



THE KIDS ALL WRITE

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE WRITING LANDSCAPE FOR
ANTHROPOLOGY MAJORS AT UCSC, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE WRITING
ASSISTANT CENTER PROGRAM**

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I. Introduction and report outline

Teaching students to write clearly and compellingly is central to the mission of the Department of Anthropology. Strong writing skills are crucial not only for student achievement in the major and the fulfillment of the mandatory Disciplinary Communication requirement, but also, and crucially, for students' professional career beyond the department. Many of our students go on into local government, law, business, teaching, and non-profit work, all of which require that they be adept with written language. This report traces the experience of UCSC anthropology students as it pertains to their writing training, resources, and struggles. Our goal is to highlight current lacunae in writing support but also to document the vital importance of the Anthropology Department's unique, one-on-one Writing Assistant Program, the only peer writing program at UCSC housed within an academic department.

The role of the anthropology Writing Assistant Program can be best evaluated when considered in relation to the educational context in which students accomplish their written work. Drawing on data from six months of surveys, interviews, and observations, this study follows the experiences of students who arrive at UCSC (often with a California public school education), enroll in various courses to complete their writing requirements, and major in Anthropology. Each stage of their education at UCSC presents a different set of writing approaches, requirements, and support. This exercise will highlight our efforts in the Department of Anthropology to keep students from "slipping through the cracks," (i.e. graduating without the skills they need) as well as the significant obstacles we face in training our majors to be skilled and effective writers.

Methods

The data for Part II of this study was drawn mainly from structured interviews with experts from different departments and offices on the UCSC campus. Data for sections III-IV was largely collected via anonymous surveys from students in classes using Writing Assistants and from students who visited the Writing Assistant Center; semi-structured interviews with other important groups and individuals were also used. The main respondents were:

- Writing Assistants and students who visited the center
- Anthropology faculty, Teaching Assistants, and undergraduate majors
- Writing Program coordinators, instructors, and tutors
- Writing resource staff and instructors across campus (LSS, Oakes College, Faculty Panels)
- Career Center advisors

This ethnographic approach put together a broad picture of the variety of actors and experiences that shape student writing at UCSC. There is no ‘typical student’ here, but there is a common set of resources, requirements, and challenges with which students engage. Studies of education usually focus on a single classroom or quantitative data sets, which this study has drawn upon to confirm observed and reported trends. By considering the bigger picture, however, this study aims to document the gaps in support and preparation for undergraduate writing and the very serious implications of those deficits during and after student time at UCSC. In this perspective, the WA program is more than a departmental resource—it is an initiative geared towards instituting a cultural change in the Anthropology Department and across campus, fostering practices of collaboration and support where they are needed most.

II. The Writing Landscape at UCSC

1. Students: diverse and dynamic

UC Santa Cruz's student body has changed dramatically over the last decade, both in terms of the backgrounds with which students arrive and the writing preparation they receive in high school. There is no 'typical student' at UCSC; the variety of skills, strengths, and deficits in the classroom challenges instructors across departments. However, increasingly we are finding that anthropology instructors, including professors and graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs), struggle with poor student writing on a daily basis, and in all of their classes.

We are now working to educate the first generation of students educated entirely under the auspices of the No Child Left Behind initiative. The policy's heavy emphasis on test scores and quantitative educational measures means that writing skills and awareness of writing as a process have been compromised in California and across the country. Education researchers from a variety of geographical locations and theoretical perspectives have noted the erosion of writing-based curricula. The following remark from McCarthy is representative:

although writing is included as a component of the prescribed curriculum teachers do not necessarily use the materials; instead, they are concentrating on preparing students for the state reading tests. Writing in these contexts may be neglected altogether, denying students opportunities to engage in meaningful, purposeful projects" (McCarthy 2008: 493).¹

Referring specifically to California, Sandra Murphy finds that there is a broad consensus among scholars and professional organizations that standardized testing has "negative effects on students teachers and learning" (2003: 28). Ironically, this insight led California to adopt an innovative approach to writing instruction in the 1980s that was subsequently abandoned in favor of high-stakes testing to determine student promotion and retention in the 1990s. Tied to federal requirements under No

¹ She is here discussing a low-income school in Illinois, but the comment is representative.

