

BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE



WRITING CENTER



Making a difference in students' lives and academic experiences

SPRING 2014 SEMESTER REPORT

Bakersfield College Writing Center Spring 2014 Semester

Staff:

Writing Center Lead: Kim Arbolante, kimberly.arbolante@bakersfieldcollege.edu

Writing Center Instructional Assistants: Joelle Milholm (Liaison), Kristen Watts, Laura Harris, Susan Abbassi, Eric Weis, and Kevin Goodwin

CSUB Interns: None at this time

Mission: Open to all students, the Bakersfield College Writing Center allows students to craft their writing process from invention and structure to style and mechanics. The student-led sessions will be facilitated by a writing consultant who, along with the student, aims to identify strengths and weaknesses in the student work with the goal of gaining life-long skills for writing independence. The Writing Center’s services complement classroom instruction and instructor’s office hours. The Writing Center engages students in discussion about their writing and serves as an inquisitive and thoughtful audience for it.

Statistics and Analysis

Table A: Appointment Attendance

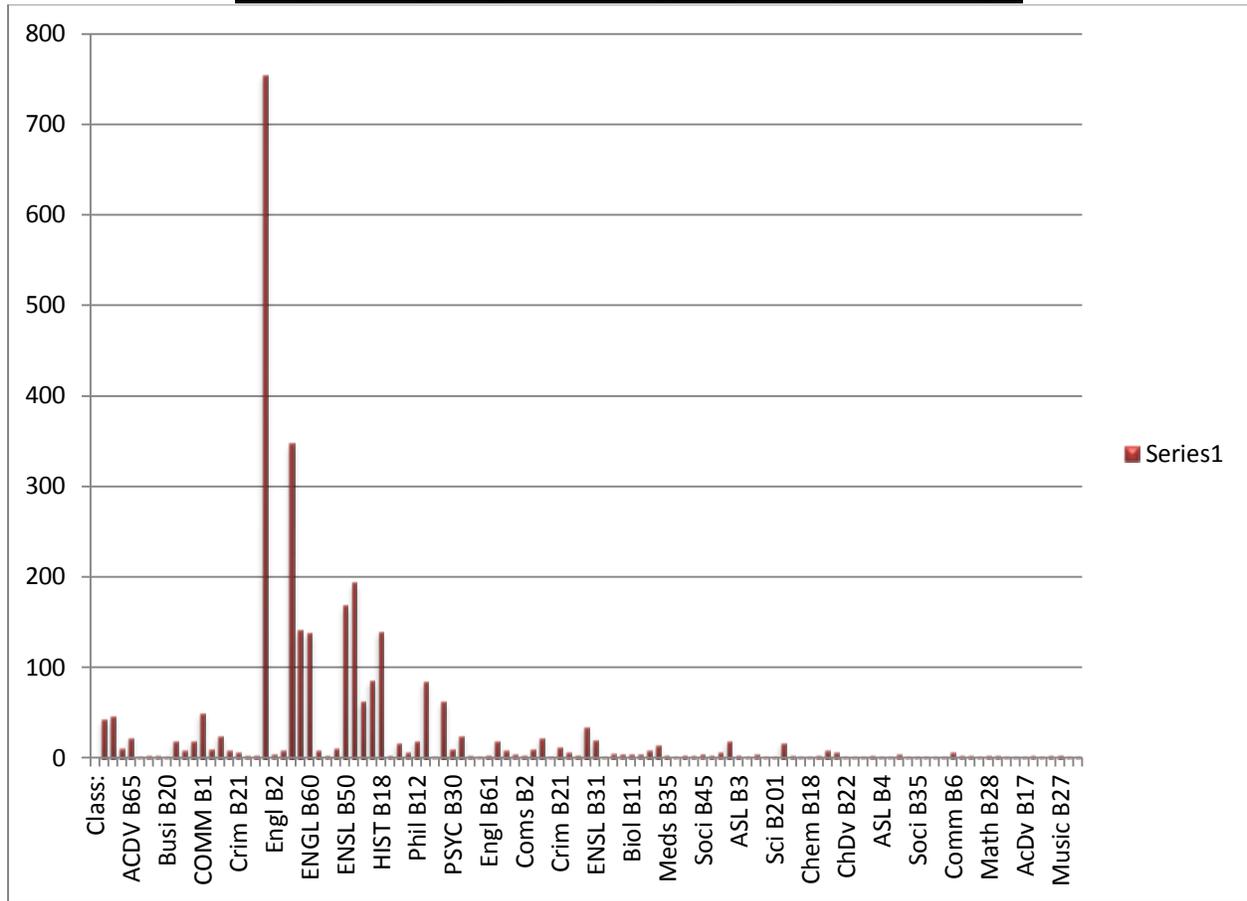
| | Spring 2013 | Fall 2013 | Spring 2014 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Attended | 2,348 | 2,338 | 2,326 |
| Drop-ins | 266 | 334 | 543 |
| Not Attended (No-show) | 294 | 290 | 276 |
| Total Students Served | 708 | 739 | 862 |
| Total Appointments Seen | 2,614 | 2,672 | 2,880 |

