



## **The State of Writing at Salt Lake Community College:** Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment

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## On the Dynamic Nature of this Document

This report is the culmination of six months of multi-faceted research activities and is intended to serve as a comprehensive view of writing and writing instruction at Salt Lake Community College. It must be noted, however that this report does not claim to be an exhaustive or complete account of writing and writing instruction at our college. It would be impossible to capture the entirety of complexities of writing within such a large and varied institution as SLCC.

Because of this, this report is being released digitally so as to accommodate corrections, additions/subtractions, or misrepresentations that may be found herein. Readers are requested to submit information to remedy inadvertent omissions, corrections to factual information, and/or evidence that would affect interpretive and analytical findings.

All submissions, comments, or inquiries regarding this report or the SLCC Writing Across the College program should be directed to Tiffany Rousculp, Director at [t.rousculp@slcc.edu](mailto:t.rousculp@slcc.edu), SLCC South City Campus 3-186K, or (801)957-3232. The WAC at SLCC website can be found at [www.slcc.edu/wac](http://www.slcc.edu/wac).

## Executive Summary

This Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment creates a comprehensive picture of how writing and writing instruction take place at Salt Lake Community College. This document fulfills two primary goals set for the newly established SLCC Writing Across the College (WAC) program. This work will be the foundation upon which priorities for the WAC program at SLCC will be determined.

The research activities for this report took place between June 2014 and March 2015. These activities were primarily conducted by Tiffany Rousculp, Director, SLCC Writing Across the College. Research methods included quantitative and qualitative surveys, analysis and synthesis of published documents, and a series of interviews with 80+ members of the SLCC community. Data from these interviews were coded and quantified.

Findings were grouped into an Inventory and a Climate Assessment. The inventory notes the kinds and types of writing that take place at SLCC which are organized into student, faculty, and staff and administration areas. The inventory also accounts for writing courses, writing support systems, and writing programs across all groups.

The Climate Assessment sorts findings from the surveys and interviews into four thematic areas:

1. Mechanics
2. Expectations
3. Attitude and Emotion
4. Career and Technical Education Needs.

Each thematic area goes into depth to describe the climates that inform writing activities and instruction. Overall, findings suggest that the ability to write well is highly valued amongst all stakeholders at Salt Lake Community College. At the same time, writing at SLCC is an act surrounded by attitudes (directed both towards the self and towards others) that may be detrimental to its successful execution. The writing climate at SLCC appears to be similar to that found at many other institutions of higher education: for all stakeholder groups, writing is very important, yet is also arduous, arbitrary, adversarial, and potentially traumatic.

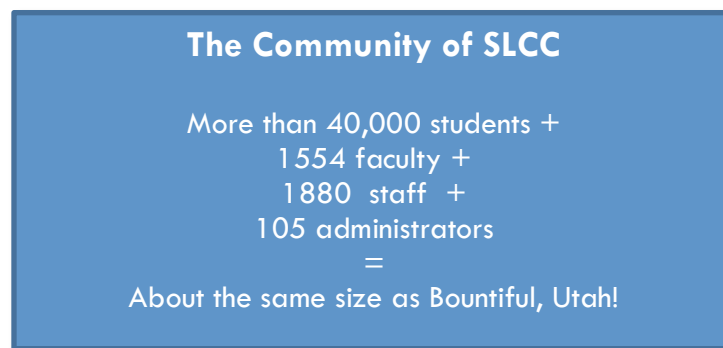
The document continues with the Next Steps for the SLCC Writing Across the College program, which include constituting a WAC Advisory Council and setting priorities for the next two academic years.

Appendices detailing sources of research conclude the document.

All questions, comments, and corrections to this document should be directed to Tiffany Rousculp, Director, SLCC Writing Across the College, [t.rousculp@slcc.edu](mailto:t.rousculp@slcc.edu), (801) 957-3232.

## What is Writing Across the College?

The SLCC Writing Across the College (WAC) program was established on June 1, 2015. This program was originally envisioned as a Writing Across the Curriculum program—charged with infusing and increasing writing activities and assignments into college courses across all disciplines. Concerned with the potential of such a program’s long-term sustainability, however, the appointed faculty director of the WAC program wished to model this program’s development after that which grounded the long-term success of the SLCC Community Writing Center. This approach prioritizes building a program from inside of a community with respect for all its members’ knowledge, needs, resources, and limitations.



Approaching a “Writing Across” program in this way necessarily broadens its scope to more than just curriculum; it looks at all the ways writing takes place throughout entire college. SLCC’s community members (or stakeholders) include students, certainly, but also faculty, staff, and administrators. While writing across the curriculum programs traditionally support only student writing or writing instruction, the SLCC Writing Across the College program dedicates itself to supporting all members of the SLCC community to succeed in their writing responsibilities and goals. In doing so, WAC at SLCC will belong to everyone, which will improve its opportunities of developing into a sustainable resource at SLCC.

### WAC at SLCC Working Mission Statement

This program's working mission statement is **to collaboratively cultivate educational environments where the principles of "learning to write" and "writing to learn" support the academic, professional, and personal goals for all students, faculty, staff, and administrators at SLCC.** "WAC" at SLCC, therefore, stands not only for "Writing Across the Curriculum;" it also represents "Writing Across the College," an approach that suggests every member of the SLCC community can play a part in creating a culture of effective and confident writing. —*SLCC WAC Website, 2014*

When constituted, the WAC Advisory Committee will revisit this mission statement and revise it as necessary. (See “Next Steps,” p. 33.)

## Writing Across the College Principles and Priorities

Principles	2014-2015 Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local Environment:</b> The WAC at SLCC program will grow from the specific environment that exists at Salt Lake Community College. While it will draw from WAC best practices, only those practices appropriate for the SLCC community will be pursued.</li> <li>• <b>Respect:</b> The WAC at SLCC program will respect all students, faculty, staff, and administrators. This means that all initiatives will value the resources (and potential resources) already in place and will recognize the presence of boundaries and limitations that exist.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> The WAC at SLCC program will work with other departments and programs on initiatives and projects. The WAC program will not re-create or attempt to change that which is already working well to support a culture of writing at SLCC.</li> <li>• <b>Self-Interest:</b> The WAC at SLCC program will prioritize how its initiatives and projects can serve the self-interests of all involved individuals, departments, and other programs.</li> <li>• <b>Change:</b> The WAC at SLCC program will be a continually evolving web of projects and initiatives; as the college environment changes, so too will the Writing Across the College program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Writing at SLCC Inventory</b> Many departments, programs, and individuals are engaged in innovative writing projects and programs to improve student success. The Writing at SLCC inventory project will work to raise college-wide awareness of "what we're doing right" in writing at SLCC.</li> <li>• <b>Writing Climate Assessment</b> WAC programs need to respond to the specific "climates" (or cultures) of writing at the institutions they serve. Through the Writing Climate assessment, we will learn about the strengths and stresses that students, faculty, staff and administrators bring to writing and writing instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Individual/Small Group Consultation</b> The WAC Director is available to work one-on-one or with small groups with faculty members who are interested in talking about writing.</li> <li>• <b>Workshops</b> The WAC at SLCC program will provide a small offering of workshops regarding writing and writing instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Online Resources</b> There is a world of information out there for people interested in writing, writing across the curriculum, and literacy resources. The WAC at SLCC program will develop a user-friendly resource on its website. (<a href="http://www.slcc.edu/wac">www.slcc.edu/wac</a>)</li> </ul>

## The State of Writing at SLCC: Writing Across the College Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment

### Purpose

The purpose of the Writing Across the College Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment is to create a comprehensive picture of how writing and writing instruction takes place at Salt Lake Community College. This will allow the WAC Director and the WAC Advisory Committee to understand the strengths and weaknesses in writing performance, instruction, and support for SLCC students, faculty, staff, and administration.

Almost everyone has an opinion about the quality of writing or writing instruction at SLCC. Many believe they understand the strengths and challenges that students, faculty, staff, and administrators bring to writing tasks. To build a program upon opinions and undocumented understandings, however, sets a shaky foundation for sustainability. This inventory and assessment aims to reduce subjective understanding of writing and writing instruction by providing findings supported by sound research and analysis.

Although writing across the curriculum programs exist at other institutions of higher education, including a relatively small number of community colleges, such programs may not succeed if simply implemented at Salt Lake Community College. The resources and needs of SLCC students, faculty, staff, and administrators are not identical to those at other college locations. Further, expanding the concept of “writing across” to the entire college necessitates a substantial and localized examination of our community.

Only by understanding writing and writing instruction at SLCC—and the climate that surrounds them—can we build a solid footing from which to set priorities for the SLCC Writing Across the College program.

### Methods

The research for this report took place between June 2014 and March 2015. It was conducted by Tiffany Rousculp, Director, SLCC Writing Across the College. The SLCC Institutional Research and Institutional Inquiry offices provided expertise and assistance in survey design and analysis. Specific thanks go to Jessie Winitsky-Stephens, Jeff Aird, Annette Lowe, and Joseph Diaz.