**[L]ack of
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skill – primarily
communicated
and assessed
through written**

Child Left Behind, high-stakes testing is now nearly universal. In the present context, teachers (and their students) are increasingly demoralized and, due to the strong relationship that now exists between scores and teacher evaluations, teaching only “to the tests,” California students in the 21st century write less, and less well, than students in the 1980s (Murphy 2003).

The lack of training in writing is an especially acute problem for students majoring in Anthropology, which is a discipline that requires critical thought, careful argumentation, and descriptive skill – primarily communicated and assessed through written work.

Students arriving from high schools with 200+ students per teacher, minimal writing expectations, and non-English speaking homes are particularly likely to come to UCSC without the language, style, and reading skills they need to be effective scholars. Instructors describe creative and inventive students who are hungry to be more critical thinkers and empowered speakers, yet fundamentally lack basic skills; resources to teach these skills are limited.

As Heather Shearer, director of the Writing Program put it, we need to seriously consider the kinds of writing support that students need, the quantity and quality of student-tutor contact required, and the resources the University is willing to invest in that skill.

2. Campus Requirements and Resources

Initial tracking and the Writing Program

When students first arrive at UCSC, they are sorted according to test scores or previously completed equivalents, including AP testing and community college work. While instructors and students report that this system does not always adequately recognize student abilities and needs, it does determine the writing instruction they receive.

Students who fail to satisfy the English Language Writing Requirement (ELWR) may take up to five quarters of writing intensive courses (Core Course, Writing 2, and remedial C 20, 21, 23) and meet regularly with tutors, but students who transfer into the UC system or test well will likely receive only 10 to 20 weeks of writing instruction (Core Course and Writing 2) before they are expected to write at the college level.

After completing the Core Course and Writing 2 requirements, the Writing Program provides no further support or resources to UCSC students.

Core Courses and ELWR tutoring

Students who do not satisfy the ELWR in the Analytical Writing Placement Exam enroll in a college Core Course (C1), the content and focus of which varies widely depending on the instructor. Students learn a specific way of conceptualizing and composing writing assignments—this varies from one instructor to the next—which they report as satisfying some of their later instructors and frustrating others.

Students who need additional support are paired with tutors provided exclusively to students who demonstrate major writing issues. ELWR tutors describe students who struggle with language barriers and maintaining an effective work ethic despite slow progress. While there are plenty of willing tutors, there is currently insufficient funding to serve student demand. Tutors and instructors report some improvement in student writing and work, especially those students who receive additional or individualized support.

While failing the Core Course is presented to instructors as a necessary part of some students' training, it does carry larger implications for students' financial aid, scholarships, or time constraints. As long as a student produces acceptable work in their Core Course, they are promoted to Writing 2.

Should instructors assess students as requiring additional training before moving to the C2 requirement, they can enroll in one of three remedial courses:

Writing 20, 21, 23

These courses address some of the key issues identified by TAs and instructors in undergraduate writing, focusing on 'The Nature of Written Discourse', 'Meaning and Style: the Sentence in Context', and 'Grammar and Rhetoric: Language and Writing'. The course objectives align directly with many of the main challenges that ESL and undertrained students face in writing at the college level, but only a fraction of students who could benefit from this kind of instruction are required to enroll.

Writing 2

In Writing 2 (C2), instructors aim to prepare students for a variety of genres, balancing a syllabus that provides students with consistent feedback but also gives the instructor time to provide individual comments. The program is actively trying to expand beyond the humanities and literature approach to writing, offering courses that focus on scientific or activist writing. Many students have yet to settle into a major at this stage, and so while they can enroll in a topic of interest, it may not align with the disciplinary demands they will encounter in later studies. Most instructors do see significant improvement in writing organization, but insist that the quarter is too short to sufficiently develop college writing skills.

