

# Just Write: Mission as a Means to a Campus Writing Culture

Presented by

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# Recent Developments at Cabrini College



# The Writing Center: A Brief History

- Writing Center before Title III
- Incorporated into the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) in January 2007

# The Center for Teaching & Learning

- Title III initiative; a “learning commons” located in the Iadarola Center for Science and Technology
- Encompasses:
  - Writing Center
  - Peer Tutoring Program
    - Peer Tutoring
    - Classroom Coaching
  - Math Resource Center
  - Academic Counseling
  - Faculty Development

# *Justice Matters*

- Piloted Fall 2008; full implementation Fall 2009
- Includes:
  - Success Seminar
  - Engagements with the Common Good
  - The Explorations
  - The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies

# Impact of *Justice Matters* on the Role of the Writing Center

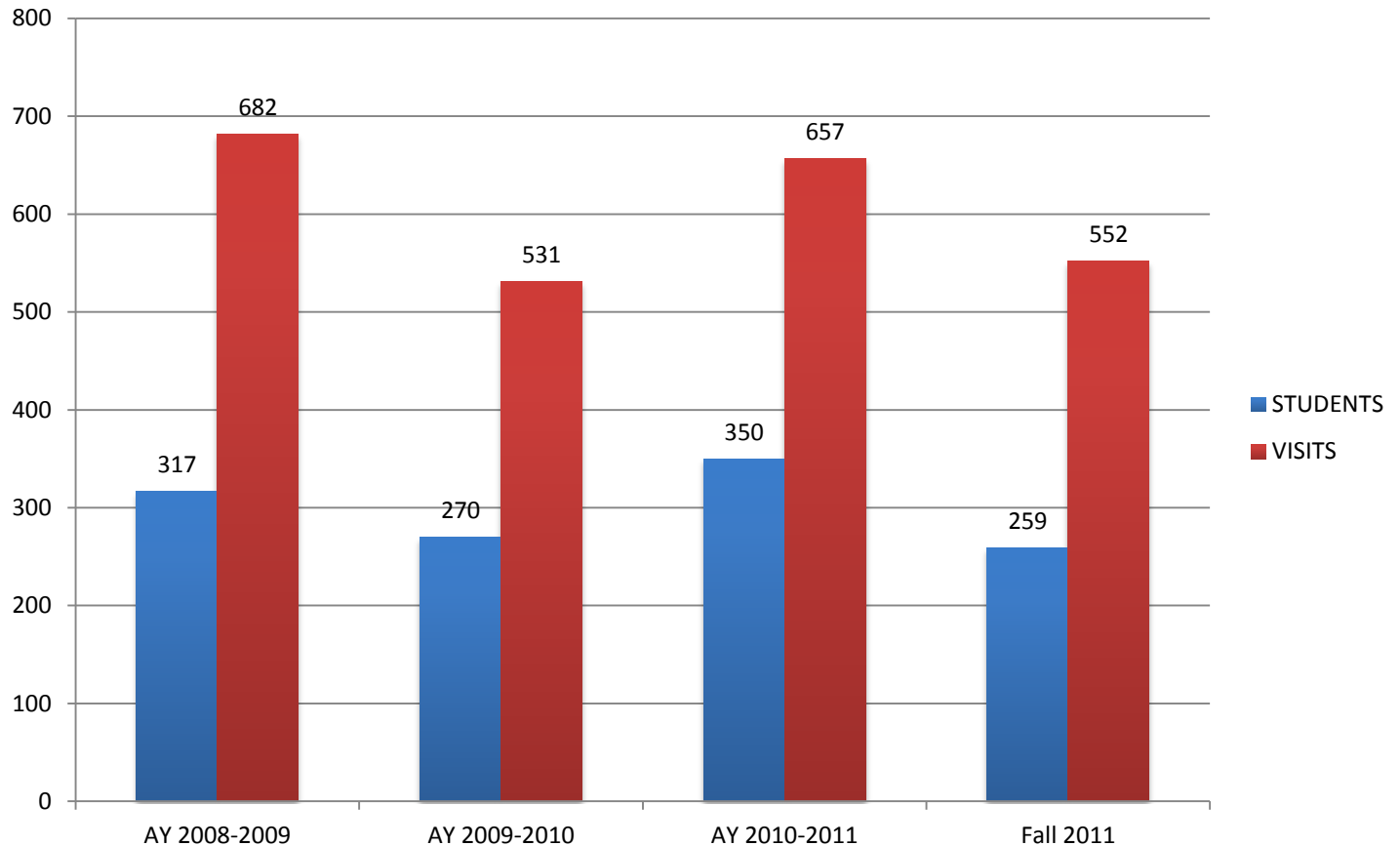
- Intentional shift towards Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines
- Writing Center and Peer Tutoring Program have emerged as avenues to curriculum support:
  - Need to support students who are being asked to write using a disciplinary/interdisciplinary lens
  - Need to support faculty who are new to teaching writing-intensive courses

