

**Stark State College of Technology**  
Academic Assessment Biennial Report

Program/Department Name: Writing Center  
Individual Completing Report: Leah Schell-Barber  
Date: May 27, 2014

**Program/ Departmental Self-Assessment Procedure and Action Plan**

Purpose:

To self-identify the status of Program/Department in the outcomes assessment process as well as the action-steps and timetable for the development of assessment processes.

Procedure:

All programs and departments must complete the self-assessment process. Programs which do not demonstrate how the program/department meets each of the self-assessment criteria must submit an assessment plan documenting the proposed action steps and timelines along with the self-assessment form. A follow-up self-assessment report on the implementation of the assessment plan will be due the following academic year. Programs meeting effective assessment standards will be required to submit an assessment report on a biennial basis.

Directions:

Mark the appropriate response to the Yes/No items with an X. Provide a brief summary of action steps to meet the Criteria (for example, the department will meet twice a month over the next term to develop goals). Please note that it is critical that due diligence is given to the development of goals and associated outcome measures. Do not attempt to create goals, identify measures, and implement the assessment plan in the same term!

Assessment Criteria

1. Goals

Does the Department have specific student learning or academic/ student service goals which reflect the discipline or service area professional standards?

Yes  No

2. Outcome Measures

Are direct and indirect outcome measures identified for each goal?

Yes  No

3. Research

Is research systematically conducted to evaluate success or failure in achieving outcomes?

Yes  No

4. Findings

Are research results analyzed and interpreted and findings determined?

Yes  No

#### 5. Review Process

Are findings discussed and reviewed by appropriate groups and individuals and recommendations made for action?

Yes  No

If no, what are the proposed action steps to meet the Criteria?

#### 6. Proposed Actions

Are recommendations acted upon?

Yes  No

If no, what are the proposed action steps to meet the Criteria?

What is the proposed timetable for the action steps?

**Improvements will be assessed throughout the 2012-2014 assessment process.**

#### 7. Improvements

Have actions result in documented improvements in student learning or academic/ student services?

Yes  No

If no, what are the proposed action steps to meet the Criteria?

What is the proposed timetable for the action steps?

**Improvements will be assessed throughout the 2012-2014 assessment process.**

**Assessment Measures Inventory**

**Type of performance benchmark  
(check all that apply)**

Assessment Measures for Goals (Outcome measures from assessment report)	Is trend data available for the measure? (Yes or No)	Has a performance benchmark(s) been identified for the measure? (Yes or No)	SSCT (Internal)	State-level (OACC, OBR, etc)	National (Professional Org., accrediting group, etc.)
Goal 1, Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center – survey	No	No	X		
Goal 1, Online Writing Center/ ANGEL - case studies	No	NA	X		
Goal 1, Studio Sessions – Faculty – focus group	Yes	NA	X		
Goal 1, Studio Sessions – Students – course evaluations for studio writing assistants	Yes	Yes	X		
Goal 2, Annual College Writing and College Composition Essay Contest– participant feedback	Yes	No	X		
Goal 3, NEOWCA Conference Attendance and Support	No	No	X		
Goal 3, Writing Center Staff Mentoring Program	No	No	X		
Goal 4, ACT Student Opinion Survey	Yes	Yes	X		X
Goal 4, Informational Writing Center Workshops	No	No	X		
Goal 4, Asynchronous Online Writing Lab – focus group content review	No	No	X		

## **Student Service Goals**

Goal 1: Meet the varying educational needs of Stark State students.

Goal 2: Promote scholarship for students.

Goal 3: Support professional development for Writing Center staff and college faculty.

Goal 4: Provide high value learning support services to students and faculty.

## **Summary Narrative**

Through the second Academic Assessment Biennial Report for the Stark State College Writing Center, four goals were assessed. These goals were chosen based on the College's mission statement and values. The Writing Center focused on the following goals: meet the varying educational needs of Stark State students; promote scholarship for students; support professional development for Writing Center staff and college faculty; and provide high value learning support services to students and faculty. These goals were assessed through various outcome measures and assessment methods. A more thorough explanation of the findings will be discussed in this narrative.

The first goal, meet the varying educational needs of Stark State students, was assessed through four outcome measures. The first outcome measure was an assessment of the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center. This assessment method was a student survey created by Writing Center staff members. Most students who visited the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center were satisfied with their experience. To address the small percentage of students who thought that the Writing Center pamphlets were less effective, the Writing Center staff will be updating all pamphlets over the summer 2014 semester. Writing Center advertisement and increasing student awareness of our services will be a major focus of the Writing Center's fall start-up meeting for all Writing Center locations, including the Downtown Canton Satellite. With the move to a new building in spring 2015, it will be imperative to create and maintain a presence among the student body in order to continue providing quality assistance. The second outcome measure was a case study assessment of the Writing Center's online services, Writing Center Online, through the College's online course software, Angel. Through this assessment, it has been discovered that students are receiving similar advice for their writing as they would during a face-to-face writing tutorial session. While only one case study was available for assessment during this cycle, the quality of interaction between the online writing assistant and student was more engaging. The student made small but significant improvements in her understanding of the writing process and how to create an academic essay. The Writing Center will continue to offer online tutoring services as well as better emphasize the writing process and how tutoring sessions can enhance a student's writing holistically. While students continue to be satisfied with this service, and many of the online chats mirror the services students receive during face-to-face sessions, continued assessments should be made to affirm consistency of tutoring quality. The third outcome measure was an assessment of studio sessions through faculty focus groups. These groups were held twice during the assessment cycle. While most faculty thought that studio sessions were an integral aspect of the Introduction to Academic Writing course, many faculty felt as if the writing assistants could better focus on pushing back on student ideas to move them closer to being ready for College Composition at the end of the semester. Because of a lack of attendance, only one focus group was held during the fall 2013 semester; however the information gather mirrored the feedback received during fall 2012. Lastly, the fourth outcome measure for the Writing Center's first goal was a second focus on studio sessions; however, this assessment focused more on student perception of this element of their Introduction to Academic Writing

course. Through surveys about their experiences with studio sessions, most students are satisfied with this aspect of their course. Many students gave their studio session facilitator an overall grade of A or B for the writing assistant's performance over the course of the semester.

The second goal, promote scholarship for students, focused on the Writing Center's sponsorship for student writing outside of writing tutorials. The only outcome measure for this goal was a student satisfaction survey for the Writing Center-sponsored Annual Academic Writing and College Composition Essay Contest. Students were asked to submit their experience before contest winners were chosen. All participating students were satisfied with their experience; however, students did suggest that scholarship money or a general gift card would be a greater incentive to enter than a gift card to the College Store.

