Co-Curricular Outcomes Assessment Report – Writing Center 2016-2017

At NMHU, co-curricular activities are defined as out-of-class experiences that complement and extend the formal learning experience of a course or academic program. Co-curricular activities develop a student's social, intellectual, cultural, democratic, civic, and aesthetic domains. They are supervised and/or financed by the institution and facilitate the attainment of NMHU's four essential traits (or student learning outcomes). These experiences are voluntary, ungraded, and non-credited, although they may be compensated through student employment.

Four identified traits/student learning outcomes that the NMHU community of faculty, students and staff identified that our graduates are expected to display:

- **Mastery of content knowledge and skills**
- **Effective communication skills**
- **Critical and reflective thinking skills**
- **Effective use of technology**

Program Name:
NMHU Writing Center

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Program Mission:
The New Mexico Highlands University Writing Center offers writing support to undergraduates and graduates in all disciplines. We assist students at any level of writing and at any stage in the writing process, whether it is with brainstorming, drafting, or rewriting and revising. Our tutors serve as guides, rather than editors, working in collaboration with students to facilitate their growth as independent, writers, speakers, and thinkers. We believe that talking about and practicing writing are the best ways to develop effective writing skills.

Summary of Student Utilization of your Program:
The Writing Center's primary purpose is one-on-one writing consultation. From March 1st-May 12th, the dates that correspond with the development and implementation of this OA process, 280 students attended a tutoring session.

Summary of Student Satisfaction Results:
Students complete a survey after each writing consultation session. The survey measures student satisfaction in 3 categories: whether the tutor was helpful, whether they were patient, and whether the student felt comfortable. Tutors averaged a 5.8 (whether they were helpful), a 5.86 (whether they were patient), and a 5.85 (whether the student felt comfortable). Although these numbers are high and show that students are overall satisfied with the tutors, we will be considering other ways of collecting data in the future. We feel that the tutors do a great job, but the statistics are not valuable for making data-driven decisions in the Writing Center.

Student Learning Outcome:	University Trait(s) linked to which it is linked Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measurement Results	Outcome Achieved? (0 = No, 1 = Yes)	Plan for Improvement
1. Process-based Writing Students who attend Writing Center tutoring sessions will exhibit a process-driven, reflective approach to writing. This outcome reflects a student's understanding and implementation of a process-based writing approach.	Mastery Knowledge of Content Knowledge and Skills Effective Communication Skills Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills	1. Ineffective data collection methodology. N/A 2/3. Reviewed last 25 student reflections of the Spring 2017 semester.	1. 0 2. 0	Because every student follows a different writing process, it was difficult to measure their process. Most students participated in only one visit, we could not evaluate the entire process. We need a better data collection processes to record student writing in various stages. It was difficult to determine whether a student response was considered a "point of discussion." The length of the response did not necessarily correspond with the quality of the response or the number of responses.
1. Improved Grades in English 111 and 112 Students who attend Writing Center tutoring sessions will earn better grades than those who do not. This outcome measures student achievement in English 111 and 112, contrasting the grades of those who utilized the WC	Mastery Knowledge of Content Knowledge and Skills Effective Communication Skills Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills	1. Reviewed grades of last 25 students of the semester. 21 were enrolled in first-year composition (FYC). The 4 others attended for other courses. Every student in FYC received a passing grade with an average of 3.05	1. 1	We achieved our goal. However, we do not have access to university programs like "Native Banner," that allows us to include a larger group of students. We researched each student's grade.

and those who did not. It reflects our belief that along with improving writing skills, attending WC sessions will improve students' grades. Because many of our students are from English 111 and 112, we are specifically collecting data on this population.				
3. **Repeat Visits** **Students who attend one Writing Center tutoring session will attend at least one other session.** **This outcome reflects the number of students that return for at least a second visit. Multiple visits to the WC allow the tutor to establish a relationship with the student and allows for more long-term support.**	**Mastery Knowledge of Content Knowledge and Skills** **Effective Communication Skills** **Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills**	1. **Out of 280 sessions between March 1 and May 12, 47 students attended more than one session. 17% of students attended more than 1 session.**	**1. 0**	**At one point in previous years, we implemented the practice of immediately scheduling another session. However, because many students had already turned in their papers, they did not attend the scheduled session. We can email students during the semester to remind them of our services to hopefully improve these numbers.**

Summary of the Outcomes Assessment Data. [Did students achieve the outcomes? Which outcomes can be achieved? Briefly analyze the results].

