

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

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Academic support services have two ways they can pursue assessment:

Institutional Effectiveness

- Setting service-oriented goals and measuring whether these goals have been met (such as number or cohort of students you aim to serve).
- Independent and quantifiable assessment is relatively easy.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Measuring student learning outcomes in relation to the support services (what skills or knowledge have students acquired via your support).
- Independent and/or quantifiable assessment is much more elusive.

Setting goals

What institutional goals have you or might you set for your unit?

How about student learning outcomes goals?

Differentiating Maximum Values of Writing Center Support

Writing center guru Neal Lerner asks “how do we begin to investigate” just how “our writing centers contribute to the teaching and learning goals that our institutions hold dear” (64), which is a question we can and should ask of any academic support center.

--from “Writing Center Assessment: Searching for ‘Proof’ of our Effectiveness in *The Center Will Hold* edited by Michael Pemberton and Joyce Kincaid

“Do it, don’t be afraid, and collaborate.”

--Neal Lerner, [“Two Experts Talk Writing Assessment”](#) podcast

Collaboration provides greater opportunities for any academic support center not only to collect more robust data but to target a specific cohort of students for close examination to determine what, if any, effects it has on this group

FOR STUDENT TO COMPLETE

Name: _____ **Arrival Time:** _____
(last/family/surname) (first/given)

ID number: _____ Level: Undergraduate/Graduate

Today's date: _____ Student's signature: _____

EPS Professor's name: _____ Semester: Fa/W/Sp/Su, 20____

What course are you here for? EPS Not EPS This form will be sent to the EPS Director.

If you are here for a non-EPS course and would like this form to be sent to that professor as well, indicate the info here:

Non-EPS Professor's name: _____ Course: _____

What do you hope to accomplish in this session?



FOR TUTOR TO COMPLETE

Tutor's name: _____ Signature: _____

Tutoring: Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Tutor's comments: _____

ID Checked? Yes/No



Don't overlook an opportunity.

In other words, even utilitarian record keeping can become significant when it is layered with other data, whether collected in the writing center or elsewhere in the institution.

Proficiency Clusters

Granting that students who score fifteen to the maximum eighteen points on the placement pre-test place out of the PLCPA course, the remaining students came to be distinguished by their proficiency levels according to three ranges for purposes of tracking improvement and support:

- Cluster One: scored between 3 (the lowest score) and 9.4,
- Cluster Two: scored between 9.5 and 12.4
- Cluster Three: scored between 12.5 to 14.4



Our eureka moment:

These data suggest that writing center support positively contributes towards improving student writing outcomes for the least proficient students, doing much to put them on par with the initially more proficient students.

Our findings:

What we have confirmed over the ensuing semesters is that the least proficient PLCPA students benefit the most from mandated writing support, that such support is beneficial to all levels of PLCPA students, and that the Studio contributes in demonstrable ways to successful student learning outcomes in the PLCPA, which impacts their ability to succeed at the institution.

We surveyed the students to determine whether they believed that the Studio had an impact on their learning.

- 104 or 94% indicated that “the Studio contributed to their success in the course”
- 94 or 85% said that “the Studio contributed to their success more generally” at our institution
- 94 students or 85% students said they would likely return in future semesters to the Studio

As Stephen North so aptly put it, the goal is "to produce *better writers, not better writing.*" (*Idea of a Writing Center*)

Mohamad's controlled tracking of students' pre- and post-test results combined with my consistent tracking of these students' attendance and tutoring session activity at the Studio allows for a sustained inquiry into learning outcomes, which reveals that the Studio has positive effects not just on student writing but on the student *writers.*

Summary

- Academic support services can increase the possibility for collecting meaningful data about the impact they have on student learning outcomes if they partner with other departments to track outcomes of specific cohorts of students.
- At Fairleigh Dickinson, we track the international students' pre/post test scores and the use of the writing center, which enables us to establish maximum value thresholds of writing support for these students at differing proficiency levels and to document effectiveness.

Measurement

- How do you or might you measure whether you've achieved your institutional goals?
- Your student learning outcomes goals?

- [Student Learning Assessment Options and Resources](#)

a fabulous, detailed document from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Other useful resources:

- [Lerner, N. \(1997\). Counting beans and making beans count. Writing Lab Newsletter 22\(1\): 8-9.](#)
- [Upcraft and Schuh's *Assessment in Student Affairs*](#)
- [IWCA: International Writing Center Association](#)
- [Writing Lab Newsletter](#)
- [Writing Center Assessment as Reflective Practice](#)

Useful FDU Links

- [Sample Template for Learning Outcomes Assessment Planning](#)
- [Metro Writing Studio](#)
- [Programs in Language, Culture, and Professional Advancement](#)

Ideas for collaborating . . .





Questions?

And thanks! Janet Boyd

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