The third goal, support professional development for Writing Center staff and college faculty, was supported through Stark State's participation in the Annual Northeast Ohio Writing Centers Association Conference at the College. This professional development opportunity continues to be a local and inexpensive way for writing assistants to gain valuable knowledge and skills that helps them improve their practice, and the Writing Center plans to continue participating at the conference during the next assessment cycle.

The fourth goal, provide high value learning support services to students and faculty, has three outcome measures tied to its assessment. The first outcome measure focuses on the ACT Student Satisfaction Survey. Over 99 percent of students who participated in this survey were satisfied with the Writing Center's services. To address some of the qualitative feedback from students, the Writing Center will continue to advertise its online services for satellite services. Training in APA will be a focus for part of the spring 2014 start-up meeting for the Writing Center staff. The second outcome measure assessed the effectiveness of Writing Center Workshops that help students across the curriculum with general writing assistance. Workshops focus on grammar assistance, thesis development, documentation style, and research incorporation. A survey was given to students who attended these workshops in November 2013. Most categories were given an "A" grade by students; however, students were not happy with how well-advertised the workshops were. This was the first semester the workshops were offered, but there will be changes to how they are scheduled during the next assessment cycle. Instead of holding the workshops during specific days and times, workshops will be offered through an instructor-request basis starting fall 2014. The content of the workshops will be better assessed through the next assessment cycle. The third and final outcome measure of this goal focused on student satisfaction and experience with Writing Center Online, the Writing Center's asynchronous website. This assessment was conducted through surveys and a student focus groups during the spring 2013 semester. Students seemed satisfied with the Writing Center's webpage – Writing Center Online. There was positive feedback given through the preliminary survey as well as during the focus group. On the surveys, students were able to navigate through the site easily; however, most students were not aware of the site's existence before completing the survey. Students also commented that the Writing Center Online page was not easy to find from the Stark State College homepage. In addition, students would like to see more examples of college-level writing on the website. A focus on advertisement coupled with adding additional information will be completed and assessed during the next cycle.

In conclusion, it was interesting to see the improvements, changes, and differences from the last assessment report. While qualitative and quantitative data reveals that the Writing Center is a high-quality service for Stark State students, there is still room for improvement as the College continues to revise and assess its academic programs. With enrollment decreasing, the Writing Center's main initiative for the next assessment cycle will be advertisement of our services to both students and faculty. With these increased visits, the Writing Center hope to receive a fuller range of feedback from a more diverse student demographic. Future assessments will help the Writing Center maintain its successful integration into the College's culture and find new ways to promote student success through our services.

## Assessment Results Report

### Purpose:

The report is a summary compilation of key assessment methods, findings, review processes, actions, and improvements related to the academic/ student service or learning goals of the department/ unit on an annual basis. As a historical record of assessment activities, the report provides for and supports the systematic assessment of academic support outcomes.

### Instructions:

Enter the outcome measure in the space provided. Please note that for each goal it is expected that a mix of quantitative and qualitative as well as direct and indirect measures are employed. Mark the term of assessment with an X (for example, if a survey is conducted in the fall term, mark fall for that measure). Provide a brief summary of key findings, either as bulleted points or in short paragraph form. Provide a brief summary on the review committee/ process (for example, Findings are reviewed by the Director and staff on a per term basis and recommendations are forward to the VP for further review). Provide a brief summary of any proposed actions for the next term/ academic year. Please note that not all findings result in actions. Provide a brief summary of any improvements from the previous year (this does not apply to new measures the first year). Finally, Goals and/ or Outcome Measures can be added (or deleted) as needed by copying and pasting.

### **Goal 1: Meet the varying educational needs of Stark State students.**

Outcome Measure 1: Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center – student survey

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall 2013                      Spring \_\_\_\_\_                      Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** Throughout the entire fall semester, students using the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center were asked to complete a survey grading their experience.

Out of the 61 responses, almost every category received a grade of “A” or “B”. The only categories to receive a grade of “C” or lower were “Helpfulness of Pamphlets” and “Effectiveness of Advertising”. However, less than 7 percent of respondents graded these categories lower than a “B”. Therefore most students are satisfied with their overall experience using the tutoring services at the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center.

Qualitative data also suggests that most students find the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center to be helpful. One student wrote, “I came in lost on my work, but with the help from the assistant I’m comfortable to begin my work and I understand it better, and I will be back! Thank you!”

**Review Committee/ Process:** Improvements will not be the focus of the review process for this assessment cycle or the next. With declining student visits, more effort will be placed on recruiting more students to visit the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center. However, the level of quality shown by these surveys will be a continuous benchmark for Writing Center staff. For the next assessment, we hope to maintain the same level of student perception while also increasing the number of students we serve.

Essentially, the Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center is an effective service that students appreciate.

**Improvements:** The Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center continues to be an effective service based on student perception about the help they receive from the Writing Center staff.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See attached survey data in Appendix A.

## Outcome Measure 2: Online Writing Center/Synchronous ANGEL group

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring 2014 Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** Students who choose to work with a writing assistant through the Writing Center Online ANGEL Group page work through 60-minute sessions in a chat room. Students are receiving process-oriented feedback on their essays and are encouraged to work independently on self-selected and writing assistant-encouraged aspects of their essays. Usually after discussing writing concepts that focus on the context of the student work, students are assisted with grammar, punctuation, and organization. In addition, students who seek Writing Center Online help are also often encouraged to continue working on their essays in addition to making subsequent appointments in order to receive additional feedback on their work before turning in a final product.<sup>2</sup>

**Review Committee/ Process:** To review online Writing Center Sessions, a case study was compiled on one student who visited Writing Center Online multiple times during the Fall 2013 semester. This case study was then discussed with the online writing assistant who assisted this student for accuracy on the qualitative analysis.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** Students seemed to have a better grasp on how Writing Center Online could help them with their writing assignments. Students were not initially asking for help with grammar and punctuation at the beginning of the session. While the student whose sessions were analyzed this year seemed to have a better understanding of writing academically than the students who were reviewed in the last assessment cycle, the student received similar assistance in helping her on an individual basis to become a better writer. In order to continue working with students who are knowledgeable about the Writing Center online services, the Writing Center is planning on advertising its mission and session descriptions to students and faculty so stakeholders have a better understanding of the entire writing process and services the Writing Center offers.