Writing Program insights

While there is no 'typical student', the faculty and staff at the Writing Program report the following as recurring problems with incoming student writing:

difficulty recognizing and reproducing the codes and standards of academic genres, i.e. an analytical essay, research paper, or reflection piece

gaps in basic grammatical rules and problems with sentence structure

lack of familiarity with strategies to improve their own work: multiple drafts, proofreading, etc

incomplete command of English, especially written English, and reliance on internet translations in composing their work

Writing Program faculty and staff recommend the following as the most effective approaches to improving student writing:

- One on one support: talking about writing to draw out ideas and engage students in the process of developing and articulating their thoughts
- Close reading of their work with a tutor to identify and remedy grammar and spelling errors
- Another person (a tutor, TA, or instructor) to hold them accountable for their ideas and work progress
- Peer-to-Peer editing to motivate students and give them a chance to learn from their peer's strengths and weaknesses

Learning Support Services

LSS provides students with one-on-one tutors by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Tutors are trained in EDU 96 and listed with their disciplinary experience for appointments. While LSS does their best to match students with tutors according to courses and departments, there is no guarantee that the tutors will have in-depth experience with the specific genre or style assigned, especially for the drop-in center.

Westside Writing Center (Oakes)

Provides tutors (usually graduate students) on an appointment basis to students from Oakes, Porter, and College 8 only. This is a strong program, but it excludes the majority of the undergraduate population and does not address course specific style.

References:

McCarthy, Sarah. 2008. The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Teachers' Writing Instruction. *Written Communication*. 25(4): 462-505.

Murphy, Sandra. 2003. That Was Then, This is Now: The Impact of Changing Assessment Policies on Teachers and the Teaching of Writing in California. *Journal of Writing Assessment*. 1(1): 23-45.

III. Writing and Anthropology at UCSC

1. The role of writing in our curriculum

The Anthropology Department's undergraduate studies web page introduces the discipline as a writing intensive practice:

[Anthropology] offers critical perspectives on the diversity of human experience - and how to think, write and talk about it. It is an excellent major for students considering careers that involve communication, writing, and critical analysis of information and high levels of cultural interaction.

Professors consistently emphasize that the ability to write compellingly and critically is *the skill of their discipline*. Writing is part of every class in the course catalog, and students give some of the most enthusiastic reviews to the courses that ask them to write the most. Anthropology students compose argumentative essays, synthesize theory and data into research papers, and critique nuanced theoretical texts in their own words.

Professors and TAs read hundreds of pages of student writing every quarter, and often exceed their expected work hours in order to provide constructive feedback to students. This proves to be a Herculean task, as many students arrive in the department without the basic tools to compose a passing paper. Given that UCSC students may receive only 10 weeks of writing training before writing for anthropology courses, it is less shocking to find students in upper division courses who continue to fail assignments due to writing deficits.

2. Disciplinary Communication (DC) in Anthropology

Anthropology's DC requirement works toward cultivating high-level skills in critical and ethnographic writing. To satisfy the DC requirement students must: a) complete an Anthropological Theory Course (chosen from ANTH 100, 150, 152, 170, 270) and; b) complete a Senior Seminar or complete an Independent Senior Thesis, following the guidelines of the senior exit requirement. Students who take 270 to fulfill the theory/DC requirement may not use the course to satisfy the senior exit requirement.

When students arrive at the Senior Seminar or Thesis level, they are asked to compose thorough and convincing research papers, thinking with and communicating complex ideas. At this stage, an inability to compose grammatically correct sentences or organize a composition is unacceptable, and demands that both instructors and students spend considerable time working on issues that are not intended purpose of the course or the project.

3. Challenges and Gaps

Faculty, TAs, and Writing Assistants (WAs) in the Anthropology Department report the following major challenges in student writing:

serious grammar and style issues that inhibit the expression of clear ideas

inability to sustain a cohesive argument or maintain a consistent theme

lack of familiarity with citation styles and plagiarism protocols

failure to properly or fully address the prompt or assignment

difficulty articulating a thesis as separate from a claim or example

They also note that particular groups of students demonstrate a clear pattern of challenges, especially first generation students, second language learners, and those who transfer from community colleges.

