

2011-2012 GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: REPORT ON SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO PILOT ASSESSMENT, 14-15 JUNE 2012

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Submission dates: 13 Aug. 2012, 10 Sept. 2012 (revised)

I. The SWP Assessment: Overview, Contexts, Data Collection, Limitations

Overview. What can we learn about student writing from our best graduating seniors? This question became central to Westmont's pilot assessment of senior writing portfolios (SWPs) in June 2012. Although we acknowledge the need to learn from students other than those at the top of the Class of 2012 (and did so learn via multiple measures), the results of our pilot SWP study contribute to a valuable, emerging map of Westmont's Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. In short, our assessment findings point to the need to balance instruction in polished style (including format and citation methods appropriate to discipline) with increased emphasis on higher-order thinking, sensitivity to audience and purpose (rhetorical awareness and mobility), and the craft of revision as part of a robust writing process. Although these findings are not surprising in the context of similar goals in a number of WAC programs nationally, they may surprise some teaching faculty and administrators who (understandably) notice weaknesses in some students' stylistic performances. In addition, these findings have consequences for the current structure of our WAC program, for faculty instruction practices, and for support/development resources for both students and faculty. At the end of this report, I offer high-priority recommendations for Westmont's WAC program.

Contexts. In the 2011-2012 academic year, Westmont entered a six-year assessment cycle for General Education; this past year, GE assessment focused on Written Communication. (Although we had planned to measure Oral Communication in the same year, that area of the GE was deemed "unassessable" by Dean Nazarenko in 2011-2012 due to the low number of Speech-Intensive courses available to students.) In assessing Written Communication, our primary goal was to learn how well our students were meeting the relevant SLO for General Education: "Students will communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum." Although student performance varies, each student's *experience* of such "variety" is formalized by completion of at least two Writing-

/Speech-Intensive courses, one from inside and one from outside his/her major.¹ Due to the few approved Speech-Intensive courses, students almost always fulfill the WSI GE requirement with Writing-Intensive courses.

In accordance with best practices in WAC program assessment, we used multiple measures to assess our program in relation to the relevant SLO. Initially, we focused on formative assessment, seeking to map the existing shape of the WAC curriculum before deciding on the methods of data collection for summative assessment, including direct assessment of student writing (completed in June 2012 in the SWP pilot assessment). In the absence of a Writing Program Administrator (WPA) or WAC Coordinator, formative assessment took considerable time and included review of approved Writing-Intensive (WI) course syllabi and course caps, analysis of writing center data, and a survey of student and faculty experiences of WI courses using the Consortium for the Study of Writing (CSWC) questions (used nationally in partnership with the National Study of Student Engagement). Also, prior to the June 2012 workshop in which senior writing portfolios were rated by a team of Westmont faculty from all three divisions, professional development activities included two faculty WAC workshops on “Responding to Student Writing” (Fall 2011) and “Designing Assignments and Supporting the Writing Process” (Spring 2012), co-led by Cheri Larsen Hoeckley and Sarah Skripsky of the English department. See the Appendices and the [Writing/Speech-Intensive Faculty Site](#) (enrollment key: “wacfac.key”) for additional information on the structure and findings of these assessment activities.

Data Collection and Limitations. After engaging in formative and indirect assessment efforts, we initiated the SWP pilot assessment for direct, summative assessment in Spring 2012. All eligible students (seniors graduating in December or May of 2012) were contacted via e-mail with SWP participation guidelines, which included the submission of 2-4 writing samples (totaling 10-40 pp.) from courses in at least two different disciplines plus a writer’s memo making a case for how the portfolio demonstrated the ability to “communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum” (a rephrasing of the GE SLO for Written Communication).

For multiple reasons, the SWP assessment was limited to a pilot project only, and its results are suggestive rather than weighty. Reasons for the assessment’s limitations include a lack of vertical sequencing in the WAC program², the lack of a

¹ Depending on placement, that student may first (ideally) complete the Writing for the Liberal Arts GE requirement, most commonly fulfilled by taking ENG 002 (Composition). In some cases, this course also fulfills the requirement for a WSI course outside the major.

² Currently, Westmont lacks vertical sequencing in writing instruction (with ENG 002 sometimes being delayed until the junior or senior year of a

² Currently, Westmont lacks vertical sequencing in writing instruction (with ENG 002 sometimes being delayed until the junior or senior year of a student’s education). There is no existing requirement for students whose placement results require them to take ENG 002 to do so early in their

portfolio requirement at any level of WAC education³, and limited resources to provide incentives for voluntary student participation in a senior portfolio assessment.⁴ Despite these limitations, the SWP assessment added to our knowledge of the WAC program. Moreover, through a rubric norming session plus portfolio reading, rating, and discussion, faculty engaged in a professional development opportunity relevant to all who teach and support WI courses. Other institutions who use portfolio assessments (to measure writing or even multiple outcomes) have also noted the dual benefit of such activities: assessing student writing while fostering faculty development.

Due in part to the aforementioned limitations on the SWP assessment, we collected a small data set of portfolios from 7.3% of our graduating seniors of 2012 (22 portfolios from 301 eligible seniors). Upon reviewing the names of our voluntary participants, it became obvious that the data set was skewed in an interesting way: many were “top seniors” who had received honors at our spring awards and commencement ceremonies. (In fact, the average G.P.A. of our participants was 3.47 while the average G.P.A. of the class of 2012 was 3.26.) Although our small data set was rather disappointing and admittedly unrepresentative of the average Westmont student, we wondered what could be gained from close analysis of the writing portfolios of some of our best students. What could their portfolios teach us about how our most successful students navigate our WAC program? How would their portfolio memos narrate and make meaning of those experiences? Did they share any interesting strengths or weaknesses—in keeping with *or* despite their overall academic excellence? What suggestions and challenges might they offer to us as faculty and administrators?