**Improvements:** Students seemed to have a better understanding of how to use the Writing Center Online as a resource. Fewer students, including the case study student, initiated online sessions seeking assistance with lower order concerns. The main demographic for The Writing Center's online services continues to be dual enrollment students. This past academic year, one of the online writing assistants demoed writing tutorials for one instructor's classes. This practice will be advertised to other dual enrollment instructors for the next assessment cycle.

## Outcome Measure 3: Studio Sessions -- Faculty

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall 2012/2013 Spring \_\_\_\_\_ Annual X

**Findings 2012:** This year, the Writing Center interviewed eight faculty members comprising of both full-time and part-time faculty. There were two focus groups. Both groups had four members each. Three members held an MA in Composition; two members held an MFA in Creative Writing; one member held a PhD in Composition; one member was ABD for a PhD in Composition; and one member held an MA in Adult and Higher Education. There were three female and five male participants. All have been teaching Developmental Writing for a range of 1.5 to ten years.

The faculty think that the best aspects studio sessions are the communities they build. Several faculty members commented on how studio sessions help students feel more comfortable having an audience for their writing as well as provide an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their writing. Other successful elements include teaching students how to talk about writing in a relaxed, open atmosphere and helping students become self-aware of their writing skills set. In general, the focus group agreed that time management needs to become

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<sup>2</sup> For case study, see Appendix B.

a priority for studio sessions to be successful. With the growing number of students in the Developmental Writing Program, it can be difficult for the writing assistant to ensure all students have the opportunity to share their work and receive feedback about their writing. Other ways studio sessions can be improved are to focus more on developing consistency among writing assistants participating in studio sessions and to better define the purpose of studio sessions to students.

The most crucial elements of studio sessions seem to focus on two things: having the writing assistant understand how to facilitate discussion during studio sessions and developing strategies that encourage student participation. Studio sessions can affect student writing in positive ways that range from helping students better understand that writing is a process to developing confidence within student writers. One faculty member pointed out that it depends on how well the writing assistant creates a sense of camaraderie within the student groups in order to affect positive changes in student writing.

Most of the faculty thought that student success depended on student participation in studio sessions as well as a developed camaraderie between the student groups and the writing assistant. Essentially, studio sessions help students feel accountable to each other for bringing work to studio session. One faculty member stated, “everyone will know if a student didn’t do the work,” while another faculty member commented that “students stay in the same groups and build a sense of identity and responsibility to each other.”

While discussing how studio sessions are incorporated into the classroom, feedback centered more on how they’re incorporated throughout the semester rather than how studio sessions are introduced to students. Most faculty members saw studio sessions as an opportunity for students to work on revising their essays. Community and giving feedback were also stressed; however, specific strategies on how these elements are incorporated into the class were not given.

**Findings 2013:** While two focus groups were scheduled, only one focus group was conducted this year because of a lack of attendance. The Developmental Writing Program has gone through significant changes since last fall semester. The group that was used for this assessment consisted of the planning committee for the Developmental Writing Program redesign. All group members were full-time faculty with between 3 and 6 years of experience teaching developmental writing classes. This group was chosen because of the newness of the redesigned program. Feedback from the full-time faculty who created this course would give me the best sense of how studio sessions are implemented and if major changes should be made to this aspect of the Introduction to Academic Writing course.

Faculty felt that the aspect of studio sessions that works best is the opportunity students have to work with each other in a low-risk environment where their ideas are not evaluated by the course instructor. This aspect of studio sessions allows students to talk freely and work through the writing process at their own pace.

When asked about which aspect of studio sessions could be improved, it was unanimous that writing assistants need to do a more consistent job of pushing students to think about rhetorical concepts in a way that would prepare them for the expectations of College Composition. The quality of instruction could be more consistent, and more training should be available to writing assistants to ensure that they can better facilitate discussion rather than working with each student group member one-on-one.

The most crucial element of a studio session is for faculty, writing assistants, and students to be on the same page concerning the purpose of studio sessions within the Introduction to Academic Writing curriculum. Student should also be prepared for class in order for studio session discussion to take place.

Studio sessions enhance student writing by helping students understand the concept of audience, and they affect student success for two reasons. First, studio sessions can hold students accountable for being prepared for class. Second, it has been observed that students who have taken a class where studio sessions have been incorporated are better able to peer workshop on future writing assignments.

Many faculty members balance their course calendars around studio session days in order for students to get the most from their discussions. This often entails introducing assignments, requiring journals, and designing portfolio letter requirements around a student's studio session experience.

One new question introduced to the focus group process this year was, "How would you like to see studio sessions change based on the Introduction to Academic Writing curriculum?". This question was added specifically because this is the first semester (excepting summer) that Introduction to Academic Writing has been offered to students. Responses ranged from revisiting the structure of studio sessions to include both days of instruction to more communication between instructors and writing assistants. A more formal way to report the connectivity between the writing assistant, students, and instructor was also suggested.

**Review Committee/ Process 2012:** Again, I will be discussing these findings with Sandy Deel, the Coordinator for the Developmental Writing Program to look at whether or not these findings correspond and/or conflict with the intentions behind the implementation of studio sessions. I will also be focusing on facilitating studio sessions at the Spring 2013 Writing Center Start-Up Meeting to further develop consistency in how writing assistants work with developmental writers.

**Review Committee/ Process 2013:** Last year's findings were discussed with Sandy Deel and a discussion of studio sessions based on the changes to the Developmental Writing curriculum took place at the Fall 2013 Start-Up Meeting. This discussion focused on helping students be more prepared for College Composition; however, writing assistants are not pushing students enough in their current studio sessions. This topic will be addressed again at the Spring 2014 Start-Up meeting which is the only time I can meet with all of the writing assistants face-to-face at one time.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** A focus on developing discussion facilitation skills among the Writing Center staff will be a focus for the next assessment cycle. These skills will be addressed through meetings, mentoring discussion, and Performance Evaluations.

**Improvements:** Based on findings from the previous assessment cycle, a more comprehensive understanding of how studio sessions are approached by faculty has been reached. Mainly, discussion about studio sessions was addressed in faculty training at the end of the Spring 2013 semester. Previous findings reported a general acceptance of studio session incorporation by faculty, and the focus seems to have shifted to consistent quality facilitation by writing assistants. It is suggested by the Primary Investigator that the focus groups are used to assess the quality of writing assistant performance as opposed to faculty understanding of their purpose.