# Trends in Writing Center Utilization



# Writing Center Utilization since the Implementation of *Justice Matters*

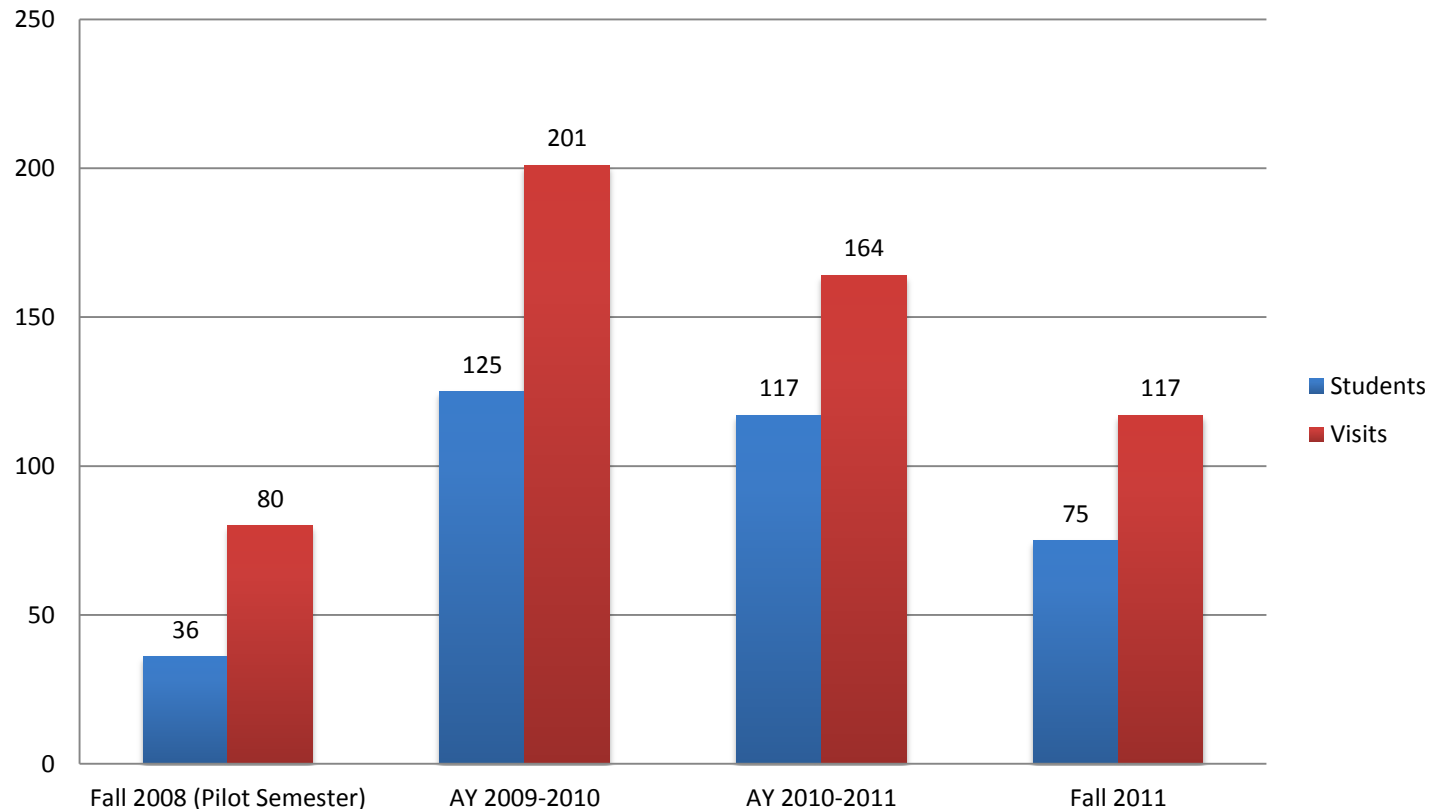
Writing Center – AY 2008 – Fall 2011  
Students and Visits





