

Understanding Writing Center Use among Community College Students

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Author Note

This study was supported by a research grant from the International Writing Centers Association.

Abstract

Student writing center use has been associated with positive academic outcomes, yet less attention has been paid to what, exactly, influences their participation. The researcher surveyed 434 community college students on a range of demographic and academic variables, as well as their level of self-efficacy in writing, to predict their writing center use and non-use. Enrollment in remedial coursework and freshman composition course grade emerged as significant factors. These results may influence how academic support professionals can both accommodate students likely to seek tutoring and promote the writing center as a resource for writers of all levels.

Keywords: Writing centers, community colleges, self-efficacy in writing, student tutoring participation

Introduction

Academic writing is often a source of consternation among undergraduates. It can be an even greater area of concern for the community college student, who may be returning to school after many years in the workforce, the first in the family to attend college, an English language learner, or a student with children or other dependents. Such students often do not have a clear support system to help them navigate the challenges of college-level work, while others may simply lack the confidence to succeed. As a result, these difficulties put students at risk of not completing their degrees. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 62% of students who started at two-year public institutions in Fall 2016 persisted to Fall 2017, compared to 83% of students who started at four-year public institutions ("Persistence & Retention – 2018"). The reasons why so many community college students do not persist are varied, and many are unrelated to the college itself, including the student's personal and financial responsibilities outside of school. Such statistics highlight the potential for learning assistance programs, including writing centers, to support students attending community colleges. Writing centers are traditionally promoted as places for students of all ability levels, not just struggling writers, to receive feedback and guidance on assignments (North, 1984). Centers are staffed either by peer tutors who are undergraduate or graduate students, or professional tutors,

who may or may not also serve as classroom faculty. No matter their makeup, writing centers are a common facet of undergraduate academic support. In the latest survey of four-year ($n = 623$) and two-year ($n = 104$) colleges by the National Census of Writing (Gladstein & Fralix, 2017), all respondents reported having a writing center staffed with writing tutors.

Simply because writing centers exist, however, does not mean that students choose to use them. When it comes to tutoring in general, students from both two- and four-year schools appear to underutilize the programs offered by their campuses. According to survey data, 74% of first-year students attending four-year institutions report "never" or "sometimes" seeking help from learning support services, including tutoring, while 63% of community college students report "never" using peer or other tutoring programs (National Survey on Student Engagement [NSSE], 2018; Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CSSE], 2018). Community college students represent a diverse academic population, with many juggling multiple responsibilities at home and at work, in addition to school. In fact, nearly 83% of all students among undergraduates attending public 2-year colleges are considered *nontraditional*, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, compared to 54% of the student body at public 4-year institutions (Radford et al., 2015).

Beyond the external responsibilities that may impact community college students' decisions to utilize writing centers, their participation may be influenced by their internal perception of their ability to succeed at writing, also known as their level of self-efficacy in writing (SEW). Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (2006), refers to an individual's "belief in their capabilities to produce given attainments" in any activity, or domain, in which the individual engages (p. 307). Researchers have measured SEW as both an individual's confidence in their ability to identify and execute mechanical concepts and essay components (McCarthy et al., 1985; Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Shell et al., 1989) as well as the individual's beliefs and attitudes about the writing process (Bruning et al., 2013; Piazza & Siebert, 2008; Schmidt & Alexander, 2012; White & Bruning, 2005; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). A student's SEW can be related to their awareness of their level of anxiety about the writing process (Martinez et al., 2011) or be influenced by instructor feedback (Callinan et al., 2018; Ekholm et al., 2015).

Students' perception of the writing center itself is another element to understanding their usage (Giaimo, 2017). Research suggests there may be a disconnect between students and tutors regarding the mission of the writing center. For example, while students mainly focus on specific assignments and course grades, tutors are more concerned with developing students as writers (Missakian, 2015; Morrison & Nadeau, 2003). Bridging the gap

between the student's and tutor's expectations for the writing center is one of the greatest challenges writing center administrators face when promoting the short- and long-term benefits of writing center tutoring (Boughey, 2012; Gordon, 2008; Missakian, 2015; Morrison & Nadeau, 2003).