Outcome Measure 4: Studio Sessions -- Students

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_2012/2013\_\_\_ Spring \_\_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_X\_\_

**Findings 2012:** Approximately 200 students completed the studio session surveys at the end of the Fall 2012 semester. The surveys show a variety of responses when the students were asked about the role of studio sessions. Answers ranged from the writing assistant being in the classroom to moderate discussions and give students feedback to helping students better understand the writing process. Most statements started with "to help", "to give", and "to listen". Many of the responses focused on how the writing assistant was there in order to help the students improve their writing.

For the third year in a row, the most useful aspect of studio sessions was receiving feedback from their peers and the writing assistant. While an overwhelming majority of students did not there a least useful aspect of studio sessions existed, some students felt that studio sessions took time away from completing essays, got off track, or forced students to read their papers out loud in public areas.

Most students thought that their studio session facilitator helped them progress in meeting the requirements of College Writing. However, the students who did not feel that studio sessions helped them meet the requirements of their College Writing course thought that their teacher was the most useful resource for their progress.

Most students were pleased with their studio session experiences, but there were some students who would have liked to have had more one-on-one time with the writing assistant as well as have been given examples of successful essays.

Students thought that the writing assistants excelled at giving feedback that focused on writing process, grammar/punctuation, and giving examples/providing details. Many students also felt their writing assistant excelled at listening.

The grade students most often assigned to their writing assistant was an A (64.1%). The second most assigned grade was a B (25.5%).

**Findings 2013:** There was a low response rate to the student studio session survey this semester. Eighty-three students responded to the survey about their experiences with studio sessions during the Fall 2013 semester. Responses were more homogenous this year to the question of what the role of the writing assistant is supposed to be in studio sessions. Most students wrote about discussion, collaboration, and feedback in order to help them become better writers. Fewer student discussed the writing assistant role as one to point out mistakes or give answers.

Again, students find that receiving feedback from the writing assistant and their peers as the most useful aspect of studio sessions. Also, many students appreciated the opportunity to read their papers out loud. A majority of the students did not find anything least useful about studio sessions. Anecdotally, a few students thought that the topic of discussion could get off track, and some students thought that studio sessions would be more useful if the classes were smaller.

All students thought that their studio session facilitator helped them progress in meeting the requirements of Introduction to Academic Writing. When asked what the writing assistant could have done differently to make studio sessions more useful, most students responded that they were happy with their experience. A few students responded that more one-on-one time would have helped them more with their writing assignments than the studio session alone.

When asked about what the writing assistants excelled at, most responses centered on giving feedback, listening, and being genuinely interested in what the students were writing about. One student commented that she appreciated that the writing assistant remembered what everyone was writing about from week to week.

The grade students most often assigned to their writing assistant was an A (85.4%) which is a jump over the A grade response rate from last year (64.1%). The second most assigned grade was a B (12.2%) which was a drop from the B grade response rate from last year (25.5%).

**Review Committee/ Process 2012:** This semester, surveys were computerized which may again account for the drop in student respondents. There was also a glitch in the link, and some students could not open the survey directly from their email accounts. However, based on the received feedback, the majority of students participating in studio sessions are having positive experiences with this element of the Developmental Writing Program.

**Review Committee/ Process 2013:** This year, only one email was sent to Developmental Writing instructors asking them to distribute the studio session survey to students. This may have been a factor in the lower response rate from students taking Introduction to Academic Writing. Having both cycles of the survey complete for the 2012-2014 assessment report, findings will be reviewed with the Developmental Writing Coordinator to discuss any potential changes in studio session format or writing assistant training.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year 2012:** The writing assistants will spend several hours at the start of the Spring 2013 semester discussing common issues experienced by students and writing assistants during studio sessions and best practices in how to ensure the studio sessions remain productive. Communication between the writing assistant and course instructor will also be more strongly encouraged.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year 2013:** Students were more satisfied with studio sessions than in previous years. However, a discussion with the Developmental Writing Redesign Committee revealed that writing assistants could focus more on pushing students with their writing to be better prepared for College Composition. Since there are fewer developmental writing classes, students have less time to develop rhetorical concepts imperative to succeeding in the freshman composition course. Therefore, the Spring 2014 semester all-staff meeting will focus primarily on strategies and pedagogy that will help facilitate discussion in studio session that engages students more to develop these rhetorical skills.

**Improvements:** There haven't been any improvements in student perception of studio sessions since the last assessment cycle. However, these surveys in combination with the faculty focus group show gaps in where writing assistants could be more useful in helping students prepare for College Composition.

## **Goal 2: Promote scholarship for students.**

Outcome Measure 1: Annual College Writing and College Composition Essay Contest

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring \_\_2013/2014\_\_ Annual \_\_X\_\_

**Findings 2013:** A survey assessing the Academic Writing and College Composition Essay Contest was sent to all students who submitted an essay before the winners of the contest were announced. Participation in the survey was anonymous and did not affect the outcome of the contest in any way.

In 2012, over 80 percent of respondents learned about the Essay Contest through their instructors with the remaining 20 percent learning of the contest through flyers advertising the contest. This year, the same holds true. All respondents thought the submission process was easy and that the prize for winning the contest was a desirable incentive. As in 2012, this year's respondents thought they'd like to see a separate publication for the contest winners.

**Findings 2014:** The same survey as last year was sent to students who submitted an essay for the Academic Writing and College Composition Essay Contest. The survey was sent and feedback was collected before contest results were announced. Again, participation in the survey was anonymous and did not affect the outcome of the contest in any way.

This year, over 30 percent of students who responded to the survey learned of its existence through flyers placed around the College and uploaded onto the Writing Center's website. This is a 10 percent increase over last year's respondents when asked about how he or she learned of the contest. All but one student thought it was easy to submit an essay for the contest, and all students responded that the prize for winning the contest was a desirable incentive. However, students did suggest that scholarship money or a general gift card would be a greater incentive to enter. A difference from past surveys was that only half of the students thought a separate journal should be created for essay contest winners.

**Review Committee/ Process 2013:** After reviewing the survey data, I think the contest continues to be successful. Instructors and students are aware of the contest, and students find the process to be easy and rewarding.

**Review Committee/ Process 2014:** After reviewing the survey data, I think the contest continues to be successful. Instructors and students are aware of the contest, and students find the process to be easy and rewarding.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year 2013:** There were more students who submitted essays for the contest, but numbers are still low compared to the amount of students enrolled in these courses. Even with an increase in advertising, there still was not a vast increase in entries. However, with changes to the curriculum for the developmental writing classes, more students may be enticed to submit essays since they'll be competing with other students from Introduction to Academic Writing as opposed to students from College Writing 1, 2, and 3.