# Writing Center Support of ECGs since the Implementation of *Justice Matters*

Writing Center Support of ECG Students  
Fall 2008 – Fall 2011  
Students and Visits



# Writing Center Support of WID

- Decrease in percentage of overall visits supporting ECG courses
- Increase in support of classes not traditionally considered writing-intensive
- Increase in requests for discipline-specific in-class workshops

# **Campus Perception of the Writing Center**



# Mission Statement

## **Education of the Heart**

*Cabrini College is a Catholic institution of higher education dedicated to academic excellence, leadership development, and a commitment to social justice. The College welcomes learners of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds and prepares them to become engaged citizens of the world.*

# Survey

- Spring 2012: Surveyed faculty and students
  - 70 full-time undergraduate faculty
    - 39% response rate (27/70)
  - 165 students who have visited the Writing Center three or more times since the pilot of *Justice Matters* (Fall 2008)
    - 21% response rate (34/165)

# Faculty Survey

- Solicited feedback about:
  - Encouragement of students to visit the Writing Center
  - Perception of the Writing Center as an academic resource and as a part of campus culture
  - Perception of how the Writing Center's work relates to the mission of the College

# Student Survey

- Solicited feedback about:
  - Reasons for visiting the Writing Center
  - Perception of the Writing Center's impact on writing ability and confidence
  - General experience in the Writing Center
  - Perception of how the Writing Center's work relates to the mission of the College



