Helping Your Students Make Effective Use of the Writing Center

Students should be taught how to make effective use of the variety of services offered on LCC’s campus, including the Writing Center. As an instructor, you can play a vital role in this process by helping students better understand our services as they prepare for an appointment with a Peer Writing Assistant (PWA).

**Preparation counts.** Encourage students to bring their written assignment sheets and notes about any additional instructions you have given during class. Also encourage them to bring any relevant course materials, including textbooks like the *Pocket Style Manual*. PWAs often help students with documentation and other mechanics issues by demonstrating how to look up appropriate examples in their course textbooks.

**Visit early.** Many students think they must bring a written draft of a paper to the Writing Center, but this is not true. On the contrary, we encourage them to visit during the pre-writing stage to discuss the assignment requirements, brainstorm topic ideas and develop a plan or outline.

**Visit often.** Writing assistance is especially helpful for students who visit the Writing Center multiple times at various stages during the creative process. A single, 50-minute session with a PWA is often not sufficient time to address everything. Students are allotted two appointments per week and can make additional visits for walk-in assistance as availability permits. See the “Hours and Appointments” page on the Writing Center’s website for more information: [http://lcc.edu/as/writingcenter/hours/](http://lcc.edu/as/writingcenter/hours/).

**It’s your writing.** Encourage your students to take ownership of their Writing Center appointments and subsequent revisions. Students are not obligated to utilize every suggestion made by the PWA. The Writing Center relinquishes control over what students do with their writing after they have visited us. Our goal is to help students make good decisions about their own work.

**Shop around.** Students can request a specific PWA or request *not to work with* a specific person. We take no offense to this request because we know that just like instructors have different personalities and teaching styles, so do our PWAs. Sometimes students need to work with a variety of people before they find an optimal fit.

**“I think my teacher said . . .”** When students visit the Writing Center for assistance in revising an essay, encourage them to bring any written feedback they have received from you. It is very helpful for the PWA to see exactly what you have commented on so they can assist the student with interpretation and application of the feedback.

**“What was that?”** Feedback from both instructors and PWAs is open to interpretation. What the PWA suggests and what the student hears and internalizes might not always be congruent. Please be aware of this and encourage students to take notes during their session with a PWA to minimize confusion and produce a tangible point of reference.
**Back to you.** Our PWAs are familiar with the general requirements for some courses (like those in our composition sequence, comprised of WRIT 117, 121, 122 and ENGL 122) but not with instructor-specific requirements. PWAs rely on students’ understanding of these requirements and might, therefore, need to send the student back to you with specific questions.

**Misguided expectations.** If students tell you they visited the Writing Center and did not find their session helpful, it might be useful to ask about their expectations. Sometimes, well-intentioned students ask the PWA to edit a paper or predict a grade, which our staff are not permitted to do. If the student does not fully understand why these requests cannot be fulfilled, a follow-up conversation with you can provide further clarification.

**Talk to us.** We encourage feedback—both positive and critical—from students and faculty. If a student approaches you with a complaint, please encourage them to come talk to us. If you would rather bring the concern to our attention on behalf of the student, please try to get as many details as you can about the student’s visit, who they worked with and what happened. You might also wish to verify that the student actually worked with someone in A&S 202 (the Writing Center’s only location), as there are a variety of services on campus where other forms of writing support are offered.

**Prove it.** If you are requiring students to provide evidence that they visited the Writing Center, please remind them to record essential details about their visit while they are here. We recommend that, at minimum, you ask them for the date and time of their appointment, the first name of the PWA, and a brief description of the feedback they received. You are welcome to use the student reflection form found on the “Resources” page of the Writing Center’s website: [http://lcc.edu/as/writingcenter/resources/](http://lcc.edu/as/writingcenter/resources/).

**Writing Assistance on Campus**

The College does not offer editing services for students. Therefore, no matter where students seek assistance on campus, they will likely return to class with papers that still contain errors.

The Writing Center assists students with writing assignments for all classes and at all stages in the writing process. PWAs focus primarily on content and organization in student writing but offer instructional editing (identifying patterns of error) in later drafts.

If students need a more direct, instructional approach, The Learning Commons (108 A&S) offers holistic, content-based tutoring in virtually all LCC classes and also employs specialists in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The LCC Library (TLC, second floor) offers drop-in assistance with writing, primarily focused on research, source incorporation and documentation.

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