This article describes research conducted to determine the factors that significantly predict writing center use and non-use among community college students. There is evidence to suggest that utilizing the writing center, or another academic tutoring service, improves outcomes for college students (Coladarci et al., 2013; Cooper, 2010; Pfrenger et al., 2017; Rheinheimer et al., 2010; Vick et al., 2015); however, while research about writing centers and other tutoring programs focuses mainly on their impacts, there is little that explores why students, particularly those enrolled at community colleges, seek writing center tutoring. While students' perception of their writing skills, or of the writing center itself, may influence their writing center use, other variables may play a significant role, specifically, students' demographics or academic history (Salem, 2016). While their circumstances may just as much influence students' writing center use or non-use as by their perception of their own writing skills or the writing center's purpose, other variables may play a significant role, specifically, students' demographics or academic history (Salem, 2016). Knowing more about the reasons why students decide to take advantage of

writing center services, or not, may help colleges customize their programs to increase utilization.

Methods

Participants

This study examined participant data collected at the beginning of the spring 2020 semester from students attending a public suburban community college that is part of a larger, multi-campus institution with a total enrollment of approximately 23,000 students. When the research was conducted, the enrollment of the campus under study was approximately 8,000 students, with approximately one-third considered full-time. Females represent 56% of all students. The population is 37% White, non-Hispanic, 27% Hispanic, 22% of unknown ethnicity, 12% Black, non-Hispanic, and 4% Asian or Pacific Islander. Most students are aged 24 and below, with approximately 26% of students aged 25 and older. The most common degree among campus graduates is an Associate in Arts (A.A.) from the program in Liberal Arts and Sciences – General Studies Emphasis, followed by an Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Nursing.

The writing center is located within the academic tutoring wing of the campus library, considered to be the heart of campus. At the time the study was conducted, the center was open for appointments and walk-in visits Monday through Saturday, with online tutoring offered on Sunday. Tutors are available to assist

students with writing assignments from any course or subject area, as well as with resumes, cover letters, and essays for scholarship applications. Tutors are paid professionals who possess at least a master's degree in English, creative writing, or education. The center does not employ peer tutors.

Participants were selected based on their enrollment in Introduction to Literature (ENG 102), a course required by virtually all programs at the college. This was done to ensure that students from a variety of disciplines were represented in the participant sample. Students take the course after completing a freshman composition course, either Standard Freshman Composition (ENG 101) or Enhanced Freshman Composition (ENG 100); therefore, most participants have been enrolled at the college for at least two semesters and have completed at least one writing course. Faculty were asked to participate in the study by allowing the survey to be distributed to their students 5-10 minutes before their classes began. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary, and all participants were given a choice to opt out. Students enrolled in 20 different sections of ENG 102 (18 in-person, two online) participated in the study. Participants in online sections were given the option to include additional comments about their reasons for their writing center use or non-use. Out of 579 possible participants, 434 students submitted surveys, a response rate of 74.96%.

Variables

Self-Efficacy in Writing (SEW)

Participants completed the Post-Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale (PSWSES) developed by Schmidt and Alexander (2012). While most college tutoring assessment uses student achievement, such as GPA (Bredtmann et al., 2013; Cooper, 2010; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Rheinheimer et al., 2010; Walvoord & Pleitz, 2016) and persistence (Bell & Frost, 2012; Coladarci et al., 2013; Rheinheimer et al., 2010; Vick et al., 2015) to measure program effectiveness, the aim of the PSWSES is to understand student progress based on their evolving attitudes about writing. The scale measures 20 items of self-efficacy in three separate areas that are characteristic of a writer: local and global writing process knowledge (e.g., "I can identify incomplete, or fragment, sentences"), physical reaction (e.g., "I can write a paper without feeling physical discomfort"), and time/effort (e.g., "I can invest a great deal of time and effort when writing a paper when I know the paper will earn a grade"). Following testing for consistency and reliability, the published Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .931. For the present study, participants rated each item on a Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always*), for a possible total score range of 20 – 120. Cutoff scores indicating the participant's level of SEW are based on quartiles.