Table B: Appointment Usage by Discipline

| Disciplines | Spring 2013 | Fall 2013 | Spring 2014 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Academic Development | 204 | 198 | 145 |
| English | 596 | 640 | 1,472 |
| ESL/EMS | 632 | 628 | 467 |
| History | 289 | 327 | 265 |
| Psychology | 186 | 152 | 87 |
| Child Development | 112 | 135 | 58 |
| STEM | 65 | 25 | 12 |
| Communications | 129 | 159 | 119 |
| All Others | 391 | 408 | 255 |

***This is the class the student indicated he/she needed writing assistance with. For information about majors please see Graph B.**

Graph A: Spring 2014 Usage by Discipline Graph



*A viewer may hover his/her mouse over any bar on the graph to view what discipline that bar represents.

Table C: Appointment Reasons

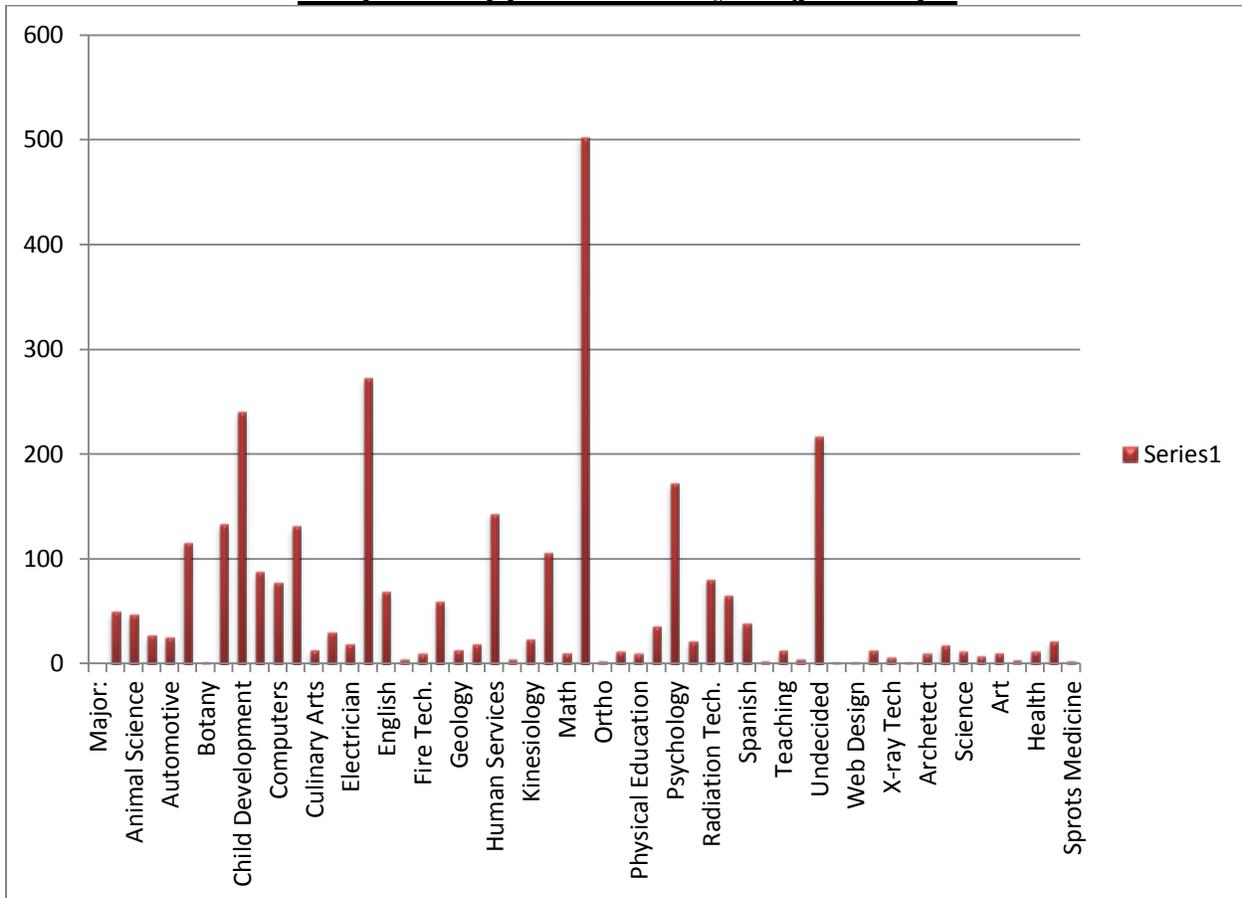
| Appointment Reasons | Spring 2013 | Fall 2013 | Spring 2014 |
|---|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Invention | 465 | 641 | 1,084 |
| Organization | 401 | 114 | 79 |
| Development* | 925 | 1,666 | 2,315 |
| Mechanics | 1,068 | 948 | 1,101 |
| Sources | 220 | 19 | 11 |
| Formatting | 1,225 | 693 | 1,078 |
| Other (Style, Resumes, Scholarship Applications, Business Letters, etc.) | 153 | 68 | 66 |
| ESL/EMS Related Concerns | 446 | 525 | 268 |

*Development, as an appointment reason, includes editing strategies and final revision assistance. This term is also the designation given as a reason for students who request

“proofreading,” which is immediately discussed as something our center does not do. Rather, we emphasize that we teach self-editing strategies instead.

