**ASC Assessment Plan/Report—May 2011**

NOTE: this report includes the following new information relative to the May 2010 ASC assessment report:

1. Analysis of AY10-11 program assessment data from QSC and WC session reports for fall 2010 and spring 2011.

2. Updated information about Learning Support Center (LSC) assessment, including AY10-11 program data and analysis based on the current LSC assessment model.

3. Discussion about a pilot Writing Center assessment project, which incorporates WC assessment data and qualitative interviews with peer consultants.

*PLEASE NOTE: Previous ASC assessment plans/reports (plus annual program reports) have presented substantial* indirect *student learning data (including longitudinal data for some areas/aspects of the program), gathered from student usage patterns and student surveys, grade and retention information, etc. The current ASC assessment model is an effort to assess student learning* directly *and across several of the programs and services included within the ASC.*

**1. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Academic Skills Center helps students who use our services improve their learning process.

(Improvement of learning process might include one or more of the following actions: gain awareness of learning strategies and learning skill sets, assess learning style preferences and strengths, assess attitudes toward learning and studying, assess time management and/or other factors inhibiting learning, etc.).

**2. Learning Outcomes**

* Students will be aware of decision options that can improve their learning process, production, and/or products (i.e., students will gain metacognitive awareness and understanding of their own learning).

* Students will be able to apply better decision making in/to their learning process (i.e., students will apply metacognitive awareness of own learning styles, strengths, and strategies, etc. as appropriate to meet particular learning goals, needs, or situations).

**3. Program Components**

* Students gain awareness of, and practical experience with, learning process options through their use of ASC services: individual consultation with ASC professional staff, individual consultation with ASC peer tutors/writing consultants, group consultation with academic help room tutors, group or classroom workshops developed by the ASC, and other learning process/strategy sessions developed by the ASC.

**4a. Data Sources and Instruments**

* The primary source of data will be ASC consultation/meeting reports for student use of services (individual, group, help room, workshop session).
* Individual consultation/meeting reports are currently produced and maintained for each area within the Academic Skills Center (Disability Services, Learning Support Center, Quantitative Skills Center, and Writing Center).
* Quantitative Skills Center (QSC) and Writing Center (WC) report forms have been revised and adapted to include direct evidence of student learning: these forms were first piloted during AY 09-10, and were used again in AY 10-11; data from these report forms is included and analyzed in the current assessment report.
* The Learning Support Center (LSC) has slightly revised assessment this year using individual student meeting reports over the course of the academic year. (Given that LSC learning support specialists often meet multiple times with individual students, LSC meeting reports provide a measure of student learning during a semester and/or academic year.)
* The Writing Center began a pilot assessment project during spring 2011, which incorporates WC assessment data and qualitative interviews with peer consultants. The pilot involved the WC director and two student writing consultants reviewing selected WC assessment report data, then developing a list of interview questions based on this data; the writing consultants who had written the selected WC assessment reports were then interviewed by the director and two consultants. Preliminary findings from the research pilot were presented at the 2011 East Central Writing Centers Association Conference, and we subsequently presented to all WC consultants during spring semester staff training. (*See further details about pilot research project and future plans for the project in sections 5 and 6 below*.)
* Other ASC report forms will be revised/adapted in the near future (based on successes and challenges regarding pilot use of forms in other ASC divisions), and implemented as part of ASC assessment procedures, as feasible.
* Group, help room, and workshop session consultation/meeting reports have been less consistently produced in the past, so reports for these areas will likely prove especially challenging as we move forward.
* Finally, ASC staff and student tutors/consultants continue to receive training about program session report methodologies and formats; as a program, we will continue providing ongoing feedback and support to one another as we continue piloting and adapting program assessment.

**4b. Methods**

* Review and analysis of ASC consultation/meeting reports for the following general patterns:

A) evidence of student awareness of learning process options;

B) evidence of student decision making regarding learning process;

C) evidence of student application of *improved* decision making in/to learning process.

* Review and analysis of research interviews with Writing Center student consultants, as follow-up to, and in conjunction with, selected WC assessment and writing consulting report data.

**5. Analyze and interpret the data**

**A. QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports**

Responses to direct assessment questions on the pilot QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports for the academic year were reviewed (separate from the context of other report information) and each set of responses was coded as one of the following categories.

A = indicates evidence of student awareness of learning process options.

B = indicates evidence of student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process.

C = indicates evidence of student application of *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process.