Again, the Writing Center will continue to advertise this activity through flyers, the SSC Facebook page, and email to English faculty. The number of submissions could grow, but if too many students submitted, the Writing Center would have to develop new ways to assess the essays to determine a winner. Currently, this process is completed by Writing Center staff and full-time English faculty who volunteer.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year 2014:** The Writing Center will continue to advertise to students and faculty through flyers, emails to instructors, and the Writing Center's Facebook page.

**Improvements 2013:** The Writing Center will advertise more frequently for the essay contest during summer, fall, and spring semesters.

**Improvements 2014:** This year brought in a record number of essays for the contest. Over 30 essays were judged by English faculty and writing assistants. A focus on advertisement and awareness of the contest by the Writing Center may be attributed to this increase in participation. More emails were sent to instructors at the end of Fall semester to remind students to submit their essays. Bulletin boards have also been placed outside of the Writing Center, and advertisements for the contest have been posted on those. While notification from instructors still seems to be the most useful way to increase student awareness in the contest, the Writing Center will continue to advertise in a variety of ways.

### **Goal 3: Support professional development for Writing Center staff and college faculty.**

Outcome Measure 1: NEOWCA Conference Attendance and Support

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall 2012 Spring \_\_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** Stark State did not host the Northeast Ohio Writing Centers Association annual conference this year; however, the Writing Center Coordinator, five Writing Center staff members, and one student worker attended the 6th annual NEOWCA conference at Youngstown State University. Key Note Speakers specifically discussed the meanings of writing center marginalization and strategies to break away from having a marginalized status on campus. While Stark State's Writing Center is not a marginalized service, the Key Note Speakers framed their discussion with negotiation with administrative professionals on campus. The SSC Writing Center often negotiates with administrative personnel in order to provide quality support for all of the College's student demographic. All of the attending Writing Center staff members presented at the conference.

**Review Committee/ Process:** The NEOWCA planning committee will meet again in May 2012 to discuss the 2013 conference. Responses from the 2009 and 2010 conference were used as a reference for meeting the needs of registered participants, and another survey was given at the 2012 conference to further assist the planning committee in meeting the needs of conference attendees.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** The NEOWCA conference will not be held at Stark State during this assessment cycle. I will participate with the planning committee for future conferences and continue to encourage Writing Center staff to attend as a local professional development opportunity.

**Improvements:** If NEOWCA is to be held at Stark State in the future, I will assess participant surveys to ensure growth within the program for a successful professional development opportunity for participants.

## Outcome Measure 2: Writing Center Staff Mentoring Program

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring 2014 \_\_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** The Writing Center's mentoring program started during the Fall 2010 semester as a way to give both new and established members of our team a better understanding of the Writing Center's central working theories and to create unity and consistency among the writing assistants while more clearly outlining the duties and expectations of the writing assistants. Writing assistants who have worked in the Writing Center for at least one year and have expressed an interest in becoming a mentor are asked to help build an atmosphere where every member of the Writing Center is confident in his or her abilities and can provide high-quality and consistent assistance to Stark State Students.

This assessment cycle is the first time the mentoring program has been assessed. Through a survey emailed to the writing assistants, 12 responded to a series of questions about their experiences with the mentoring program. Half of the respondents indicated that they had or currently serve as a mentor, and 75 percent of respondents have worked in the Writing Center for 1-5 years. Most professional development within the mentoring program happens face-to-face. However, writing assistants have also participated in article discussion, conference proposals, observations of tutoring sessions, and Facebook group discussion. Mentors and mentees communicate at least on a weekly basis, and 100 percent of respondents found the mentoring program to be valuable.

Qualitative evidence from this survey indicates that writing assistants value having a staff person available to talk to about issues concerning the Writing Center. The only issue that seems to evade the mentoring program is time spend with the mentors. Since mentoring groups are assigned based on each semester's schedule, some writing assistants have limited time with their mentors and have to rely on electronic forms of communication.

**Review Committee/ Process:** Results from the survey will be reviewed with the English and Modern Languages Department Chair and current Writing Center mentors to determine is changes in the mentoring program need to be made.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** Most of the feedback about the Writing Center's mentoring program is positive. The Writing Center Coordinator will continue to meet weekly with all mentors, and issues will be addressed if and when they arise.

**Improvements:** N/A Will be determined during the next assessment cycle.

### **Goal 4: Provide high value learning support services to students and faculty.**

## Outcome Measure 1: ACT Student Opinion Survey

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring 2013 \_\_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** There were between 544 and 552 respondents to the Writing Center questions added to the ACT Student Opinion Survey. Over 99 percent of respondents are satisfied with the friendliness of the Writing Center staff. Over 99 percent of respondents are satisfied with the helpfulness of Writing Center assistants, and over 99 percent of respondents are satisfied with the overall quality of the Writing Center. New this year was the category of accessibility, and over 98 percent of respondents are satisfied with accessibility of the Writing Center.

The qualitative data provided both positive and negative experiences students have encountered when utilizing the Writing Center's services. Most commonly, respondents commented that Writing Center services would be helpful for students attending satellite campuses other than the Downtown Canton Satellite where a satellite Writing Center has already been established. Some respondents were also dissatisfied with writing assistant

knowledge of APA Documentation style. Positive comments were general and expressed overall satisfaction with the Writing Center's services.

**Review Committee/ Process:** Results from the survey were reviewed to determine where the Writing Center could improve student satisfaction with its services.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** While most of the quantitative and qualitative data was positive, the Writing Center will continue to advertise its online services for satellite services. Training in APA will be a focus for part of the spring 2014 start-up meeting for the Writing Center staff.

**Improvements:** There were small improvements in respondent satisfaction for Writing Center friendliness, helpfulness, and overall quality of the Writing Center.

#### Outcome Measure 2: Informational Writing Center Workshops Survey

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall 2013 Spring \_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** This was the first semester that workshops outside of one-on-one tutoring were offered to SSC students. Workshops focused on MLA and APA Documentation, comma usage, incorporating research, and thesis development. Most workshop were attended by at least two students, with the best attended workshop serving seven students. Surveys were distributed to students during workshops held in November. Thirteen surveys were completed. Most categories were given an "A" grade by students. These categories included: helpfulness of workshop; helpfulness of workshop materials; helpfulness of workshop activity; professionalism of staff; overall atmosphere; and overall satisfaction of the workshop. The one category where the workshops earned a wide range of grades (A-D) was effectiveness of advertising.