II. Tools and Methods for Assessing SWPs (Rubric with Five Criteria)

education (nor as a prerequisite for upper-division Writing-Intensive courses); in addition, according to Spring 2011 CLA results, approximately half of our students fulfill their WLA requirement without taking ENG 002. Thus, we opted to do direct assessment of student writing at the senior level in order to learn about how well students were meeting both GE and Institutional SLOs for Written Communication (SLOs which are very similar) by the time of graduation. By the end of our current GE assessment cycle (2011-2017), if we can achieve better course sequencing in our WAC program, we can gather more data about student learning at the GE level. For now, both the GE and institutional learning outcomes for Written Communication were measured by the SWP assessment as well as by indirect assessments, most notably the CSWC survey.

³ While approval for a pilot assessment of senior portfolios was granted by the Program Review and General Education Committees in Spring 2012 (after referral of the proposal from the provost), the length of the approval process prohibited a class-wide requirement for the class of 2012.

⁴ Dean Nazarenko approved monetary incentives for student participation in the SWP study, but these incentives were understandably limited to the reach of her budget. Incentives included three \$100 prizes for excellence (one per academic division) and six \$20 prizes for participation (randomly selected).

In addition to Dean Nazarenko, a group of 11 faculty from all three academic divisions spent two days assessing the SWPs. (See Appendix A, SWP Faculty Reading Assignments.)

On the first day, we normed the SWP rubric (see Appendix B) in order to achieve a reasonable degree of agreement on expectations for each of the rubric's five criteria. I designed the first two criteria (focused on rhetorical mobility and sensitivity) to assess our GE SLO in relation to a portfolio assessment which—by definition—assesses multiple writing samples. The last three criteria are restatements of the standard grading criteria for Writing-Intensive courses (see Certification Criteria for Writing-Intensive Courses, approved 4/19/2011). In addition to increasing inter-rater reliability for the SWP session, the norming session increased faculty sensitivity to these three standard grading criteria, which together communicate value for a balance of content/message, form/organization, and style in student writing.

On the second day, faculty submitted SWP ratings. Each portfolio was rated at least twice by faculty members with expertise appropriate to the submitted writing samples. Whenever an acceptable degree of disagreement (i.e., a degree of one on a five-point scale for each criterion) was exceeded by the first two raters, a portfolio was scored a third time to achieve sufficient inter-rater reliability.

III. SWP Assessment Results and (Limited) Interpretation

SWP assessment results are summarized in Appendix C, the SWP Assessment Table. After combining scores and calculating averages on day two of the workshop, it became clear that the sample suggested that our best graduates are strongest in the criterion of style (averaging a score 4.26 on a scale of 5) and somewhat weaker in the criteria of rhetorical sensitivity and mobility (averaging scores of 3.86 and 3.70, respectively).

These results, though limited, resonate with findings from indirect assessments (i.e., CSWC results and recent writing center data) which suggest that both faculty and students perceive style to be of significant importance in writing performance. In contrast, the higher-order thinking required for rhetorical sensitivity and mobility (i.e., writing for “a variety of purposes and audiences” in keeping with the GE SLO) is a relative weakness in student performance, even among our most impressive graduates. Faculty may, understandably, privilege style in instruction and response practices since style is an area in which it is possible to provide quick, decisive critique. However, these assessment results suggest that, like many institutions with WAC programs, Westmont challenge in General Education in Written Communication is to produce writers who are not only adept stylists but who are also keen, flexible thinkers and communicators. For

students to succeed in achieving our GE SLO for writing (and to be prepared for writing beyond Westmont), such instruction in rhetorical sensitivity and mobility should be introduced in ENG 002 and should be supported and developed in additional Writing-Intensive courses.

IV. High-Priority Recommendations for WAC Program Development (drawing on multiple data sets, including the CSWC and SWP Assessment Results in the Appendices)

When well-supported and sustainably run, WAC programs like Westmont's are a rich, engaging component of General Education and liberal arts learning. While our WAC program is certainly functional, our 2011 CSWC results suggest that we are below national norms in terms of achieving the best practices imbedded in the survey questions. In addition, our SWP results reinforce the impression that we are best at teaching style and that this emphasis may not be serving students' rhetorical development as well as it should. Many programmatic improvements could be made, but the following are my high-priority recommendations:

- (1) **Vertical Sequencing.** Require completion of ENG 002 or acceptable Writing for the Liberal Arts equivalent for students to achieve junior status (similar to major declaration requirement). Also, we would be wise to review ENG 002 placement methods, to consider developing interdisciplinary first-year seminars as another WLA option, and to develop more lower-division WI (and/or SI) courses to benefit both majors and non-majors. Such program development may require faculty incentives, e.g., more curriculum development grants similar to the Interdisciplinary Curriculum Grant.
- (2) **Writing-Intensive Course Support.** While it would be ideal to reduce all of our Writing-Intensive course caps to be comparable with national norms (15-20), such broad-based reduction is currently cost-prohibitive as well as difficult to manage for some departments in which the senior seminar fulfills the WI course in the major (often fulfilling the Integrating the Major Discipline requirement as well). In the latter case, creating two smaller sections for a senior seminar in order to lower WI course caps would detract from the seniors' cohort experience. However, providing alternative support for faculty via teaching assistants and/or Writing Fellows would enhance WI course quality and improve the experience of both faculty and students.

- (3) WAC Resources for Students and Faculty.** Increase professional development resources such as WAC workshops and materials. We have made a good start this year by offering three WAC workshops, developing the WSI Faculty Site, and giving away departmental reference copies of John Bean's *Engaging Ideas* ("the WAC Bible"), but only a limited number of faculty have taken advantage of these resources. Consider inviting an outside expert (e.g., Chris Anson of NCSU or John Bean of Seattle University) to offer a workshop to increase faculty understanding of best practices in WAC program (e.g., to revise their assignments and response practices); Anson has already been contacted provisionally and is available for limited engagements in the upcoming academic year. Consider, also, hiring/appointing a faculty WAC Coordinator who could work in partnership with both students and faculty to foster student success, e.g.: to form a WAC faculty council, to increase the reach and effectiveness of the writing center by coordinating a Writing Fellows program attentive to Writing in the Disciplines, and even (with institutional funding and permission) to support a sustained portfolio assessment as a requirement for seniors and/or underclassmen who complete the Writing for the Liberal Arts requirement. (Carleton College offers an excellent model of a sophomore portfolio assessment.)

