

Writing Center Implementation Group Report
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November 15, 2020

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2020, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Ralph Hexter appointed a Writing Center Implementation Group charged to “move us from a place of discussion about whether we should form a new Writing Center on campus to the question of what that Writing Center should be.” This group was composed of members from across campus who share a strong commitment to student success, and was animated by the part of Chancellor Gary May’s campus strategic plan that calls for “bold steps to close gaps in academic outcomes for students from underrepresented, first generation, and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Through a combination of meetings and asynchronous collaboration, we have worked to answer Provost Hexter’s charge to “outline a plan for implementing the recommendations” of the Writing Task Force (2019), the Closing the Preparation Gap Working Group (2019), and the external consultant who assessed support for writing across campus (2020). We did so while drawing upon the expertise, experience, and values of our own group. We therefore respectfully offer the following vision of a new Writing Center at UC Davis and recommend these actions to transform shared aspirations into concrete reality.

- Convene a University Writing Council empowered to assist and assess the Writing Center’s coordination of writing requirements, writing instruction, and associated resources across campus.
- Allocate sufficient funds to hire an initial staff consisting minimally of a Faculty Director and an Associate Director, and plan to allocate more funds when the Center is adequately staffed by faculty, staff, and students.
- Authorize and conduct a national search for a Writing Center Director. To begin building campus support and trust with a slate clean of pre-existing competition and political differences among units, the Director should come from outside UC Davis, be a Senate Faculty member with expertise in Writing Center studies, be located in an academic unit, and report directly to the Provost and Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.
- Consider appointing an Interim Faculty Director and Interim Associate Director to work with the University Writing Council on initial coordination and transition plans to consolidate the extant writing support currently dispersed widely across campus.
- Ensure continuity of support for the vulnerable student populations who are our first priority by maintaining existing personnel and services during transitions.
- Locate and assign appropriate physical space in a high-traffic, high-visibility location where the Writing Center is both inviting and accessible to students, faculty, and staff in all colleges and disciplines.
- Assess the Writing Center via Special Academic Program Review, on a regular cycle with other Special Academic Programs.

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Charge to the Committee

In a letter dated June 22, 2020, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Ralph Hexter appointed a Writing Center Implementation Group and charged us:

to move us from a place of discussion about whether we should form a new Writing Center on campus to the question of what that Writing Center should be. Specifically, this group should outline a plan for implementing the recommendations provided by the external consultant report, one that benefits as well from other committee reports on this topic and takes into consideration questions of program, space and budget, as well as oversight that must be determined.

- Identify key functions of a campus writing center
- Estimate the appropriate initial scope of service for a campus writing center
- Recommend appropriate staffing levels for a campus writing center
- Recommend an initial programmatic and staffing budget for a campus writing center
- Determine the best ways to incorporate existing writing expertise located in the campus Writing Hub as well as the University Writing Program into the writing center, both in terms of personnel and program

Members of the Implementation Group

Sheri Atkinson, Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs
Melissa Browne, Student Services Librarian, University Library
Marcela Cuellar, Associate Professor, Education
Teresa Dillinger, Director, GradPathways Institute, Graduate Studies
Frances Dolan, Distinguished Professor, English (Academic Senate representative)
Annaliese Franz, Professor, Chemistry (Academic Senate representative)
Michael Hill, Professor, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Rick Karban, Professor, Entomology
Maja Makagon, Assistant Professor, Animal Science
Dan Melzer, Associate Director, First-Year Composition Program
Kevin Sitz, Director, Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers
Matthew Stratton, Associate Professor, English (Chair)
Matthew Vernon, Associate Professor, English

Background

The very composition of our group embodied facts that antecedent working groups and task forces had articulated: that a university is only as good as its writing, that writing occurs in every corner of campus, and that all forms of writing are fundamental to the success of our community. Whether pragmatically fulfilling UC systemwide requirements, communicating the goals and

conclusions of investigation in laboratories and archives, promoting the role of education in achieving a more just society, or expanding the imaginative horizons of possibility for individuals and groups, writing is much more than a practical means for making the work of a great research university legible. Rather, from first-year undergraduates in classrooms and student services to faculty, staff, and the upper reaches of administration, writing is a portable set of skills and habits across multiple tasks and disciplines, “an ability to assess the specifics of a writing occasion, its purpose, and the genres useful for the task” that is ultimately “inseparable from learning and knowing.”¹