****The total number of appointment reasons will always be greater than the total quantity of students seen because many students ask to address more than one concern per appointment; thus, we document each reason for a given appointment.**

Graph B: Appointments by Major Graph



***A viewer may hover his/her mouse over any bar on the graph to view what major that bar represents.**

Trends & Table Analysis

Our goal each semester is to surpass the number of students seen from previous semesters, with the exception of summer. In the fall of 2013, we saw a grand total of 2,672 appointments, and served 739 individual students. This term, we had a record number of appointments yet again, with 2,880 appointments taken, and 862 individual students served! Our team implemented several new strategies to combat issues such as staff shortages, increased wait times for drop-ins, and high numbers of no-shows. The total number of students served in the spring 2014 semester

is evidence that the Writing Center's new initiatives, policies, and—most importantly—the pragmatism of its Instructional Assistants is having a positive impact on student success and our ability to continue meeting the needs of students seeking auxiliary writing instruction.

For the first 13 weeks of instruction, we operated with 71% of the projected staff for this term. Originally, we had anticipated being able to see 3,200 students this semester. Regrettably, we fell short of that goal by 320 appointments. If we would have had 100% staffing for the whole term it is certain we would have met that goal. Fortunately, we do have a full staff in place now and are ready to try again in the fall of 2014 to meet that same goal of 3,200 appointments taken.