The qualitative data provided positive feedback from students. One student wrote, "This was awesome. I enjoyed thesis without being in class. Great job 😊." Another student wrote, "Helpful; not too fast; willing to look-up information and answer all questions." Overall, the workshops seemed well received.

**Review Committee/ Process:** Results from the survey will be reviewed with the English and Modern Languages Department Chair to determine more effective advertising methods for the workshops.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** With the positive feedback from students about the Writing Center workshops, the next step will be to present the workshops at the Downtown Canton Satellite campus since there is a Writing Center at that location. An expansion of workshop materials and online workshops will also be considered.

**Improvements:** N/A Will be determined during the next assessment cycle.

#### Outcome Measure 3: Asynchronous Online Writing Lab (Website)

Terms of Assessment: Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall 2014 Spring \_\_\_\_ Annual \_\_\_\_\_

**Findings:** Students seemed satisfied with the Writing Center's webpage – Writing Center Online. There was positive feedback given through the preliminary survey as well as during the focus group. On the surveys, students were able to navigate through the site easily; however, most students were not aware of the site's existence before completing the survey. Students also commented that the Writing Center Online page was not easy to find from the Stark State College homepage.

The focus group revealed similar information about Writing Center Online. When asked about overall impression of the website, one student praised the website as "I really liked it. I was amazed by this as I have

never seen anything like this. It helped me understand what type of writer I am”. Another student remarked, “The Meeting the Writing Assistants was cool. I liked to be able to see the persona of a writer so you can relate to an assistant before going in”. When asked about what they found helpful about Writing Center Online, students listed content ranging in topics from Brainstorming to being able to find information about writing online through available links. However, one student suggested, “I think having a search engine where samples can be found might help”. When asked about what was least useful about the website, one student remarked, “It is all new to me. So when I started I didn’t know what a thesis was, so maybe summaries of what different styles could be. Like an intro to some of the concepts.” Most students commented that there wasn’t anything least useful that they could find. When asked what they would like to see added to the website, some students suggested more reference materials for beginning writers, more interaction for the user, and sample papers.

**Review Committee/ Process:** Information from the focus groups will be reviewed by the English Department Chair, Writing Director, and Developmental Writing Coordinator for feedback on revision.

**Proposed actions for next term/academic year:** The Writing Center will continue to revise website materials to include more information for beginning writers. The Writing Center will also revise advertising materials to better inform students about Writing Center Online and its contents. The Technical Communications intern will assist the Writing Center Coordinator in developing advertisement materials.

**Improvements:** While revisions to the website content had been made, students seems to have a similar response to the Writing Center’s website as they had from the previous assessment cycle. While the Writing Center will continue to improve its content to meet student needs, more needs to be done to increase student awareness of this resource.

**Assessment Report Review Rubric**

Purpose:

A rubric is a guide that differentiates between levels of development in outcomes assessment. The rubric is designed to clearly show departments/ units how the assessment report will be evaluated and where further action may be needed.

Directions:

Mark the response to each item. If any item is not completed in its entirety the appropriate response is No. An Assessment Report review committee will use the same rubric to evaluate your assessment report.

Are the goals for the department/ service area measureable?

Yes  No

Comments:

Is a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures used to assess outcomes for each goal?

Yes  No

Comments:

Was research conducted and findings determined for each goal?

Yes  No

Comments:

Is there a review process in place for the department/ service area?

Yes  No

Comments:

Are action steps outlined where applicable?

Yes  No

Comments:

Was the self-assessment and action plan completed?

Yes  No

Comments:

Was the assessment measures inventory completed?

Yes  No

Comments:

## Key Assessment Terms

Competencies/Goals are clear, meaningful statements of purpose or aspirations for the academic program or support service. Programs and services typically have several goals.

Outcome Measures are direct or indirect measures of student learning or of support services. Direct measures provide evidence of actual learning, e.g. paper, exam, artistic performance. Indirect measures provide evidence about characteristics associated with learning, e.g., student perception surveys, focus group interviews, alumni surveys. See below for detailed examples.

Research is the systematic collection and evaluation of outcomes data.

Findings are the results of research.

Review Process is the method(s) by which findings are discussed and reviewed by faculty, staff, and administrators.

Proposed Actions are the result of the review process and are based on findings.

Improvements are positive changes in student learning or support services as noted through the assessment process. It takes at least two iterations of the research and review process to document systematic improvement.

## Examples of *Direct Measures of Student Learning/Services*

- **Scores and pass rates on standardized tests** (licensure/certification as well as other published tests determining key student learning outcomes)
- **Writing samples**
- **Score gains** indicating the “value added” to the students’ learning experiences by comparing entry and exit tests (either published or locally developed) as well as writing samples
- **Locally designed quizzes, tests, and inventories**
- **Portfolio artifacts** (these artifacts could be designed for introductory, working, or professional portfolios)
- **Capstone projects** (these could include research papers, presentations, theses, dissertations, oral defenses, exhibitions, or performances)
- **Case studies**
- **Team/group projects and presentations**
- **Oral examination**
- **Internships, clinical experiences, practica, student teaching, or other professional/content-related experiences** engaging students in hands-on experiences in their respective fields of study (accompanied by ratings or evaluation forms from field/clinical supervisors)
- **Service-learning projects or experiences**
- **Authentic and performance-based projects or experiences** engaging students in opportunities to apply their knowledge to the larger community (accompanied by ratings, scoring rubrics or performance checklists from project/experience coordinator or supervisor)
- **Graduates’ skills in the workplace rated by employers**
- **Online course asynchronous discussions** analyzed by class instructors

Whenever appropriate, scoring keys help identify the knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions assessed by means of the particular assessment instrument, thus documenting student learning directly.