Virtually all of our peer institutions operate a Writing Center to cultivate, improve, and assess the diverse forms of writing and writers across campus. Different models for successful writing centers exist across the country and world, including those that are located under the authority and auspices of Student Affairs and those that are located under the authority and auspices of an academic unit. The excellent tutoring and support of undergraduate students offered by the Writing Support Center in our own Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers (AATC) represents one part of the work that comprehensive writing centers offer, and the excellent support of graduate students offered by the University Writing Program represents another. Most of our peer institutions (including eight campuses of the University of California), however, are led by Faculty Directors who are research scholars located in an academic unit, and offer a wide range of writing support that goes well beyond one-on-one tutoring.

Without fully reprising the prior work and recommendations that led to this moment, we do emphasize that the consolidation and reorganization of existing writing resources—and the addition of new ones, without reducing existing services—under the auspices of a Writing Center emerges directly from the consensus recommendations of properly constituted and consulted groups of scholars and staff across campus. In addition to Prof. Neal Lerner, the external consultant hired to assess writing and the feasibility of a Writing Center, two campus groups devoted to writing and equity have pointedly recommended that UC Davis:

- **Establish a Writing Center led by research faculty in Writing Studies in an academic unit so that all writers, students, and faculty know where to find guidance.** This Writing Center would bring together and enhance all of the facets of writing at UCD that we have tried to map here. If we want a healthy writing culture that is driven by student need but includes all writers and potential writing teachers on campus, then we need a physical, conceptual, and virtual hub where we can find each other, communicate, and collaborate. *We want to state as strongly as possible that this Center would gather together and replace the existing archipelago. We do not recommend adding yet another unit to the hodgepodge we’ve got.*

- Writing Task Force²

¹ Writing Task Force Report (5).

² Writing Task Force Report (14).

- **Establish a robust, centralized, and well-resourced campus writing center to mitigate the current disparate outcomes with regard to writing at UC Davis.**

UC Davis should have a writing center. That center should gather together the existing constellation of disparate services offered across campus and bring together staff, faculty, and students to support our campus community's needs. In other words, such a center would improve writing across the campus by centralizing and coordinating existing writing services and by adding new services for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty who want to improve their writing and their ability to teach writing to diverse populations. On the campuses of our peer institutions, such centers serve as physical and intellectual hubs where students—especially students not well-versed in the art of navigating inconsistent academic services and cultures—can find the kinds of writing support that are vital for educational and professional success. Our students deserve the same opportunities.

- Working Group on Closing the Preparation Gap³

Recommendations and Determinations

As with any diverse group whose membership represents a variety of interests, our group achieved consensus more frequently than unanimity. Where possible, the following recommendations and determinations try to articulate that consensus while representing multiple perspectives and describing areas of disagreement. We value and appreciate the work currently being done to support student writers; we agree that academic excellence proceeds from equity and inclusion of all writers, and that teaching conditions for faculty and instructors are inseparable from the learning conditions of our students. We agree with the Committee on Courses and Instruction, who insisted that “methods to support the delivery of writing requirements (such as a Writing Center) should acknowledge the heterogeneous writing styles, tools and overall needs across disciplines.”⁴ We unanimously share the commitments of those whose work on these issues led us to our central proposition: we need a Writing Center that integrates existing campus resources in order to provide the very best support for our students and faculty, especially those who are most vulnerable socially, economically, and academically.

Key Functions of a Campus Writing Center

Our group unanimously agreed with prior recommendations about the key functions that a Writing Center can and should provide. Some of the support currently exists across campus, and some will emerge from the coordinated efforts of faculty, staff, and students working in a Writing Center.