The trend continues in which student enrolled in accelerated or compressed English, Academic Development and EMS (ESL) courses are seeking more assistance from the Writing Center. This trend continues to encourage us because it is a testament that our hard work in increasing our visibility on campus has been fruitful, and that the faculty of Bakersfield College advocates for, and see the value of our services. More importantly, we can deduce from this trend that students enrolled in LRNC, compressed, or accelerated classes are employing the right Habits of Mind to take charge of their own success through persisting and striving for excellence by seeking more guidance with their writing outside the classroom.

The statistical data we gathered this semester did present some surprises. Graph A: Usage by Discipline indicated, not surprisingly, that ENGL B1A and ENGL 50 are the predominant classes students seek assistance for in the Writing Center. This was followed by students seeking help with their ENSL 60 course. It is surprising that the statistical value of ENSL students seen only totaled roughly half of that of English. When compared to last semester, in which the total number of ENSL students seen rivaled English quite closely, this drop is significant. We can only speculate at the cause of this decrease, but believe it is mostly due to what information students wrote down on their pink sheets (that we use to gather data and keep records of session content). Certainly, we will ensure in the future that ENSL students are not mistakenly writing ENGL as their class section. Because so many students indicated on their pink sheets that they wanted assistance with mechanics, we can also reasonably speculate that many of those same students are also ESL/EMS learners. As well, this drop in EMS (ESL) students served could be partially due to the independence we try to teach students in each session. In other words, it is possible that student we saw last semester in ENSL 70 feel more confident in their ability to succeed in their ENSL 60 courses, and accordingly, have sought out slightly less assistance. The information gathered in question 3 of the student survey also correlates with this. (See Graph 3 of the student survey below) Graph B: Appointments by Major also gave us some surprising results. STEM and Nursing majors made up the majority of our appointments this term; however, as the statistics show, those were not the areas of concern they wanted to address. Instead, the data indicates that they struggled in areas unrelated to their majors, such as in English, History, ESL/EMS, etc. This trend serves as proof positive that our mission to teach writing across the curriculum is advantageous to students, especially those whose academic and future careers utilize technical writing over expository composition.

Student Survey

At the end of each semester, we ask students to participate in an anonymous survey. The survey can change from semester to semester depending on current areas of concern or new points of focus. This semester, 79 students participated in the survey. Given the ratio of students who took the survey to the total number of students served, the Writing Center may change the survey from a printed form to an online survey via Survey Monkey in the future in hopes that we can gather anonymous feedback from more of the students we have served.

Despite the small number of students who took the survey, it is still possible to ascertain some crucial feedback that is representative of the same feedback Instructional Assistants receive during and after their sessions with students. Instructors are clearly the main avenue by which students discover our services. Accordingly, we will continue to do all that we can to increase the number of classrooms we visit in the fall in order to further raise our campus visibility. Most students expressed that they found their visit to the Writing Center excellent or good, and only one person rated his/her visit as average. No students gave a poor rating. The most significant survey response we received was from Graph 3 regarding whether students felt the Writing Center helped them succeed in their classes. All but one student responded positively to this question, which is very encouraging. At present, this survey is the best measurable student success metric we have in place, although we are thinking to the future and may implement a study in the future that would give us a more thorough statistic of student success based on Writing Center visits and term grades.