These groups, both as described by others and as self-reported, often struggle with:

- reading effectively and recognizing key ideas
- reproducing the codes and conventions of academic writing
- a hesitancy to engage with peers or faculty that they perceive as coming from more privileged backgrounds or social groups

Students are often keenly aware of their shortcomings, and in interviews and anonymous surveys conveyed widespread anxiety over their writing abilities and assignments. Central among these is skill in revision. Papers filled with grammar and spelling errors are not always a sign of carelessness on the student's part, but rather an inability to recognize their own mistakes. In their own words, students describe writing for anthropology courses as:

- varying widely between the sub-disciplines (sociocultural, archaeology, biological)
- at once technical and theoretical, analytical and argumentative

- using a patterned way of thinking and writing
- requiring them to break from the conventions of writing for history or English classes
- providing more freedom to experiment and express themselves, but also asking for consistent critique of assumptions and perspectives

Writing in a typical course context

Teaching Assistants read the majority of student written work and use office hours as well as section time to discuss writing issues, strategies, and assignments with their students. With the student-to-TA ratio increasing each year, however, TAs are often responsible for grading 50 to 80 assignments, each several pages long, periodically throughout the quarter. It is logistically impossible for TAs and instructors to meet with each student to work on their writing, and even in-text comments are limited to the time they can allot to each student's work.

IV. The Writing Assistant Program

In this broader campus and departmental context, the Anthropology Department created the Writing Assistant (WA) Program in 2010. The goal was to address the needs of students who must master writing skills in order to succeed in the discipline, but arrive woefully unprepared to do so. A combined two-year study of the program's implementation and impacts, carried out by Suraiya Jetha and Rebecca Feinberg with support from the Chancellor's Graduate Internship Program, indicates a high degree of overlap between identified problems and needs and the program's services and outcomes.

Every fall, faculty in the Anthropology Department identify a cadre of juniors, and occasionally sophomores, who are recruited into the WA program on the basis of an anonymous faculty recommendation. If they accept their appointment – and the vast majority of WAs are thrilled to be nominated and participate with gusto – these students take a two-credit class, ANTH 113, which introduces them to the peer-engagement process, a variety of writing assistance techniques, and serves as a supportive environment for them to discuss challenges and successes throughout their first quarter as WAs. WAs read widely on topics related both to the techniques of writing and to strategies for engaging their peers in discussion and reflection; faculty also provide guest workshops on topics such as proper citation. Historically, the cost of this course has been borne by the Anthropology Department. In addition, a faculty coordinator is appointed each year to oversee the recruitment of the WAs, the operations of the Center, as well as to work on grant writing and donor outreach. Each writing assistant is also assigned a faculty mentor, who serves as an additional research with whom the WA can discuss questions and concerns that arise in the process of peer assistance.

In our first four years of operation, WAs were assigned to specific classes and worked with individual faculty members. Given ongoing scheduling issues, however, in the fall of 2014 we switched to a drop-in model and the Writing Assistant Center (WAC) was opened in the department. The WAC model gives both students and WAs greater freedom to participate in the program despite a full class schedule, jobs, and commuting. So far we are pleased with this change; one notable development is that studying student outcomes has been made far easier by having all students who work with WAs documented in one place (see below).

The Anthropology Department has given the WA program its own office in Social Sciences 1, 235, where the meetings are held. WAs work with students at a variety of stages throughout the writing process, from the initial brainstorming of ideas to polishing a final draft. Students can and do return at a later stage in the writing process or with additional assignments.

Having now run this program for five years, we are beginning to amass empirical evidence that the WAs' work makes an important contribution to student success in anthropology. We anticipate that this program will yield reduced time-to-degree for anthropology majors, who have now a three-tiered support structure for their academic achievement. We also expect that

the confidence gained by students who participate in this program can only result in improved student retention, especially among transfer and first generation college students.