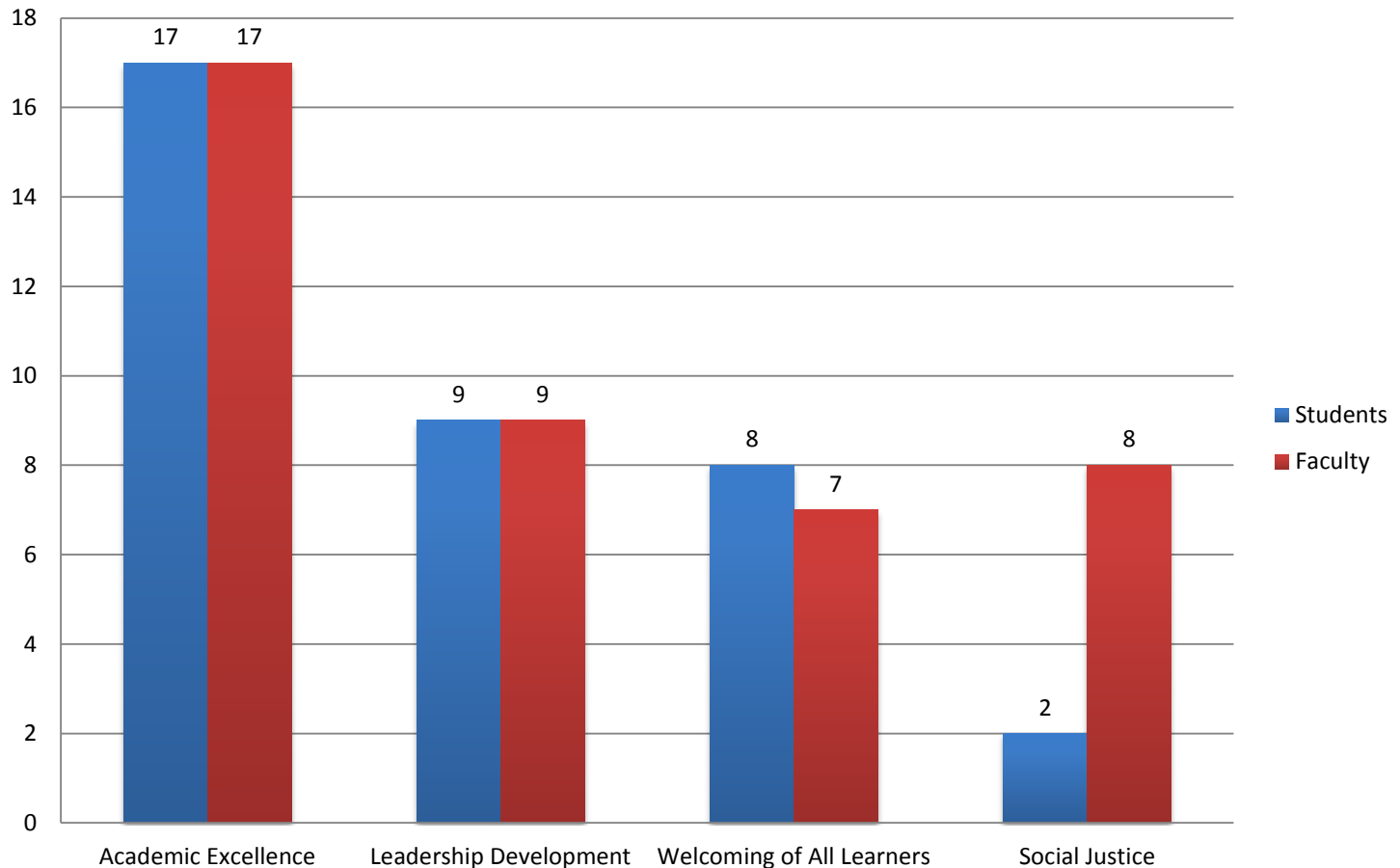
# Survey Findings

- 96.3% (26/27) faculty respondents reported that they encourage their students to use the WC
- 70.6% (24/34) student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their writing ability had improved through their Writing Center experiences
- 70.6% (24/34) student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their writing confidence had improved through their Writing Center experiences



# Survey Findings: The Writing Center and College's Mission

Elements of Cabrini College Mission Statement  
Most Associated with Writing Center



# Academic Excellence

- 63% of faculty respondents (17/27)
  - “By helping students become better thinkers and writers, [the writing tutors] are instrumental in promoting academic excellence.”
  - “The Writing Center reinforces our goals of encouraging academic excellence by helping students to develop essential written communications skills.”
  - “The Writing Center, by assisting students with their ECG writing assignments, truly is connecting academic excellence to social justice.”

# Academic Excellence

- 50% of student respondents (17/34)
  - “The Writing Center has...[helped me] become dedicated to academic excellence by...improving my writing ability.”
  - “Their goal is to improve students’ writing, not just on a particular paper or assignment, but overall so that students will possess the skills needed to write papers on their own with confidence.”
  - “The tutors will try anything to help me succeed.”

# Leadership Development

- 33% of faculty respondents (9/27)
  - “It helps students learn how to be leaders by learning how to...ask for help.”
  - “The daily practices of deep listening, patient assistance, well-tempered advice all contribute to developing leaders: word-by-word.”
  - “The Writing Center...offers opportunities for leadership development through the tutor program.”

# Leadership Development

- 26% of student respondents (9/34)
  - “Working with the [tutors] helps me to feel confident enough to help others with their writing and...be a leader.”
  - “It...allows students to take constructive criticism, which is essential for leaders.”
  - “The tutors show extreme leadership abilities and help me to strive to be a better leader myself.”

# Welcoming of All Learners

- 26% of faculty respondents (7/34)
  - “The Writing Center can be an expression of the College’s commitment to diversity, because it recognizes that students arrive with different levels of preparation and with different learning styles.”
  - “When students know we care about each of them as valued individuals, they can open up to guidance. That is the environment/climate of the Writing Center for each of our diversified student body.”

# Welcoming of All Learners

- 24% of student respondents (8/34)
  - “The Writing Center is more than willing to help every student.”
  - “[The tutors] don’t judge or critique harshly and they just want us to succeed!!!”
  - “I have worked with several different people who have different backgrounds..than [me], which is always a good experience. [They]...provide a different viewpoint.”