## Examples of Indirect Measures of Student Learning/Services

- **Course grades** provide information about student learning *indirectly* because of a series of reasons, such as: a) due to the focus on student performance or achievement at the level of an individual class, such grades do not represent an indication of learning over a longer course of time than the duration of that particular class or across different courses within a program; b) grading systems vary from class to class; and c) grading systems in one class may be used inconsistently from student to student
- **Grades assigned to student work in one particular course** also provide information about student learning *indirectly* because of the reasons mentioned above. Moreover, graded student work in isolation, without an accompanying scoring rubric, does not lead to relevant meaning related to overall student performance or achievement in one class or a program
- **Comparison between admission and graduation rates**
- **Number or rate of graduating students pursuing their education at the next level**
- **Reputation of graduate or post-graduate programs accepting graduating students**
- **Employment or placement rates of graduating students into appropriate career positions**
- **Course evaluation items related to the overall course or curriculum quality**, rather than instructor effectiveness
- **Number or rate of students involved in faculty research, collaborative publications and/or presentations, service learning, or extension of learning in the larger community**
- **Surveys, questionnaires, open-ended self-reports, focus-group or individual interviews** dealing with *current students'* perception of their own learning
- **Surveys, questionnaires, focus-group or individual interviews** dealing with *alumni's* perception of their own learning or of their current career satisfaction (which relies on their effectiveness in the workplace, influenced by the knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions developed in school)
- **Surveys, questionnaires, focus-group or individual interviews** dealing with the *faculty and staff members'* perception of student learning as supported by the programs and services provided to students
- **Quantitative data**, such as enrollment numbers
- **Honors, awards, scholarships, and other forms of public recognition earned by students and alumni**

[Adapted from Maki, P.L. (2004). *Assessing for learning: building a sustainable commitment across the institution*. Sterling, VA: AAHE; and Suskie, L. (2004). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*. San Francisco, CA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.]

## Appendix A

### Downtown Canton Satellite Writing Center Survey Data

Downtown Canton Satellite Surveys, Fall 2013										
	Ease of finding the WC	Usefulness of the one-on-one sessions	Usefulness of the pamphlet	Attitude of the staff	Professionalism of the staff	Effectiveness of Advertising	Overall Atmosphere or Environment	Overall effectiveness of center	Totals of each Grade	
A	52	61	41	61	61	48	58	60	442	
B	7	0	9	0	0	8	3	1	28	
C	1	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	8	
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
F	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	61	61	53	61	61	60	61	61	61	
Qualitative Comments										
<b>Fall 2013</b>	Great. They really helped me.									
	* Jon, I really appreciate the time and effort you put into helping me. I'm so grateful for this. Elisha Jenkins, Dr. Williams class.									
	* The guys are very fun. It makes learning fun. I'll keep coming back.									
	* Had a great time! Will definitely be back.									
	* After visiting the Writing Center, I have a better understanding of writing my thesis for my English paper.									
	* Teacher need to advertise more or require 1 or more sessions.									
	* Just please keep this college writing center open for people like myself that really needs the help.									
	* The guys are very fun. It makes learning fun. I'll keep coming back.									
	* Jonathan really helped me out with my first draft. Thanks, it was a big help.									
	* I came in the Writing Center on ease, but once I met Andrew he made me feel comfortable and showed me step by step of everything. He explained things to me to where I could understand without any problems. Great job. :)									
	* I would like more time each time I come in for work for class and homework. This is my favorite place to be. :)									
	* I didn't have any idea of a topic when I came. Andrew showed me into a new light that made the assignment much easier.									
	* Keep up the good work.									
	* Just keep them here. It help me more and more. Thank you.									
	* Thank you for help me with my first essay.									
	* Even though I am having first time anxiety with my writing class, I feel a lot better with learning to write after visiting the writing center.									
	* Great tool to have for all writing class, or even just classes.									
	* The Writing Center is very good.									
	* I enjoy coming here. I don't know what I would have done if there was no writing center. It has help me grow as a write which I enjoy very much.									
	* The staff was very helpful and made the topics more understandable.									
	* This session was very helpful.									
	* The Writing Center had gave me a further understanding of my paper.									
	* Was good.									
	* I came in lost on my work, but with the help from the assistant I'm comfortable to begin my work and I understand it better, and I will be back! Thank you!									
	* Very helpful. I had a lot of things cleared up. I got the advice that I was looking for, and my experience was actually very enjoyable.									
	* Just very very helpful. I think I am not alone and I think that I will continue to strive for excellence.									
	* Good job bud! Thanks for all your help.									
	* Jon did a excellent job in giving us feedback.									
	* Jon was good at understanding what I was saying in my paper. I like working with him. But it was cold in the writing center.									
	* Need bigger room and maybe more people to help sometimes.									
	* The writing lab is very helpful. Taking all advise and running with it. :)									
	* Very well, convenient, & helpful.									
	* Andrew was awesome!									
	* Very helpful. :)									
	* This is the place to come for assistance.									
	* Your staff at the main & downtown are the greatest people in the world!!!!									
	* I enjoy coming to the Writing Center. I am an early college student so I appreciate the help that I get here at the Writing Center. My only suggestion is the fact that I only learned of the Writing Centers existence as a senior. This place would have been a great opportunity to me as an ECHS junior as well.									
	* Andrew was very patient & helpful.									
	* Advertising is always offered. Great Staff. Friendly atmosphere.									
	* Emilia you were great! Thank you so much. Thanks for your time.									
	* Emilia was very helpful. She made me feel welcome and showed me the things that I need to know to revise my research paper. This was my first item in the Writing Center and I will come back in the future. All the staff is friendly. Thank you.									
	* I found Seth's advice very helpful and I am going to take that advice and fix my paper.									

## Appendix B

### Online Writing Center -- ANGEL

#### Assessment of Individual Online Tutoring Session

Spring 2014 – Leah Schell-Barber, Writing Center Coordinator

#### Case Study

##### Background Information

Student is a female in her twenties and has only been enrolled in one writing course at Stark State – College Composition. This student has always enjoyed writing. In high school, writing was the only class that she claims to have excelled in and the only class that she actually enjoyed. She still feels that way today. She knows she is not perfect when it comes to writing, especially when being graded on punctuation. However, this student does feel that she is a decent writer, and often writes poems, letters, and blogs.

Except for her initial visit, the student's visits to the Writing Center were voluntary. When she visited the online writing center, she always worked with the same person. She feels as if the online writing assistant was very supportive and helpful in anything that he needed help with. Sometimes it was punctuation, grammar, making his paper longer, thesis statement, or a conclusion. The student claims that the online writing assistant helped her improve her writing without telling her exactly what to put in the paper. The online writing assistant never said that she had a "bad" paper or put down her writing style. The only issue given by the student was the length of the session. In her opinion, an hour online, with the amount of time it takes to type makes communication take a lot longer and a longer appointment would have been more convenient.

##### Presenting Problem

The student came to the Online Writing Center for assistance in several areas. Since this student has tested into College Composition through the COMPASS test, she generally has a good sense of how to organize an essay and use critical thinking to develop her ideas. The class focuses on building writing and critical thinking skills so the student can complete an 8-10 page research essay at the end of the semester.