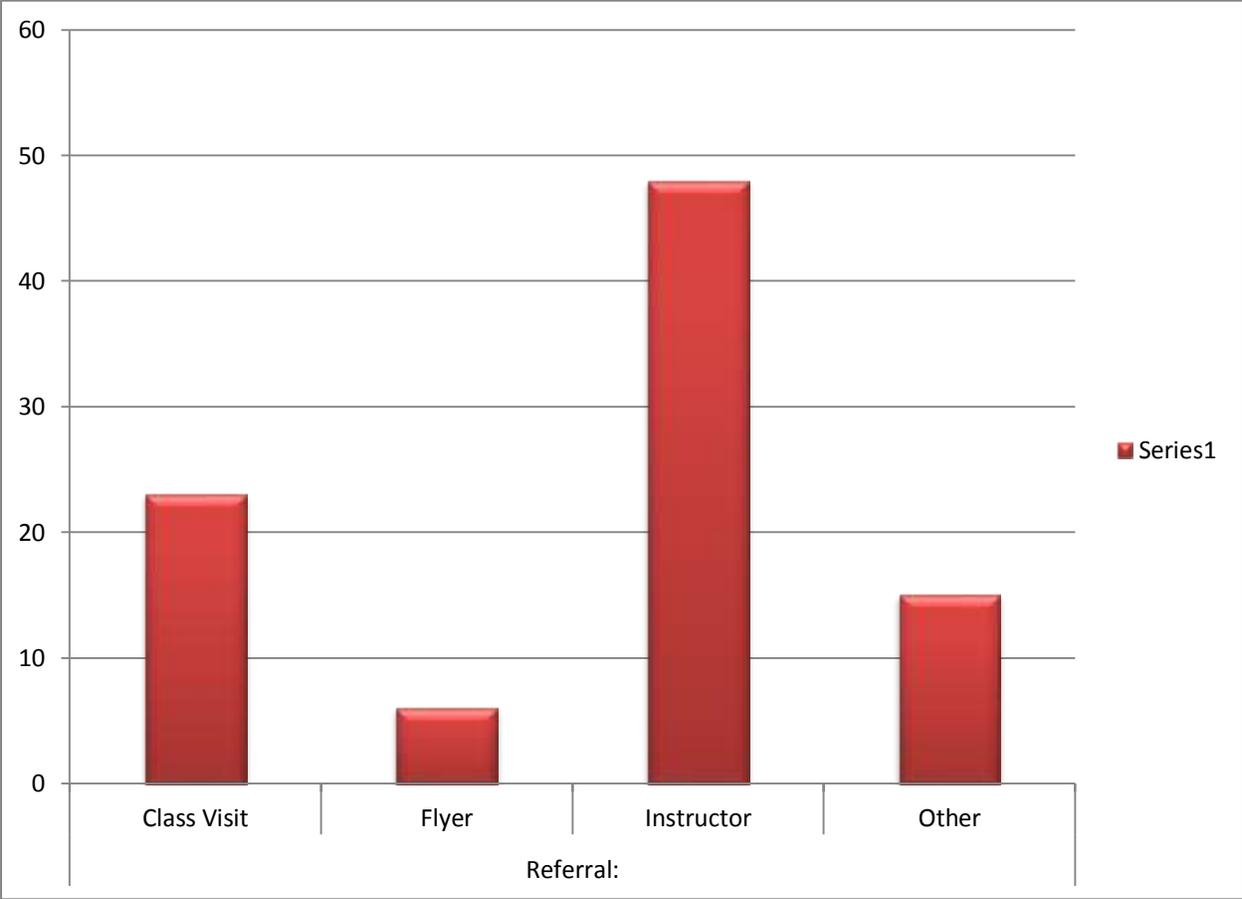
The most frequently repeated comments about our services continue to include suggestions about making all appointments last for a full hour, rather than 30 minutes, and to make evening and weekend appointments available. We have also had many students comment in their surveys that they would like to see more engaging posters in our office area. In response, we are looking for cost-effective instructional posters that could both brighten our center and also assist students with frequent areas of concern such as state of being verbs, literary devices, comma use and many other topics related to writing.

Because several students commented about our hours in the survey, it has become evident that there is a significant community of students who work between 8am and 5pm and go to school at night who would like to visit the Writing Center after 6pm or on weekends. This is noteworthy should the opportunity to extend our existing hours ever present itself. We value the input of both students and faculty, and are considering innovative ways to meet the needs and suggestions of our campus community.