The following original surveys were conducted:

- *Perceptions of Student Preparedness for Writing in College Classes*  
This survey asked faculty and students to assess how prepared students are for the writing assignments in their courses, and how well students meet writing expectations.
- *Intention of Registration in Composition Course Modalities*  
This survey asked students if they intended to register for a particular composition course modality (e.g. in-person, on-line, hybrid, online plus). If not, why, and what was their level of satisfaction with the modality.

- *Data Analysis of Number of Credits Earned Prior to English 1010/2010/2100*  
Registration data was analyzed to determine how many credits students had completed (between 2012 and 2014) when they registered for WRTG 0900/0990 and English 1010/2010/2100.
- *Use of Electronic Devices in Classroom Work (Handheld and Computing)*  
This survey asked students what types of electronic devices they used to work on a variety of class-based assignments.
- *First Year Composition Course Name and Numbering Systems*  
This survey collected data from higher education institutions across the country regarding their required composition courses' numbering systems and course of study recommendations.

In addition to these original surveys, data from the 2012 SLCC Writing Across the Curriculum survey<sup>1</sup> was utilized in this assessment.

Findings and meta-analysis of data from the following published research and documents were utilized in this assessment.

- 2012 Community College Survey of Student Engagement
- 2013-2014 Salt Lake Community College Fact Book, SLCC Institutional Research
- 2013-2014 SLCC New Student Report, SLCC Institutional Research
- 2013-2014 SLCC Graduate Student Report, SLCC Institutional Research
- 2014 SLCC General Education Assessment Report, David Hubert and Kati Lewis
- 2014-2015 SLCC Course Catalog
- "Grading and Student Writer Identity Formation," poster, Clint Johnson

Along with this data-focused research, the WAC Director conducted interviews with over 80 members of the SLCC Community, specifically Associate Deans, Academic Program Directors, Student Service Program Directors, faculty, and staff members. (A list of all interviewees can be found in Appendix A.)

The interviews were informally structured and followed paths of discussion that the interviewees seemed to feel was important. Every effort was made, however, to answer the following questions with each interviewee.<sup>2</sup>

Academic Administrators/Academic Support	Student Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of writing do students do in this academic/CTE area?</li> <li>• What student and faculty attitudes are expressed about writing?</li> <li>• Do students engage in any extra-curricular writing in this academic/CTE area?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this area provide any kind of writing support for students?</li> <li>• Does this area provide opportunities for students to engage in writing outside of their classes?</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The 2012 SLCC Writing Across the Curriculum Survey was administered by this report's author, Allison Fernley, and Stephen Ruffus.

<sup>2</sup> A few interviews with faculty members and students included questions specific to their work.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of writing do faculty do in this academic/CTE area?</li> <li>• Are there areas that faculty need support in their writing?</li> <li>• What types of writing do staff do in this academic/CTE area?</li> <li>• Are there areas that staff need support in their writing?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What attitudes do students share about writing?</li> <li>• What kind of writing do staff and administrators do in this area?</li> <li>• Are there areas that staff and administrators need support in their writing?</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Copious notes were taken during each interview (totaling over 100 pages of written data). This data was analyzed for both the Inventory and the Climate Assessment. For the Inventory, mention of distinct types of writing were noted and counted. For the Climate Assessment, 61 distinct comment areas were determined. The data was then reviewed for these comment areas and coded. The coded data were then quantified and ranked. (All coded response groupings can be found in Appendix B.)

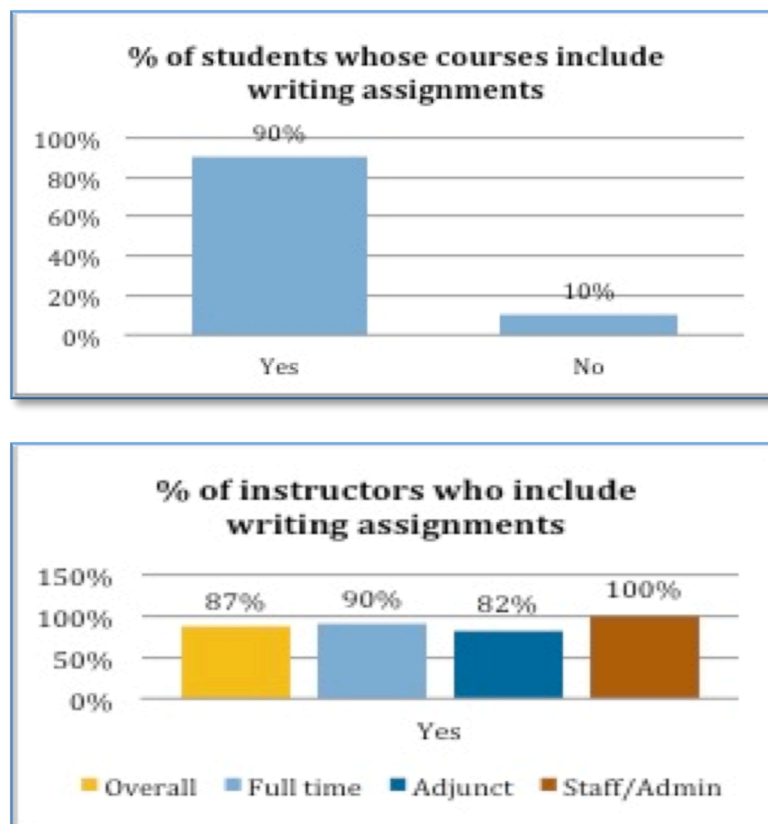
## Findings

### Writing Inventory

The SLCC Writing Inventory attempts to document the quantity and extent of writing instruction and writing activity at the college. The inventory is broken into three sections based on the primary stakeholders at the college: students, faculty, and staff/administration.

#### *Students*

Students appear to encounter writing in nearly all of the courses they take at Salt Lake Community College. Ninety-five percent of faculty respondents to a 2012 Writing Across the Curriculum survey indicated that they included writing assignments in their teaching. This figure is reflected by a 2014 survey that assessed perceptions of student preparedness for writing. In this survey, 87% of faculty responders and 90% of student responders indicated that their courses included writing assignments.



Not only do SLCC students write in the majority of their courses, they appear to write more than students at comparable institutions. An analysis of CCSSEE 2010 data reveals that SLCC students had a statistically significant (t-test) higher mean response to “Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in” and “Number of written papers and reports of any length.” The SLCC mean score for “number of papers/reports” was well within the “Between 5 and 10” response, while the national mean was at the high end of the “Between 1 and 4” response.

Students encounter writing across their different courses and participate in many extra-curricular writing activities as well. The range of writing genres (“types” of writing) that students engage in is vast, as the word cloud below demonstrates.<sup>3</sup>



## Courses

While students encounter writing in most of their courses, there are a handful of courses that are specifically **composition courses**. The transfer level courses fulfill the General Education composition (EN) requirement, while the developmental courses prepare students for English 1010<sup>4</sup>. They include:

- Writing 0900—Basic Writing
- Writing 0990—College Preparatory Writing
- English 1010—Intro to Writing
- English 2010—Intermediate Writing
- English 2100—Technical Writing
- Business 2200—Business Communications
- Construction Management 2310—Construction Writing

All students at SLCC in the AA, AS, AAS programs must fulfill a composition requirement; the result of which is that English 1010 is the highest enrolled course at the college. Other composition courses are also highly enrolled with English 2010, and Writing 0990 being the third and fourteenth highest enrolled courses at the college, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This word cloud was generated by the list of writing genres mentioned in the Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment interviews. The size of the individual genre in the image correlates with the number of times it was mentioned in the interviews (the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned).

<sup>4</sup> Courses in the School of Applied Technology’s ESL and College and Academic Readiness programs prepare students for WRTG courses. This program is undergoing significant development to bolster its writing instruction.

<sup>5</sup> Data shared by Nate Southerland, Assistant Provost of Academic Support.

While 85 - 90% of courses at SLCC include writing in their curriculum, only a small percentage (5%) note in SLCC Catalog descriptions that writing is an important feature in the course<sup>6</sup>. These 196 courses include most language courses (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Navajo, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, and Tongan) and several ESL courses in the School of Applied Technology and the English department.<sup>7</sup>

The Division of Communications and Fine Arts carries several writing-based courses (e.g. Journalism, Screenwriting, Songwriting, Elements of Effective Communication) as does the English Department (e.g. Imaginative Writing, Poetry, Fiction, Effective Revision and Editing). Many computer science courses teach code (which is considered a form of writing for the purposes of this inventory report). Psychology and History offer specialized courses on writing in their disciplines. Paralegal Studies provides courses to prepare students to write on the job, as does Dental Hygiene, Occupational Therapy, and Photography.

