College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

CSBS Writing Lab SSI Annual Report

University Division:: Academic Affairs

Name of person Responsible for overseeing SSI project/activities:: Joy Barta

Email Address:: jbarta@csusb.edu

Title:: CSBS Writing Lab Coordinator

Funding Type: Recurring funding

Extension:: 73795

Total SSI amount allocated this year:: $21,600

Total SSI amount expended this year:: $21,600

Number of unique students served (July1-Winter Quarter): 869 (more details available in "Progress Toward Outcomes" section)

SSI Program/Project Overview :

The main goal of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Writing Lab is to help students create their best possible written work in the social and behavioral sciences. The lab accomplishes this goal through tutoring sessions, a series of six writing workshops each quarter, and a spring writing symposium for students in SSCI 306: Expository Writing.

The lab exists because, previously, there were no campus resources that helped specifically with writing in the social sciences. The lab offers students opportunities to improve their APA and Chicago citation skills, learn about proofreading, write strong expository essays, incorporate data and statistics into their papers, write scientifically, generate research reports, and receive detailed written feedback. The lab's tutors major in the social and behavioral sciences and can relate to student visitors on a more personal level because they have been in the same classes the students are taking. Such a connection is reassuring to students and inevitably helps them to succeed.

The Grammar Cram workshops are offered each quarter by the Writing Lab coordinator who aims to provide detailed instruction in a fun learning environment. The coordinator also offers workshops on APA citation (the basics of citing sources in the paper and references) and formatting (creating titles, title pages, abstracts, and references) each quarter.

All Writing Lab activities aim to provide students with a positive environment in which to learn. The Writing Lab's resources offer detailed feedback and encourage students to use the lab to build their skills for a successful future. Without the CSBS Writing Lab, some CSBS students would face serious challenges completing their classes and thus their degrees. The Writing Lab provides critical support and guidance to hundreds of students each quarter to help them overcome these challenges.

SSI-Funded Activities :

Tutoring: Students majoring in the social and behavioral sciences tutor students by examining and discussing their written work with them in a collaborative environment. The lab provides the only campus tutoring specifically focused on writing in the social and behavioral sciences.

Workshops: The Writing Lab coordinator teaches six workshops per quarter for a total of 18 workshops per academic year. Workshop topics include: commas, semicolons, and colons; active voice; reducing wordiness; possessives and plurals; subject-verb agreement; APA citation; and APA formatting. There are no other grammar workshops or 2-hour APA workshops offered on campus.

Leadership of the Writing Lab: The Writing Lab Coordinator conducts a variety of activities to maintain the lab, such as recruiting and interviewing potential tutors, evaluating tutors as they work, creating documents for the lab, advertising the lab and workshops, teaching the workshops, collecting and analyzing data, managing the websites, solving problems, and completing SSI tasks.

Progress Toward Outcomes/Cumulative Findings::

The Writing Lab held 1125 total tutoring sessions of 618 unique individuals during Fall 2019 (593 sessions; 319 unique individuals) and Winter 2020 (532 sessions; 299 unique individuals). In Summer 2019 (not SSI-funded), the lab operated with greatly reduced capacity and saw 28 unique individuals during 89 tutoring sessions. The Grammar Cram and APA workshops served 223 students during Fall 2019 and Winter 2020. Note: Unique individuals are counted once per quarter for lab tutoring sessions and once per session attended for workshops.

Students visit the Writing Lab for help with many tasks. During Fall 2019 and Winter 2020, students listed ~91 unique topics for which to visit the Writing Lab. When accounting for classes listed with a course number, students reported attending the lab for help with ~86 unique courses of which 69 were from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. (The other topics listed included general issues, such as personal statements and applications and essays for scholarships, summer internship programs, and graduate school.) Students visited from classes in anthropology, child development, communication, criminal justice, economics, education, English, educational counseling, expository writing (SSCI, EDUC, ENG, and NSCI 306), history, human development, humanities, management, natural sciences, political science, psychology and human development, social work, and sociology.

Student satisfaction with the Writing Lab remains high. In the lab's satisfaction survey, there were 96 responses to the question "How would you rate this session?" during Summer 2019, Fall 2019, and Winter 2020. The tutors received 82 excellent ratings, 6 above average ratings, 5 average ratings, and 3 poor ratings. Similar overwhelmingly positive ratings were given for other prompts, such as "The tutoring session was well-organized" (86 strongly agreed, 9 slightly agreed, 1 was neutral, and none disagreed), "The tutoring session helped me improve my work" (89 strongly agreed, 3 slightly agreed, 2 slightly disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed), "The overall performance of the tutor was impressive" (83 strongly agreed, 7 slightly agreed, 1 was neutral, 2 slightly disagreed, and 3 strongly disagreed), and "The tutoring session was understandable" (87 strongly agreed, 4 slightly agreed, 1 was neutral, 3 slightly disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed). Comments from the surveys include "The assistance in citing sources and creating a reference page was very helpful," "The tutor answered all my questions in time and provided great feedback," "This is my 1st time coming to the lab and I had an amazing experience, I just wish it was longer!!!!!," "Great session! I felt that the feedback helped me to fix the issues I had with my paper," "I am now able to stay on track while writing an essay and I do not go off topic," "I will definitely be using these tips especially as a political science major," "I've never written in APA format so the handouts will be helpful in future writings," "For future papers I will make sure I pay greater attention as I am writing instead of only revising at the end," "I will be better at creating an APA approved reference

