EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The mission of Lakeland Community College is to provide quality learning opportunities to meet the social and economic needs of the community. Faculty at Lakeland strive to fulfill this mission by incorporating the core values of excellence, accessibility, diversity, integrity, innovation and joy in their classrooms. All are dedicated to contributing to learning that is high quality, supportive, convenient, and continual.

Continuous assessment of the learning experience is essential to maintaining high quality. It also ensures learners are able to get the support they need. The Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, a committee representing all divisions of the college, was charged with researching how well current programs are serving learners with a focus on student writing ability. This survey, one component of the research effort, collects information from faculty about their experiences with student writing.

SURVEY METHOD

In February 2004, informational surveys in the form of written questionnaires were distributed to all full-time and part-time faculty via interoffice mail. A follow-up mailing was distributed via interoffice mail in March 2004. Faculty were instructed to complete one survey only. One hundred and thirty-six (136) completed surveys were returned. Approximately forty-two percent (42%) of full-time faculty responded. Nearly sixteen percent (16%) of part-time faculty responded. The combined response rate is approximately twenty-one percent (21%).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

QUESTION 1: How satisfied are you with the abilities of your students to perform the following?

- With the exception of Item a: “Read & interpret assignments,” mean & median scores indicate respondents are generally dissatisfied with students’ writing abilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total # Responses</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Median Score</th>
<th>Very Satisfied (4.00)</th>
<th>Satisfied (3.00)</th>
<th>Dissatisfied (2.00)</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied (1.00)</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Read &amp; interpret assignments</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4% (5)</td>
<td>60% (81)</td>
<td>30% (40)</td>
<td>6% (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Use grammar &amp; syntax</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>&lt;1% (1)</td>
<td>40% (53)</td>
<td>49% (66)</td>
<td>10% (14)</td>
<td>&lt;1% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Employ correct mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>33% (44)</td>
<td>56% (75)</td>
<td>11% (14)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Analyze (data, ideas, arguments)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3% (4)</td>
<td>40% (53)</td>
<td>49% (65)</td>
<td>8% (10)</td>
<td>3% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Synthesize (information from multiple sources)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>&lt;1% (1)</td>
<td>41% (50)</td>
<td>48% (59)</td>
<td>11% (13)</td>
<td>10% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Cite/Document sources</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>&lt;1% (1)</td>
<td>36% (43)</td>
<td>43% (53)</td>
<td>18% (21)</td>
<td>12% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Paraphrase</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>42% (48)</td>
<td>50% (57)</td>
<td>7% (8)</td>
<td>10% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Other important writing skill: See Appendix A for a complete listing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean / Median Score: 4.00 = Very Satisfied 3.00 = Satisfied 2.00 = Dissatisfied 1.00 = Very Dissatisfied*
QUESTION 2: Do you refer students to support services when they need help with writing assignments?

- Half of those responding to the survey refer students to support services for help with writing assignments. Most referrals are to the Learning Center. See Appendix A for complete listing of open-ended responses.

  ✓ 50% (68) DO refer students needing help with writing
  ✓ 44% (60) DO NOT refer students needing help with writing
  ✓ 6% (8) did not respond to the question

QUESTION 3: If you do NOT refer students for help, please explain why.

- Many respondents indicate a lack of awareness of services available to students who need help with writing.

  See Appendix A for complete listing of responses.

QUESTION 4: If you do refer students for help, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of those services?

- Of those faculty who did refer students for help, more than three quarters rated the effectiveness of support services at Lakeland as “Good” or “Excellent.”

  ✓ 57% (36) rated the effectiveness of services as “GOOD”
  ✓ 22% (14) rated the effectiveness of services as “EXCELLENT”
  ✓ 16% (10) rated the effectiveness of services as “FAIR”
  ✓ 5% (3) rated the effectiveness of services as “POOR”

QUESTION 5: Suggestions for improving services

- Faculty provided many suggestions, including:

  ✓ Increased communication from the Learning Center regarding students referred for services
  ✓ Better advertising of services available to both faculty and students
  ✓ Creation of a formal Writing Center

  See Appendix A for complete listing of responses.

QUESTION 6: ◊ List the courses you regularly teach; and then ◊ Indicate the average number of writing assignments you typically require for each course

- Respondents listed more than 300 courses with the average number of writing assignments ranging from one to thirty.

  See Appendix C for details.
QUESTION 7: Which of the following types of writing assignments are required in the courses you teach?

