Overview of Assessment Efforts for Educational Support Services

By Chris Sutherland, Senior Director for Educational Support Services

Academic Standards

Academic Standards continues to assess number of students served, the impact on GPA by students who participate in the coaching program, and student retention. The effort is ongoing to ensure the data being collected is consistent and accurate in an effort to build a dashboard available to all of our Educational Support Services areas.

As part of the student experience working with Academic Standards, data is collected through Academic Notice and Continued Academic Notice workshops where student are able to self-report particular obstacles they are experiencing. The on-going effort is to find ways to assess this qualitative information to identify institutional barriers, department blind spots, or areas needed to improve to better support student growth and ultimately greater retention and student success.

Academic Tutoring & Math Lab

In our Academic Tutoring and Math Lab, most of the assessment efforts have been focused on student usage and wait times. Using the QUE reporting system, we can track the number of students that come into the lab, and frequency of visits. Additionally, we measure the in-lab student experience by looking at student wait times to receive help from a tutor, how much time each student spends in the lab, how many questions are asked, and how much time is spent with tutors, etc. Similar data is pulled for our Supplemental Instruction program to see how many students attend scheduled sessions and how frequently. This data is compared year to year to assess whether we are increasing usage and then focusing efforts where we are not showing growth. We also use this data to calculate wait times for lab usage to ensure we have enough staffing so that students are not waiting inordinate amounts of time for help. We also measure the effectiveness of our outreach campaigns to students based on student usage in our space's year-to-year.

In the future, we would love to be able to have data run at the institutional level that can utilize grade and demographic data to see the academic effectiveness of our services. We were able to have some data run a year ago to assess the effect of our supplemental instruction program in a specific course during a specific time, which was shown to have a positive effect. However, we have not been able to have our data analyzed on a broader level. We are currently working with other departments that utilize our same systems to submit a request to have our data analyzed at that level to assess the effectiveness of all our services. While we see the positive effect our Academic Tutoring and Math Lab services have are having in individual qualitative ways through student/staff interactions, we will ultimately need more to be able to truly assess our impact and how/if we are accomplishing our goals.

Writing Center

Writing Center Usage Data

The Writing Center currently collects usage data in multiple ways. For the main Writing Center and Graduate Writing Center, we collect registration, appointment, and post-session summary data through WCOnline (a third-party provider) and workshop and presentation data through MS Forms and staff reports. Our Writing Fellows program, a course embedded tutoring program, has assessment embedded as assignments within the courses we partner with, and that data is collected through Canvas and Qualtrics, using grade-passback coding.

Data Collected

- **Patron information:** name, UVUID, university email, phone number, returning or initial visit, first or primary language, how they heard about the Writing Center
- **Course information:** course, section, instructor
- **Assignment information:** type of assignment, assignment guidelines or rubric, due date, sensitive content concerns
- **Appointment information:** date, time, session length, tutor modality (in-person, online live, or asynchronous video feedback), required or volunteer visit
- **Support and tutoring session information:** student's concerns or questions, topics covered in the tutorial, length of tutorial, tutor facilitating the session, revision plan and resources discussed

Data Use

- **Resource and program development or refinement:** handouts, workshops, asynchronous learning modules, partnerships
- **Hiring and scheduling staff:** hiring tutors with a range of academic, cultural, and linguistic background to mirror the demographics and needs of students using the Writing Center and scheduling tutors to meet student needs and preferences based on usage trends
- **Hours of operation and appointment slots per hour:** adjusting tutoring availability to meet demand
- **Appointment modalities**: in-person, online/live, asynchronous video feedback, or workshop offerings
- **Tutor education and staff training:** genres and assignments, disciplinary writing conventions, assignments, support for students from certain demographics, learning strategies, adjacent literacies, etc.
- **Reporting usage and trends**: reporting the breadth and depth of student support provided to campus administrators and decision makers
- **Individual tutor data:** individual tutor data recommendation (number of students tutored, number of courses served, return visits, etc.) for resumes, graduate school applications, and letters of recommendation.
- **Outreach and collaborations:** prioritizing effective or promising partnerships with faculty, departments, and programs; contributing to Writing Enriched, ESS, OTL, and other campus discussions; and connecting with high-usage stakeholders for increased or targeted feedback.