The School of Applied Technology provides instruction in office-based writing through its Administrative Office Specialist program. Many SAT programs also include a Job Seeking Skills course that helps students prepare resumes, applications, and other job-seeking documents. The SAT programs, and the Public Safety Institute and Apprenticeship programs, include courses to prepare students for written certification exams in their fields. The Division of Continuing Education provides a wide range of workplace writing courses, genealogy writing courses, and writing courses for the UDOT Training program. Continuing Education also offers 27 writing-based courses through their “Ed2Go” programming.

### Student Writing and Handheld Electronic Devices

- In courses that require or allow online submission, nearly 25% of students report composing **informal** writing assignments on handheld devices (e.g. smart phones, tablets).
- In courses that require or allow online submission, just over 10% of students compose **formal** writing assignments on handheld devices.
- In courses that do not allow online submission, these percentages drop to 10% and 6%, respectively.
- Nearly 1 in 12 students do not use any electronic devices (handheld or computer) to compose their formal or writing assignments, unless assignment submission is required in person—then it increases to roughly 30%.

<sup>6</sup> Determined by SLCC Course Catalog 2014-2015 and Writing Inventory/Climate Assessment Interviews.

<sup>7</sup> Developmental Education has a course in the SLCC Catalog entitled “Language Arts for the Deaf” which teaches English through American Sign Language though it is unclear where this course is currently offered.

## Writing Support

Classmates, friends, family, and co-workers make up the largest support system for students as they work through writing assignments in their courses and extra-curricular activities.<sup>8</sup> This informal support also exists through the relationships that students develop with their instructors and with SLCC staff/administrators (e.g. TRiO, Thayne Center, Disability Resource Center<sup>9</sup>, First Year Experience).

Institutionally, most faculty members hold office hours to provide individual writing support, and many schedule conferences with students at regular intervals throughout the semester to talk about writing. The broadest and deepest form of individual writing support can be found in the Student Writing Center, where Peer Writing Advisors and writing faculty members meet with students in 20 to 30-minute tutoring sessions. In the Fall 2014 semester alone, the Student Writing Center served 1028 students through 2480 writing sessions.<sup>10</sup> Individual writing tutoring is not limited to the Student Writing Center, however, and can also be accessed through the Academic Literacy Center, the Center for Languages, the SLCC Peer Mentoring program, Academic Advising's Una Mano Amiga, and the Career and Student Employment Services department.

Other avenues of writing support for students include programs through the First Year Experience department (e.g. BruinSteppers, Summer Bridge), the Publication Center, and informally, through the School of Business's "Jam Session" that takes place just before finals each semester. The new Math, Science and Technology Resource Center will provide tutoring for writing under its new Writing Across the Sciences Coordinator position.

## Writing Programs

There are a number of innovative programs that provide opportunities for students to develop their writing abilities through means other than traditional classroom instruction (in-person and online). Some of these programs create supportive pathways for students through the English Composition requirement. The Accelerated Learning Program allows students whose Accuplacer scores are just below the English 1010 cut-off to take English 1010 along with a co-requisite English 1250 (Effective Revision and Editing) two-credit course.<sup>11</sup> A single Supplemental Instruction English 1010 course provides students who have previously failed English 1010, or who passed WRTG 0990 but lack confidence to move forward, with course-based tutoring support for two hours each week.

Students who wish to participate in a Learning Community cohort that includes their English Composition requirement may do so through the Gen Ed Step Ahead program, or through faculty-driven partnerships (e.g. English 2010 and History 1700). Finally, students who enjoy the flexibility of online instruction—yet appreciate in-person consultation with instructors and course-based tutors—can enroll in the English 1010 or English 2010 Online Plus program.

Such innovation is not limited to composition courses. The high profile E-portfolio requirement engages students in all general education courses to present signature assignments accompanied by written reflection. The practice of reflection also deeply informs student writing in service-learning

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<sup>8</sup> This finding reflects the research conducted by Deborah Brandt, author of *Literacy in American Lives*, Cambridge, CUP, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> The DRC also provides assistive technologies to allow students to write.

<sup>10</sup> Data from Clint Gardner, Director, Student Writing Center.

<sup>11</sup> While student demand for ALP is increasing, its future is uncertain with potential changes in the Accuplacer scores that will lower the cut-off for English 1010 placement.

courses, and civically-engaged students affiliated the Thayne Center. Further, many departments offer capstone courses in which students reflect upon, and engage with, their courses of study.

Other programs provide students with the opportunity to write as a member of their academic disciplines. The long-running *Folio* publication solicits and publishes original student work, while it employs student editors and provides students enrolled in the Folio Special Studies course with valuable editing and publication experience. Students enrolled in STEM courses are invited to participate in the annual STEM Symposium where they can showcase their learning in poster, paper, and presentation form. Philosophy students are invited to submit papers for presentation at the annual International Philosophy Conference, and all students are invited to do the same at the annual Writing and Social Justice Conference. Chemistry faculty have involved their students in undergraduate research, which has led to conference presentations at the American Chemical Society and publication.

Finally, the Writing Certificate of Completion program is “designed to give students specialized skills in written and electronic communication so they are prepared to enter or enhance professions that require extensive writing skills.”<sup>12</sup> Students in this certificate program complete seven writing courses, one Quantitative Literacy course, and two elective writing-emphasis courses before undertaking a capstone writing project.

#### Extracurricular Programs

Students are writing beyond their courses as they participate in SLCC extracurricular activities. For example, Health and Wellness Services’ Peer Action Leaders regularly engage in writing activities, most recently the “Know Your Verse” suicide prevention campaign. Leadership in student government and clubs/organizations are actively writing to fulfill the requirements and goals of those positions. Many students also work in in work-study employment on campus where they have writing responsibilities as well.

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<sup>12</sup> SLCC Writing Certificate of Completion website: [www.slcc.edu/wcc](http://www.slcc.edu/wcc)

## Faculty

Faculty write in nearly as many genres of writing as students do. A selection of the types of writing that faculty do can be generally organized through the three main areas that full-time faculty are responsible for (in alphabetical order).

Teaching	Professional Development	Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessments</li><li>• Assignments</li><li>• CCOs/PCOs</li><li>• CMS/OER content</li><li>• Course promotion</li><li>• Curriculum</li><li>• Email</li><li>• Handouts</li><li>• Lecture Notes</li><li>• Lesson Plans</li><li>• Letters of Recommendation</li><li>• Syllabi</li><li>• Teaching philosophies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applications</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Artist statements</li><li>• Books</li><li>• Coursework/Training</li><li>• Credential Exams</li><li>• Grants</li><li>• Panel presentations</li><li>• Posters</li><li>• Proposals</li><li>• Reflections</li><li>• Sabbatical requests</li><li>• Textbooks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agendas</li><li>• Articulation agreements</li><li>• Assessment plans</li><li>• Email</li><li>• Foundational documents</li><li>• Instructions</li><li>• Letters</li><li>• Memoranda of Understanding</li><li>• Policies</li><li>• Program design</li><li>• Proposals</li><li>• Reports</li><li>• Web content</li></ul>

## Writing Support

Similar to students, the major source of support for faculty writing is informal networks that consist of friends, colleagues, and supervisors. Additionally, as the Climate Assessment below will show, faculty are affected by a culture of expertise that exists in all higher education institutions. This culture hinders the willingness of faculty members to seek out assistance publicly on their writing (regardless of the area).

Even so, support does exist informally across SLCC as the examples below demonstrate:

- The Development Office provides targeted assistance in grant and proposal writing to faculty members and teams.
- The Thayne Center assists faculty in developing service-learning assignments and civically-engaged curriculum.
- Institutional Research provides support to research and assessment methods and analysis.
- Library Services works with faculty to improve information literacy strategies in curriculum.
- The Disability Resource Center offers workshops on improving accessibility in email and curricular writing.
- Academic and Student Services administration and staff will provide feedback and assistance to faculty on professional development and service-oriented writing work.

In addition to this ad hoc support, faculty have two structural resources as well to support their writing. The Faculty Teaching and Learning Center strives to support faculty in many pedagogical areas, although writing-based support has had limited resources. Additionally, the annual Faculty Convention and Adjunct Faculty Conference have provided panels and workshops on teaching-based writing tasks, such as assignment design and assessment.



## Writing Programs

With the exception of the Distinguished Faculty Lecture award that provides support for original research and presentation, there are no institutional programs that promote faculty writing.

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## *Staff/ Administration*

Although it can be assumed that SLCC staff and administrators engage in writing tasks every day, discussion was limited regarding staff and administrative writing during the interviews. Frequently, questions about what staff and administrators write (and what support might be beneficial) were met with surprise—some replying that it was unusual for someone, especially a faculty member—to be concerned with these stakeholders’ working conditions or needs. How this climate affects staff and administrative writing will be addressed later in this report.

Even though overt discussion was limited regarding staff and administrative writing, close analysis of interview notes (and common sense) reveals that they write just as much as other stakeholders on campus. Staff and administrators write emails, letters, reports, web content, agendas, meeting minutes, program reviews, proposals, agreements, forms, contracts, assessments, marketing documents, grants, research and much more.