Nontraditional Status

Students were considered "nontraditional" if they met at least one of the seven characteristics that categorize nontraditional students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Each description was coded as a binomial variable (no/yes).

Awareness of the Writing Center

Students identified whether they were aware of the college's writing center. Responses were coded as a binomial variable (no/yes). Students were also asked to identify how they became aware of the writing center. Responses were coded into seven categories (0 = college tour, 1 = friend or classmate, 2 = professor, 3 = college counselor, 4 = college website, 5 = flyer or other advertising, 6 = other – please fill in).

Writing Center Use

If students selected that they were aware of the writing center, they were asked to self-report the number of times they have used the college's writing center for help with writing since they have been enrolled at the college. Students were given the option to circle a figure between 0 and 10+. Their responses were coded as both a continuous variable and a binomial variable (0 = have not used the writing center, 1 = have used the writing center).

Repeat Visits. Students who had used the writing center at least once were asked if they would return. Their responses were coded as a binomial variable (no/yes).

Reasons for Non-use. If students had not visited the writing center, they were asked to identify all the reasons why they had not. Responses were coded into 10 categories (0 = I do not need help with my writing, 1 = I am afraid to share my writing with a tutor, 2 = I prefer to get writing help from another source, 3 = I do not know what a writing center does, 4 = I am too busy to visit the writing center, 5 = I do not know where the writing center is located on campus, 6 = the writing center is not conveniently located for me, 7 = the hours of the writing center are not convenient for me, 8 = I only learned about the writing center this semester, 9 = other – please fill in).

ENG100 or ENG101 Grade

Participants were asked to self-report the grade they earned in their freshman composition course. Responses were coded based on the letter grade reported. To consolidate categories, half grades were converted to whole grades (for example, both a B and a B+ were considered a B).

Remedial Coursework

Participants self-reported whether they have taken remedial (also known as *developmental*) English courses at the college. Responses were coded as a binomial variable (no/yes).

First-Generation College Student Status

Students were considered first-generation college students if they reported that neither of their parents had attended some

college, as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (Cataldi et al., 2018). Responses were coded as a binomial variable (no/yes).

Additional Covariates

Participants self-reported their gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, degree program, ESL coursework, and college GPA.

Data Collection Procedures

Responses were gathered during two weeks in February 2020. For the 18 in-person sections, the researcher began distributing the paper surveys 5-10 minutes before the start of each ENG 102 class. Faculty were asked to leave the room while students completed the survey. All students were notified that, if they chose to participate, their responses would have no bearing on their course grade, were confidential, and would in no way be shared with their professor. In most cases, the researcher administered the survey. When the researcher was not available to do so, a faculty member not affiliated with the course administered the survey by following a script provided by the researcher. Participants enrolled in online sections of ENG 102 completed an online version of the survey using Qualtrics.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once the researcher collected the completed surveys, all variables were entered into SPSS version 26 for statistical analysis. Initial correlation tests were run to reveal any relationships between

variables. Frequency tables were also computed for means and standard deviations of all variables. Significance for all results of the study were set at the $p < .05$ level, indicating that there will be less than a 5% chance of outcomes occurring randomly.

Results

This study examined survey data from 434 students enrolled across 20 sections of a second-semester English course. Participants from 18 sections were taught traditionally, or face-to-face ($n = 409$), and participants from two sections were taught online ($n = 25$). The dependent variable of writing center use was transformed to binomial scores (no/yes) to fit a logistic regression, which was performed to test the research question as to which independent variables most predicted writing center use.