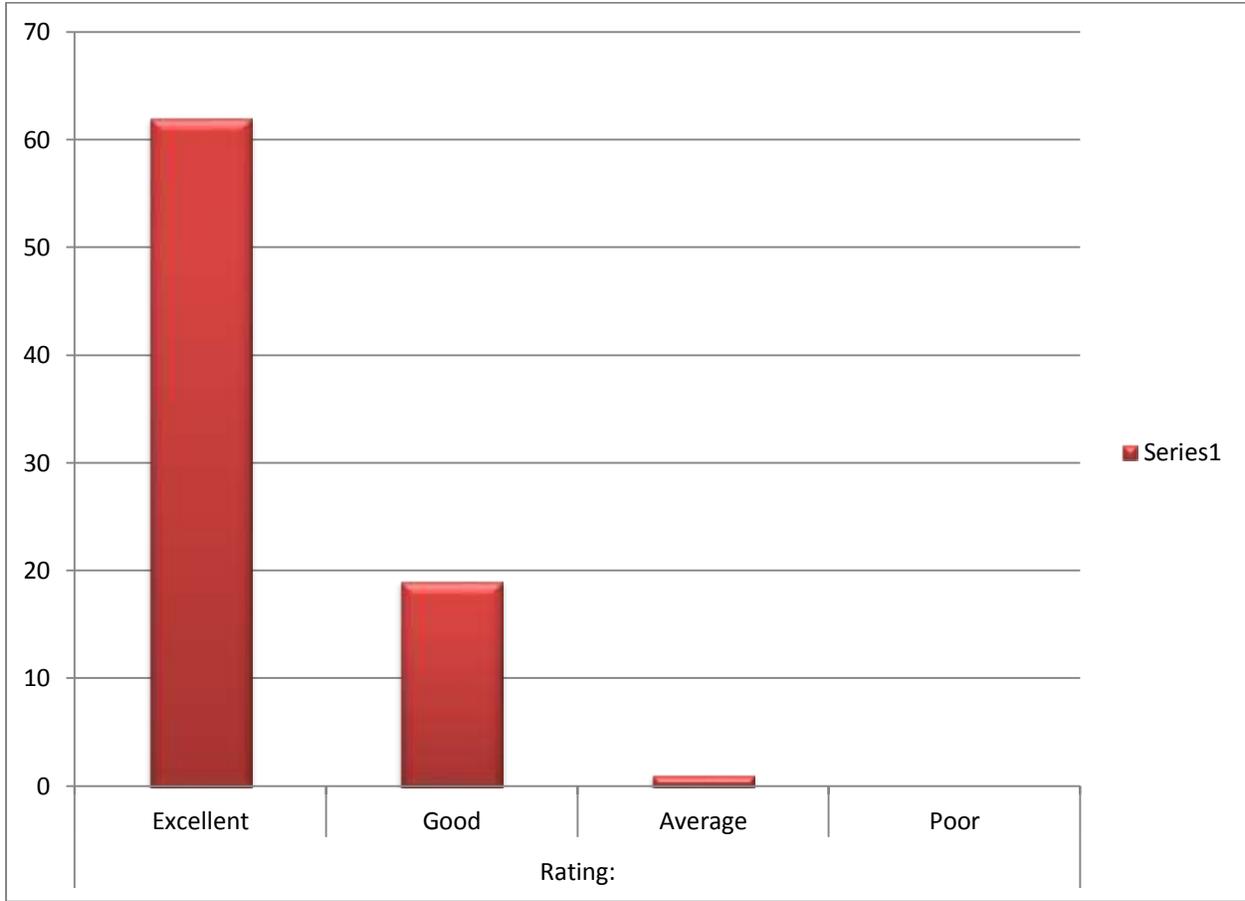
The Writing Center has been utilizing end-of-semester surveys for some time now. They have been invaluable in gauging the level of service we offer as well as areas of needed improvement. However, we will continue to consider more avenues of measuring student success. Overall, the Writing Center's collection and analysis of critical data and statistics is an endeavor that is at the forefront of succeeding in making a difference in the academic experiences of Bakersfield College students.