D = no clear evidence indicated and/or incomplete data.

**Analysis of the data from QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports yields the following student learning outcomes for the reported tutoring sessions**.

**OVERALL QSC/WC SESSIONS** (N = 715 report forms, AY10-11)

**Category of Percentage of Sessions**

**Student Learning Evidenced AY10-11 AY09-10**

A 11.9 10.7

B 46.8 35.9

C 25.9 35.6

D 15.4 17.7

The report coding process presumes that a tutoring session coded C entails both A & B as well (that is, student learning that evidenced *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process necessarily includes student awareness of learning process options [A] and student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process [B]).

Thus, based on the data reported above, the following general picture of student learning becomes apparent: 84.6% of reported sessions indicate evidence of student awareness of learning process options; likewise, 58.7% of reported sessions indicate evidence of student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process; and 25.9% of reported sessions indicate evidence of *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process.

The data discussed here is presented in table format just below.

**% of Sessions Student Learning Evidenced**

84.6 awareness of learning process options

58.7 student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process

25.9 student application of *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process

The student learning data described above (especially in conjunction with specific responses for QSC and WC sessions) continue to provide fun, provocative, and useful information as we consider small and big picture understandings of student academic support programs. In addition, this assessment effort seem to be yielding helpful program information about direct student learning in the ASC (as well as yielding information about tutor teaching and effectiveness in the QSC and WC—factors we plan to include in our assessment efforts at some point in the future; *see discussion of WC pilot research project in sections 5 and 6 below*).

In August 2011, the QSC & WC Directors will meet to review, analyze, and discuss the full data set. At that time, we will also review and revise/adapt the data collection instruments in each area, as appropriate (and perhaps in collaboration with student tutors).

**B. LSC consultation/meeting reports**

LSC consultation/meeting reports for the academic year were reviewed (separate from the context of other report information) and each set of meeting reports was coded as one of the following categories.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A = indicates evidence of student awareness of the learning process and options they may

utilize to reach their stated goals.

B = indicates evidence of student decision making regarding learning and the learning process. (Student may indicate recognition of need to make changes to improve academic performance. Student may report attempts to change behavior based on previous meetings. May take initial steps to act on meeting recommendations.)

C = indicates clear evidence of student making decisions about academic activities in order to improve performance. (Student independently initiates and carries through on

changes in behavior. Student reports utilizing new strategies and may work at refining

them with the specialist.)

D= students’ work with specialist may focus primarily on maintaining academic performance and require learning assistance due to health or emotional issues.

The following table provides a description of the ratings of student learning for each of the four meeting types conducted by LSC learning support specialists.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ratings of Student Academic Strategy Learning** | | | | | |
| **Student Groups [[2]](#footnote-2)** | **#** | **A**  Student aware of options | **B**  Indicates need to change | **C**  Independently initiates change | **D**  Maintain academic performance |
| General Students | 51 | 7 | 19 | 22 | 3 |
| Conditional Admission Students | 14 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 1 |
| IDY 100 & post-IDY 100 Students | 33 | 2 | 7 | 23 | 1 |
| Students with Disabilities | 35 | 1 | 10 | 20 | 4 |
| **TOTAL** | **133** | **10** | **41** | **73** | **9** |

Discussion

The students in the two academic programs (Conditional Admission; IDY 100 and post-IDY 100) were all rated as having made some academic changes. This can be expected as a result of enrollment in structured programs to promote change. The conditional admission program students are new to college, so much advising focuses on the shift from high school to college level academic skills. The students in the IDY 100 and post-IDY 100 programs may have adequate academic skills but must focus on methods to improve their consistency and persistence.

The general student group represents students with a variety of reasons for requesting a meeting. Some are referred by faculty staff or coaches; students coming because others are indicating concern over their academic performance often are aware of a problem but have not committed to change. They may explore options with the LSC staff but are not willing to partner with them in developing better strategies. Other students are committed to finding strategies that will assist them in reaching their goals and improve their academic skills. These students generally return for several sessions and will return with examples of the steps they have taken.

The students with disabilities represent a group who generally utilize academic support meetings to adjust or develop skills that will enable them to work effectively. For many of these students, hard work is not sufficient reach their goals. They work with the LSC staff on lifestyle issues such as time management and organization. They also may work with staff to adjust strategies in studying for specific classes. In these cases, the student and staff member analyze specific task requirements and discuss how to structure work to minimize various areas of weakness.