- **Support.** The Graduate Council's response to the Request for Consultation affirmed “consensus support from Graduate Council for the establishment of a Writing Center and that timed exams should not replace writing,” neatly encapsulating ways to understand “support for writing.” It states that a “Writing Center should develop partnerships with graduate programs on how to improve writing instruction across a program, identify the kinds of writing students will need after they graduate, and to increase graduate student writing skills in general.” Furthermore, the Writing Center should have “writing experts to help graduate programs work out best practices for their specialized teaching of writing” in keeping with “peer institutions that were studied, which created Writing Centers that serve

³ Working Group on Closing the Preparation Gap Final Report (18).

⁴ Committee on Courses and Instruction response to Request for Consultation:
https://asis.ucdavis.edu/sitefarm/file.cfm?view=rfc_response&id=15340

undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.” A Writing Center should also serve international students, for whom “a Writing Center’s workshops should not only focus general writing skills for international students, but also on how to write personal statements of research/career plans and scientific papers.”⁵ We believe that in a Writing Center organized around cooperation and coherence rather than competition, this statement would apply equally well to undergraduate programs, departments, and students, as well as professional students, faculty, and staff.

- **Tutoring.** One-on-one tutoring services should be not only available but easily accessible for all writers. Tutoring for undergraduates is currently offered by staff and students in the Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers (AATC) under the auspices of Student Affairs; tutoring for graduate students is currently offered by Graduate Writing Fellows under the supervision of faculty in the University Writing Program. Students, faculty, and staff should be able to meet tutors and specialists by dropping-in and by appointment, in-person and online, synchronously and asynchronously. Writing support should be offered regardless of discipline or class, at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming to final drafts, by a combination of adequately trained undergraduate Peer Tutors / Writing Fellows, graduate writing assistants, and qualified Writing Specialists holding advanced degrees in appropriate fields.

Different populations want and need different kinds of writing support, and the different kinds of support currently offered are both desirable and necessary. Yet all writers would benefit from a synergized and coordinated combination of those resources under a new organization that is able to build trust and support across campus. AATC emphasizes that it supports undergraduate writing as a process and serves students holistically with writing support located amidst a host of other academic and non-academic support services; UWP emphasizes its support for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars with a similar focus on process, as well as the fact that it teaches writing pedagogy and the genres of graduate disciplines. Bringing these two forms of support together under new cooperative leadership would not only ensure that valuable services aren’t lost, but that all members of the campus community benefit from centralized writing support (a fact that research suggests is particularly important for first-generation, working-class, and underrepresented minority students).

- **Training.** The Writing Center will be the location for training anyone working in that center or its constituent hubs: from undergraduate Peer Tutors / Writing Fellows to graduate students in any field where courses fulfill the Writing Experience GE, the Entry Level Writing Requirement, the Lower Division Writing Requirement, and the Upper Division Writing Requirement. Leadership of the center will determine the final staffing needs and competitive hiring processes for those conducting and undergoing the training. In addition to training its own staff, the Center will also be the place where “training” is construed broadly to include advising instructors and other staff across campus. Both individually and at the level of course, series, minor, or major, faculty who are developing writing assignments and assessing student work, will find guidance or instruction here.

⁵ Graduate Council response to Request for Consultation:
https://asis.ucdavis.edu/sitefarm/file.cfm?view=rfc_response&id=15338

This should include not only individual appointments but workshops, faculty development retreats, mini-courses, and seminars offered both within and across disciplines. The benefits of this kind of training, perhaps in cooperation with the Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE), would be especially welcome for Teaching Assistants and Associate Instructors, who are now too often left to their own devices.

- **Providing spaces and opportunities for writing.** There are many advantages to a single location widely known on campus as “the place to go when you want to write,” whether that is under the late-night duress of a class assignment or under the general knowledge that anyone who writes is a writer, and anyone who is or wants to be a writer will thrive within a community of easily accessible resources to support them. Writing Centers across the country report signal successes in improving student writing simply by creating and publicizing a comfortable space where structured and unstructured writing can occur; where undergraduate, graduate, professional, and international students, faculty, and staff can write creatively, critically, scientifically, or otherwise in the secure knowledge that there is help nearby. At the same time, well-run Writing Centers also frequently offer project-based weekend retreats, late-night writing pods, and other opportunities to structure writers’ time and work. This is a place where writing is promoted not just as a necessary skill, but as a vibrant culture that spans across disciplines, curricula, and campus.