V. Appendices

- **Appendix A: SWP Faculty Reading Assignments**
- **Appendix B: SWP Rubric**
- **Appendix C: SWP Assessment Table**
- **Appendix D: SWP Prompt for Students**
- **Appendix E: 2011 CSWC Survey Results (see especially strong results for 2G)**
- **Appendix F: Writing Center Data at a Glance (see especially Tutorial Tasks data: stylistic emphasis in the majority of tutorials)**

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO RUBRIC: 2012 WESTMONT PILOT STUDY (GE WRITING ASSESSMENT)

Rater's Name/Department: _____ / _____

Portfolio Letter/Number (please write carefully): _____ / _____

2012 Senior Writing Portfolios: Each participant was asked to assemble a portfolio of 2-4 writing samples (of 10-40 total pages) written for at least two academic departments, one of which was his/her major department. (Optional: One or two samples may have been written for non-academic audiences, but at least two samples must be for academic audiences.) Each writer was asked to create a reflective memo of approx. 250-500 words to make a case for the quality of his/her portfolio.

Instructions: On a scale of 1-5, rate how well the writer demonstrates the criteria via his/her portfolio:

-----FAILING-----							-----PASSING-----	
Criteria	Poor 1	Weak 2	Average 3	Strong 4	Excellent 5	N/A		
RHETORICAL SENSITIVITY/MOBILITY *Evidence of liberal arts learning								
1A. Demonstrates awareness of varied audiences and purposes for writing across the curriculum. <i>Memo narrates this awareness; the writer's <u>choice of samples</u> demonstrates its application.</i>	1 Missing memo AND unvaried samples	2 Missing/ weak memo OR unvaried samples	3	4	5 Excellent memo and variety of samples	N/A		
1B. Demonstrates ability to adjust his/her writing to varied audiences and purposes. <i>Quality of <u>samples</u> demonstrates writer's rhetorical sensitivity/mobility.</i>	1 Doesn't fulfill memo's promises	2 Weakly fulfills memo's promises	3	4	5 Exceeds promises of his/her memo	N/A		
CONTENT/MESSAGE *Dependent on audience/purpose: some listed features may not apply to each sample								
2. Demonstrates control of content/message: can construct a central message that includes purposeful and inviting ideas, insightful arguments and reasons to accept them, relevant/substantive supporting material, <i>as appropriate for audience/purpose.</i>	1 Loss of control	2 Minimal control	3	4	5 Could publish	N/A		
FORM/ORGANIZATION *Dependent on audience/purpose: some listed features may not apply to each sample								
3. Demonstrates control of form: can organize messages strategically, create meaningful transitions, and introduce/conclude effectively, <i>as appropriate for audience/purpose.</i>	1 Loss of control	2 Minimal control	3	4	5 Could publish	N/A		
STYLE: GRAMMAR, SYNTAX, PUNCTUATION								
4. Demonstrates control of style: can manipulate grammar, syntax, and punctuation, <i>as appropriate for audience/purpose. (If samples need academic citation, the writer follows conventions of APA, MLA, etc.)</i>	1 Loss of control	2 Minimal control	3	4	5 Could publish	N/A		

Please make any comments you have about this portfolio (feel free to use/create more space):

Assessment Scores for Westmont Senior Writing Portfolios (GE Pilot Assessment)

Date 15 June 2012

CRITERIA	MEAN SCORES of 2+ readers per portfolio											
SWP Codes >>>	1	2	3#	4	5#	6	7	8	9	10	11	
IA. Rhetorical Sensitivity	1.5	5	5	5	2.5	5	4.25	4.75	4	3.75	4.33	
IB. Rhetorical Mobility	1.5	5	4.5	5	2.5	4.5	4.25	4.5	3.25	3.5	4	
2. Content/Message	4.5	4.5	4	4.5	2.5	5	5	4.5	3.5	3.5	4	
3. Form/Organization	4.5	5	4	5	2.5	5	4.25	5	4.25*	3.5	3.67	
4. Style	5	5	5	4.5	2.5	4.5	4.25	5	4	3.5	4	
COLUMN TOTALS >>>	16.5	24.5	22.5	24	12.5	24	22	23.75	19	17.75	20	

Assessment Scores for Westmont Senior Writing Portfolios (GE Pilot Assessment)

Date 15 June 2012

SWP Codes>>>	12	13	14	15	16	17#	18	19	20	21	22	CRITERIA RATING AVERAGES FOR 22 PORTFOLIOS
IA. Rhetorical Sensitivity	4.25	3.75*	3.5	1	2	4*	4.33	3.5	5	4*	4.75	3.86
IB. Rhetorical Mobility	4.25	4.25	3.25	1.5	1.5	4*	4	3.5	4.25	3.25*	5	3.70
2. Content/Messag e	4	5	2.5	2.25	4.5	3.75*	4.5	4.5	5	3.75*	4.75	4.13
3. Form/Organizati on	3.5	5	3	3	4.5	4*	3.5	4	4.25	4	4.75	4.10
4. Style	4	5	4*	3.5	4*	4*	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.75	4.26
COLUMN TOTALS >>>	20	23	16.25	11.25	16.5	19.75	21.67	19.5	22.75	19.25	24	

portfolio was scored by 3rd/4th rater for greater inter-rater reliability (adjusted scores)

* = more than 1.0 range of disagreement on that criterion

Writing at Westmont, Writing Beyond Westmont: INVITATION TO SUBMIT YOUR WRITING

Create a writing portfolio that you can show to future employers and other interested audiences **beyond** Westmont. As you transition to life after Westmont, account for your writing—and make your writing count.

