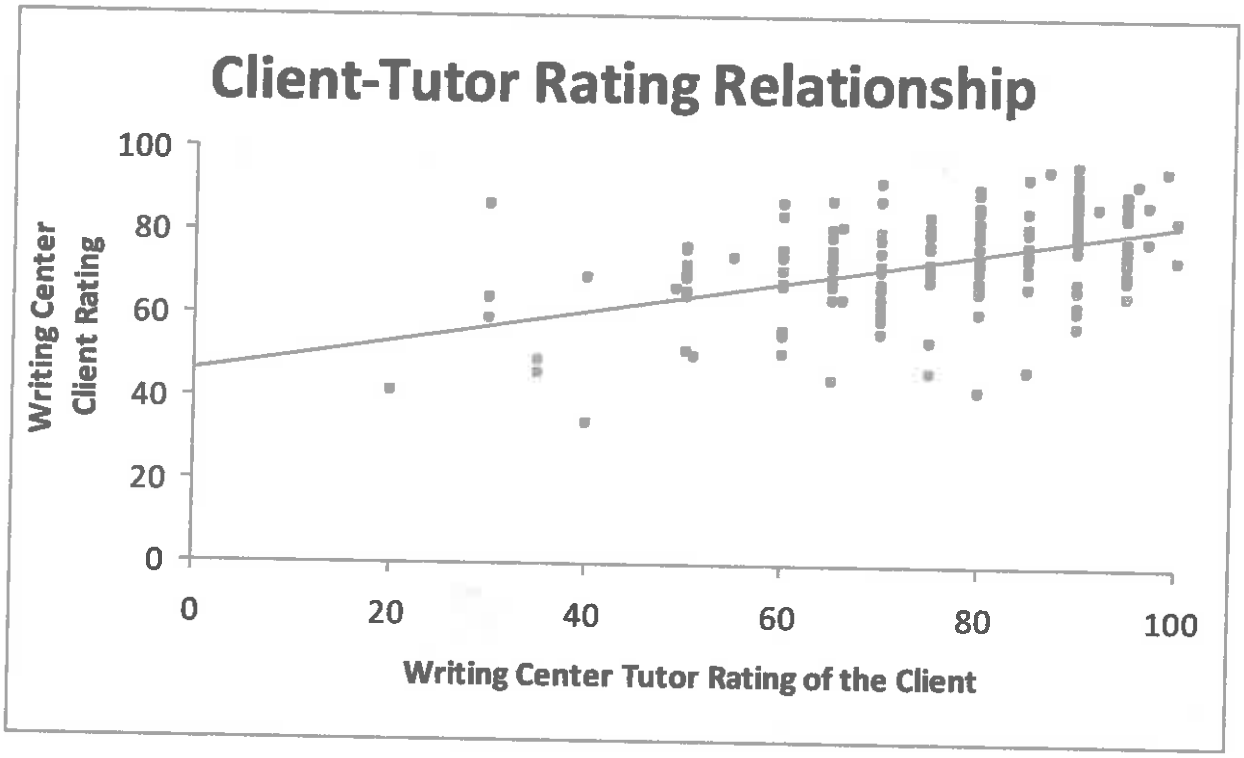


Figure 2. The individual ratings for writing center clients in relation to writing center tutor ratings of the client.



**2017-2018**

**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2017 | FALL 2017 | WINTER 2018 | SPRING 2018 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 4 | | | | 4 |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 24 | | | | 24 |
| Graduate Contact Units | 52 | | | | 52 |
| Total Contact Units for 2016-2017 | 129 | | | | 129 |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 40.31% | | | | 40.31% |

**2016-2017**

**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2016 | FALL 2016 | WINTER 2017 | SPRING 2017 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 12 | 82 | 52 | 37 | 183 |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 42 | 109 | 99 | 80 | 330 |
| Graduate Contact Units | 96 | 300 | 250 | 197 | 843 |
| Total Contact Units for 2016-2017 | 148 | 2646 | 2319 | 1809 | 6922 |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 64.86% | 11.34% | 10.78% | 10.89% | 12.18% |

**2015-2016**

**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2015 | FALL 2015 | WINTER 2016 | SPRING 2016 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 5 | 126 | 104 | 77 | 312 |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 39 | 159 | 128 | 110 | 436 |
| Graduate Contact Units | 83 | 444 | 360 | 297 | 1184 |
| Total Contact Units for 2015-2016 | 104 | 2313 | 2276 | 1720 | 6413 |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 79.81% | 19.20% | 15.82% | 17.27% | 18.46% |

**2014-2015**
**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2014 | FALL 2014 | WINTER 2015 | SPRING 2015 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 16 | 121 | 208 | 185 | **530** |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 27 | 89 | 164 | 138 | **418** |
| Graduate Contact Units | 70 | 299 | 536 | 461 | **1366** |
| Total Contact Units for 2014-2015 | 198 | 2541 | 2258.5 | 1989 | **6986.5** |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 35.35% | 11.77% | 23.73% | 23.18% | **19.55%** |

**2013-2014**
**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2013 | FALL 2013 | WINTER 2014 | SPRING 2014 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 2 | 90 | 137 | 121 | **350** |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 28 | 43 | 94 | 67 | **232** |
| Graduate Contact Units | 58 | 176 | 325 | 255 | **814** |
| Total Contact Units for 2013-2014 | 210 | 2109 | 1998 | 1373 | **5690** |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 27.62% | 8.35% | 16.27% | 18.57% | **14.31%** |

**2012-2013**
**Appointments for Graduate Students**

| | SUMMER 2012 | FALL 2012 | WINTER 2013 | SPRING 2013 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirty Minute Appointments | 6 | 27 | 21 | 15 | **69** |
| Sixty Minute Appointments | 17 | 30 | 30 | 59 | **136** |
| Graduate Contact Units | 40 | 87 | 81 | 133 | **341** |
| Total Contact Units for 2012-2013 | 365 | 2113 | 2221 | 1954 | **6653** |
| Percent Grad Appointments | 10.96% | 4.12% | 3.65% | 6.81% | **5.13%** |