It is clear from all prior recommendations that the word “Center” in a Writing Center needs to be more than a metaphor, and the goal of coordinating existing and new resources for writers will only be accomplished by consolidating and organizing (without reducing) them as one hub under one roof. The past eight months have amply demonstrated the signal difficulties of coordinating and convening diverse members from across campus, and this working group was itself not immune from those difficulties. It is unsurprising, then, that our group strongly echoed prior calls for easily accessible, centralized space for the Writing Center to occupy.

The external consultant concisely articulated a national consensus when he observed that “Physical writing centers thrive when they are in high-traffic locations” because “a central physical location is key to writing center visibility and reputation.”⁶ As one member wrote to emphasize how fundamental the unified space is to realizing these multiform goals, “We need an easy, regular way for all of those invested in writing to get together and confer. That will go a long way toward promoting communication and creating consistency and eliminating redundancy.” Another stated that “making a writing center visible, both in terms of infrastructure and in terms of presence within the university’s publicity (creating websites with resources, and also placing it prominently near other resources, for example) will be crucial.” With space not only for individual tutoring sessions, but offices and rooms where writers across campus—including the University Writing Council—can meet, confer, and collaborate, this space can become a location where a culture of writing is manifest, energized, and disseminated across campus.

⁶ Neal Lerner, “Report on UC Davis Consulting Visit” (3)

- **Coordinating satellites and outreach.** Both AATC and UWP make clear that they work with different strengths to serve different parts of the campus population in different ways, and the group feels strongly that we should capitalize on these existing strengths rather than starting from scratch. Part of bringing these different strengths together under one roof is to facilitate cooperation by eliminating competition between units, to offer students a new destination for writing, and also to meet them where they already are and want to be. As the Writing Task Force remarked in concert with national best practices, there are “students in vulnerable populations [who] find the smaller, local writing services, which come to them and are tied to culturally-grounded retention centers or their own networks, accessible and welcoming.”⁷ The Writing Center should build upon and expand AATC’s current outreach support services (e.g. the “Native Nest” in the Native American Academic Student Success Center) by offering “spokes” extending from the Writing Center hub to EOP, the Latinx/Chicanx Center, the Center for African Diaspora Student Success, the new Graduate Center, and elsewhere. Moreover, increased coordination and support would make it possible to recruit and train Writing Specialists and Peer Tutors / Writing Fellows who represent the rich demographic diversity of the campus as a whole. At the same time, one of the pressing needs of vulnerable and marginalized communities is assistance in developing their identities specifically as *scholars* in addition to their identities as members of many other communities; in this respect, both hub and spokes are requisite components of a coherently integrated approach not only to serve existing communities of writers but to build a newly comprehensive community of writers.
- **Coordinating Information.** The Writing Task Force and the external consultant both observe and regret the fact that not only resources but expectations and requirements for writing are confusingly dispersed across campus. As Prof. Lerner points out, our current required writing curriculum “creates confusion” for anyone, let alone for students, for whom “the writing requirement[s] must be dizzying, if not overwhelming.”⁸ While the same is said about the resources intended to help students fulfill those requirements, bringing together all the existing resources and expertise under one roof and organizational structure will produce a central hub to provide information about writing across campus and help students navigate the disorienting maze of both resources and requirements.

The tangle of different resources and requirements needs to be made legible and navigable, and the requirements, outcomes, and resources for meeting them need attention from a centralized operation. As the Writing Task Force wrote, we need to “coordinate the work of the four departments that teach lower division writing. At the very least, these four departments should develop shared outcomes for courses that fulfill the lower division English composition requirement and meet occasionally to discuss their goals and methods.”⁹ Since that report, the English Language and Literacy Committee has made great progress on this work. The Writing Center would provide the space and opportunity for departments to continue developing these outcomes in concert with faculty, ideally in cooperation with the University Writing Council and the Center for Excellence in

⁷ Writing Task Force Report (13)

⁸ Neal Lerner, “Report on UC Davis Consulting Visit” (3). See also Writing Task Force Report (2).