You are warmly invited to participate in Westmont's first Senior Writing Portfolio (SWP) contest. Only seniors graduating in 2012 (May or December) are eligible to participate, and participation is voluntary. The SWP contest is part of the Writing at Westmont Research Project. Additional information is available on the [SWP Eureka site](https://eureka.westmont.edu/course/view.php?id=51484). <https://eureka.westmont.edu/course/view.php?id=51484>

Cash prizes will be awarded for excellence in writing as well as for general participation. Whether you love to write, have doubts about writing, or fall somewhere in-between, YOU are a valuable participant and can be rewarded for your writing. Other than cash prizes, the best part of this invitation is that we're interested in writing you have already completed while at Westmont.

***Prizes for EXCELLENCE (winners will be chosen by a team of faculty judges):
\$100 each for the three best portfolios!**

- \$100 for the best portfolio from a major in the Humanities
- \$100 for the best portfolio from a major in the Natural and Behavioral Sciences
- \$100 for the best portfolio from a major in the Social Sciences

***Prizes for PARTICIPATION (winners will be chosen at random):**

- Six \$20 participation awards for any participants!

[Participation guidelines](#) are available on [Eureka](#) and will also be available in hard copy at the Westmont writing center (Voskuyl Library 215). Per these guidelines, you should [upload your writing samples directly to the SWP Eureka site](#). In brief, you should upload 2-4 writing samples from your Westmont education along with a short self-reflection essay that comments on the samples you've chosen. [A sample essay is available](#) for your reference.

The deadline for submitting your Senior Writing Portfolio is Tuesday, May 15. If you have questions after reviewing the SWP Guidelines, please contact me (Sarah Skripsky) at sskripsky@westmont.edu. Make sure to put "SWP" in your subject line.

Thanks in advance for submitting a Senior Writing Portfolio. **We look forward to reading your writing!**

Blessings,
Prof. Skripsky

P.S. If you choose, you can do more than use Eureka for your portfolio's creation. You can create your own e-portfolio using the user-friendly Weebly.com. (Imagine being able to include your e-portfolio link on a graduate school application letter, or showing your site to a potential employer, etc.) If you create a Weebly e-portfolio, you should follow the guidelines on this [sample Westmont Writing Portfolio site](#). Just don't forget to submit your own website's URL/hyperlink (<http://...>) to [the SWP Eureka site](#) for consideration. Otherwise, we won't be able to find your portfolio, and you won't be eligible for prizes. *Please note: using Weebly or similar e-portfolio builders are entirely optional for the SWP project. Contest participants who choose not to use Weebly will not be penalized.*

Senior Writing Portfolios: Spring 2012 Contest Guidelines

Why is Westmont interested in Senior Writing Portfolios? The portfolio contest is part of an ongoing research project on student writing; the results will help Westmont improve writing instruction and support services. Participation is voluntary. In May-June 2012, Westmont faculty will read the portfolios. This research project is supported by Westmont's General Education and Program Review Committees; the lead researcher is [Sarah Skripsky](#), Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center.

Why should YOU submit a Senior Writing Portfolio? Submitting a portfolio offers multiple incentives. SWP participants are eligible to receive one of three \$100 prizes for excellence¹ as well as one of six \$20 prizes for participation. Beyond the short-term benefits of such prizes, however, seniors can enjoy long-term benefits from creating writing portfolios. Based on the research of [Edward M. White](#), California State University Emeritus Professor of English, student portfolios serve as valuable resources for job interviews and more. Despite considerable benefits, portfolio creation requires very little work for students; with the exception of a brief reflective essay, such portfolios are an assembly of what students have already accomplished (White 591, 594).

What should you include in your portfolio?

- **Choose samples of your very best writing, including samples demonstrating your range** (i.e., avoid choosing samples with very similar purposes and audiences).²
- **Please select only 2-4 writing samples for your portfolio.** At least one sample should be from a Westmont course within your major, at least one sample from a Westmont course outside your major.³ (For example, a Religious Studies major might include a paper written for his/her senior seminar as well as one written for a course in psychology.) **OPTIONAL:** To give evidence of your writing range, you may submit additional samples from courses and/or extra-curricular activities.
- **When combined, your portfolio samples should total approx. 10-40 typed, double-spaced pages, not including bibliographies (if any).** When using sources, make sure to follow an academic citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Your citation style may vary between samples.
- **Within your portfolios, a variety of writing samples are welcome:** academic literature reviews, explications, lab reports, thesis-driven arguments, news articles, proofs, multimedia compositions, business cases, ethnography projects, scripts, faith-learning essays, and more. We invite a range of writing projects produced during your Westmont career. (Note: For this contest, you should submit writing samples written by you alone. While we value projects with group authorship, they should not be part of your portfolio.)

Should you write anything new? (Just one thing.) After selecting samples, create a short self-reflection essay of 250-500 words ([see model](#)) before submitting your portfolio to the [Senior Writing Portfolio site](#) on Eureka. Within this essay, comment on the audience and purpose of each writing sample; you should also address how effectively you wrote for those audiences and purposes. **Overall, the self-reflection essay's purpose is to make a case for how your portfolio demonstrates your ability to "write for a variety of audiences and purposes across the curriculum."** The essay's immediate audience is Westmont faculty members; however, its future audience will be potential employers and anyone else with whom you choose to share your work (e.g., a graduate school admissions committee, etc.).

Thanks in advance for creating a Senior Writing Portfolio. Despite how easy it is, your portfolio will be a valuable resource for you and your future audiences. We look forward to reading your writing!

