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# WRITING LAB 2019/20 REPORT

## PROJECT SUMMARY

REPORT DATE	PROJECT NAME	PREPARED BY
May 1, 2020	Writing Lab	Karen Palmer & Sandi Van Lieu

## STATUS SUMMARY

Though the Writing Lab faced many challenges during this first year, we are happy to report that the Writing Lab has helped several students and has quickly become a benefit that students don't want to lose.

In the first half of the Fall 2019 semester, we were able to create a welcoming space for students in our new Writing Lab, 3-208. The space includes comfortable seating, a computer, whiteboards, and even coffee. We met with Robb Ferguson and Holly Molina to decide the best way for the Writing Lab to serve students without conflicting with the services offered by the Academic Learning Center. It was decided to offer longer sessions (30-60 minutes) and to offer editing help to students. In addition, we partnered with Robb and Holly to give our tutors access to the training provided to the tutors in the ALC by the CRLA, which also gives students who complete the training an official certification. Not only does this ensure that our tutors are well-trained, but it also gives them an important credential that they can take with them in the future. We created our tutoring positions, for which four students applied. Of the four, three were offered positions, and two accepted. Both students who accepted positions are English Club officers. As our tutors came on board, we set up Calendly accounts for them and taught them how to use Calendly in sync with Outlook to create appointments with tutees. We created a website for the writing lab with our location, hours, and tutor information: [yc.edu/writinglab](http://yc.edu/writinglab). We also worked to create intake forms and an outtake survey for students. By the end of the Fall 2019 semester, both tutors had completed their initial training modules and were ready to begin seeing students.

Early in the Spring 2020 semester, we decided to upgrade to a Team version of Calendly in order to better serve students. The updated version of Calendly allows us to supervise sessions scheduled with Calendly and to keep records electronically, as well as send out student survey e-mails automatically. As tutors worked with students, they were told that students were finding it difficult to set appointments, and they were asking for drop in hours. As the budget allowed, we set up a limited number of open hours each week. That created momentum in the Writing Lab, with the last week before spring break being our busiest yet.

A special training for the tutors was planned for March 20<sup>th</sup>. Both tutors were to join the English Department for a norming session on Professional Development Day. Unfortunately, Professional Development Day was cancelled due to COVID. We look forward to offering this training to our students next year.

Unfortunately, the COVID situation also halted the amazing momentum we saw prior to the break. Our tutors quickly responded that they would like to continue offering tutoring via Zoom. The information was updated on our YC website, as well as sent out to faculty and students. While the tutors have not had as many tutoring opportunities since the break, this echoes the experience of the more established ALC. The students they have helped have been very appreciative, and their teachers have noted clear improvements in their writing. While tutors are keeping open hours, they have also been working toward completing all of the training offered by the ALC. Their goal is to have completed all training by the end of May 2020.

Other projects in process: We are working on creating a Writing Lab specific training course in Canvas specifically for our Writing Lab tutors. This shell will include our YC Writing Lab Handbook, instructions for using Calendly, tips for using Zoom effectively, keeping good records, as well as training modules.

## WRITING LAB OBJECTIVES

NEEDS IDENTIFIED	PROPOSED SOLUTION	IMPLEMENTATION	RESULTS
Improve student writing and student success.	Create a Writing Lab where students can receive targeted assistance with their writing assignments in all classes.	The Writing Lab was placed in 3-208. 30 minute and 60 minute tutoring sessions were offered for targeted one on one writing tutoring. Open hours were later added.	The Writing Lab served a total of 15 students, several of whom came in for several sessions, in the 2019-2020 school year. Students, tutors, and faculty saw noted improvement in student writing, which contributed to student success in their classes.  **Update for summer: The Lab served an additional 6 students in June alone. **
Train future English majors and/or English Club members on skills including, but not limited to editing, relationship building, teaching, and other skills necessary for future careers in English, such as teaching or editing.	Create Work Study positions for future English majors and/or English Club members who will work in the Writing Lab.	Two tutors from the English Club were hired to staff the Writing Lab. One of the students is an English major transferring to NAU in Fall 2020. The other is considering changing her major to English after working in the WL.	Tutors report multiple benefits from their tutoring experiences. Our English Major was able to envision himself teaching English one day, and his experience strengthened his desire to become an English teacher. Our other tutor is now thinking about becoming an English major.
Provide an opportunity for students to build community at YC.	Writing Lab tutors will work directly with English faculty to learn how to best assist other students, creating a multi-faceted community.	Writing Lab tutors worked under the direct supervision of Karen Palmer and Sandi Van Lieu. They were instructed in the basics of tutoring, as well as with one on one conversations with Karen and Sandi.	Having tutors from the English Club has created community in multiple ways. Because students in English courses are plugged into the Writing Lab, they are more willing to attend English Club events because they know the members. The relationship between the tutors and faculty have expanded, as well. Overall, we have created a very nice learning community that is impacting many areas.