⁹ Writing Task Force Report (16)

Education. The benefits of this approach would work both ways, as Writing Center faculty and staff could themselves develop and tailor their support services in harmony with the course and program learning outcomes.

Initial Scope

Many of our recommendations for the initial scope of a Writing Center are simply the most recent iterations of prior recommendations. We reiterate them while fully aware that the timing, staffing, scale, and scope of this project are being conceived in a moment of profound uncertainty and financial difficulty. We thus emphasize that these initial steps require a relatively minor investment of money, even as they represent a significant investment of time, effort, and commitment on the part of faculty, staff, and administration.

- **Maintain and consolidate existing support.** It is vital that the organization and foundation of a new Writing Center minimally disrupt the various, disparate, and distributed services that currently serve students. Consolidating and coordinating services need not mean reducing those services, especially for undergraduate and graduate tutoring; maintaining tutoring services is paramount, especially as those are the services that are most likely to feature centrally in the very earliest incarnation of the Center. Thus, in conversation with current providers, existing support should be reimaged under the Writing Center's leadership and be foundational to any new services the Center envisions and develops. The current training of TAs and AIs in courses that fulfill the Writing Experience GE, the Entry Level Writing Requirement, and the Lower Division Writing Requirement should be assessed and moved to the Writing Center.
- **Constitute the University Writing Council**
In 2004, the University Writing Program was chartered as an independent academic unit within HArCS. As a key component of its foundation, the Undergraduate Council recommended the formation of a University Writing Council, which would comprise "Six Senate Faculty members broadly representative of the undergraduate colleges" as well as representatives from UWP, English, undergraduate and graduate students, and the Undergraduate Council, and multiple representatives appointed by the Provost. This key component of UWP's charter remains unrealized, and the lack of a University Writing Council means that the campus lacks coherent, consistent oversight of writing requirements and resources. From its initial conception, this University Writing Council was meant to be wholly independent of UWP in order to preserve the Council's responsibility and capacity for oversight; although UWP and the Writing Center would have representation on the Council, an independent Council would consult with significant stakeholders but have ultimate authority over the requirements and resources for writing across campus.¹⁰

The campus has changed since 2004, of course, and this group disagreed upon the best way of establishing the council. Membership might include Senate Faculty from all undergraduate colleges, the University Writing Program, Student Affairs, departments teaching courses that fulfil the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) and the Lower Division Writing Requirement (LDWR), lecturers from the Academic Federation, the

¹⁰ Undergraduate Council, "Proposal for a University Writing Program"

Undergraduate Council, Graduate Studies and professional schools, and representatives appointed by the Provost. Regardless of membership, however, the University Writing Council would be involved in the assessment of the Writing Center itself via Special Academic Program Review, on a regular cycle with other Special Academic Programs.

- **Expand existing support.** Support for faculty who teach writing—in the form of individual meetings and workshops for both individuals and groups of faculty in programs and departments—will be vital not only for improving the teaching and assessment of writing by our students, but for raising the profile of writing at the institution as a whole. Creating a campus culture where writing is integrated into all facets of learning can begin with helping individual faculty members, who can serve as conduits for information and promotion of writing as more than boxes to tick or requirements to be fulfilled. This is particularly true of the Writing Experience GE, which is often attached to courses that do not meet the Minimum Expectations for its fulfillment.

Appropriate Staffing Levels for a Campus Writing Center

Identifying and assessing the sheer number of individuals directly involved in writing support was beyond the scope of our charge, so implementing these recommendations should only come after the University Writing Council or some other body conducts a full and fair accounting of employees—faculty, staff, and students—currently doing this work. Furthermore, some of the particular decisions regarding the administrative structure will depend upon the vision of the new Writing Center leadership (like all scholars and practitioners, leadership can accommodate individual preferences for different organizational structures and staffing levels while nonetheless according with national best practices). Other decisions regarding the full scope and staffing for a Writing Center will depend upon available funding and success in hiring, and thus may need to come in stages. Yet one position has been clearly recommended by prior reports, by the practices at a majority of Writing Centers at peer institutions whom we seek to emulate and surpass, and by the consensus of this Implementation Group: Director.