Works Cited

White, Edward M. "[The Scoring of Writing Portfolios: Phase 2.](#)" *College Composition and Communication* 56.4 (June 2005): 581-600. Web. 9 Nov. 2012.

¹ A prize for excellence makes a valuable addition to a résumé, not just a bank account.

² A few Westmont departments already require portfolios with writing from their majors; these portfolios may be adapted for this contest. Please include a writing sample from outside the major and a self-reflective essay.

³ If you are a double major, you should include at least one writing sample from each of your two majors.

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIOS: SAMPLE SELF-REFLECTION ESSAY

NOTE: You should adapt the content of this sample essay for originality and accuracy. You need not use any of the same sentence structures and are encouraged to add to and subtract from the model. Length will vary, but 250-500 words are suggested for your self-reflection.

HEADER:

Writer's Full Name

Writer's Contact Information for Summer 2012 (If you win a prize, how may we reach you?)

Date

Senior Writing Portfolio: Self-Reflection Essay

I will graduate from Westmont College in _____ 2012 with a major in _____ [and a minor in _____]. This portfolio showcases my growth and success as a writer during my college career and includes writing samples from inside and outside my major. *OPTIONAL: I have also included several samples of my extra-curricular writing [for the Horizon and/or from my recent _____ internship; etc.].* As a writer, I have learned to adapt to a variety of audiences and purposes. In this self-reflection, I make a case for the value of my portfolio, showcasing the best of my writing [as a college student and as an emerging professional in the field of _____]. As part of my liberal arts education, I completed a variety of writing projects. These writing samples demonstrate my intellectual and creative abilities as well as my skill in using writing for different situations. As a whole, this portfolio _____.

My first writing sample is an excellent example of writing within my major. I wrote this essay, "_____", for my senior seminar, _____. This course serves as a capstone for _____ majors and asks challenging questions of advanced students. In this particular assignment, I was responding to the prompt _____; my purpose was _____. My audience consisted of [a professor in ____; experts in ____; fellow Christians; medical professionals; etc.]. I selected this sample because I am proud of *A, B_ [a few possibilities below].*

- *[I wrote and revised this project over the course of approximately six weeks, and it shows my ability as a skilled researcher and writer within my discipline; etc.]*
- *[I wrote this project after considerable reading on controversies related to faith and _____; it shows my ability to integrate Christian faith with _____.]*

My second writing sample, "_____", was written for a General Education course, _____. In this assignment, I was responding to the prompt _____; my purpose was _____. My audience consisted of [a professor in ____; experts in ____; future teachers; Republican voters, etc.]. I selected this sample because I am proud of *D, E, F_ [a few possibilities below].*

- *[Initially, I was unsure about the purpose of this assignment, but ultimately, creating this project allowed me to challenge stereotypes about _____.]*
- *[In my opening paragraph, I argue _____; later paragraphs demonstrate _____. Finally, I _____.]*
- *[I demonstrate mastery of __APA citation style and format__; not only do I understand these conventions, but also I _____.]*

[OPTIONAL REFLECTION ON A NON-ACADEMIC SAMPLE] I created my final writing sample at the end of a four-month internship with _____. This business specializes in _____. My responsibilities as an intern included _____. As a writer, I contributed _____ to the company, as demonstrated by this writing sample directed at an audience of [teenage consumers; Hispanic fathers; Bay Area professionals; etc.]. I selected this sample because I am proud of *G, H_ [a few possibilities below].*

- *[I wrote this project after researching _____ in the Bay Area; it shows my ability to _____.]*
- *[I reworked the _____ of this project with input from my boss; ultimately, I succeeded in _____.]*

Together, these samples demonstrate _____. As you read the portfolio, please take note of features such as _____ and _____ as I show sensitivity to a variety of audiences and purposes for writing. Thank you for your interest in my writing.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT for the Writing at Westmont Research Project

In 2011 and 2012, Westmont College is gathering samples of student essays for use in institutional research. If you're reading this message [and have been contacted about Senior Writing Portfolios], you have been selected to be part of a research project that Westmont is conducting about general education and writing across the curriculum (WAC) at our institution. The purpose of this research project is to learn more about faculty and student experiences of Writing/Speech-Intensive General Education courses as well as to evaluate the performance of student writers and better support their learning and growth. Participation in this study is voluntary, and all student essays collected for this study will remain confidential. If your essay is cited for research purposes by Westmont College or by Sarah Skripsky (the lead researcher), your name will be kept anonymous. Your participation will also be confidential; research participants will be referred to by pseudonym. If you have questions about this project or would like to opt out, please contact Sarah Skripsky at sskripsky@westmont.edu or 805-565-6122.

27 QUESTIONS FROM THE CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING IN COLLEGE¹ (a supplemental question set for the National Survey of Student Engagement²)

Since 2008, the following questions have been administered to over 60,000 students at 151 four-year institutions (representative random sample) as part of the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE). The student survey has generated a set of national, comparative data for use in institutional research and has "provid[ed] the broadest snapshot so far of undergraduate writing" (Gonyea et al.).³ The Partnership for the Study of Writing in College also created a parallel set of questions for the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)--to date, yielding responses from over 3,000 faculty at 46 institutions.

At Westmont, the parallel CSWC question sets were administered in 2011 as part of a voluntary, confidential survey that yielded 219 complete student responses and 71 complete faculty responses. Local data is provided below; statistical tables are followed by excerpts from open-ended survey questions.