**Analysis of the above data from LSC consultation/meeting reports yields the following student learning outcomes for the reported sessions (including all student groups).**

(N = 133 reports)

**Category of**

**Student Learning Evidenced Percentage of Sessions**

A 7.5

B 30.8

C 54.9

D 6.8

Results of coding for evidence of student learning and academic options indicated that nearly one-third of students who met with a learning specialist **demonstrated decision making** regarding learning and the learning process (*Category B = 30.8%)*; in addition, over half of the students actually **demonstrated making decisions about academic activities in order to improve performance** (*Category C = 54.9%).* Example student decisions/actions included the following: changing study methods; organizing time and priorities more effectively; reaching course planning/registration decisions; withdrawing from class. (*These are selected examples; other decisions or actions, as well as combinations of decisions, also occurred*.)

As with the QSC and WC data, the LSC coding categories above presume that a session coded C entails both A & B as well (that is, student learning that evidenced *improved* decision making necessarily includes student awareness of learning process options [A] and student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process [B]).

Thus, based on the data reported above, the following general picture of student learning during LSC academic assistance sessions emerges: 93.2% of reported sessions indicate evidence of student awareness of learning process options; likewise, 85.7% of reported sessions indicate evidence of student decision making regarding learning and/or learning options; and 54.9% of reported sessions indicate evidence of *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process.

The data discussed here is presented in table format just below.

**% of Sessions Student Learning Evidenced**

93.2 awareness of learning process and options to reach stated goals

85.7 student decision making regarding learning and learning process

54.9 student decision making about academic activities in order to

improve performance

**NOTE**: The LSC assessment report coding for *Category D* was adapted to indicate those students who were deemed to be struggling primarily with health or emotional factors, which prevented them from addressing academic issues. In these cases, the learning support specialist helped the student obtain help from counseling or, in some cases, withdraw from the college.

**C. Writing Center Assessment Research Study**

The pilot WC assessment research project was designed to study the embedded writing consulting assessment model initiated last year (fall 2009), and had the following traits (method, goals, and key results of pilot study).

METHOD

Compare student consultant-written assessment reports with follow-up interviews about sessions

PROJECT GOALS

* + test validity of session assessment reports
  + check for other learning outcomes
  + enrich understanding of complex writing & learning work that occurs in WC sessions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In February 2010, the WC director collaborated with two student consultants to select 15-20 WC session reports (from both fall & spring sessions), then developed interview questions based on the assessment data reported, as well as other writing consulting session details. Researchers then interviewed writing consultants who wrote selected session reports; following the interviews, the co-researchers met to review, discuss, and analyze interview notes, with the goal of synthesizing preliminary findings from the research interviews. Finally, the three researchers presented their preliminary study findings at the 2011 East Central Writing Centers Association Conference (in March, at Western Michigan University)—and subsequently presented their research findings to all WC consultants during spring semester staff training.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS (pilot study; to be checked, challenged in follow-up studies)

Several key concepts emerged from the pilot study; the following discussion focuses on three of these areas—as consultants responded to targeted questions—which seem especially important in relation to assessment of student learning during WC sessions:

● where writing consultants focused their energy and time during sessions

● where students focused their energy and time during sessions

● what student writers gained/learned from the consulting sessions

KEY RESEARCH DATA

**Where did consultant focus energy, time during session?**

Writer = 38%

Paper = 44%

Other writing areas = ---

Other = 19%

The consultant has but two tools to work with during a session: the writer and the writer as s/he exists in the thoughts on the page. Thus, it seemed appropriate that our research revealed consultants reported spending roughly equivalent proportions of energy and time on the writer and the paper during the selected consulting sessions (38 and 44%). This finding is, of course, much more complex than the bare numbers suggest; in several situations, for example, consultants shifted focus during the session, as seemed appropriate.

Following are four interview summaries from the pilot study: the first two reflect clear focus on the writer and the paper, respectively; the third interview summary reflects a blend of focus on BOTH writer and paper; and the fourth interview summary reflects the consultant shift in focus, intended to prompt the writer’s engagement and learning process during the session.

* The Writer. KW needed to talk to the writer about personal experiences to find out what information was key to the personal statement. Who the writer is needed to be established before What important stuff should be in the writing.
* Focused on paper itself. Consultant knows the client as a person from multiple WC encounters, so tends to focus on paper since it requires more thought than other options.
* The Writer AND the Paper. Both of these pieces lent themselves to the session’s success. M realized that the writer needed her to play the role of audience member to the writer’s own revisions. M was able to help simply by reading the paper in a voice separate from the writer’s.
* At the start, consultant spent a lot of time trying to get writer involved and focus on him, but without much response, ended up shifting focus onto paper and fix the errors in there. Had to ‘puzzle out’ some of the specific errors and reconfigure so they were more appropriate.