1. WA Program Outcomes 2013-2014 (Jetha)

In the first year of evaluation, we found several interesting trends:

- Students who participate in the WA Program in an anthropology class report that they are more aware of writing as a process than before their work with WAs
- Students who see WAs are likely to report that they have skills that could be improved (i.e. have a better sense of their own writing challenges than those who do not reflect on the writing process with WAs)
- Students report that seeing a WA helped them in time management. The attention to writing as a process and the incentivization provided by faculty (in the past*) for working on multiple drafts of a project means that they get started earlier and have more time for revision (*note: per union rules, faculty can no longer mandate WA sessions for students in their classes).
- Students who work with WAs attribute increased confidence in their writing skills to the WA program. Even in classes where WA visits were not mandatory, students use the WAs to help structure the completion of written assignments and state that this helped prevent procrastination and end-of-quarter stress.

In addition, Jetha noted a very unexpected, though welcome, outcome of the WA program:

- Some students, including transfer students and students of color, report that meeting with a WA helps them prepare for or feel less intimidated by meeting with faculty or graduate student teaching assistants. They effectively use the peer advising sessions as a rehearsal for interactions they find significantly more intimidating.

This finding enhances our sense that the WA program can have direct, positive impacts on student retention and speaks to the possibility of changes that extend far beyond the technics of writing.

We have also found that one of the true successes of this program pertains to the WAs themselves. WAs continue to be recruited exclusively through faculty nomination. Several of the selected students were surprised at their nomination, but program participation gave them a new level of confidence and, they reported, significantly improved their own writing. As one WA put it:

Being invited to participate in the writing assistant program took me by surprise. Sincerely, I was not aware of my potential and competence to work with my classmates' writing. However, I [knew this was an] opportunity, and I decided to accept the invitation and see how it unfolded. Little did I know it [would become] one of the most rewarding experiences of my undergraduate career. As a transfer student

coming from a non-native speaking background, I believed that the way I expressed myself... was nothing more than average... [I realized that] I had the capacity to [bring topics to the table] in a clear manner.

By far our most striking finding in 2013-2014, however, was that

Students who work with a peer Writing Assistant tend to become what we call “frequent flyers.” That is, they recognize a high value in the interaction and seek out WA support repeatedly throughout the quarter.

We think this is clear evidence that we are so far very successful in building a lateral support structure – a community – that supports student writing. We are working to produce far-reaching changes in department and academic *culture* in the Anthropology program that may not be quantitatively measurable for a few more years but that the faculty have all certainly experienced on an anecdotal level.

http://anthro.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/writing_assistant_pro

2. WA Program Outcomes in 2014-2015 (Feinberg)

Taking the previous year’s findings, we have worked this year to increase the WAC’s visibility through greater publicity and outreach. WAC hours are available on-line at the Anthropology website (http://anthro.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/writing_assistant_program.html). The WAs also advertise with posters and class announcements; a “Write In,” in which the WAs held extra, public drop-in hours for writing assistance was also held in March 2015 (see cover photo).

We also set out to further investigate program outcomes. With the new centralized WAC up and running, we were able to obtain more fine-grained data on the areas in which students feel they need the most assistance.

WA reports and student outtake surveys analyzed by Feinberg during the current academic year indicate that WA sessions are most often spent working on **rough drafts of analytical essays and critical reflection papers**. WAs work most often with students on:

- improving the clarity and organization of student papers
- synthesizing a concrete thesis that properly addresses the prompt
- recognizing and reproducing anthropological writing styles
- correctly and effectively using notes, data, and citations in papers

“FREQUENT FLYERS”

Students who work with a peer Writing Assistant tend to become frequent users of the program.

They recognize a high value in the interaction and seek out WA support repeatedly throughout the quarter.

- identifying and correcting repetitive grammatical or spelling mistakes

WAs also describe reminding their peers to write *respectfully*. One of the most important skills in anthropology is the ability to distance oneself from assumptions and prejudices in order to think more creatively and productively. WAs hold themselves and their peers accountable to those standards in writing.