Section 1: Students' writing processes 1. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have you done each of the following? <i>5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.</i>	Westmont students <i>(reporting what they did)</i> MEANS	Westmont faculty <i>(reporting what they encouraged or required)</i> MEANS
1A Brainstormed (listed ideas, mapped concepts, prepared an outline, etc.) to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment	3.45	2.65
1B Talked with your instructor to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment	2.26	2.76
1C Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment	2.89	2.18
1D Received feedback from your instructor about a draft before turning in your final assignment	2.27	2.25
1E Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment	2.70	#
1F Visited a campus-based writing or tutoring center to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in	1.36	2.24
1G Used an online tutoring service to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in	1.13	1.07
1H Proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in	*4.33	3.52
*1H responses show correlation with students' gender (i.e., women's ratings are generally higher than men's).		# = no parallel faculty data

¹ Additional information on the CSWC is available online: <http://comppile.org/wpa+nsse/faq/index.htm>

² The standard NSSE asks only five writing questions. The questions are limited and conceive of writing primarily as quantitative: (1-3) During the current school year, about how many papers have you written that were **0-4 pages**, **5-19 pages**, and **30+ pages**? (4) During the current school year, how often have you prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in? (5) To what extent has your experience at your institution contributed to your ability to write clearly and effectively?

³ Gonyea, Robert, Paul Anderson, Chris Anson, and Charles Paine. "Powering Up Your WAC Program: Practical, Productive Ways to Use Assessment Data from NSSE's Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC)." Writing Across the Curriculum Conference. Bloomington, IN. 21 May 2010.

Section 2: Types of student writing. 2. During the current school year, in how many of your writing assignments did you: 5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.	Westmont student <i>(reporting what they did)</i> MEANS	Westmont faculty <i>(reporting what assignments asked)</i> MEANS
2A Narrate or describe one of your own experiences	2.46	2.01
2B Summarize something you read, such as articles, books, or online publications	3.15	2.55
2C Analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed	3.66	3.88
2D Describe your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.	2.32	2.24
2E Argue a position using evidence and reasoning	3.35	3.07
2F Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	2.01	1.59 ⁴
2G Write in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	3.00	2.93
2H Include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content into your written assignment	*2.01	2.13
2I Create the project with multimedia (web page, poster, slide presentation such as PowerPoint, etc.)	2.03	2.01
*2H responses show correlation with non-humanities courses (i.e., given higher ratings from students outside the humanities).		

Section 3: Instructors' ways of assigning and supporting student writing / 3. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments has your instructor done each of the following? 5=All assignments, 4=Most assignments, 3=Some assignments, 2=Few assignments, 1=No assignments.	Westmont student data (reporting what faculty did) MEANS	Westmont faculty data (reporting what they did) MEANS
3A Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do	3.91	4.44
3B Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn	3.39	3.82
3C Explained in advance the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment	3.52	3.89
3D Provided a sample of a completed assignment written by the instructor or a student	2.13	1.82
3E Asked you to do short pieces of writing that he or she did not grade	1.83	#
3F Asked you to give feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline the classmate had written	2.18	1.82
3G Asked you to write with classmates to complete a group project	2.12	1.66
*3H Asked you to address a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	2.21	2.27
*3H relates to Westmont's GE Student Learning Outcome for writing: "[students will] communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum"		# = no parallel faculty data

⁴ Six faculty declined to answer this question.

Section 4: Students' writing plans 4. Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? <i>Response options: 4=Done, 3=Plan to do, 2=Do not plan to do, 1=Have not decided.</i>	<i>Westmont students (reporting what they did) MEANS</i>	#
4A Prepare a portfolio that collects written work from more than one class	*1.97	#
4B Submit work you wrote or co-wrote to a student or professional publication (magazine, journal, newspaper, collection of student work, etc.)	2.19	#
*4A relates to our summative assessment plan for 2011-2012+: assessing seniors' e-portfolios using Ed White's "Phase Two Scoring" method of writing assessment. In addition to being useful for institutional research, e-portfolios encourage students to situate their work rhetorically and benefit alumni job-seekers.		# = no parallel faculty data

WESTMONT STUDENT COMMENTS FROM THE OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTION (2011)⁵

RE: INSTRUCTION/SUPPORT

- I love the perspective Westmont takes on writing intensive classes - they are helpful.
- I highly recommend that freshmen take the Composition course their first semester if at all possible. I did that and I feel it really prepared me for what my professors would expect from me.
- Require [W]riters['] corner? Require printed out and peer edited drafts before a final paper . . .
- I . . . have had many pleasant experiences with Writers['] Corner . . .
- Teachers need to be more harsh when grading papers. Not u[n]necessarily brutal, but they should provide good, thoughtful feedback.
- There needs to be harsher grading. There is no incentive to proof-read, or spend adequate time on papers. Teachers seem scared to give less than a C on even the worst of papers. Don't be afraid to hurt our feelings[;] it[']s your job to push us beyond our comfort zone. **There is not a very advanced writing culture besides those that write for the Horizon or are [E]nglish majors. That is probably the most disappointing aspect of my education here.** I came in freshman year excited about each paper I wrote, and my opportunity to grow as a writer. I soon noticed that my many hours spent on a paper that would get the [?] deserve an "A", seemed toilsome when my peers could throw together sloppy papers with incongruent thes[e]s and get a grade not much lower. It was not until my junior year as I became busier that I sadly conce[d]ed a similar approach as my peers.
- I think it is really important for students to share their writing with other students, whether that involves peer-editing of drafts or required readings of final essays.

⁵ The following student comments are topically relevant. Not all survey comments are reproduced here.

MORE STUDENT COMMENTS . . .

RE: CONSTRAINTS/CHALLENGES

- There are too many writing intensive classes. I think I have taken at least 4 and I needed those classes for other things and I didn't need them to be writing intensive.
- I wish [*** course] would satisfy the writing intensive requirement, because based on the current workload, it should satisfy the requirement.
- I felt like my writing skills actually got worse after [*** course] because it was very remedial.
- The writing styles taught in my [*** course] were VERY different from the writing styles demanded by my Chemistry and Biology professors. I think more work should be done in preparing students who will be a science major in writing in a way that prepares them for upper division classes in their major...