## Writing Support

Like students and faculty, informal support networks of colleagues, friends, and supervisors exist for staff and administrators in their writing tasks. Administrators appear to be subject to the same climate of expertise that faculty face, while staff are more willing (comparatively) to seek out assistance. The Center for Innovation and Professional Development Center provides occasional workshops on writing topics.<sup>13</sup>

## Writing Programs

Based on the Writing Inventory research, there are no institutional programs that promote staff and administrative writing.

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<sup>13</sup> The Writing Across the College program has offered two “Grammarphobia” workshops through the Center for Innovation Employee Training program since December 2014. Both workshops were filled to capacity and received high ratings of satisfaction and value from attendees.



## Writing Climate Assessment

In order to build a sustainable Writing Across the College program at SLCC, it is essential to understand the “climate” of writing here at the College. This means asking the questions, “How do stakeholders feel about their own and others’ writing? How do stakeholders feel about writing instruction and assessment? How do stakeholders feel supported or hindered in their efforts to write?” Interviews and surveys provided ample amounts of data that has been analyzed using the methods described in the “Methods” section above.

**Overall findings suggest that the ability to write well is highly valued amongst all stakeholders at Salt Lake Community College. At the same time, writing at SLCC is an act surrounded by attitudes (directed both towards the self and towards others) that may be detrimental to its successful execution. The writing climate at SLCC appears to be similar to that found at many other institutions of higher education: for all stakeholder groups, writing is very important, yet is also arduous, arbitrary, adversarial, and potentially traumatic.**

The table below shows the top 30 comments culled from interviews and surveys that are relevant to the writing climate at SLCC. These 30 responses account for just less than 80% of the total comments. (A table of all coded responses and their percentages can be found in Appendix B.)

	Comments that suggest...	% of Comments	Cumulative
1	The mechanics of writing (e.g. correctness) is very important.	6.39%	6.39%
2	Students are unprepared for the writing in their classes.	4.74%	11.13%
3	A teacher's attitude about writing highly influences students' attitudes about writing.	4.01%	15.15%
4	Students are anxious, afraid, and experience trauma with writing.	3.83%	18.98%
5	Students are unable to adapt to different audiences, formats, and/or styles of writing.	3.65%	22.63%
6	Assessment of writing assignments is unclear, feels random, and is not linked to assignment's goals.	3.65%	26.28%
7	Writing assignments create more work for faculty.	3.28%	29.56%
8	Writing assignments are not well written.	2.74%	32.30%
9	ESL issues affect the communicative quality of writing of/for students, staff, and faculty.	2.74%	35.04%
10	Students experience a vast range of writing assignments, expectations, and assessment processes.	2.55%	37.59%
11	Students don't want to write.	2.55%	40.15%
12	Students can't write beyond the personal (yet the personal can be used to motivate student writers).	2.55%	42.70%
13	A generalized positive perception of students as writers.	2.37%	45.07%
14	Students are confused about why there are different formats and styles of writing.	2.19%	47.26%
15	Faculty need/want to improve their email communication.	2.19%	49.45%
16	Staff/administrators experience anxiety, insecurity, and trauma with writing.	2.19%	51.64%
17	Writing instruction specific to Career and Technical Education is needed.	2.19%	53.83%
18	Students are lazy (e.g. no original thought, don't try).	2.19%	56.02%
19	Courses that teach practical and business writing are needed.	2.01%	58.03%
20	Faculty need assistance/tools to teach and evaluate writing.	2.01%	60.04%
21	Students are motivated to become better writers.	2.01%	62.04%

22	Faculty need to improve their professional and business writing.	1.82%	63.87%
23	Staff want workshops and training on multiple writing topics.	1.82%	65.69%
24	Staff/administration are expected to write well in areas they aren't trained in.	1.82%	67.52%
25	Students are bad writers.	1.82%	69.34%
26	Students feel writing is irrelevant to their lives, a specific course, or a major.	1.82%	71.17%
27	A generalized nostalgia exists that students were better writers in years past.	1.64%	72.81%
28	Students use informal networks of support to improve their writing.	1.46%	74.27%
29	Faculty need/want to improve their curricular and instructional writing.	1.46%	75.73%
30	Some faculty writing instruction is out of date or inadequate.	1.46%	77.19%

In the sections that follow, this report will explore the following climate issues: Mechanics, Expectations, Attitude and Emotion, and Career and Technical Education Needs. These themed groupings encapsulate the majority of the top 30 comment areas.

## Mechanics

Comments regarding the mechanics of writing (e.g. grammar, spelling, punctuation, format) were made more often than any other. These comments tended towards statements of inadequacy directed at others and the self. Many interviewees linked “writing well” or “quality writing” with mechanical correctness.

Mechanical correctness is an important component of strong writing, yet it wields a disproportionate impact on the discussion of writing and writing instruction. Writing effectively consists of many different cognitive and physical acts. Cognitive acts that take place in all writing situations include task definition, goal evaluation, problem representation, memory (short and long-term) access, comprehension, evaluation, modification, revision, time management, and more. Physically, writing requires large and small muscle control, keyboarding or voice-recognition skills, and stamina.

A writer in the act is a thinker  
in full-time cognitive overload.  
—Linda Flower and John R. Hayes

These acts culminate in types of writing that address dimensions of purpose, audience, content, style, format, discourse (register), media, and mechanical correctness. Why, then, is correctness so often held as the arbiter of quality writing? Below are some possible reasons:

- **Mistakes are everywhere:** When people are in the process of learning a new type of writing (whether it is an entirely new form, in a new content area, or a more sophisticated version of something already known), mechanical correctness suffers. The added cognitive load of acquiring new writing skills and abilities pushes on the capacity for mechanical correctness. Ideally, students are always in a state of learning. Therefore, student writers who are actively learning will make mechanical mistakes.
- **Correctness is concrete:** When a word is spelled wrong, or a grammatical rule is broken, it is readily visible to the experienced reader. Whether or not a piece of writing adequately addresses the intended audience requires the reader to consider and evaluate multiple concepts. In other words, it requires less cognitive effort to determine correctness over other more abstract elements of writing. Further, unless the reader was specifically taught to read, interpret, and talk about issues of purpose, audience, discourse (and other less concrete elements) in writing, the default critique will be based in issues of mechanical correctness.
- **It's what we're taught:** Because of the above reasons, people who move through the educational system will have lots of attention drawn to mechanical correctness in their writing. (Many interviewees shared stories how their own student writings were incessantly marked.) Over time, “good writing” becomes associated with unmarked writing—or writing that is mechanically correct.

I was afraid of  
writing. My papers  
were “bloody” but  
I didn’t know why.  
— Associate Dean

To be sure, mechanical proficiency is an essential element of strong writing skills, as is the awareness that the necessary level of correctness depends on the type of writing. A document that represents the college to a public audience must be mechanically correct; responses to a survey asking about concerns with student writing do not (e.g. “Student's lack of familiarity and comfort with reflective writing,” “students do not know APA style and that's what we are requiring in the [blank] dept”). Just as

all other elements of writing change depending on the situation, the importance of mechanical correctness does too.

Mechanics are very important to many writing situations and should be a concern for all stakeholders at SLCC. A climate of writing that focuses on mechanical correctness to the exclusion of other concerns, however, can actually stifle the development of writing abilities<sup>14</sup>. Further

complicating the picture is that students, faculty, staff, and administrators bring a vast range of Standard Edited English abilities to this community; and language/literacy development takes a very, very long time for anyone. The Writing Across the College program will need to address how the climate of mechanical correctness impacts writing development.

#### **Student Mechanics Might Not Be As Bad as We Think**

The 2014 SLCC General Education Assessment Report indicated that only two percent of student e-portfolios had mean scores showing that the student, “Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.”

A full 95% of student e-portfolios demonstrated control of mechanics at or above the criteria, “Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.”

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<sup>14</sup> See “Emotion,” p. 30.

## Expectations

Throughout the interviews, several comments were made that can be grouped into the theme of “Expectations.” Most often these were directed outwardly—specifically referring to inadequacies of others’ writing (e.g. “Faculty need to improve their professional and business writing,” “Staff/administration are expected to write well in areas they aren’t trained in,” “Students are unprepared for writing in their classes.”). Such concerns, however, were not always directed at others; many interviewees expressed worry and sometimes shame that they were not “good writers,” because their positions at the college carried with them the expectation that they should be.

The ability to write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, in a timely manner, is essential for almost all employees of Salt Lake Community College. Yet, an analysis of the interviews for this inventory and climate assessment suggests that expectations are framed within an ideal instead of reality. This leads to frustration for all involved. For example, most adults are capable of writing well in areas they frequently engage in because they learn the strategies and expectations over time. However, unless people are consciously engaged in improving their writing abilities, and are receiving useful feedback and instruction, unfamiliar writing tasks typically are going to be challenging for all.