Overall, the WC needs to reconsider our methods for collecting and analyzing data.

1. The WC employed an informal method for collecting student drafts. This method proved insufficient for collecting an adequate number of essays for evaluation. The evaluation of student reflections also proved to be more complicated than expected.
    - **a.** We were unable to collect student papers to conduct this part of the analysis. However, it can reasonably be assumed that most students visiting the WC have composed at least two drafts of a writing assignment because many students bring a draft to their tutoring session.
    - **b.** The assessment threshold for assessing reflections was 4 points of discussion. Again, the interpretation of data proved to be complicated because of the varying reasons student sought writing support. For example, if a student only attended a session for help with citation, then there might not be a reason to write about anything other than citation. In addition, students wrote reflections composed of phrases and fragments, not of full sentences. We decided to count the number of words in each reflection to determine the average number. Most reflections fell below the average. The number of words themselves only measure length; they don't necessarily measure the value of the reflection. The student reflection form also includes an area where students can mark the areas on which they worked. In general, the items they marked did not correspond with what they wrote. Students did not achieve the threshold, but the outcomes did not consider the complexity of writing reflections.

2. Each of the students whose records we reviewed passed the course for which they sought writing support. Our goal was 75%. This outcome is also problematic because we do not know much about these students. Are they already high-performing students? Are they more comfortable seeking academic support?
3. The WC determined a goal of 30% for repeat visits and achieved a 17% rate.

Although the Writing Center collects data about students who attend the WC, we do not have a history of outcomes data that can be used to determine appropriate thresholds.

How are you going to improve the program for next year? Which outcomes will you target, and what specifics steps will you take for improvement?

In the Writing Center, training and policy tie directly into outcomes assessment. With a plan in place before the school year begins, I can shape training and policy so that it corresponds with our outcomes.

This year's outcomes were focused on core values in Composition Studies. I would like to continue developing outcomes based on reflection and process-based writing. This year's OA process provides a starting place for understanding how to gather and analyze data.

Because I believe that writing center support works best when students develop a working relationship with writing consultants, I will continue to assess our efforts to encourage students to attend other sessions.

What were the results of the discussion with peer reviewers and the joint meeting between the Co-Curricular and Assessment Committees?

The peer review session was valuable for understanding how other programs collected data. Because many of the participants in CCOA are staff rather than faculty, they already had access to a number of programs of which I was unaware. As this was my first individual attempt at outcomes assessment, I was able to examine the methods of those more familiar with the process.

Do any improvements need to be made to your plan? How will those be implemented?

There are several improvements that can be made to the WC OA plan. 1. Outcomes Assessment represents the values and practices of the organization. Those practices need to be an essential element of writing consultant training. Because the CCOA process was implemented after the beginning of the spring semester, the WC was unable to fully integrate new practices and training in that short amount of time. Beginning the 2017-18 year with a plan in place will guide training and practice. 2. Because this was the first time the WC engaged in this process, some of data collection methods and assessment tools proved to be insufficient and potentially unreliable. We need to develop consistent methods for collecting data. This first experience with CCOA should provide the WC with new approaches for collecting data. This was especially the case with collecting student papers.

For programs to adequately measure outcomes, directors need to be provided access to programs like "Native" Banner that house institutional data and need to be trained in their use. While it seems that staff can access some of these databases, faculty cannot. The director was unable to access some data required for OA.