## BUDGET OVERVIEW

TOTAL BUDGET FOR 19/20	ITEMS	AMOUNT	
	Tutor Salaries	1881.03	
	Calendly Subscription	287.99	
	MLA/APA Handbooks	77.37	
	Stipend	2026.66	(This was not supposed to be included in our budget, but it is included here to reflect a complete picture.)
	TOTAL	4273.05	
	Remaining	1811.03	

## CHALLENGES IN 2019/2020

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	RESULTS
Students were having trouble making appointments via Calendly.	Since we had the budget available to do so, we decided to offer Open Lab hours just before spring break.	The week prior to spring break was our busiest week yet, with 5 students and 7 tutoring sessions.
Tracking Data—We created forms for students to fill out at the beginning of their tutoring session and a survey for them to complete afterward via Google forms. Unfortunately, the tutors sometimes were unable to get the forms signed, and students forgot to complete the survey.	Since the forms were cumbersome, we adopted an updated version of Calendly that allowed students making appointments to fill in the questionnaire prior to their appointment. The new version of Calendly also sends out an automated e-mail reminding students to complete the survey for a prize.	Though the Calendly update solved some problems, it didn't solve everything. We were able to track a handful of appointments made via Calendly, and we received four responses to our survey, in addition to one e-mailed message. Students seem to prefer open hours to making an appointment, which means that tutors need to remember to have students fill out the forms.
COVID 19 shut down the campus right as the Lab was gaining momentum.	After Spring Break, we shifted to Zoom tutoring sessions. Tutors offered appointments and continued to offer open hours.	As was seen with the ALC, students are hesitant to use Zoom for tutoring. Fewer students were seen after the break, but students who received help before the break have continued to make appointments with the tutors. Over the last week, we have seen another uptick in numbers, with students making appointments for their final papers. Again, we were not able to capture data for those students who did not make an appointment via Calendly and instead opted

to join for open hours. Tutors did not have access to the forms, but kept track of students they helped.

## FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS, TUTORS, AND FACULTY

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### Students

“THANK YOU for helping to create the Writing Lab! I'm very excited to use it for the remaining semester and in future semesters as well.

I think it will help bridge the wide gap between K-12 writing skills and college entry level requirements (I helped a couple of people last semester and was surprised what's not being learned in school) as well as those of us who desperately want to improve what skills we might already have.”

“Thank you for providing this helpful service!”

“I love the fact that there is tutoring for writing. It makes writing essays so much better because I can get a second opinion for free!”

“Elliot was a huge help and he explained the things I needed to work on in a clear way.”

“Please continue to keep the Writing Lab open! It has been very useful and helpful to me. I will continue to use the Writing Lab!”

### Tutors

I would like to express my utmost gratitude toward the English Writing Lab program and Yavapai College. The time that I have spent learning how to tutor and tutoring other students has been extremely valuable in my experience as an English major. I aided many students, a widely diverse group of a little less than a dozen total, in becoming better writers regardless of the subject their assignment comes from. It has provided me with the confidence to decide on a field for my future career and I have been accepted to the BS Secondary Education program at Northern Arizona University. Realizing the joy of helping others learn is a huge part of the reason for choosing the field, and helping others learn has also taught me a lot about myself. I am much more comfortable in a classroom setting and speaking in front of others is fun rather than frightening as it once was. Also, the money earned from the student worker position allowed me to spend more time on campus and focused on schoolwork, partly because of the standby time of eight hours per week. This has been a wonderful opportunity and I would highly recommend it to any other English majors that attend Yavapai College.

Elliot McBee

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My name is Rochelle Haddad. This year I had the opportunity to tutor in the new Writing Lab. While there were certainly a lot of hiccups to make it operational, I was able to gain some very key learning opportunities. With this insight, I would like to share with you my experience.

I was approached by both Dr. Sandi Van-Lieu and Dr. Karen Palmer at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2019. I had taken classes with them and they knew that I had an interest in working with other students. I had just been elected to the position as the English Club president, and because of my Honors English classes, they also knew my work ethic and desire to be of service.

The position did not offer a lot of in-person tutoring right away, but with some advertisement and incentive from some of the faculty, by spring break the lab really started getting busy. I was able to help a few students before the beginning of the break. I was actually starting to get excited about the possibility of what having a dedicated Writing Lab could look like for students. It was encouraging to see the students writing at the end of the few people I saw. I saw their confidence grow even within the short time we met. It is because of the one-on-one time and personal attention that a dedicated writing tutor can bring.