RE: ASSIGNMENTS

- This semester I wrote in **three different writing styles** for three different classes: MLA, APA and Chicago.
- I did not even know how to write a paper in MLA format before coming to Westmont.
- I think that if professors provided a **template** for writing assignments more often (or even their own written work), it would benefit and help instruct students more
- I've had two classes where we maintained a **workbook** on [G]oogle docs and updated it throughout the year with various assignments. Neither professor looked at it until the end of the year. It would have been helpful to get feedback during the year.
- Essay prompts that ask the writer to connect the given subject area with the overall **theme of the Liberal Arts** are redundant and pointless. This is mostly because almost every GE teacher praises the Liberal Arts ad na[u]seum in class. This is fine to do every once in a while, but it's not like I do not know what a Liberal Arts education is - I chose to come here, stop asking me to write about it.
- [Prof. X] is thorough in her assignments and assigns projects in a way that you can easily keep up with them!

WESTMONT FACULTY COMMENTS FROM THE OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTION (2011)⁶

RE: GOALS FOR STUDENT WRITERS

- Having students write in the courses I teach is . . . an attempt to engage them in the learning process by putting their own thoughts into print so they can examine them, review them and present their thoughts to be evaluated and in some cases presented to their classmates for discussion . . . **I want them to address a question directly and not shy away from hard questions or difficult topics.**
- Writing is crucial for **ALL disciplines!!!**
- Students' development as writers and speakers who have "discursive mobility" (i.e., are rhetorically savvy in a range of situations) seems **vital to liberal arts education and to our mission as a Christian college.**
- Resources to help students develop effective skills in responding to other writers would help build **writing communities** that could capitalize on what we are teaching in all our fields.

RE: ASSIGNMENTS

- I find it hard to create good new essay prompts, so I find that **I often use my old time-tested ones**, but there are obvious disadvantages to that.
- The role of writing in my discipline is mainly **critique.**
- I would like to do a better job designing a variety of writing assignments that will help students achieve the **learning objectives** for my courses.
- I've . . . noticed [upper-division] students in my discipline . . . express some **nervousness about their preparation for research papers . . .**
- . . . [O]nly our senior seminar is listed as WSI. This is because it is required of all majors and assessing one course limits the burden of writing assessment. However, this seminar does not teach technical writing. Rather, **it is the first time we ask our students to write nontechnical papers.**
- [In my WI course], students write about 60 pages each and they also **work in a group to merge ideas and to develop a plan of action** that is the basis of an oral presentation.
- Students . . . research and write about a topic that **becomes a resource to their classmates** for future elementary and secondary teachers.

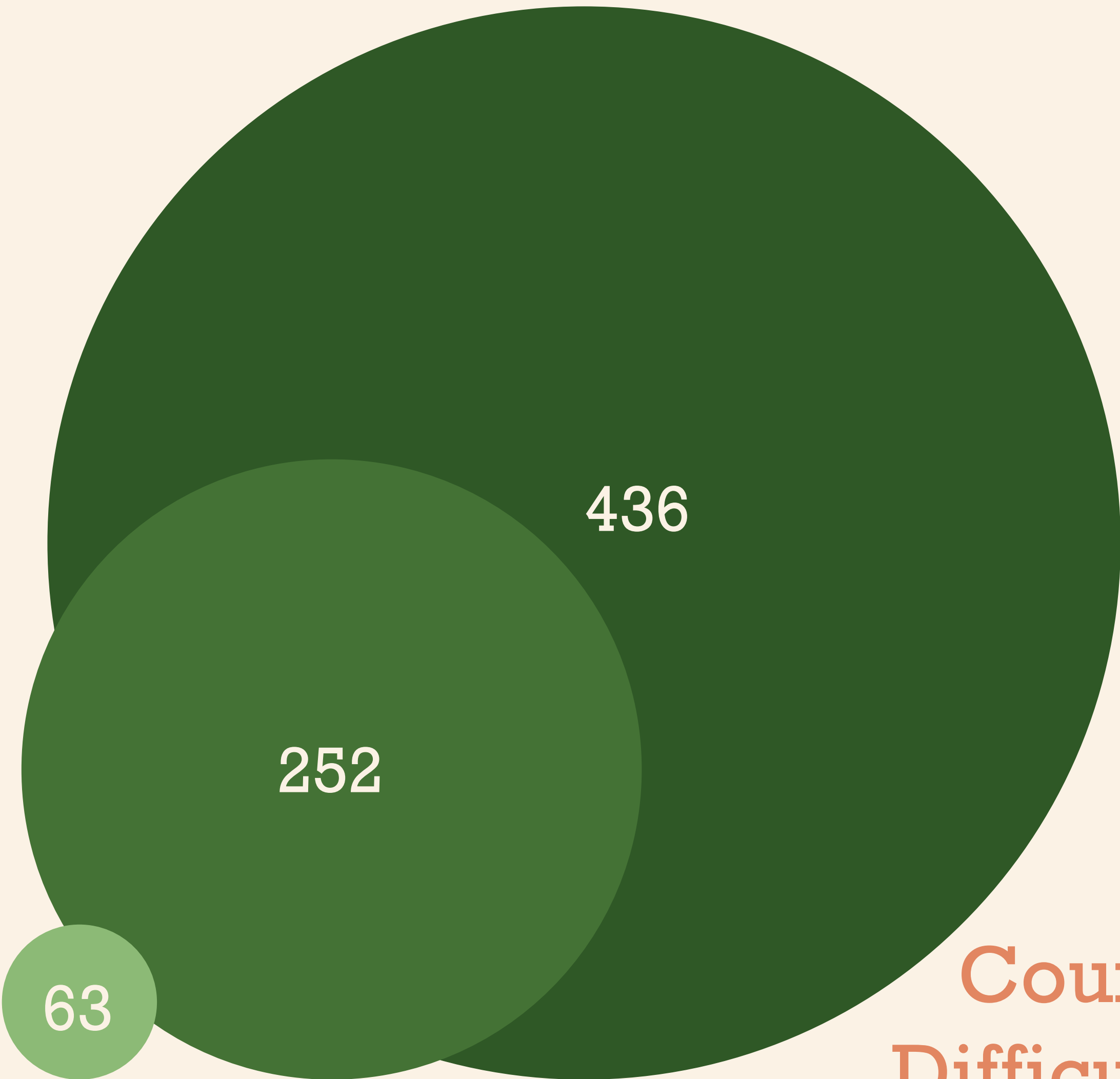
⁶ The following faculty comments are topically relevant. Not all survey comments are reproduced here.