Initially, this student was trying to make her essay relevant to a reader even though she was writing it in response to his instructor's assignment guidelines. The purpose for her essay was to observe a location and analyze her observations and reactions. The student seemed to understand that she had to make her writing appeal to a reader but didn't know how to begin since she was at this location solely because of her essay assignment. As the student worked through the writing tutorial, she became more familiar with the type of service she was receiving and how to develop an academic essay.

##### Assessment of Problem

Assessment of the problem was done through collaboration between the student and the online writing assistant. With the goal of an online Writing Center session being to guide a student through rhetorical concepts to improve the student's knowledge of writing, writing process, and written product, the online writing assistant generally begins each session with an open-ended question to better understand where the student would like to

direct the conversation with the online writing assistant. This student started with a rough draft of her first essay and questions on how to introduce her reader to her topic and transition to the body of her discussion. In addition to introducing her topic, this student also had awkward transitions but seemed to be a strong editor of her writing.

### **Intervention**

In order to assist this student, the online writing assistant asked the student to clarify the requirements of the assignment. Based on the student's request to find places where she could add more detail and ensure that her content flowed from one idea to the next, the writing assistant responded: "I think the ideas all move from one to another fairly logically, so that "flow" is pretty good, except for the move from the intro to the first body paragraph. That was a little abrupt. Want to look at that together?" From here, the writing assistant and student worked on building an introduction that both fit the requirements of the assignment and would introduce the purpose of her essay to his readers.

After more conversation, the student questioned how to incorporate her purpose for choosing a park as her observation place into his introduction. The writing assistant responded: "It could certainly go both ways. I can see it being successful as just a little addendum to what you already have, or you could sort of rearrange the whole essay to accommodate this new outlook. So I think the answer is up to you- do you want this essay to be about how people see infertility with a side-note of how the paper changed you? Or do you want this paper to be about how YOU changed what you saw? Which feels more right to you?" This comment scaffolds the student to focus on making revision decisions based on her own knowledge of good writing. While the writing assistant provided two examples of directions the writer could go in for her introduction, she allows her the autonomy to choose one of her suggestions or to develop one on her own. The writing assistant is also scaffolding the student to develop a framework for her essay – to frame her analysis on people's opinion of infertility or on her perceptions of infertility. The student chose to keep her existing introduction but to incorporate more of her analysis at the end of the essay and move on to discuss transitions with the writing assistant.

The next visit from this student occurred while she was working on her second essay for College Composition. For this assignment, the student continued to use infertility as her topic. In her essay, she had to analyze a concept, use MLA format, and incorporate 2-3 outside sources as support for her analysis. The student came into this session with a first draft which she claimed to be rough. She also admitted to having trouble wiring this assignment. This entire session focused on helping the student find a purpose within her text that she could develop into a thesis statement. There seemed to be confusion between the writing assistant and the student on the assignment requirements. The student seemed to be describing the assignment in a way not congruent with the assignment sheet the writing assistant accessed from ANGEL. After agreeing on a direction, the writing assistant again used a series of questions to help the student narrow her topic: "You describe what infertility is, and how it affects you, so that's good. That establishes how you see the topic. I think what we need to nail down is: are you going to focus on your personal perception more, or on other people's? I think trying to do too much of both will lose focus. Which one is more important- how you perceive it, or how others do?" After further discussion, the student finally decides her working thesis to be: "For my thesis statement should I say something like. The lack of knowledge about infertility in our culture makes other's perspectives different from those who are infertile." The writing assistant never directly gave a thesis to the student based on her paper topic. Rather, she used a Socratic method of questioning to help the student develop her own framework for her essay. This

method is congruent with current research in tutoring practice and is often used at Stark State College's Writing Center.

The student's last two visits were spent on the final research paper for the course. This assignment should encourage students to apply much of what they've learned throughout the semester to a single document. For the student's first visit, she sent the writing assistant 6 pages of a draft of this assignment. The writing assistant noticed that the student had long sentences and lists. Her main question for the student was, what is the main idea, and where is it going? The student seemed to feel a little lost, especially on formulating her argument. The writing assistant again used a series of questions to help the student carve out her topic from her draft. Eventually, the student found her focus: "I think adoption agencies charge way too much money for what they do. I feel like they are taking advantage of people who can't have children and aren't really in it to help but just to make money." The writing assistant praises the student and restates her ideas: "Now THAT is an argument. Given all the hoops that people have to jump through, it doesn't seem like adoption agencies are there to help children, but instead, just to make money. I think that sounds like a strong thesis for a paper. You will have to show that there are a lot of children in need, that there are a ridiculous amount of things adopting parents have to do, that agencies make a lot of money, and that not enough children are being helped along the way. What do you think?" Not only does the writing assistant encourage the student to continue her train of thought, especially since her topic is narrowed and has a unique perspective, but she also leaves the student to make the final decision on her direction by asking her what she thinks.

The student returned the following week with a complete draft. The student had revised her essay based on the work she had completed with the writing assistant and narrowed her research to focus on the adoption process and working directly with adoption agencies. During this particular session, the student and writing assistant worked on the conclusion. During this session, the student seems to develop her conclusion with little assistance from the writing assistant. After the student sends the writing assistant her drafted conclusion, the writing assistant suggests: "Let's add one more sentence to drive home the importance of the issue. You could go positive or negative I think. Either tell us again what is wrong right now (something about how, without these changes, \_\_\_\_ will continue to be bad) or show how much better it could be (something like if things change, we could finally \_\_\_\_\_) Thoughts?" The student decides to end on a positive note and responds: "Things would be so much better if it didn't cost so much to adopt. There would be more children with a caring and loving family who would do anything for them. And parents who normally couldn't have children would finally have the family that they always dreamed of." This session seemed more facilitative on the part of the writing assistant than past sessions. After five sessions, the student seemed to take more control over the session and worked ahead before the writing assistant could make suggestions.

## **Results**

Through the five online tutorials, this student was able to go from a fairly competent writer to having more confidence and a better understanding of how to construct an argument for an academic reader. Her understanding of audience, critical analysis, and structure improved with each of her visits. Her first two visits with the online writing assistant are evidence that she was trying to adapt what she knew about writing to fit in with academic standards and expectations. The student's last visit is evidence that she was becoming comfortable discussing her own perspective of a complicated issue and how she could translate that opinion to a researched argument. Her independent writing process and development of an argument became stronger

through the five online Writing Center visits which, in turn, created better written products for her College Composition class.

## Appendix C

### Student Studio Session Survey Data