Another thing that I would really like to highlight is that although I am not an English major now, it has opened up my mind to the possibility of making a change towards becoming one. I am seeing that I really love helping other people improve their work. Knowing that I have had a hand in making others feel more confident in their own writing skills excites me.

I think that by continuing the writing lab many more students will greatly appreciate the time taken and use this service. I am hopeful that next year I'll have another opportunity to serve my fellow students. Creating an environment that will benefit all who come in to better their own writing skills will help shape anyone involved with the tutoring process.

Thank you so much for your time.

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## Faculty

I have been so thankful to get to see the results of the Writing Lab first hand this semester. One of my students started in my ENG 100 class last fall. This semester, she is taking the ENG 101 and ENG 102 back to back combo course. She has visited the writing lab at least five times for multiple papers. This is a student who works extremely hard, always shows up to class, asks questions, etc. However, she struggles with writing. The extra help she received at the Writing Lab helped her to improve her writing noticeably this semester. While improvement after visiting a tutor is expected to some extent, even the student's drafts, which I see prior to her visits to the Writing Lab, have improved. This is the ideal situation—a student who is learning from her experiences. The Writing Lab is making a difference, and it has the potential to benefit even more students if we can get the word out!

Dr. Karen Palmer

## CONCLUSIONS

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We have learned a lot this year about creating a successful Writing Lab. We have overcome many challenges, from changes to our physical space to COVID, and we are very proud of the work we have done in moving the Writing Lab from concept to reality. There is a clear need for a Writing Lab on campus. Our students need the targeted support they receive from the Writing Lab, and they have all asked for us to continue this work.

However, we still have challenges that we must overcome. We know that we need to track students and that Calendly is filling that role admirably, but at the same time, students want drop in hours. This puts the responsibility for paperwork on our tutors. Having a defined reception area would solve this problem, but is likely beyond the resources at our disposal. Having the Writing Lab serve dual purposes as an open student space makes it difficult to keep records in the space. Since Sandi and Karen both maintain busy schedules with multiple responsibilities that conflict with our tutor availability, it has been difficult to find the time we were hoping to have to do physical observations and trainings. However, we have been able to observe first-hand the results of the Writing Lab in our own students. The ongoing COVID situation will continue to impact how we can deliver services to students and how we can continue to train our tutors. We switched gears from physical training to a Canvas shell after COVID, but we are still in the process of creating that space. Though we spread the word about the Writing Lab, it seems that English students are the only students who have been coming into the lab. And, of those students, the majority are coming from Karen's, Sandi's, and Nicole's classes. In addition, we are still working on creating a solid training manual and Canvas shell specifically for our Writing Lab tutors.

Moving forward, we will need to continue to improve our training, our systems, and our marketing. All of these things are time-intensive, but they are vital to establishing a thriving Writing Lab.

## **CONTINUING THE WORK OF THE WRITING LAB IN 20/21**

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As we move into the second year of the Writing Lab, our focus is on continuing to offer an essential service to students. We will continue to offer Open Lab time, as well as Calendly appointments. We plan to keep the lab open for an average of 10 hours each week. We will choose different hours than the ALC to provide students more options.

Our tutors would like to continue to work on completing their training and to offer services to students at least through June (the end of the fiscal year). Since we have \$1811 left in our budget, we hope that we can allow these students to continue to work 10 hours a week through the end of June.

Tutors & Training: In the fall, we will be losing one of our tutors, as he is transferring to NAU as an English Major. We will need to hire at least one more tutor from among the ranks of our English Majors/ English Club members. We will continue to improve our training options, as well as create opportunities to observe our tutors in action. We plan to develop the following 1 hour training sessions in addition to the ALC tutor training:

- Onboarding training: Setting up Calendly, integrating Zoom, and submitting Timesheets
- Data Reporting—Keeping accurate records
- FERPA Training
- Zoom Best Practices
- Norming Session with English Faculty
- MLA/APA Review
- Revision vs Editing
- Building Rapport
- Handling Difficult Tutoring Situations
- Cultural Awareness
- Discipline Specific Training

System:

- Writing Lab Handbook
- Writing Lab Canvas shell to house training and reporting

Marketing:

- Updated Flyers
- Updated Website
- Newsflash for Students and Faculty
- Social Media?

20/21 Requested Budget:

Two tutors @ \$11/hour 10 hours total per week x 30 weeks: \$6600 Student Salary

Calendly subscription: Free per Ian McDonald

Training with ALC: TBD (Waiting to hear back from Robb Ferguson)

Supervision: \$1800 (2 hours/week x 30 weeks x \$30/hr)