Writing Center Survey Data
The Writing Center and its programs (Writing Center, Writing Fellows, and Graduate Writing Center) regularly survey a range of stakeholders. Students or patrons receive a survey after every tutoring session, and this survey data is collated and reviewed weekly by fulltime administrators. Faculty working with Writing Fellows are encouraged to provide feedback at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Faculty regularly sending students to the Writing Center are surveyed at the end of the semester. Writing Center tutors and office assistants are surveyed in the middle and at the end of semester.

Data Collected
- **Impact data:** self-reported data on how students and patrons feel their writing knowledge, skills, and confidence have been impacted by their use of Writing Center programs and services, which can be triangulated with student performance and campus metrics, if the data becomes available
- **Satisfaction data:** self-reported data about patron experience and partnerships, including what users valued most and what suggestions they have for the Writing Center
- **Staff feedback:** self-reported data about the morale and administrative support needs of student employees
- **Assessment of tutor education:** tutor feedback on Canvas and live tutor education meetings, which is compared with tutor performance on Canvas assignments and participation in live trainings

Data Use
- **Tutor education and training:** adjustments in tutor education to address the needs of students, patrons, and Writing Center staff
- **Program and resource development:** development or revision of programs, partnerships, resources, processes, and policies to better support learners and learning
- **Program and workplace improvements:** responsive adjustments to the needs of students, patrons, and Writing Center staff
- **Triangulating data:** comparing usage data with stakeholder feedback and observations to have a more complete picture of the effectiveness of Writing Center programs and resources

Writing Center Staff Observations & Evaluations
Each semester, the Writing Center requires each writing tutor to complete a self-evaluation and be observed by a peer and an administrator. Administrators conduct a post-observation discussion with each tutor to discuss their self-evaluation and observations and to learn more about the needs of peer writing tutors and the students they work with. Tutors facilitating workshops are also observed in a workshop setting. Writing Center assistant coordinators have weekly one-on-one meetings with a full-time administrator, and the director of the Writing Center meets regularly with the senior director of ESS to report of the work of the Writing Center. Full-time administrators also participate in university performance evaluations.

Data Collected
- **Self-evaluation:** self-reported data on tutors' knowledge, application, and confidence with writing and tutoring concepts as well as any questions tutors have for administrators
- **Observation and post-observation discussion data:** Evidence and discussion of tutor performance and use of tutoring concepts and strategies to effectively support students and structure tutoring sessions—individual and compiled tutor data and discussion points
- **Weekly or regular admin check-ins:** observed trends, overview of program and resource development, and areas of improvement or effectiveness for the Writing Center and its employees
- **Professional evaluations:** annual evaluations of Writing Center administrators and the goals and strategic direction of Writing Center programs

Data Use
- **Program quality assurance:** administrative awareness of the quality of individual tutors, the effectiveness of tutor education, and the overall quality and consistency of educational support available through the Writing Center
- **Education and professional development:** responsive and improved tutor and administrator education, mentoring, and professional development
- **Operational updates:** revision or clarification of policy and procedures, updates to schedules and services to meet learner needs
- **Program updates:** development or revision of services and programs to better support learners, alignment with other ESS areas and the university
- **Triangulating data and reporting:** providing and articulating a more data-informed view of Writing Center successes and areas for improvement

In addition to our regular assessment cycle, outlined above, we are conducting formal (IRB approved) and informal (in-house surveys and focus groups) to better understand timely topics related our work, such as AI and writing and peer tutoring as a high-impact practice and educational experience for tutors. While these are not areas where we are doing consistent assessment and ongoing research, they do highlight how the Writing Center uses a range of assessment and research data to inform and contribute to educational support at UVU.