The issues and skills that WAs do work on with students align directly with the problems that instructors and TAs have identified. In addition, the WAC provides students with many of the resources that the Writing Program recommends as key to improving writing skills, including:

- one on one close readings and immediate verbal feedback on their work
- another mind to talk through tough concepts and help them develop their ideas
- a peer who is approachable but who students want to impress
- identifying repeated errors and correcting them

The Writing Instruction panel held on 5/6/15 for UCSC instructors reinforced our sense that across the disciplines, peer-to-peer review and conversational feedback are some of the most effective forms of improving student writing. WAs are a familiar and friendly face, one that is less intimidating to approach than their instructor or TA, but also one that students do not want to disappoint. Thus, our finding from 2013-2014 with regard to the “rehearsal” aspect of peer-to-peer tutoring seems to be confirmed.

As one student put it, *“After my experience in a predominately white middle school, I began to believe that white people could write better than me. Because majority of my teachers after middle school were white and male, I made sure not to hand in poorly written essay assignments.”* Writing Program instructors also report underprivileged students as arriving to UCSC with a less developed sense of voice and confidence in the classroom. A WA explained that she felt similarly when she first arrived to UCSC, and so wanted to serve her peers as a more approachable female student of color.

Student outcome surveys and interviews report an overwhelmingly positive experience with the WA program. The most common results that students report include:

- feeling more confident about their writing abilities *and* more comfortable asking for help with writing
- approaching assignments with a clear sense of their instructor’s expectations
- getting past writing blocks and concretizing jumbled ideas

- identifying and recognizing repeated errors
- feeling supported by the department and their peers

Community and Appreciation

Many students explain that they wish they had started visiting the WAC earlier in their career at UCSC and express their gratitude towards the program and their tutors, saying “I wish other departments had something like this” and emphasizing the enthusiasm and patience their tutors bring to their work. Within the Anthropology Department, the program builds a sense of community amongst the undergraduate students, while also giving WAs a chance to work directly with faculty and build relationships that can be difficult to establish at a large public university.

A Note on the Relationship Between WAs and TAs

WAs are not replacements for TA or instructor support, nor should they be. WAs are taught to recognize the difference between content and writing tutoring and refer students to their TAs or professors when appropriate. As noted above, we find that this increases the likelihood that students will attend office hours for their courses. Further, it helps them identify questions for their instructors. Thus, we view the WA program as one part of a multi-faceted approach to addressing the writing needs of our students.

3. WA Program Broader Impacts

Student Support and Retention Rates

At a campus seeking to improve retention rates while increasing enrollments and fees (and therefore decreasing student-teacher contact and the services/resources available to each student), students express a fair amount of frustration and alienation with the UC system, explaining that “It feels like the university doesn’t care about us, and [the WAC] is a nice alternative to that reality.”

Writing after Graduation: Career Counseling and Continuing Education

Upon graduating from UCSC, social science majors and anthropology majors are likely to pursue careers in which writing skills figure prominently in both the application process and their job description. Anthropology majors in particular rely heavily on their disciplinary training in thinking through complicated ideas and expressing them clearly in writing.

Whether writing statements of intent for graduate education or composing cover letters for professional positions, advisors agree that clear and well-organized writing is crucial to success after graduation. They identify the following as most important to career building writing:

- composing persuasive arguments, either to sell an idea or oneself as the ideal candidate
- concise and effective communication of concepts
- polished and professional writing with no grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors

Not all students arrive prepared for career track writing, and advisors report that students struggle especially with:

- identifying and demonstrating their skills and strengths
- reading their writing “through someone else’s eyes”
- proofreading their work for stylistic errors

Advisors stressed the frequency with which they assist second language learners who continue to struggle with English grammar and spelling well into their final quarters at UCSC. Both Career Center counselors and Writing Program staff alike commented that there is not enough support for these students; they caution that the issue will intensify for UCSC, which has been named a Hispanic Serving Institution, in the future. In assisting students with their applications, advisors describe the ethically fraught process of wanting to help, but having resisting the urge to turn student writing into their own.