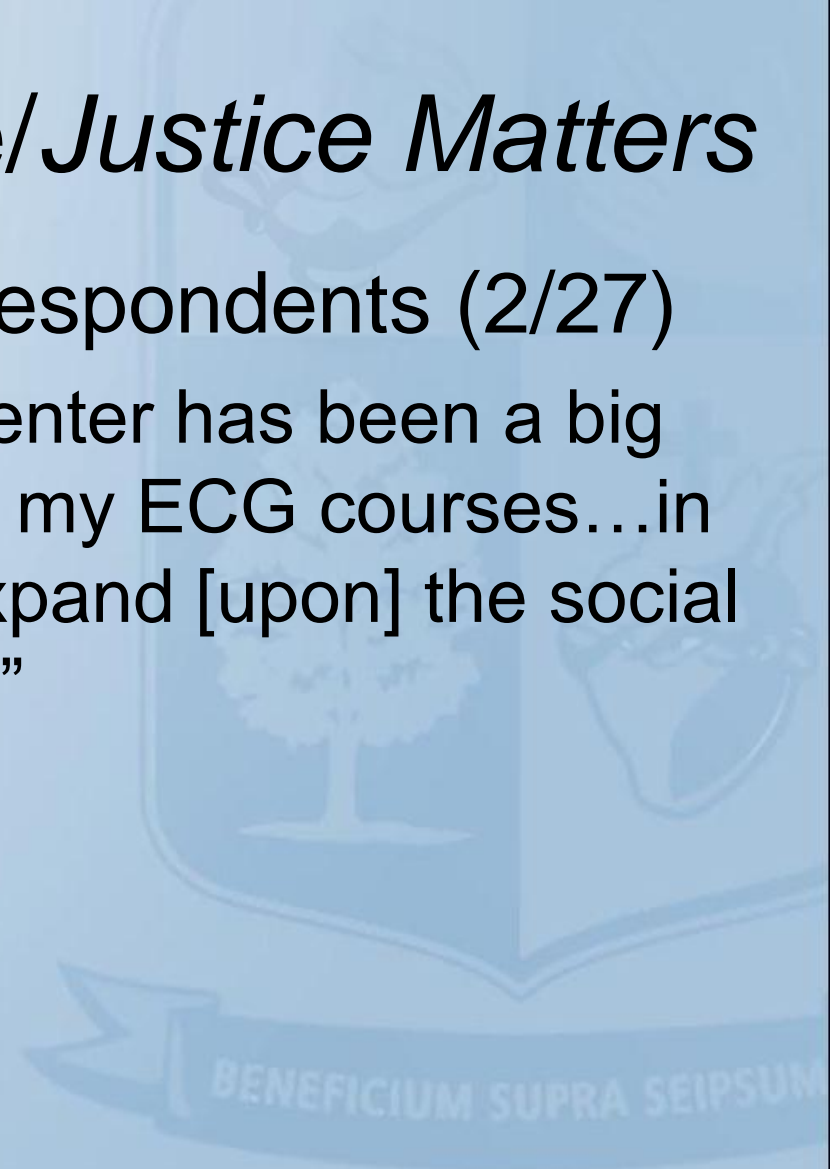
# Social Justice/*Justice Matters*

- 30% of faculty respondents (8/27)
  - “They are preparing our students to become engaged citizens who are committed to social justice as a result of their reading, writing and experiential learning.”
  - “The Writing Center, by assisting students with their ECG writing assignments, truly is connecting academic excellence to social justice.”



# Social Justice/*Justice Matters*

- 6% of student respondents (2/27)
  - “The Writing Center has been a big asset to me for my ECG courses...in helping [me] expand [upon] the social justice themes.”



# Peer Tutor Perspectives

- “I have done my very best to help students go above and beyond what they thought was possible, and in turn it allowed me to do the same with my own work.”
- “I see social justice in the types of assignments that fellow students bring to the Writing Center...I also witness social justice by simply interacting with students who come to the Writing Center.”

# Peer Tutor Perspectives

- “I like to think I have helped students learn more about themselves and their writing abilities...I have seen students from all different majors and all different walks of life.”
- “We are learning just as much from our peers as they are learning from us. We are exposed to concepts and topic areas that we may have not had experience with before and are able to learn about them as we help those we are tutoring.”

# Continuing the Mission



# Next Steps

- Assessing student achievements in *Justice Matters*
- Developing leaders as an intentional part of tutor training
- Cultivating relationships between Writing Center and campus constituencies
- Continuing to explore the meaning of Education of the Heart in our work

**Questions?**



# Works Cited

MacDonald, Ross B., PhD. *The Master Tutor: A Guidebook for More Effective Tutoring*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Williamsville, NY: Cambridge Stratford, 2000. Print.

Sullivan, Mary Louise. *Mother Cabrini: Italian Immigrant of the Century*. New York: The Center for Migration Studies of New York, 1992. Print.