Descriptive Statistics

Of the participants who responded to the gender item ($n = 432$), 59% identified as female and 39.6% identified as male. Of participants who reported their age ($n = 406$), the average was 20.6 years. Of the participants who responded to the item about their parents' educational history ($n = 432$), 46.8% were considered first-generation college students. Of the participants who responded to the items about nontraditional student characteristics ($n = 427$), 53.6% were considered nontraditional students. Of participants who reported their college GPA ($n = 342$), the average was 3.19. Of participants who responded to the item about remedial coursework ($n = 431$), 26.5% indicated that they had taken at least one remedial

course. Of participants who responded to the item about ESL coursework ($n = 418$), 3.5% reported they had taken at least one ESL course. Of participants who responded to the item about degree program ($n = 431$), the most common was an A.A. (64%), followed by 36% of participants who were enrolled in either an Associate in Science (A.S.) or an A.A.S. program.

Of participants who responded to the item about race/ethnicity ($n = 433$), most identified as either Hispanic/Latino or White. See Table 1 for a description of participants by their self-identified race/ethnicity.

Table 1
Demographics of Study Sample by Race/Ethnicity

	N	%
Hispanic/Latino	189	43.6
White	169	39.0
Black or African American	47	10.9
Other/Prefer Not to Respond	16	3.7
Asian	12	2.8
Total	433	100.0

Of participants who responded to the item about writing center use ($n = 433$), 73.5% reported never using the writing center ($n = 318$). The most common reason students cited was that they were too busy to use the writing center, followed by the belief that they do not need help with writing. The complete list of reasons

participants selected for not using the writing center is reported in Table 2, ranked in order of selection frequency.

Table 2
Responses to Survey Question 5: If You Have NOT Visited the Writing Center, Why Not?

	N	%
I am too busy	132	30.9
I do not need help with my writing	98	23.0
I prefer to get writing help from another source	48	11.2
I am afraid to share my writing with a tutor	35	8.2
The hours of the writing center are not convenient for me	33	7.7
I do not know where the writing center is located	26	6.1
I do not know what the writing center does	19	4.5
Other – please fill in	18	4.2
I only learned about the writing center this semester	17	4.0
The location of the writing center is not convenient for me	1	0.2
Total	427	99.0

Among online participants, who were given the option to include additional information about their writing center use ($n = 25$), 14 shared why they have not used the writing center. Some responses included: "I have not attended the college writing center because I have become extremely busy with a part-time retail job and part-time photography job as well as being a full-time student,"

"Going to the writing center just isn't something I think about doing when assigned a paper," "Writing assignments are not complicated for me," and "The only course I took that involved the writing center was ENG 101. All the papers I wrote received a grade of B+ or better. I didn't feel I needed assistance on any of my papers for this course."

Of participants who responded to the item about writing center awareness ($n = 433$), 88.7% reported that they were aware of the writing center ($n = 385$). Participants were most frequently made aware of the writing center by their professor, followed by a college orientation or tour. How participants became aware of the writing center are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Responses to Survey Question 2: How Did You Hear About the Writing Center?

	N	%
Professor	211	54.8
College Orientation/ Tour	127	33.0
College Counselor	17	4.4
Friend or Classmate	13	3.4
College Website	9	2.3
Other Type of Advertising	8	2.1
Total	385	100.0

Among participants aware of the writing center, the average number of visits was .855, with 94.7% of users reporting that they would return. The highest average number of visits to the writing

center came from participants who had enrolled in ESL coursework ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .899$), participants who had enrolled in remedial coursework ($M = 1.10$, $SD = .209$), and participants who earned a B+/B in their freshman composition course ($M = .958$, $SD = 1.96$). The lowest average number of writing center visits came from participants who earned an A in their freshman composition course ($M = .584$, $SD = 1.75$), participants who were not first-generation college students ($M = .613$, $SD = .112$), and participants who had not enrolled in remedial coursework ($M = .644$, $SD = .087$). The means and standard deviations of the participants' average number of writing center visits for various independent variables may be found in Table 4.