page," "I am completely satisfied with the assistance I received over at writing lab. I am still looking forward on returning once my paper is complete. My tutor's knowledge and form of teaching was very impressive," and "I felt like my work was critiqued constructively and appropriately. I gained insight on my mistakes and learned how to correct them in my writing style. I am just starting to develop my writing, and I felt very supported in my ability to get where I need to be."

In addition, tutors complete assessment forms for most students they see. These forms provide a way of measuring student progress over time. Sample comments include "Student struggles with clarity and conciseness. However, the student has made a lot of improvements this quarter," "Student has never written in APA so I gave him a crash course in APA format for his assignment," "The professor indicated on her paper that she needed to work on transition/topic sentences. I helped her understand what her professor was looking for and helped with sentence structure," "The student has improved in citing her sources," "She is improving in understanding what goes where in the template," "She has more confidence in her work and I can see she is picking strong sources for her paragraphs," "He is working hard to improve and his APA knowledge seems to have grown," "Student brought in a revision. Their revision was much better from their first draft. Made some additional changes to transition sentences," "Student had a well written paper and he made a lot of great adjustments from his first draft," "I worked with the student to identify a hypothesis and formulate literature review topics," "The student has been improving in his writing," and "We worked on changes based on the 7th edition of the APA Manual."

These comments reveal how students improve their writing over time by taking advantage of tutoring at the Writing Lab. The assessment forms also allow tutors to communicate with each other about any potential issues a student might need to focus on during a session, thus improving the student's chances for receiving the most specific help even if the student sees a different tutor each time.

Workshops

During this period, the Writing Lab coordinator taught workshops on APA citation (6 sessions); APA formatting (2 sessions); active voice; commas, semicolons, and colons; possessives and plurals; and subject-verb agreement.

All workshops showed student success through pre- and post-testing. All tests have a maximum score of ten. For APA citation, the scores went from a pre-test average of 4.86 to a post-test average of 8.26. For APA formatting, the pre-test score was 5.71, and the post-test score was 8.32. For agreement, the scores went from 5.13 to 7.58. For possessives and plurals, the scores went from 6.86 to 7.33. For commas, semicolons, and colons, the scores went from 4.36 to 7.46. For active voice, the scores went from 6.89 to 9.3. These tests show significant improvement in all of these skills during each two-hour session.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement Efforts: :
Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Writing Lab is currently undergoing an experiment with being completely online. Our online scheduling system, WCOnline, allows for chat-style and video-style appointments, depending on the equipment people have available. It will be interesting to see how the online appointments work. Based on demand and success, it's possible the Writing Lab will offer both virtual and face-to-face appointments in the future. The virtual option may allow the lab to serve more students than only having conventional face-to-face sessions.

Resources for Continuous Improvement Efforts:
Additional funding would help the Writing Lab. Annual academic year expenses for staffing only (Writing Lab Coordinator, ISAs, and SAs) are usually at least $35,000 over existing SSI funding of $21,600 per year. Summer costs are typically around $2500 to hire two ISAs for July and August. The online scheduling system that is now critical to our operation costs $800 per year. Additional funds would help us continue to provide these unique services to social and behavioral sciences students.

Challenges:
The biggest challenge this year has been dealing with campus closures. In the fall, the Writing Lab lost several days because of campus closures due to wind and power outages. The first day this happened, I had to cancel 23 appointments. Some people rescheduled but many did not. I would estimate the Writing Lab lost at least 50 appointments due to the multiple days of closures. In the winter, the end of the quarter, which is usually our busiest time, was likely negatively impacted by the approach of the coronavirus pandemic. Students became increasingly concerned about coming to campus as the quarter ended, and there were fewer appointments than usual at the end of the quarter.

I do not need assistance.

Budget Summary:

Attached Files
📄 CSBS Writing Lab SSI Annual Report Budget.xlsx
Check-in/Utilization Data:

Attached Files
📄 Summer19WLAppointmentsUpload.xlsx
📄 Fall19WLAppointmentsUpload.xlsx
📄 Winter20WLAppointmentsUpload.xlsx
📄 Workshop Data F19 Upload.xlsx
📄 Workshop Data W20 Upload.xlsx
Feedback on Reporting:
This seems more secure than SurveyMonkey. I appreciate that.

When cutting and pasting from my template, one paragraph in one section was a different font. I could not find a way to mimic the default font of everything else, so I just converted everything to Arial.

Providing Department: College of Social and Behavioral Sciences