- **Director.** Prior recommendations were unanimous in one key regard: successfully improving writing at UC Davis will depend upon a Director who is located in an academic unit and given “responsibility for writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines and the university writing center.” The demonstrable need for leadership is a need for a scholar and practitioner with an inspired and “overarching vision for all things writing at Davis. It is important that such a hire be senate faculty, thus ensuring that the person in the role has access to essential conversations and university personnel, as well as the institutional leverage to enact change.”¹¹

The consultant recommended we look to Prof. Daniel M. Gross at UC Irvine as an example of such a Director: a Full Professor who oversees and runs the Writing Center, including final responsibility for maintaining the budget, for coordinating writing courses outcomes and requirements, managing academic and support staff, assessing courses and curricula, organizing the training of tutors, teaching his own classes, and conducting his own research in writing studies. One member of this group suggested that such a role be identified as a

¹¹ Neal Lerner, “Report on UC Davis Consulting Visit” (3). See also Writing Task Force Report (14).

50% administrative appointment to complement a 50% faculty appointment within an academic department or program; advisory interviews with Prof. Gross himself and with multiple directors of Writing Centers at peer institutions, however, suggest that an appointment such as his (Prof. Gross's Writing Center duties are remunerated with a course release, a small summer salary bump, and a warm sense of personal satisfaction) would not attract an experienced and qualified Faculty Director, let alone achieve the suite of goals identified by so many different stakeholders.

We echo Prof. Lerner's suggestion that the Director "report directly to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education," whence funding for the Center would also come. The Director, perhaps imagined as a 75% or full-time version of the Faculty Director who currently oversees the Undergraduate Research Center (which is a 50% administrative position), will oversee all operations of the Writing Center as well as participating in the training of Peer Tutors, Writing Specialists, and graduate students through workshops, graduate seminars, and practica.

In order to address the problems of competition and lack of cooperation between existing units, we emphasize that this should be a national search with the goal of hiring a Director from outside UC Davis. We also emphasize that the leadership and staffing of the Writing Center should strive to reflect the full diversity of the students, faculty, and staff at UC Davis, which neither UWP nor AATC currently does. Until such time as a qualified Faculty Director can be hired, an Interim Faculty Director drawn from Writing Studies faculty at UC Davis should be appointed to begin assessing existing resources and to outline the duties and material resources of the position in order to make the position of founding Director attractive to the best candidates.

- **Associate Director.** While most top-flight Writing Centers are run minimally by a Faculty Director who is ultimately responsible for coordinating the Center's activities, they are also joined by an Associate Director. An Associate Director oversees day-to-day operations, including the management of administrative staff and Assistant Directors (usually graduate students conducting their own research in Writing Studies) and the training of undergraduate and graduate tutors. It is common practice for scholars to serve as Associate Directors immediately before they become Directors of their own Centers, though it was also suggested that the position of Associate Director could be a permanent staff position in order to offer a pathway for interested staff or faculty in units like AATC or UWP to advance within the university. An Interim Associate Director might initially be found among faculty in academic departments, in UWP, or in staff at the AATC.
- **Administrative coordinator for Writing Fellows / Peer Tutors.** The person serving in this role assumes responsibility for quotidian practicalities such as scheduling. Ideally, the person initially hired into this position would also have instructional design expertise; while the first order of business should be the simple step of adding a "Writing" tile to myucdavis, the ultimate goal would be to help develop a strong web presence for the Writing Center and to create learning tools that faculty could embed in their courses to support writing.