Graphs

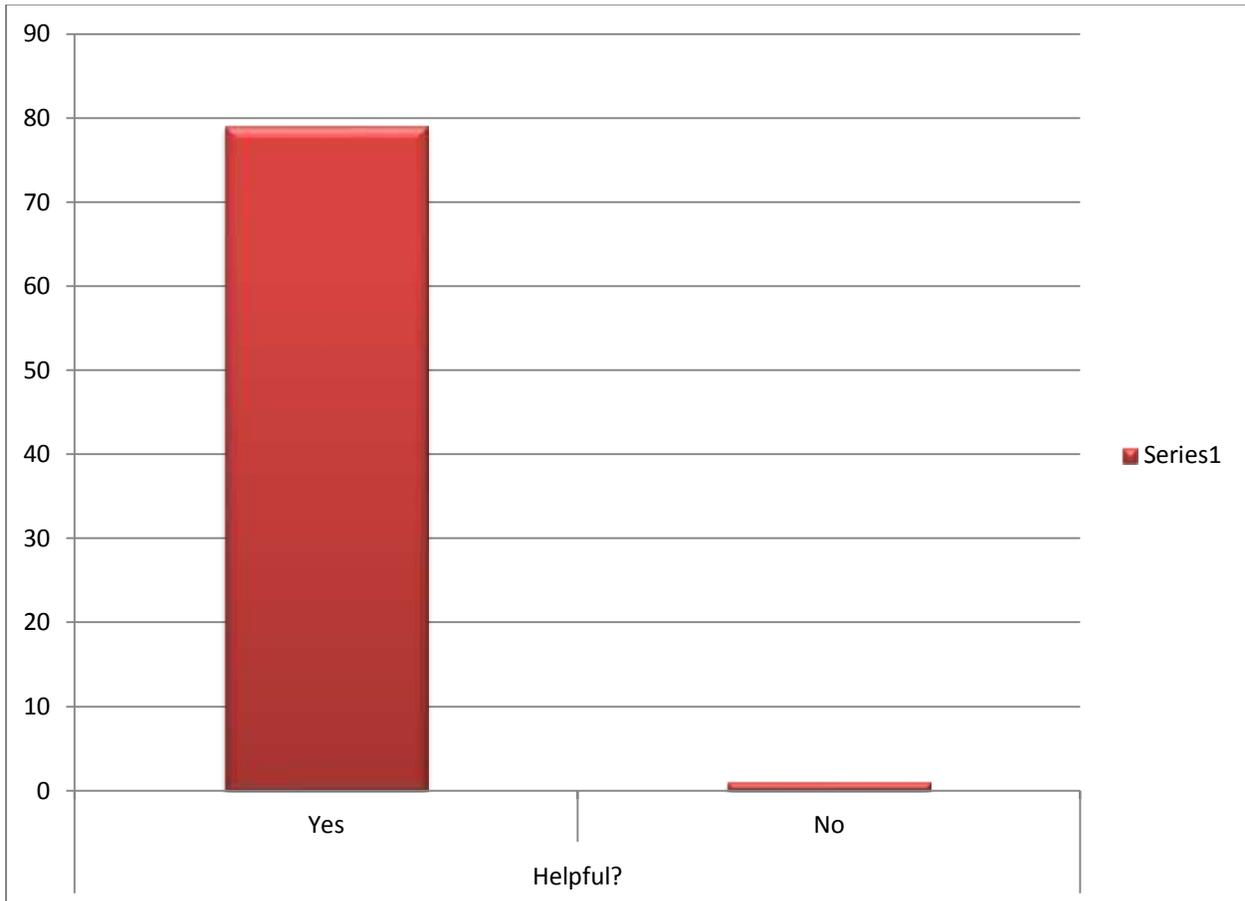
Graph 1: How did you hear about the Writing Center?



Graph 2: How would you rate your visit to the Writing Center?



Graph 3: Do you feel the help you received at the Writing Center helped you succeed in your class?



Data Collection

Pink Sheets

The pink sheets students fill out at the beginning of each appointment have proven themselves to be valuable for several reasons. In addition to giving students a copy of the form for their use, or instructor's requirement, it is also valuable as a tool for statistical analysis and data collection. It is through these pink sheets that we are able to analyze trends in need, instructor engagement, and myriad other areas. As new areas of concern arise, we may change the pink sheets to give us statistical information in that area. Overall, these pink sheets are at the core of our data analysis and will continue to be important to the work we do here in the Writing Center.