**Where did writer focus energy, attention during session?**

Consultant = ---

Paper = 46%

Other writing areas = 54%

Other = ---

As above, the interview findings reveal what we should anticipate regarding student learning goals during writing consulting sessions.

The writer rarely focuses on the consultant. The writer is not interested in the consultant’s background, frustrations, discipline disinterests, or composition shortcomings. The consultant is there to help the writer, a resource to be used. While the writer may still defend his work as a consultant responds to a paper, there is rarely a critique of the consultant’s consulting (until the evaluation sheet is filled out).

The paper at large is a primary focus for writers who, while they might recognize that they have sentence-level issues, are much more invested in the construction of an idea that will fit the professor’s assignment. These students believe that *what* they write and how they organize thoughts are the things that determine the final grade; grammar is secondary.

Other Writing Areas—If the writer has given up on the paper’s central idea and wants the piece to sound “good” or if the writer is confident in her idea and wants to make sure the piece is meeting organizational, grammar, citation, and other sentence-level rules, then the writer’s focus ends up in the “Other Writing Areas” category. These people know that they are struggling with a very specific element of paper composition. They will spend the session looking for that thing, displaying concern by engaging in the discussion (we clumped this together as “The Discussion” in the interviews).

**Editing vs. learning: What did student writers gain/learn from session?**

ESL and editing sessions

“Pushing” for a connection = learning

Editing vs. Learning

Several things can be gleaned from reading the interview responses with the understanding that several of questions subtly ask, “Do you feel the session was oriented toward editing, or learning?” That is, questions like “Where did you/the writer place most of the focus during the session?” and “What is the major concept you feel the writer walked away with?” are essentially asking, “Do you feel the experience was more focused on editing, or on learning general concepts and tools?”

Focus on Paper/Writing

With this understanding of these questions, several trends become apparent. First, several consultants expressed uncertainty of learning in cases of ESL students. One consultant in particular noticed that she tended to *revert* to editing-style sessions when attempts to focus on the writer and draw discussion from the writer failed after repeated attempts. We see this in her response to question 4:

*At the start, E spent a lot of time trying to get writer involved and focus on him, but without much response, ended up shifting focus onto paper and fix the errors in there. Had to*

*puzzle out’ some of the specific errors and reconfigure so they were more appropriate*.

Additionally, E expressed concerns that not much “major learning” or “major concept” was gained since communication was limited.

Questions like this help us pluck out the ways that consultants impart knowledge or tools of learning to the students who come to sessions. Initial assessment of these early interviews shows that a focus on the paper itself tends to lead the consultants' interactions with students toward being more limited t editing-based sessions. Consultant M, who sees the same student with some consistency, says that sessions in which he focuses on the paper yield “no big concept” to the writer:

*No big concept imparted—just editing. Understands broad concept suggestions, but wants to*

*focus more on proof-reading.*

When asked for a measure of success in these sessions, M continues to say the sessions are objective-based, with the objective being the editing of the grammar and syntax of the paper.

Focus on Writer

Conversely, when the editing session focuses on the writer, as with several other consultants' experiences, we see that larger learning and tools for learning are imparted to the writer. In Consultant K's case, the consultant was able, by focusing on the writer, to instill confidence and pride in the writer, which made ideas more coherent and made the flow of the paper smoother.

When the writer responds to attempts to personally interact and discuss aspects of writing—grammatically or thematically—we find that learning is more easily recognized and imparted to the client. For example, consultant M managed to have a breakthrough with a student who was primarily focused on the writing itself by focusing on the writer and the paper:

*M felt as though she could not merely present her thoughts on the piece. She was frequently questioned, her ideas attacked. She had to use the paper and its shortcomings as examples when defending her perspective and addressing his potentially skewed interpretation of what the assignment actually called for.*

By continually focusing her attention on the writer and his ideas, even when the client appeared defensive or uninterested in her suggestions, M was able to see, or at least report on, learning. In this case, her persistent questioning allowed the writer to see the value in objectively editing his own work and finding the small errors in compositional flow and logic.