- **Eventual full staffing.** Ultimate staffing decisions should emerge from and be bound by the vision and resources of a Faculty Director. However, in 2019 leadership in AATC and UWP collaborated on a proposal for a Writing Center. There, they agreed to a vision of a Center staffed by: seven Writing Specialists (professional staff writing tutors); six writing hub faculty assistants (UWP lecturers with one course release times that would assist the director with both tutor training and WAC efforts); ten graduate writing assistants (twenty hours a week); 75 undergraduate Peer Tutors / Writing Fellows; four graduate student junior writing program administrators; four lead tutors to help supervise and train undergrad tutors / Writing Fellows. This does not depart significantly from the staffing of comparable Writing Centers at peer institutions, and might well serve as a kind of ballpark vision for how our own Center might eventually be staffed.

Initial Programmatic and Staffing Budget

In their response to a Request for Consultation last year, the Undergraduate Council remarked that “the Task Force and the Working Group rightly situated their assessments and recommendations in terms of best practices in higher education. Ultimately, the success of these programs,” including a robust Writing Center, “will hinge upon whether they are supported by adequate resources.”¹²

The final budget will of course depend upon ultimate staffing decisions and scope of the Writing Center (and vice versa), but budgets shared by Directors at prominent Writing Centers at peer institutions all fell within a range of \$800,000 (excluding salary of Faculty Director) to \$1.4 million; the higher-end number accords with the provisional budget suggested by AATC and UWP in their collaboration last year. Since student services fees are not used for instructional purposes, that would mean the budget would need to rest somewhere other than Student Affairs and COSAF, and every Writing Center Director who was interviewed as a part of this process recommended the virtues of a budget that was allocated and overseen not by a program or department but rather by an existing administrative unit (e.g., within the Office of Provost or Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education).¹³ This recommendation extends to the way that current Writing Across the Curriculum efforts are funded: while these efforts are currently funded by course releases and by the UWP’s budget, we see good sense in funding for these services coming from across the campus units that benefit from them. Peer institutions report a variety of funding models, where salaries for graduate students come in the form of fellowships, TA-ships, GSRs, or hourly wages; salaries for undergraduate tutors and Writing Fellows are often paid through hourly wages, work study, fellowship stipends, or occasionally through scholarships.

Incorporating existing writing expertise

We believe that existing resources across campus can and should be integrated under a single roof in order to help all Aggies become better writers, no matter what discipline they come from or what goal they’re trying to achieve. Despite—or perhaps because of—the equally valuable but very different histories, disciplinary training, and foci of writing support offered by AATC and UWP, the external consultant found what has long been apparent to many of us who are committed

¹² Undergraduate Council response to Request for Consultation:
https://asis.ucdavis.edu/sitefarm/file.cfm?view=rfc_response&id=15337

¹³ Thanks to the Directors of prominent Writing Centers at UC Irvine, Purdue University, University of Oklahoma, Temple University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison for making themselves and their expert experiences available via long interviews with the Chair of this group.

to writing excellence across campus: we “lack coherence and cooperation.” What Prof. Lerner described as “Competition and lack of cooperation among two units charged with writing support”¹⁴ likely hinders rather than helps both individual services and the development of a thriving culture of writing across campus. Where resources and expectations are in usefully coordinated harmony, all members of the Aggie community—undergraduate and graduate students, post-baccs, professional students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, staff and even alumni—can not only find what they need but also contribute to each others’ successful development as writers.

Our campus is uniquely different from most of our peer institutions, of course, in the admirably high number of first-generation, underrepresented minority, and low-income students that comprise our population, and if we are to continue serving those vulnerable students then the leadership of the Writing Center must find a way to integrate the two main models for writing support that currently exist on our campus. Rather than simply increasing much-needed resources to expand both models and thereby reproduce this rift in magnified and expanded form, we should integrate the strengths of each model so that writers can benefit from their totality. Our group produced four discrete pathways for proceeding, all of which are predicated upon a successful national search to recruit a Faculty Director reporting directly to the offices of the Provost and the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.