Among online survey participants who used the writing center, four included additional information about their choice to do so. Responses included: "Before handing in your research paper, you can stop by and get a glance of how you might be graded," "Knowing that I had not been in school for a long time I knew that [...] my skills needed some touching up," and "The confidence I gained in my writing from going to the writing center will be instilled in me forever [...] The writing center, for me, is like a safe place. Somewhere I can go when I want to express my feelings on paper."

Table 4*Means and Standard Deviations on Writing Center Visits for All Variables, by Group*

Covariates and DVs		Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Student Type	Traditional	.697	.131	198
	Nontraditional	.823	.111	232
First Gen. Student	No	.613	.112	230
	Yes	.931	.128	202
Remedial Coursework	Some Remedial Courses	1.10	.209	114
	No Remedial Courses	.644	.087	317
ESL Coursework	Some ESL Courses	2.53	.899	15
	No ESL Courses	.697	.080	418
Degree Type	AS/AAS	.826	.112	156
	AA	.654	.128	275
ENG100 or ENG101 Grade	A	.584	1.75	166
	B+/B	.958	1.96	190
	C+/C	.667	1.14	57
	D+/D	.692	1.03	13
Gender	Male	.669	1.55	172
	Female	.828	1.90	256
	Other	.000		1
	Prefer Not to Answer	.667	1.15	3

Research Question

To examine which factors predict writing center use among community college students, logistic regression was performed using writer center use as a binary variable (no/yes). The preliminary analysis fit a model including SEW, age, ENG100 or ENG101 grade, remedial coursework, nontraditional characteristics, and first-generation college student status as predictor variables. These variables were selected based on an overall absence of research examining their relationship to the dependent variable of

writing center use. Based on this analysis, a total of 360 cases were analyzed. The Hosmer-Lemshow Goodness of Fit test was not significant, indicating that the model was good and adequately fit the data. In this analysis, only two variables, ENG100 or ENG101 grade and remedial coursework, demonstrated to be significant predictors of writing center use (omnibus chi-square = 25.21, $df = 6$, $p < .01$), which accounted for between 6.8% and 10.0% of the variance in writing center use. Among those who did not use the writing center, 96.6% were correctly predicted, while 10.9% of those who did use the writing center were correctly predicted. Overall, 74.7% of predictions were accurate.

A second analysis was conducted with the non-significant variables from the preliminary analysis removed. In this model, only ENG100 or ENG101 grade and remedial coursework were entered as predictor variables. Based on this second analysis, 426 cases were analyzed. The Hosmer-Lemshow Goodness of Fit test was not significant, indicating that the model was good and adequately fit the data. ENG100 or ENG101 grade and remedial coursework again demonstrated a significant prediction of writing center use (omnibus chi-square = 16.02, $df = 2$, $p < .01$), which accounted for between 3.7% and 5.4% of the variance in writing center use. Among those who did not use the writing center, 97.8% were correctly predicted, while 3.6% of those who did use the writing center were correctly predicted. Overall, 73.9% of

predictions were accurate. Table 5 shows that the variables ENG100 or ENG101 grade and remedial coursework were significant, $p < .05$, as a predictor of writing center use. The value of the coefficient reveals that ENG100 or ENG101 grade increases the odds for writing center use by a factor of 0.62 (95% confidence interval 0.47-0.82), and remedial coursework increases the odds for writing center use by a factor of 1.53 (95% confidence interval 1.02-2.30). The negative coefficient for ENG100 or ENG101 grade indicates that the odds of writing center use declines as the student's grade increases.