In any professional environment, expectations are necessary to shape work requirements and set performance standards. Writing competencies are significant markers of the ability to meet performance standards and, by extension, are often read as signs of educational attainment (even though these signs may be inaccurate). In an academic environment (including Salt Lake Community College) such signs of educational attainment carry real power in terms of one’s worth and value to the institution. This climate of “ideal expectations” puts some people who work at SLCC in precarious positions. They are expected to be able to write well in multiple arenas, are critiqued when they cannot, and are afraid to ask for help because doing so risks negative judgment of their worth within an academic institution. (Faculty and administrators are particularly affected by this climate. A few faculty and administrators who sought individual consultation from the WAC Director repeatedly expressed significant embarrassment for asking for help.)

While the rest of this section delves into expectations of student writing abilities, it is important to keep in mind that a climate of ideal expectations affects all who write at SLCC. Understanding how this climate impacts interactions about writing amongst SLCC employees (e.g. requests, feedback, responses, critiques, assistance) will help to shape Writing Across the College programs to improve effective writing on all levels.

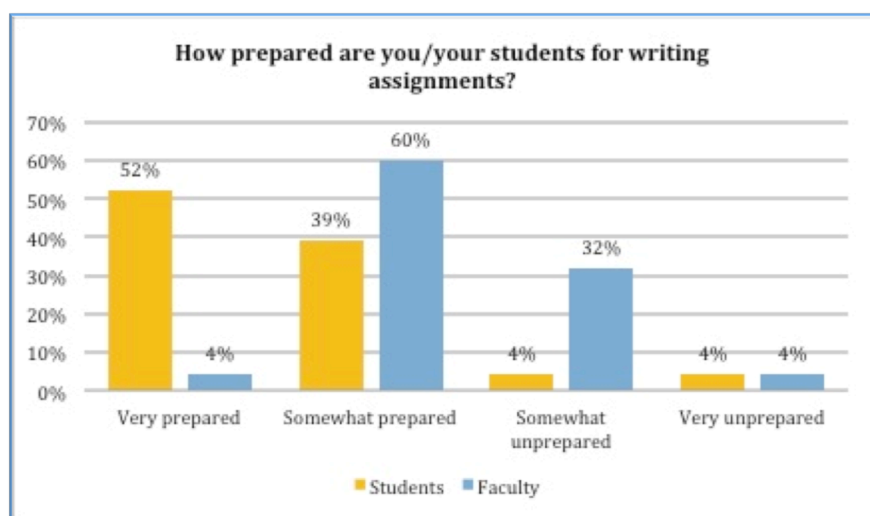
## Expectations for Student Writing

Many interviewees lamented the quality of student writing in multiple arenas (e.g. assignments, emails, appeals). This campus-wide complaint was most often based on the claim that students have not been prepared to write successfully in college, yet the responsibility for this lack was not as easily identified. The most frequent recipient of the blame was the students themselves, who are lazy, or just don't care.

However, some stated that students are eager for a challenge, and are motivated to write well, but the high schools haven't prepared them to write in college. Additionally, blame was ascribed to what is perceived as a failure of the English Composition requirement to prepare students to write in all college classes.

I was overwhelmed by the [student] writing that I encountered here.  
—Faculty member

These perceptions are mostly held by faculty members (and some staff/administrators), but are not necessarily held by students. In the 2014 survey on perceptions of student preparedness, there is a

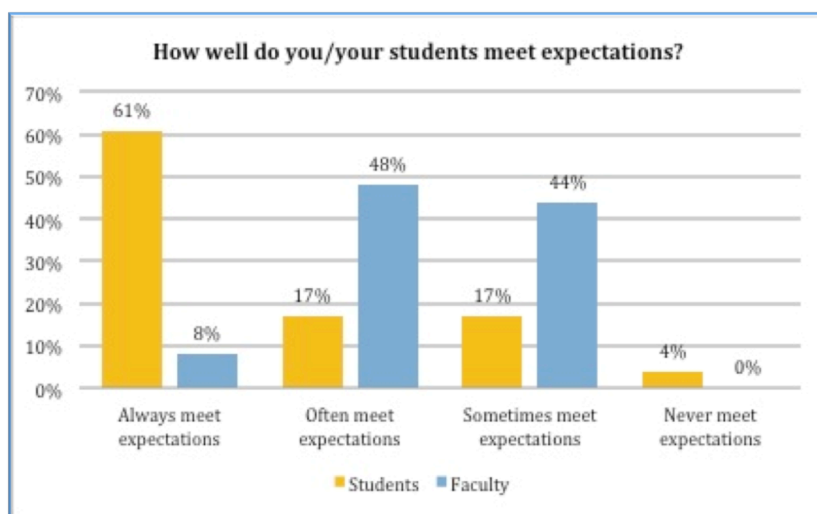


stark difference between students and faculty in how well prepared students are for college writing. Roughly half of the students surveyed felt they were “Very prepared” for writing assignments, while only 4% of faculty felt students were this well prepared.

Adding to this disconnect, students and faculty also differed significantly in their assessment of

meeting course expectations ( $p=0.003$ ). Mirroring the results of the preparation question, not a single faculty member felt that students “Never [met] expectations,” and students tended to agree. But students are far more likely to say they “Always meet expectations.”<sup>15</sup>

It is possible that students who felt more comfortable with writing tasks self-selected to respond to this survey, thus increasing the difference in perception between students and faculty. However, complementary perceptions are found in the SLCC Institutional Research’s 2014 Graduate Student Report—generated by a survey mailed to all students who have completed a certificate or a degree over the previous year. In the



<sup>15</sup> Data analyzed by Jessie Winitsky-Stephens.

report, respondents to the question “How well do you feel prepared to do the following?” (with a scale of 1=Not at all to 5=Very Well”) reported a 4.2 average response to “Communicate in writing.” Again, this high self-rating could be influenced by the fact that respondents had just succeeded in graduating. However, throughout the research for SLCC WAC program, the only area in which student perception of inadequate preparation was expressed was in the aforementioned mechanical correctness area. When students did mention that they were not good writers, it most typically showed up in concerns of grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

We should ask the question, “Why is there such a significant difference between faculty and student perception of preparedness and performance?” One possible explanation for this is a general (though perhaps false) nostalgia that students used to be much better writers than they are now. In other words, it may be due to a climate of expectations based on an ideal rather than reality. A comparative analysis of student writing from 20 years ago and today would be an interesting undertaking.

#### **The Difference May Lie in the Grades**

According to research conducted last year by Clint Johnson, Lead Writing Advisor in the SLCC Student Writing Center, students’ perceptions of their academic writing ability is indistinguishable from their grading history. Students self-rated their academic writing ability as well as their grades on writing assignments. Perhaps students receive grades that indicate (to them) stronger writing abilities than faculty perceive them to have.

.....

SLCC students bring with them a vast range of educational privilege (and lack of it). To be sure, some are very prepared for the demands of college writing, but most are not. This is unsurprising when the backgrounds and academic experiences of SLCC students are taken into consideration. Most SLCC students are not enrolling at the college with histories of consistent engagement with academic, professional, and/or technical writing skills, nor do they come from backgrounds in which these types of writing activities routinely take place.

Even if high schools were preparing students well for writing in college, only 16% of SLCC students enroll in SLCC directly after high school.<sup>16</sup> Most students come to SLCC after a 4 to 7-year period away from education—ostensibly when they realize they need an education to achieve their goals. Additionally, of those who are currently enrolled in SLCC, 82% self-identify as first generation students, meaning that neither parent has achieved a Bachelor’s Degree. These students are not entering SLCC already surrounded by academic cultures, nor are they familiar with academic writing.

When they do arrive, 60% of students are seeking a “transfer” education, and 32% are pursuing workplace education. They have educational goals, but education is not their only priority—most do not move through their studies in a full-time manner (enrolled in 12+ credits a semester). SLCC students have to work: about a third of the student body works 40+ hours per week, and nearly half works part time (defined as 39 or fewer hours per week). Many SLCC students have family obligations including children, siblings, or parents. Most SLCC students do not, or cannot, dedicate all of their time or energies to their education. In 2013-2014, nearly 2/3 of SLCC students carried less than 10 credits per semester (more than ¼ of students carried only 4-6 credits).

With 84% of students starting at SLCC after an extended absence from educational settings, and with a limited percentage enrolled in school full-time, the average SLCC student relationship to

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<sup>16</sup> All data in this section provided by Jeff Aird, Director of Institutional Inquiry, based on 2014-2015 figures.

college writing is transitory in nature. Students simply do not engage in regular and extended practice with college writing. Moreover, when students do encounter writing assignments, they are met with vastly different expectations and criteria from different faculty (as they would at any academic institution). For even the strongest student writers, these are challenging circumstances indeed.