WAC and UCSC’s HSI mandate

As a recognized Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), UCSC is committed to improving its programs for underrepresented groups. The goals that Dean Hughey outlined below for the HSI team align directly with the services and example that the WAC provides:

- initiatives and ideas to increase our visibility, value, and effectiveness for students from underrepresented groups
- review of best practices and their feasibility for expansion at or adaptation to UCSC
- determination of opportunities for fund raising related to HIS status, potentially including grant proposals

4. Budget

The final aspect of the Writing Assistant Program that we would like to note is its cost effectiveness. In the first three years of the program, costs were shared somewhat by the Anthropology Department and Learning Support Services (LSS). In 2013, we made the decision to move the program entirely “in-house,” which meant we also had to seek out other sources of funding. Our costs for the 2014-2015 year have been as follows, with WA salaries listed in Table 2:

Table 1.

ANCEP - ANTH - ACADEMIC SENATE CEP GRANT

Date	Description	Doc Code	Ref 1	Ref 2	Account	Account Title	Budget	Expenses	Liens	Balance
09/17/14	DC Initiative Funding - Moodie	J0445841	EV009		B00000	ACADEMIC SALARIES	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	
09/30/14	UCSC Copy Center Copy Sept 2014	J0446557	ANTH113		000050	PRINTING-FORMS, STATIONERY,E	0.00	152.15	0.00	
10/23/14	BOOKS	J0448342	20794		000500	LIBRARY MATERIALS(NON-INVENT	0.00	522.00	0.00	
04/06/15	Moodie, Megan C.	I2255072		REIMB-03/30/15	000030	OFFICE SUPPLIES	0.00	149.54	0.00	
04/06/15	sales tax due for reimbursement	J0456143	I2255072		000030	OFFICE SUPPLIES	0.00	13.08	0.00	
ANCEP - ANTH - ACADEMIC SENATE CEP GRANT							Total	10,000.00	836.77	0.00 9,163.23
							Grand Total	10,000.00	836.77	0.00 9,163.23

Table 2. WA Salaries*

Fall 2014	\$ 1,707.31
Winter 2015	\$ 3,796.48
Spring 2015	\$ 1,077.19
Total 2014-15	\$ 6,580.98

*Please note that the figures for spring are preliminary, but we are on target to come in right at our budget of \$10,000

In addition to the \$10,000 we received from CEP and the VPDUE's office for the program this year, the department has made a significant contribution to the program in the form of cost-sharing for the CGIP, a course relief for Coordinator Moodie to compile data, write grants, and manage the new WAC, and the cost of ANTH 113, which in 2014 was \$4,076.17.

As our department gains more secure funding for all our operations we would expect to see this program become part of our normal operations. Yet we are also aware it could be the perfect focus of an endowment from our alumni. The Department of Anthropology has been proactive in seeking alternative means of funding this program. We have included information about our Writing Assistant Program in outreach efforts to prospective donors (<http://anthro.ucsc.edu/news-events/anthropology-chronicle/2014-chronicle/WA-gratitude.html>). in the annual newsletter that is distributed to students, parents, and alumni at our graduation ceremony, and the Writing Assistant Program will be featured in the brochure that the Anthropology Department is creating with the Dean of Social Sciences and Fly Communications to be distributed to "high capacity" donors. Faculty Coordinator (2010-11, 2013-present) Megan Moodie has also met at length with Anne Hayes of the Social Sciences development team to discuss the program and highlight reasons it may be an attractive option for donors. We are also investigating the prospects for foundation support for this program, given its relevance to our commitment to empowering students from underrepresented groups and preparing them for careers in our field.

We are currently researching our options for more crowd-sourced funding for this program. We are weighing the relative benefits and drawbacks of a public service website like

Kickstarter.com and have submitted a proposal for the campus-based Crowdfund UC Santa Cruz (<https://crowdfund.ucsc.edu>). Photos of our recent “Write-In,” in which WAs, professors, and graduate students offered public writing consults and spent time writing together in public spaces in the Social Sciences 1 building were also posted to our Facebook page, along with a request to visitors and alums for WA Center support.