Table 5
Second Logistic Regression to Determine the Variables that Predict Writing Center Use

	B	S.E.	Wald.	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% C.I. for EXP (B)
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Step 1							
ENG100 or ENG101 Grade	-.472	0.104	11.31	1	.001	0.62	0.47-0.82
Remedial Coursework	.428	0.207	4.28	1	.039	1.53	1.02-2.30
Constant	.301	0.451	0.45	1	.504	1.35	

In summary, logistic regression revealed that the freshman composition course grade was a significant predictor of writing center use. More specifically, the lower students' ENG 100 or ENG 101 grades were, the more likely they were to use the writing center. The logistic regression also revealed that students' enrollment in remedial English coursework was a significant predictor of their

writing center use; if students were enrolled in a remedial English course, they were more likely to use the writing center.

Discussion

The finding that students' writing center use increases as their ENG 100 or ENG 101 grade decreases may be explained by two similar possibilities. First, students and faculty may perceive the writing center as a service reserved mainly for struggling writers. While it remains unclear in this study if faculty only promoted the writing center to struggling students, this interpretation is in line with similar findings from studies that describe a disconnect between writing center administrators, who promote the center as one that supports writers of all abilities and at all levels, and students and faculty, who view it as a place where students go when they need to "correct" something they did "wrong" (Giaimo, 2017; Missakian, 2015; Morrison & Nadeau, 2003). Suppose faculty only recommend the writing center when students have difficulty, rather than promote it as a space for all writers. In that case, they may perpetuate the perception of the writing center as mainly a corrective or punitive space, thereby missing an opportunity to normalize collaboration and feedback as part of any authentic writing process.

Moreover, professors often incentivize writing center use to students through extra points on assignments. Therefore, students who use the writing center may be striving to increase their course

grades by obtaining such extra credit. This theory supports outside findings that external motivators, such as extra credit, are one of the most cited reasons for students to spend additional time on assignments (Bender, 2007; Fukuda & Yoshida, 2013). This is also supported by qualitative research on working-class student experiences in writing centers conducted by Denny et al. (2018) who concluded that these students prefer a more direct assessment of their writing with the particular purpose of improving a grade, and not necessarily with improving their writing ability over the long term.

Several variables were not found to significantly predict writing center use, most notably, SEW and nontraditional student status. The finding about SEW is in line with an overall absence of research to support the notion that a student's SEW is a significant factor in their choice to use a writing center or other tutoring service; however, recent studies have found relationships between self-efficacy and self-regulation (Ekholm et al., 2015) and between self-efficacy and writing performance (Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010). Additionally, students who possessed nontraditional characteristics were not significantly more or less likely to use the writing center in this study. In fact, nontraditional students were found to visit the writing center in greater numbers than traditional students, on average. This result is contrary to the findings of some qualitative research about nontraditional students, which describe them as less

engaged in the campus community and less likely to participate in enrichment activities than their traditional counterparts (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Norman et al., 2015). One possible explanation for the discrepancy between these findings is that, in the current study, all participants were enrolled in a second-semester English course, which tacitly demonstrates their ability to navigate college life successfully thus far. This characteristic of the participant sample may have mitigated any influence nontraditional characteristics might have had on writing center use.

Limitations

The main threat to validity in this study is that the use of self-reported data in survey research may be unreliable. For example, students may not have been truthful about their writing center use and/or may have inaccurately reported their ENG 100 or ENG 101 grades due to misremembering or not remembering them. This limitation supports work by Morrison and Nadeau (2003), who discuss students' inability to accurately recall grades they received in classes they completed as recently as a semester prior.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Results from this study have broad implications for how writing center stakeholders promote their services to students and how writing center services are understood by the larger campus community.

Writing Center Administrators

First, writing center administrators can work with faculty to identify students who are most likely to use the writing center and strive to make the writing center as accessible to these students as possible to increase their participation. This can be achieved by surveying struggling students to determine the factors that would make writing center tutoring most convenient for them. In addition, based on this study, most students who used the writing center reported that they would use the writing center again. In light of this finding, writing center administrators should consider creating promotional materials based on positive testimonials from students who have used the writing center.