Even though most faculty and administrators are dedicated to the comprehensive mission of SLCC, it is possible that their expectations for student writing inadvertently stem from their own experiences in college, which for most, were not via open-access, comprehensive community colleges. For the minority that attend community colleges, higher education was likely an experience that they found they were well suited to (even if not initially). If it hadn't been, these individuals probably would not have pursued careers in higher education. To measure expectations of student writing from behind this lens of educational success and privilege is potentially problematic.

Faculty and administrators may be entirely accurate in their perception that students are not prepared for college-level writing. They are also right that SLCC should hold students to college-level standards of writing. However, the current climate that focuses on student unpreparedness shifts the problem to others. A climate focused on expected ideals instead of reality is not necessarily a productive one.



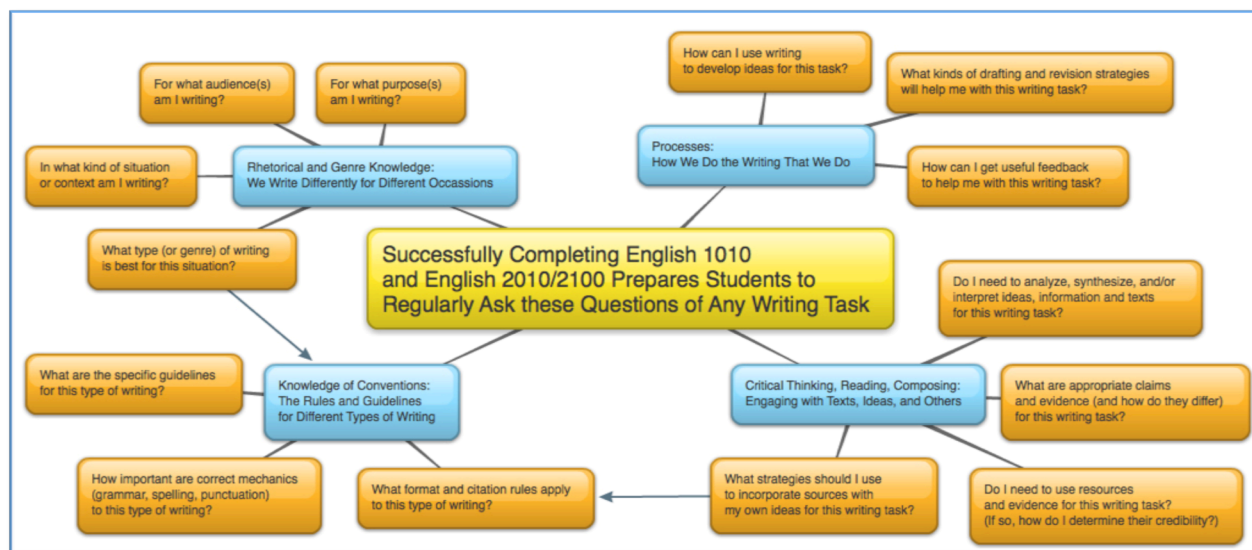
## First Year Composition Completion

Many members of higher education see the English Composition requirement as the answer to the lack of preparation for college writing; these courses indeed are intended to prepare students to write at a college level. At SLCC, all AA/AS programs require students to complete six credits of English Composition, and all AAS programs require 3 credits. Students who do not place into English 1010 must take developmental writing courses to prepare them for it. SAT and Continuing Education programs do not require composition, yet they provide other writing courses as a part of their programs.

There is a common assumption that students who pass through their English Composition requirement will be able to take on writing assignments in their other courses without additional instruction. On the surface, this seems to be a reasonable expectation, but the reality is more complex and is what Writing Across the Curriculum programs attempt to address.

Six credits of college writing does much to prepare students for assignments in their other courses, but because the range of writing assignments is so vast (See “Inventory,” p. 10) and because the expectations of different faculty is equally diverse (See “Faculty Attitudes,” p. 28), it is not possible to teach students how to write at a high level of quality in for every situation they will encounter during their programs of study. What First Year Composition (FYC) programs can do, however, is prepare students how to think about writing so that they can adapt to the myriad writing tasks they will undertake in college and the workplace.

A recently released “WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition,”—drafted and approved by the national Council of Writing Program Administrators—“describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition, which at most schools is a required general education course or sequence of courses.” The document outlines what students who complete FYC courses should be able to do, and also provides suggestions for how faculty in all disciplines can contribute to the success of these outcomes.<sup>17</sup> The image below interprets the WPA Outcomes Statement for SLCC students and for faculty in disciplines other than composition.

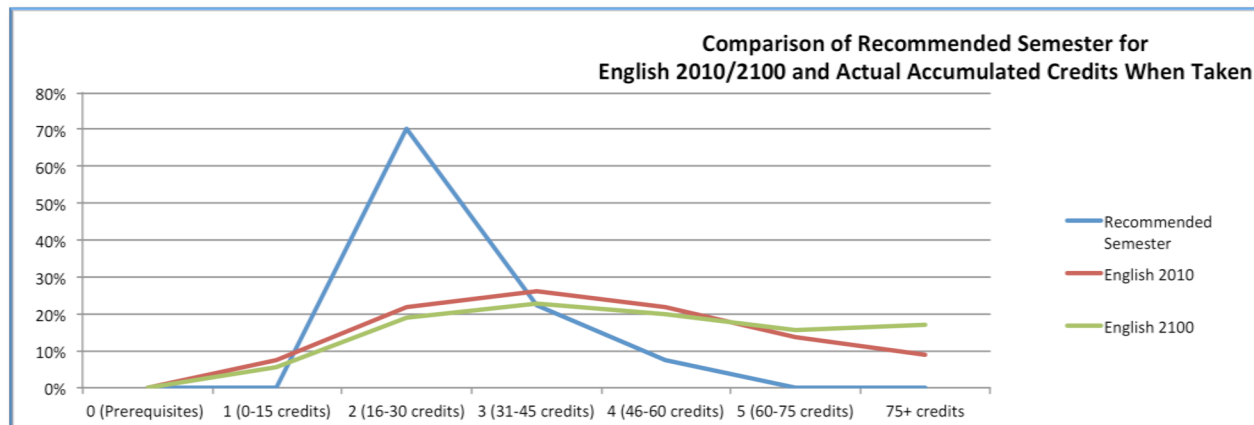


<sup>17</sup> These suggestions form the basis of many Writing Across the Curriculum programs across the country.

First Year Composition prepares students to understand that every writing task is different. The image above interprets the WPA Outcomes statement as questions that students who have successfully completed the two-course composition sequence at SLCC **should** be prepared to ask of any writing assignment/task they undertake. It is up to faculty (or others assigning writing tasks) to answer these questions, or to direct students to where they might find the answers. Some faculty are prepared to do this; others are not. This is something the Writing Across the College program will need to address in a collaborative, non-judgmental, and supportive manner.

### Completing the Composition Requirement

At SLCC, preparing SLCC students for college writing is impacted by when students take their English Composition courses. Data analysis shows that students are not taking their composition courses when faculty and administrators assume students are taking them. A review of all AA/AS/AAS recommended programs of study in the 2014 SLCC College Catalog showed that 90% of AA/AS programs and 60% of AAS programs recommend that students complete English 1010 before they have completed 15 credits of study. A quantitative analysis of when students take English 1010 demonstrated that only 40% of students have taken this course by this time. An additional 30% of students have completed English 1010 by the end of 30 credits.



A starker divide between recommendation and reality exists for English 2010/2100, which 70% of AA/AS programs recommend be completed by the end of 30 credits (and another 20% recommend be finished by 45 credits). Only 20% of students have completed English 2010/2100 by the end of 30 credits and only 25% more have done so by the end of 45 credits. The means that more than half of AA/AS students are waiting until the end of their programs of study at SLCC to complete their composition requirement<sup>18</sup>.

### Possible Impact of Course Numbering

Many SLCC students who intend to transfer to four-year college programs (which was just under 60% of new students in 2013-2014) may see English 2010/2100 as a sophomore-level course to be completed before they graduate from SLCC.

The **“2” prefix** suggests that these courses should be taken during the “sophomore year” of college. **SLCC is in the minority nationally with this numbering system.**

A survey of numbering systems across institutions of higher education, **79% of “second in the sequence” FYC courses were numbered with a “1” prefix.** Articulation agreements, however, between SLCC and other USHE institutions may require this numbering system to remain in place.

<sup>18</sup> Developmental education courses are included in the number of total credits. However, they did not appear to affect the outcome significantly.

## Attitude and Emotion

Comments from the interviews and surveys indicate that attitude and emotion play a significant role in the writing climate at Salt Lake Community College. Specifically, the findings show two specific areas of importance: 1) faculty attitudes about writing influences students' attitudes about writing and 2) all stakeholder groups at the college—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—experience marked emotional distress with writing.

