

## Position of the English Department Concerning the Structure of the Writing Center

In light of the recent administrative positions that have been created, more specifically the Dean of Academic Success and Learning, there has been discussions concerning having this dean oversee many of the tutorial services of the college. One of the tutorial services that may be potentially affected by this new restructuring is the Writing Center.

However, it is the position of the English Department that the Writing Center continue to fall under the purview of the Arts and Humanities Division and remain as a program under the English department. It is also the department's position that the lead instructor of the Writing Center continue to remain as an English Department faculty member in order to preserve the pedagogical integrity of the services that the Writing Center provides.

These matters have been discussed with President Rodriguez in which she has expressed her support of the English department's position on how the Writing Center should be structured.

The following points provide the rationale as to why the Writing Center should remain under the purview of the Dean of Arts and Humanities as opposed to other administrative leadership on the campus.

### **Potential Impacts on Student Success and Achievement:**

- The Writing Center needs to be under the control of a discipline expert faculty member who understands the pedagogy and theory of composition, grammar and language development. This has a direct impact on how services are rendered. For instance, tutors in the Writing Center must be kept abreast on composition theory and how to best address student issues in terms of writing, grammar, punctuation and formatting. These are skills that are best addressed by a discipline expert.
- Since its inception, the Writing Center has always been integrally linked to the English Department in the way that it was developed and structured. In support, the minimum qualifications for the lead instructor of the Writing Center has to have the following skill sets:
  - Master's degree in English, literature, comparative literature or composition OR Bachelor's in any of the above AND Master's in linguistics, TESL, speech, education with a specialization in reading, creative writing, or journalism OR the equivalent.
  - Experience that indicates a sensitivity to and an understanding of the diverse academic, socioeconomic, cultural, disability, and ethnic backgrounds of community college students and personnel.
- If the Writing Center is not linked with the English Department, and it is overseen by a non-English Department faculty member, then it has the potential of altering the pedagogy and philosophy of the Writing Center, which is based on instruction and helping students to become self-sufficient writers, and it may change its focus so much so that it becomes a "proof reading" service.
- English faculty use the Writing Center as a vital resource for the academic success of their students. If the pedagogy and instructional philosophy of the Writing Center is diminished, then support of the English Department for the Writing Center may no longer be upheld.

- The Writing Center is not an isolated program but serves students from a number of disciplines across the campus. As of fall 2016, the Writing Center has served over 39 disciplines. Faculty members outside of the humanities, such as those from the sciences, recommend their students to use the services provided by the Writing Center because they understand the value of having their students be tutored by experienced tutors who can guide their students to become more proficient writers.

### **Organizational Impacts:**

- The Writing Center is an instructional program and therefore falls under the Academic Senate's charge of 10+1.
- From an organizational standpoint, the Writing Center is not merely a student support service. It is akin to other programs of the English Department such as Punte, the Arrowhead Newspaper and the Phineas Literary Magazine.
- The lead instructor of the Writing Center is an English faculty member and reports as a faculty member to the Dean of Arts and Humanities. Restructuring the Writing Center to fall under the supervision of another dean (e.g. Dean of Academic Success and Learning) has the potential of creating confusion in terms of who will take responsibility for issues that arise in the Writing Center. From an efficiency and streamlining standpoint, it is logical for the Writing Center to fall under the same purview of the same division dean as its lead instructor as well as the English Department since it is a program under said department.
- Restructuring the Writing Center has the potential of taking the purview of how the center is operated away from the English Department which can have direct impacts on how it serves students.
- Currently, the Writing Center is operating very efficiently with a high Service Area Outcome performance rating. Changing the structure of the Writing Center has the potential of undermining its performance.
- Program review reports for the Writing Center are currently included as a program under the English Department.
- If the Writing Center is combined with other tutoring services (e.g. SI tutoring and/or general tutoring), the apportionment that might have been allocated toward the maintenance and expansion of Writing Center services might be diverted to other services of the college.