In addition to focusing on the students who are most likely to use the writing center, writing center administrators can reach out to new student populations beyond those enrolled in introductory English and composition courses. The finding that low freshman composition course grades increase the likelihood of writing center participation may perpetuate the notion that writing centers are designed to only help students with their English courses. Writing center administrators can work toward changing this belief by working with professors in all subject areas to encourage students to participate in writing center tutoring. In this study, students most frequently learned of the writing center through their course

professors, underscoring the crucial role classroom faculty can play in increasing writing center usage.

Writing center administrators should further identify and investigate variables that predict writing center use that were not covered by this study. For example, the researcher did not include items related to socioeconomic status, academic history pre-college, or future academic or career planning in the survey. These variables may clarify significant differences between users and non-users. Future research might also specifically investigate students who achieve As and Bs in their freshman composition class, with writing center administrators obtaining survey data from high-achieving students who use the writing center. This may help to inform how writing conferences can best be tailored to students' needs.

Writing Center Tutors

The finding that students' freshman composition course grade and/or enrollment in remedial coursework significantly predicts their writing center use is important for tutors working on the front lines of the writing center. It may be helpful for tutors to understand that the students they serve likely have struggled with writing throughout college, not solely on a particular assignment. Tutors can play a role in both helping students with their immediate need to improve their score on a single task as well as providing students with the tools and strategies to succeed on future writing assignments. This presents an opportunity for tutors to serve as

coaches to foster and build confidence, as well as experts who can model and demystify various aspects of the writing process, methods supported by Boughey (2012) and Shamoon and Burns (1995) who advocate for an expert/apprentice model of writing center instruction. Future research should examine the student-tutor relationship as a factor that may influence repeat writing center use, building on the work of DeCheck (2012) and Mackiewicz et al. (2013). Such research could also explore how the kinds of tutors a writing center employs (peer, professional, or a mix of both) impact student writing center perception, use, and/or satisfaction.

Writing Center Research

For writing center researchers, this study contains several implications for the field of inquiry, as it furthers the use of RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-supported) methods in writing center research that has been described by Driscoll and Perdue (2014) and Nordstrom (2015). In particular, this study builds upon the work of Salem (2016) for both its use of inferential statistics to examine writing center usage as well as its analysis of a sample size large enough to include many writing center non-users ($n = 319$), rather than exclusively studying the characteristics of students who already use the center. Researchers can continue to examine the role that students' perception of the writing center plays in writing center usage by questioning students on their impressions of the writing center and its mission, building on research conducted by

Giaimo (2017). Future quantitative writing center research designs should continue to strive for comparably large sample sizes so that results have the potential to be generalized to similar populations, as advocated by Haswell (2005).

Finally, additional scholarship is needed to better understand differences in tutoring modalities, such as in-person, online, synchronous, asynchronous, or any combination thereof, on student attitudes and achievement. Shortly after this research was conducted, most college writing centers, including the one in this study, shifted to an exclusively online tutoring model due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More research is needed to examine the impact the switch to online tutoring has had on students' perceptions of the writing center and their decisions to use it.

Conclusion

The benefits of tutoring on college student achievement are well-documented; however, little has been understood about student participation in writing center tutoring. In this study, the grade students earned in their freshman composition course and their enrollment in remedial courses were the variables that predicted writing center use among participants attending a community college. One student's explanation for why she used the writing center illustrates this study's main finding. "I decided to attend the writing center because I was in danger of failing my English class, and my professor recommended it," she wrote. This response

suggests that students perceive the writing center as a place that can help them if they are struggling. Writing centers inhabit a unique position in the academic landscape; they are places that can engage students in the course material, improve academic outcomes, foster students' confidence, and provide students with focused, one-on-one instruction. Because writing center services are typically offered as a benefit included in tuition, colleges have an interest in continuing to study specific reasons why students may (or may not) take advantage of such valuable help.

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