- 1) **Blend AATC and UWP to “meet in the middle” with Graduate Studies and other partners (e.g., Health Professions Advising, Internship and Career Center, Office of Educational Opportunity and Enrichment, Pre-Grad Advising) without changing reporting lines.**

Advantages:

- Quick startup time without an extended hiring period
- Sense of security for the AATC staff who strongly feel that they are part of a learning center community as well as the writing center community
- Greater representation of different stakeholders outside of AATC and UWP
- Preserves the comparative advantages brought from Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and the UWP
- Allows AATC to continue with its case management approach for students in academic difficulty and for greater cooperation between AATC and the UWP

Disadvantages:

- Replicates the structural and logistical problems of the current system, and therefore fails to meet the Provost’s charge of “implementing the recommendations provided by the external consultant report.”
- More complicated reporting lines than a single unit, likely resulting in more rather than less confusion, less cooperation rather than more
- More challenging for the new Director of the Writing Center to oversee budget, staff and tutors from those two units

¹⁴ Neal Lerner, “Report on UC Davis Consulting Visit” (2).

2) **Build a unified UWP Writing Center to hire the AATC writing staff into UWP or devise a dual appointment process with Student Affairs.**

Advantages:

- Fluid coordination with Graduate Studies
- Fully houses the writing center in an academic program
- Creates a unified unit that students and faculty can more easily recognize as the central hub for campus writing support
- Involves Writing Studies research faculty in the Writing Center
- Simpler organizational structure for the new Writing Center Director
- Creates new roles for AATC writing specialists in areas like Writing Across the Curriculum, tutor training, and pedagogy

Disadvantages:

- Significantly defunds current tutoring center by removing the Writing Support Center staff from AATC
- Eliminates the interdisciplinary tutor training program
- Jeopardizes the case management approach between AATC and Student Affairs
- Location in one academic unit/program may not as effectively serve students from all colleges

3) **Redirect existing writing support team from AATC toward other academic support services, while UWP would staff the Writing Center under leadership of the new Faculty Director.**

Advantages:

- Expands AATC programming to include Supplemental Instruction, online tutoring, and tutoring assessment through the team of former writing specialists
- Preserves funding in the AATC with the university responsible for funding these positions
- Allows UWP to start fresh and establish its own vision for the writing center according to best practices in Writing Studies

Disadvantages:

- Fails to account for authoritative role of externally hired Director of Writing Center
- Removes writing support from AATC
- Potentially more costly than the other options
- Loses the case management approach in AATC that supports students having academic difficulties in areas related to writing
- Does not provide new structure to readily bring in representation from different stakeholders outside of AATC and UWP (Office of Graduate Studies, EOE, etc.)

4) **Conduct a national search for a Founding Director of the Writing Center and vest that Director with authority to establish and integrate existing resources.**

Advantages:

- Cuts the preexisting gordian knot of competition that has prevented us from serving the entire campus to the best of our abilities.
- A position vested with the authority and resources to organize existing services and personnel in accordance with international best practices, combined with freedom to build their own team to achieve their own vision, would help recruit a Faculty Director who is uninterested in being caught in the middle of existing political difficulties.

Disadvantages:

- Entirely fresh perspective would take time to account for existing resources.
- Top talent might see the situation as undesirably fraught politically.

Conclusion

These are the possibilities produced through our deliberations. Yet one cannot escape the sense that the possibilities themselves seem to be governed and limited by the very conditions that this group was convened to transform and thereby ameliorate. The clear limitations of time and circumstance meant that this group did not have nearly as much deliberation as it might have, yet it is also clear that no amount of time would produce a range of options unlimited by current competition among understandably interested parties. As Chair of this group, my passionate commitment is not to defend the interests of any one department, discipline, or employee, but to advocate for the UC Davis writers most in need of a substantially reorganized and revived writing culture: students. We hope that we will eventually follow the recommendation of the Academic Senate to establish a University Writing Council, including the fresh perspective and political disinterest of a new Faculty Director for the new Writing Center, vested with authority to integrate programs and personnel in such a way that writers themselves are ultimately the best-supported campus constituency. Until that time, effective and coherent integration of existing resources under one roof may well require a process of mediation to adjudicate and execute the initial steps of any plan.