♦ Types of assignments respondents most often require in their courses include essays and research/term papers:

- 60% (82) require ESSAYS
- 57% (78) require RESEARCH/TERM PAPERS
- 35% (47) require REFLECTION PAPERS
- 34% (46) require SUMMARY WRITING
- 34% (46) require IMPROMPTU IN-CLASS WRITING
- 26% (35) require JOURNALS
- 24% (32) require OUTLINES
- 22% (30) require NARRATIVES
- 21% (29) require REVIEWS
- 21% (29) require TECHNICAL WRITING
- 20% (27) require CRITIQUES
- 19% (26) require CASE STUDIES
- 18% (25) require ISSUE PAPERS
- 15% (21) require PROFESSIONAL WRITING
- 10% (14) require ABSTRACTS
- 18% (24) require “OTHER” types of writing assignments (See Appendix A for open-ended responses)

QUESTION 8: How well are students prepared to successfully complete the types of writing assignments required in your courses?

♦ Less than a third of those responding to the survey believe students are prepared well enough to write successfully in their courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Median Score</th>
<th>Well Prepared</th>
<th>Adequately Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Not Prepared At All</th>
<th>Not Sure/ Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>29% (39)</td>
<td>65% (87)</td>
<td>3% (4)</td>
<td>2% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score: 4.00 = Well Prepared 3.00 = Adequately Prepared 2.00 = Somewhat Unprepared 1.00 = Not Prepared At All
QUESTION 9: How often do you employ the following strategies for helping students improve their writing?

♦ Most frequently employed strategies for improving student writing include: “providing criteria for how writing assignments will be graded,” “providing instructions,” and “acquainting students with resources for learning more about writing & research methods.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Total # Responses</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Median Score</th>
<th>All Courses</th>
<th>Most Courses</th>
<th>Some Courses</th>
<th>No Courses</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require multiple drafts of writing assignments</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>25% (25)</td>
<td>16% (16)</td>
<td>18% (18)</td>
<td>41% (41)</td>
<td>19% (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold student conferences regarding papers in progress</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>26% (25)</td>
<td>13% (13)</td>
<td>28% (27)</td>
<td>33% (32)</td>
<td>22% (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students read/respond to other students’ writing</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>27% (27)</td>
<td>10% (10)</td>
<td>23% (23)</td>
<td>39% (39)</td>
<td>21% (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide instructions (handouts, checklists, etc.)</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>73% (93)</td>
<td>15% (19)</td>
<td>11% (14)</td>
<td>2% (2)</td>
<td>4% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide criteria for how writing assignments will be graded</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>71% (90)</td>
<td>18% (23)</td>
<td>8% (10)</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>4% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide models of good &amp; bad writing</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>35% (40)</td>
<td>17% (20)</td>
<td>21% (24)</td>
<td>27% (31)</td>
<td>12% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaint students with references, handbooks &amp; websites where they can learn more about writing &amp; research methods</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>53% (59)</td>
<td>15% (17)</td>
<td>12% (13)</td>
<td>20% (22)</td>
<td>12% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students reflect on and evaluate their own writing</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>33% (35)</td>
<td>14% (15)</td>
<td>13% (14)</td>
<td>40% (42)</td>
<td>13% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer students to support services at LCC for help</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>42% (44)</td>
<td>10% (10)</td>
<td>18% (19)</td>
<td>30% (32)</td>
<td>15% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other strategy: See Appendix A for a complete listing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score: 4.00 = All Courses 3.00 = Most Courses 2.00 = Some Courses 1.00 = No Courses

QUESTION 10: What is your teaching status?

♦ Part-time faculty account for more than half of those responding:
  ✔ 63% (85) teach PART-TIME at Lakeland
  ✔ 37% (50) teach FULL-TIME at Lakeland
  ✔ <1% (1) did not respond to this question

QUESTION 11: What is your department?

♦ Faculty from more than 38 departments participated in the survey.

  See Appendix C for a complete breakdown.
QUESTION 12: Comments, concerns, ideas, etc. regarding student writing at Lakeland

♦ Comments made by respondents to this survey reflect faculty’s genuine concern for student success at Lakeland. Many respondents indicate an overwhelming need exists for more student support, particularly in the area of quality writing.

   See Appendix A for a complete listing.

CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

♦ Respondents express general frustration with students’ lack of writing ability.

♦ Several comments were made regarding the examination of placement testing mechanisms. There appears to be a need for better placement testing, and for better enforcement of prerequisites based on placement test scores.

♦ There also appears to be a lack of awareness among respondents regarding writing support services available to students at Lakeland. One respondent actually refers students to Tri-C for help.

♦ Suggestions for improving student writing ability at Lakeland center on enhanced support services. Specific recommendations include: strengthening communication between the Learning Center and faculty who refer students there for help; raising awareness of existing support services; and creating a separate, dedicated “writing center.”

NOTE: The analysis of survey data was limited to descriptive statistics in order to provide practical information that can be used for planning and assessment purposes. No tests for significance or in-depth analyses were conducted; findings should be viewed simply as one source of information that may be helpful to the assessment process.