V. Conclusion

Principle Findings

At this point, we feel there is sufficient data to argue that

The Anthropology Department's Writing Assistant Program addresses a state-wide, campus-wide problem by providing face-to-face peer support for students. In addition, because many of the students who visit WAs are not Anthropology majors, we are providing a service that extends far beyond our department.

To summarize the main findings of the two graduate student researchers who have looked at the WA program:

- Undergraduate writing is global problem on campus. This study found gaps and deficiencies in student work across backgrounds and social groups. While ESL or first generation students do face specific challenges that contribute to particular writing issues, UCSC undergraduates as a whole need better writing training and support.
- Students who are not writing at the college level are not lazy or unintelligent. They are bright, hardworking thinkers who have not been adequately prepared by their high schools or brief writing training at UCSC.
- The WAC is not just a triage for a broken system, though it certainly does provide desperately needed services, but a model for doing things differently that could be part of a campus-wide initiative to provide better education and the skills students need to succeed

Suggestions for Other Departments Interested in Supporting Student Writing:

There are several steps for setting up an initiative like the WA program, and we are eager to share what we have learned with our colleagues across campus. In an ideal world, students would encounter similar programs in several departments, and thus have even denser webs of support for their writing improvement.

There are some things that can be done without establishing a separate WA program. These include:

- Incorporate disciplinary writing skills into lectures, sections, labs, etc. and provide students with online or printed guides and resources to refer to while composing their assignments
- Offer the opportunity to revise and resubmit assignments in which writing issues, rather than content, is the main problem with the student's work
- Alternatively, design assignments in which students can take feedback from one writing task and apply it constructively to the next

- Foster classroom contexts in which students read and edit each other's writing to encourage peer support and collaboration
- Refer students to the resources that may be available to them, including the Oakes Writing Center and Learning Support Services

For departments that are considering establishing a peer writing program, some things to consider as you develop an approach that works for your discipline might be:

1. Collectively identifying issues and deficits in student writing abilities and considering which skills are most important in disciplinary communication practices can guide the process whereby you select and train WAs.
2. Though it is less transparent than having, for instance, an application process, we have found that the faculty nomination procedure for WAs lends to its status as an honor among undergraduates. One of the reasons we have such success with the WAs themselves is that they feel privileged to participate in the program, both because they reap real personal rewards from working with others and because they get sustained, closer contact with the faculty coordinator and their faculty mentor.
3. We have found that we have to put significant effort into publicity and outreach. Once we reach students in our classes, however, as we showed above, they become regular users of the WA center. It can take anywhere from 1-3 years for the idea of peer writing support to permeate through the student population. The number of sessions we provide has grown from year to year and from quarter to quarter (particularly during the 2014-2015 year when we switched to a drop-in center).
4. Not all good student writers make good student Writing Assistants. We do not just seek out the "smartest" students in our classes, but also those who demonstrate friendliness, empathy, and attention to detail – qualities that are as important as grammatical correctness in working with peers.
5. All of our efforts to set up and fund the WAC have also been accompanied by departmental activism around the shrinking levels of support for graduate students on campus. We do **not** see our WAC as a substitute for the expertise of TAs and professors and we hope that future years will see stable, higher levels of support for our TAs to reduce class size and increase the amount of individual attention we can provide to struggling students.
6. One issue that has emerged is that the role of the Faculty Coordinator takes a considerable amount of time and energy. We have usually treated this as a normal, though significant, service assignment within the department. Given the fundraising/grant writing efforts that are increasingly attached to the position, however, we have had to think about ways to incentivize faculty members to fill this crucial, but somewhat strenuous, role. One possibility is course relief for the Coordinator; as this is an expensive option every year (we are now considering offering one for a term of three years of service to the WAC), we have written a small

stipend (\$1500) to be deposited in the Coordinator's research account into our most recent budget. Another model to be considered is having the WA training course (in Anthropology, this is ANTH 113) taught by a faculty member as a full five-credit seminar. This seminar, which would never have more than 12 students, could be an honors-like space to combine WA training and contentful work in the discipline – a luxury in an era of rising enrollments!