Continued and Future Endeavors

Online Writing Lab, OWL@BC

We are still offering online appointments via the CCC Confer (Blackboard) software. However, it has become apparent that this service is not technically available to all students because CCC Confer is not compatible with assistive software used by blind students, such as JAWS. CCC Confer is also limiting due to the complicated nature of the interface. That is to say that it is not easy for all users, especially those with remedial computer skills or those who use out of date computers. Our search to find a new, easier to use program with a cost-effective, assistive-software-conducive interface continues.

Campus Visibility

We are pleased to report that our visibility on campus is at an all-time high. We are visiting more classrooms for informative presentations than in all previous semesters, and we have had several new opportunities to present ourselves to the BC faculty through the Habits of Mind initiative and Student Success Stewardship meetings. We continue the endeavor of heightening our visibility across campus to achieve our goal of seeing more students each semester and making students aware of the professional writing assistance we offer them to support classroom instruction.

In addition to increasing our visibility to the campus community, we are also endeavoring to increase our own vision and become more deeply embedded into Bakersfield College as an institution. The staff of the Writing Center has undergone several trainings, attended many campus events, and will continue to offer FLEX workshops for faculty in order to better understand our students and colleagues through increased vision, awareness, and comradery with our campus partners and students.

Habits of Mind

The Habits of Mind (HoM) initiative was officially launched across campus at the beginning of the spring 2014 semester. The Writing Center staff is proud to be playing a part in introducing students to these habits, and helping them to recognize that their current successes are intrinsically tied to them. The unique opportunity we are afforded in working with students one-on-one for extended periods of time—30 minutes to one hour—provides us with the chance to reinforce HoM in a manner that may not be possible in most student-to-staff transactions across campus. It is our intention to make these habits a regular part of our students' vocabulary, and thus a part of their behaviors and practices. Subsequently, our Instructional Assistants will undergo trainings to orient them to these habits so that they can more seamlessly integrate them into their tutoring sessions.

Training and Normalization

The Writing Center staff feels that the best way we can assist students is to be both effective in our lessons and also consistent with the level of service and approach used by each individual Instructional Assistant. To further that goal, we have begun the work of creating a training manual and set of best practices that can be utilized by current and future staff. This undertaking presents great opportunities for networking, attending training seminars and workshops, and initiating conversations with experienced experts in the field who are willing to share some of

their best practices with us. Some of these professionals include Kim Flachmann, founder of CSUB's Writing Lab (among many other distinguishing accomplishments) and Linda Fischer, Director of the Doctoral Support (Writing) Center at the University of California, among others. We believe that the creation and implementation of this manual will greatly increase the level of service and impact we have on the student body of this campus in building basic skills and offering support for remediation. That is to say that the Writing Center views these trainings and standardizations as being critical to our effect on student success.

As part of the training facilitated by the new training manual, we will also be creating measurable evaluations for Instructional Assistants. We plan to have IAs perform both self and peer evaluations, and participate in a constructive critique with the Writing Center Lead in order to maintain a consistent pedagogical approach to student learning.

Summary/Conclusion

In summation, the Writing Center is busier than ever. The increase in foot traffic and appointments we have seen are a blessing for us, but it has undoubtedly presented issues that need addressing. The trends and statistical information included in this report are important for the Writing Center, and may also be valuable to many of our campus partners. It is our hope that the data contained herein will help us continue to teach writing across the curriculum in a partnership with faculty and other support services such as Supplemental Instruction, Peer Tutoring, and Plato. This report is a consideration of our current statistical data, and a reflection on how we are recognizing, responding to, and anticipating concerns that must be met in order to be consistent with our ability to aid in student success. As always, the Writing Center staff would like to thank all campus partners and stakeholders in administration and faculty who support us in our joint mission to empower students with tools for success in their academic and professional careers. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with all disciplines across the curriculum and meeting new challenges that lie ahead.