Students can't  
write at all.  
--Faculty member

### Faculty Attitudes

The third most frequently noted comment in the interviews fell into a broad area of how teachers impact students' attitudes towards writing. This makes a certain amount of sense since students continually try to gauge what their instructors indicate is important, or not, in their courses and dedicate attention to these things to accordingly.

Students may have  
memorized formulas and  
algorithms, but to understand  
concepts, they need the  
language; they need to write.  
— Associate Dean

The influence of attitude seems to show up most frequently in two main areas: writing assignments and assessment. Students, and those who work closely with students, cited that writing assignments too frequently do not provide enough information or direction on the assignment or how it will be assessed. Next, the assessment of writing assignments often is not linked in a transparent manner to the stated goals of the assignment (if that information is included). This causes frustration and anxiety for students, and lends to climate of arbitrariness.

To be sure, at least some of this frustration stems from the lack of preparedness that students bring to college writing tasks, specifically the lack of ability that students have in adapting their writing to different audiences (the 5<sup>th</sup> most cited comment area). This lack of flexibility shows up most dramatically in writing outside of class assignments (e.g. email to faculty, staff, and administrators; written appeals) in which the more informal qualities of texting, instant messaging, and social media appear to transform such writing into ineffective (or inappropriate) communication. Within writing assignments, however, students do not seem to appreciate that each teacher is a different reader, with overlapping yet distinct expectations for a piece of writing.

Ideally, to compensate for this lack of rhetoric flexibility, instructors would need to directly address it. They would need to find time in their curriculum to talk about their writing expectations, strategies, and purposes. They would need to explain why they might read writing differently than other faculty at the college. Additionally, they would need to be able to talk with students individually about their writing, provide opportunities to revise based upon feedback.

There's a culture of writing  
here because writing is a  
means for use to grow and  
learn about ourselves.  
— Student Services Program  
Director

It is difficult to assign  
writing, unless you  
want to spend  
inordinate amounts of  
time grading.  
— Associate Dean

It is unrealistic, however, to expect faculty across the college to be able to do all of this. The climate assessment made it very clear that writing assignments create more work for faculty. (Students, too, appear to believe that writing assignments are often irrelevant, unnecessary, or too much work.) Without sustainable incentives, such additional activity would be limited to faculty's enthusiasm and

intentions, resources that are limited, even for the most writing-focused faculty member.

An important area for the Writing Across the College program to pursue will be how to positively influence faculty attitudes towards student writing and writing instruction without inflicting significant increases in workload, which will inevitably negatively impact faculty attitudes.

### **E-Portfolios, Attitude, and Writing**

The e-portfolio requirement at SLCC is a clear example of a writing across the curriculum program at the college. Students are required to create an e-portfolio that contains their significant assignments and reflections on those assignments from all of their General Education courses.

Findings from the *2014 General Education Assessment Report*, by David Huber and Kati Lewis, indicate that similar to writing in courses, student attitudes towards their e-portfolios are also affected by perceived faculty attitudes. One assessment team reflected, “After viewing 100 eportfolios, it was easy to see which students felt their eportfolio was important and which ones did not. I believe this has a lot to do with the faculty these students interacted with, and their own feelings about the importance of eportfolios.”

## Emotion

Indicated by its 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate of comments from the assessment, the act of writing is an emotional undertaking for most stakeholders at SLCC. In most conversations for the inventory and climate assessment, some expression of vulnerability was displayed: anxiety, fear, insecurity, frustration, or trauma. These comments were related by students, faculty, staff, and administrators alike. At the same time, several interviewees expressed confidence with their own writing—typically done so through metaphors suggesting that they had “won a battle” or “overcome a struggle.” Only a very few shared a history of ease and comfort with writing.

Students are afraid to ask questions about writing assignments.  
--Student Writing Center Peer Advisor

A lot of faculty think they're making it easier on students with open-ended assignments, but they're actually making it scarier for them.  
— Associate Dean

Writing causes significant anxiety for many people. Except for math and public speaking, writing appears to be the most stressful academic activity. While a certain level of stress can be useful for learning and performing, when that stress becomes fear or associated with trauma, it can impede learning. For some students, a lifetime of being labeled a “bad writer” (perhaps due to mechanical errors) leads to blocks in their potential for learning. For others, a single experience of traumatizing writing (e.g. being required to write about violent or traumatic events in one’s life for an assignment) can undo confidence and willingness to try. Many SLCC students with significant anxiety and/or fear appear to either strive for “invisibility”

in their writing assignments by doing only what is absolutely necessary (so as to not attract attention). Others cope by relying too much on the “personal” instead of expanding their writing abilities to include analytical or synthesis strategies.

Students are not alone in their anxiety with writing. A group conversation with roughly 15 SLCC staff members started out with a cacophony of shame-based writing stories. Fears ranged from inaccurately taking minutes, to program review criteria, to ESL language concerns. These staff members, and others whom were interviewed, were quite open about their writing fears, and equally eager for training in multiple writing areas. Student services administrators, on the whole, were also willing to share their own worries about writing, and were interested in what forms of writing support and training might be made available to them.

We're under a lot of pressure when we write: deadlines, distractions, and knowing we are being evaluated all the time.  
— Staff members

On the other hand, faculty and academic administrators either were more confident with their writing, or were uncomfortable sharing such insecurities. This is not surprising given the fact that the status that faculty and academic administrators gain is primarily based upon the identity as experts in their fields and in teaching. Knowledge and ability are the bases of academic credibility in higher education. (See “Expectations for Student Writing,” p 21.)

Still, many interviewees frequently noted that faculty and administrators were not necessarily the strongest writers outside of their immediate disciplines. While some faculty need to improve their syllabi, lesson plans, curriculum and writing assignments, it was apparent that most faculty can improve in their non-teaching writing tasks (e.g. reports, applications, requests, grants). This is not surprising since faculty are not necessarily very well-practiced

For many administrators, there is a lot of anxiety. You're just expected to know how to write everything. — Student Services Administrator

in these areas. Just like students, faculty do not necessarily write successfully in unfamiliar tasks, or in those for which they have not received training and useful feedback. Unlike students, however, faculty and academic administrators are expected to know how to do all the writing that comes their way. This confluence of need for faculty and administrators to improve their writing abilities and the specific risk—for these populations—that comes with asking for help creates a challenging situation.

The Writing Across the College program will need to navigate the emotional climate that surrounds writing at Salt Lake Community College with care and respect for all stakeholders.

## Career and Technical Education Needs

SLCC is a comprehensive community college. This means that Career and Technical Education (CTE) is as important to its mission as academic transfer education. CTE students and courses are a major part of the educational environment at SLCC. Nearly half of all credits offered are CTE; about a third of students enroll in workforce education programs; and 36% of 2013-2014 graduates were from CTE programs.<sup>19</sup> Many CTE students are pursuing AAS degrees,<sup>20</sup> while others are enrolled in certificate or apprenticeship programs. Students pursuing certificates or apprenticeship may take writing course specifically tailored to their fields of study, however all students enrolled in AAS program must complete English 1010 for their English Composition requirement.

Everyone is writing.  
We live in a litigious  
society so everything  
has to be documented.  
—Associate Dean

Many CTE courses include writing in their curriculum. Students in these courses find similar challenges to succeeding on writing assignments as students in academic transfer courses. Nearly a quarter of the students who utilized the Student Writing Center in Fall 2014 were from Career and Technical Education Programs.

Comments from academic administrators and student services representatives indicated that the English 1010 requirement for AAS-seeking students may not be adequately preparing them for the writing in their careers. While some noted that English 1010 is a good class for everyone to take because it teaches reading and writing skills, others felt that the curriculum in English 1010 course is more directed towards AA/AS students—who also need to complete English 2010 or 2100 for their composition requirement.

SLCC students seeking AA/AS degrees in technical fields are increasingly being advised to enroll in English 2100 (Technical Writing) for their second composition course. Indeed, the School of Science, Math, and Engineering is now requiring STEM majors to take English 2100 instead of 2010. Students pursuing AAS degrees, however, are not encountering technical writing education during their educational programs (with the exception of four AAS programs—out of 46—that have added English 2100 to their program requirements).<sup>21</sup>

The Writing Across the College program will need to examine possible ways to improve access to technical writing education for CTE students at SLCC.

<sup>19</sup> Data from Jeff Aird, Director of Institutional Inquiry.

<sup>20</sup> Career and Technical Education includes some AS degrees as well.

<sup>21</sup> One AAS program requires English 2010 in addition to English 1010.



## Next Steps

This inventory and climate assessment is merely the beginning of the Writing Across the College program at SLCC. With a comprehensive picture of writing at SLCC now in place, it is time to set priorities for the WAC program.

To make this possible, a Writing Across the College Advisory Committee—with representation from students, faculty, staff, and administrators—will be assembled in April 2015. Ideally, this committee will be no larger than 12 members serving for one to three-year terms year terms. (Student representative terms may be limited by their courses of study).