In ESL experiences where the consultant is able to focus somewhat on the writer him/herself, it is again easier to find evidence of learning. By putting the emphasis on the ideas and the expression of these ideas in a clear and organized manner, consultants are able to demonstrate learning rather than reporting on simple editing practices.

Key Points

\*ESL students present a unique challenge to the issue of editing vs. learning.

\*Deliberate attempts to interact with the student can lean a session toward a learning experience rather than a purely editorial session

**What did we learn from pilot study?**

* We were able to verify, check and challenge our assessment data, the WC assessment plans, and program goals.
* Gained a greater sense of the *active nature of WC sessions*: mutual learning, negotiation between writer and consultant, etc.
* Gained descriptive tools, frameworks for understanding WC work, revising research study.
* The study highlighted the value of consultant conversations and reflection (one-on-one, individual, whole group); encouraged us to incorporate the study as an ongoing part of staff training and professional development, as well as program research.

**6. How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc**.

● As we determine and refine best practices for ASC program data collection and analysis, we will continue developing more systematic data collection and/or analysis for other areas within the ASC.

* All ASC professional staff will be involved in discussions to determine and implement appropriate assessment and/or program revisions and updates. At our staff meeting in September 2010, discussion focused on review of the 2010 May ASC Assessment Report, and the following questions:

*What surprised you about ASC assessment report?*

*What do you see as significant assessment successes?*

*What do you see as significant assessment challenges?*

*What additional/different information might be included in future ASC assessment*

*efforts, plans, or reports?*

We had a helpful, engaged group discussion about program assessment at that meeting (and at following staff meetings), and plan to conduct a similar exercise early in the 2011-2012 academic year.

* ASC student employees will be involved in reviewing program assessment as well, in more limited capacity, closely related to their specific area of ASC tutoring or other work. For example, Writing Center consultants were asked to provide their feedback about data coding of specific WC sessions. (This was done as s part of WC training meetings, when we also discussed what the assessment reports told us about the work we were doing with student writers, and what we might learn from this information, how we might want or need to change our tutoring practices, etc.) Writing consultants also acted as researchers and/or participants in the WC pilot interview project, as noted above. ASC student employees will continue to provide assessment feedback in these two areas, with additional student feedback likely in other ASC program areas in near future.

●The pilot Writing Center assessment research study will continue next year, starting about midway through fall semester 2011 (with new consultants as co-researchers and

study participants). In addition, the plan is to bring all WC consultants into the ongoing research conversation: so that the study becomes *action research* for WC professional

development (learning and doing, and reflecting on one’s learning and doing). As suggested earlier, this research project was helpful and challenging: the project highlights

the importance of *structured* consultant conversations and reflections as part of staff

training, and provides additional and valuable staff training and professional development

opportunities. Future phases of the study will probably include student writer interviews (individual or focus group), so that we can gain a clearer and richer sense of the learning that students develop through their writing consulting sessions.

* Finally, data collected from ASC consultation/meeting report forms—direct evidence of student learning and/or student awareness of learning process options—will be reviewed by program staff in conjunction with other ASC *indirect* student learning measures (post-meeting questionnaires, student usage data, student retention and grade information, etc.). Our hope is that combining these two data streams will provide more holistic and complete measures for assessing effectiveness of ASC program and services; these measures should, in turn, provide us with evidence for continuing or adapting current practices or services, as well as evidence for suggesting new areas for ASC programs and services that would fit with our overall program mission of helping students learn inside and outside of classroom settings.

1. Note that these coding categories are revised from the LSC assessment pilot during AY 09-10; as with the earlier coding categories, the current categories are adapted from the QSC and WC coding categories presented and analyzed earlier in this report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. LSC staff meet with students individually to address a variety of academic issues; the meetings can be grouped into the following categories:

   1. Students seeking general academic assistance. They may be referred by faculty coaches or staff members. Typical requests are for assistance with improving academic performance in a single course, general assistance with time management and planning or study strategies.
   2. First year students who are part of the conditional admission program. These students are monitored and, if academic issues arise, they may have a series of meetings to follow their progress.
   3. Students who are on terminal probation and are enrolled in IDY 100 meet with Barry Wolf for study skills monitoring. Students who have been in the course in previous semesters who are again experiencing academic issues may also elect to have a series of meetings with Dr. Wolf.
   4. Students with disabilities may request to meet with a learning specialist to improve or adapt study strategies, time management and organization or for monitoring of specific issues related to their disability.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)