This committee will review this report in detail and will meet with the Writing Across the College Director to set priorities for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years. Ideally, this task will be completed before the end of the Spring 2015 semester.

Once the priorities are set, the Writing Across the College director will share those priorities with the college community, and will establish work plans and strategies to achieve them. The Writing Across the College Advisory Committee will meet once a semester to provide feedback on the progress of the program.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interviewees for Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment (alphabetical order)

- Soni Adams, Health and Lifetime Activities
- Paul Allen, Humanities and Languages
- Katherine Allred, Publication Center
- Brandon Alva, English Department, *Folio* Advisor
- Robert Ameling, Career and Student Employment Services
- Dave Attridge, Criminal Justice and Institute of Public Safety
- Alena Balmforth, English Department
- Jarrod Barben, Student Writing Center
- Jack Barnson, Student Writing Center
- Paul Benner, Accounting/Finance/Economics
- Bethany Bibb, Student Writing Center
- Lisa Bickmore, English Department, Publication Center
- James Bielefeld, Culinary Arts
- Mac Biggers, Student Association
- Carol Black, Career and Student Employment Services
- Spencer Black, Psychology and Social Sciences
- Lori Brock, Student Writing Center
- Jean Bower, Biotechnology
- Bob Burdette, Culinary Arts
- Nick Burns, Communications and Performing Arts
- Lori Castro-Zenoni, Health and Wellness Services
- James Celestino, English Department
- Ron Christiansen, English Department
- Cris Corser, English Department
- Kim Cosby, CSIS
- Candida Darling, Disability Resource Center
- Richard Diaz, First Year Experience
- Faculty Senate
- Sheerin Farahbakhsh, Student Association
- Christina Fehr, Student Association
- Eliza Filippi, Student Association
- Clint Gardner, Student Writing Center, Writing Certificate of Completion
- Jon Glenn, Library Services
- Brent Green, ESL/CAR/Testing
- Bryan Griggs, Visual Art and Design
- Jerri Harwell, English Department
- Darlene Head, Veterans Services
- Eric Heiser, Applied Technology
- Jack Hesleph, Career and Student Employment Services
- David Hess, Applied Health
- Jude Higgins, Faculty Teaching and Learning Center
- Peggy Hoffman, Student Life and Leadership
- Charlotte Howe, English Department, Publication Center
- David Hubert, General Education
- Peter Iles, Natural Sciences
- Julie Jackman, TRiO
- Amy Johnson, Student Writing Center
- Clint Johnson, Student Writing Center
- David Kehr, Student Association
- Mary Keleher, Biology
- Sandra Kikuchi, Faculty Support and Study Abroad
- Holly Langton, Student Writing Center
- Christine Larson, Student Writing Center
- Kati Lewis, E-portfolios
- Bob Lurker, Technical Specialties

- Phyllis Martinez-Seyler, Career and Student Employment Services
- Alex Maughan, Student Writing Center
- Marianne McKnight, History/Anthropology/Political Science
- Kevin Miller, Student Conduct and Support Services
- Carlos Moreno, Student Association President
- Ted Moore, History
- Suzanne Mozdy, Mathematics
- Anjali Pai, Center for Innovation
- Sonia Parker, Academic Advising
- Wendy Potter, Career and Student Employment Services
- Jeannette Proctor, Student Writing Center
- Professional Staff Support Network
- Gregory Roberts, TRiO
- Paul Roberts, Health and Lifetime Activities
- Stephen Ruffus, English Department
- Jennifer Saunders, Continuing Education
- Carol Sieverts, English Department
- Keith Slade, Library Services
- Dale Smith, FHS/EDU/Social Work
- Lucy Smith, Thayne Center
- Kevin Springer, Career and Student Employment Services
- Brittany Stephenson, English Department
- Justine Tabligan, Student Association
- Ralph Tasker, Apprenticeship and Construction Management
- C. Douglas Thom, Career and Student Employment Services
- Michelle Tuitupou, Academic Advising, Multicultural Advising
- Will Unga, Career and Student Employment Services
- William Wall, Student Writing Center
- Jonny Wesley, Student Association
- Wendy Whatcott, Student Writing Center
- Barbie Willett, Marketing/Management/Paralegal
- LaShawn Williams, Office of Diversity and Multicultural Initiatives
- Viviana Zumstein, Career and Student Employment Services

## Appendix B: Coded Response Groupings from Writing Inventory and Climate Assessment

	Comments that suggest...	% of Comments	Cumulative %-age
1	The mechanics of writing (e.g. correctness) is very important	6.39%	6.39%
2	Students are unprepared for the writing in their classes	4.74%	11.13%
3	A teacher's attitude about writing highly influences students' attitudes about writing	4.01%	15.15%
4	Students are anxious, afraid, and experience trauma from writing	3.83%	18.98%
5	Students are unable to adapt to different audiences, format, and/or styles of writing	3.65%	22.63%
6	Assessment of writing assignments is unclear, feels random, and is not linked to assignment's goals.	3.65%	26.28%
7	Writing assignments create more work for faculty	3.28%	29.56%
8	Writing assignments are not well written	2.74%	32.30%
9	ESL issues affect the communicative quality of writing for students, staff, and faculty	2.74%	35.04%
10	Students experience a vast range of writing assignment, expectations, and assessment processes	2.55%	37.59%
11	Students don't want to write	2.55%	40.15%
12	Concern that students can't write beyond the personal (yet personal can be used to motivate)	2.55%	42.70%
13	A generalized positive perception of students as writers	2.37%	45.07%
14	Students are confused about why there are different formats and styles of writing	2.19%	47.26%
15	Faculty need/want to improve their email communication	2.19%	49.45%
16	Staff/administration experience anxiety, insecurity, and trauma with writing	2.19%	51.64%
17	Writing instruction specific to CTEs is needed	2.19%	53.83%
18	Students are lazy (e.g. no original thought, don't try)	2.19%	56.02%
19	Courses that teach practical and business writing are needed	2.01%	58.03%
20	Faculty need assistance/tools to teach and evaluate writing	2.01%	60.04%
21	Students are motivated to become better writers	2.01%	62.04%
22	Faculty need to improve their professional and business writing	1.82%	63.87%
23	Staff want workshops and training on multiple writing topics	1.82%	65.69%
24	Staff/administration are expected to write well in areas they aren't trained in	1.82%	67.52%
25	Students are bad writers	1.82%	69.34%
26	Students feel writing is irrelevant to their lives, a specific course, or a major	1.82%	71.17%
27	General nostalgia that students used to be better writers	1.64%	72.81%
28	Students use informal networks of support to improve their writing	1.46%	74.27%
29	Faculty need/want to improve their curricular and instructional writing	1.46%	75.73%
30	Some faculty writing instruction is out of date or inadequate	1.46%	77.19%
31	Adjunct faculty working conditions are not ideal for teaching writing	1.28%	78.47%
32	Faculty are good writers	1.28%	79.74%
33	Faculty experience anxiety, insecurity, and trauma with writing	1.28%	81.02%
34	Writing is required in general education courses	1.28%	82.30%
35	Writing assignments should be utilized more for formative assessment instead of summative assessment	1.28%	83.58%

36	Students are not placed into appropriate courses	1.09%	84.67%
37	Teachers' expectations of student writing are not realistic	1.09%	85.77%
38	Faculty generally need help writing	1.09%	86.86%
39	Writing in general education courses is only the eportfolio project	1.09%	87.96%
40	Students don't like eportfolios	0.91%	88.87%
41	Writing assignments can violate student identity and/or trigger traumatic emotional response.	0.91%	89.78%
42	Faculty need/want to improve their academic writing	0.91%	90.69%
43	Assessing writing is difficult	0.73%	91.42%
44	Staff face intense deadlines and time pressures for their writing	0.73%	92.15%
45	Writing in general education courses is minimal or "fluff"	0.73%	92.88%
46	A generalized negative perception of student writing	0.55%	93.43%
47	Students like challenges	0.55%	93.98%
48	Plagiarism is a serious issue	0.55%	94.53%
49	Students are afraid to ask questions about writing	0.55%	95.07%
50	Writing impacts labor conditions for staff	0.55%	95.62%
51	Writing expectations in 1000-level and 2000-level courses should be different	0.55%	96.17%
52	Faculty are unable to adapt to different audiences, format, and/or styles of writing	0.55%	96.72%
53	Standard Edited English is privileged too much; other dialects should be included as valid	0.55%	97.26%
54	People were a better writers than students are now	0.36%	97.63%
55	Students used to write more than they do now	0.36%	97.99%
56	Teachers want to help students learn to write	0.36%	98.36%
57	Grading writing causes frustration	0.36%	98.72%
58	Faculty don't want to teach writing	0.36%	99.09%
59	Writing proficiency is tied into performance evaluations for staff	0.36%	99.45%
60	Staff are unable to adapt to different audiences, format, and/or styles of writing	0.36%	99.82%
61	A general sense that students should be better writers than they are	0.18%	100.00%