MORE FACULTY COMMENTS . . .

RE: CONSTRAINTS/CHALLENGES

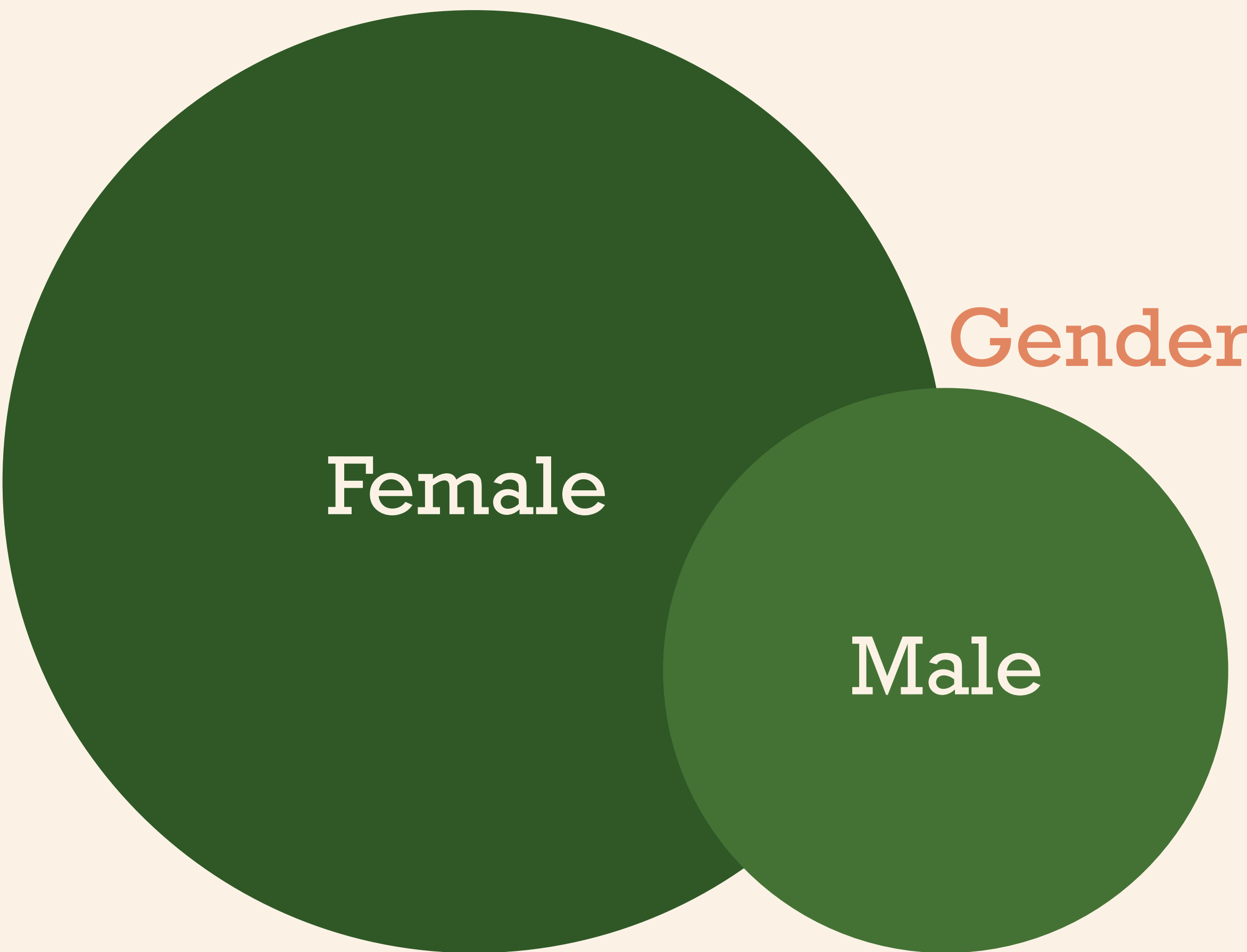
- Most [of my WI] students do not adequately understand how to properly . . . handle **quotations and paraphrases**. This loophole needs to be closed before students end up in an upper-division writing intensive course.
- The English and Comm. Studies departments can and do play important roles in students' rhetorical development, but other departments are vital to helping students grow as writers and speakers in ways that will help them thrive after they graduate. With that said, Westmont could provide **more support** for Writing/Speech-Intensive faculty and for writing/speech that happens in other courses. I'd like to see Westmont support **professional development and sustained conversations among faculty** who teach writing and speech across the curriculum.
- More than often, students in my [*GE course*] . . . demonstrate a very poor level of writing competency in spite of deliberate efforts on my part to teach every aspect of writing for this class. **I cannot be a [*department*] prof and a writing prof for sections of 50.**
- **Lower course caps** for WSI courses seem essential. If 30 students are revising 15 pages (2nd drafts = 30 pages total; 30X30), then we're grading 900 pages of writing. This is undoubtedly excessive. Students also benefit immensely from a lower student/faculty ratio.
- I would like to have **smaller class sizes**. This semester I have over 90 students and I have assignments requiring each of these students to write a total of between 3000 and 5000 words.

Writers' Corner At a Glance



436 students recieved writing tutorials at Writers' Corner in a 1 year period.
252 students reported they were seeking help with an assignment in a lower division class.
63 students reported they were seeking help with an assignment in an upper division class.

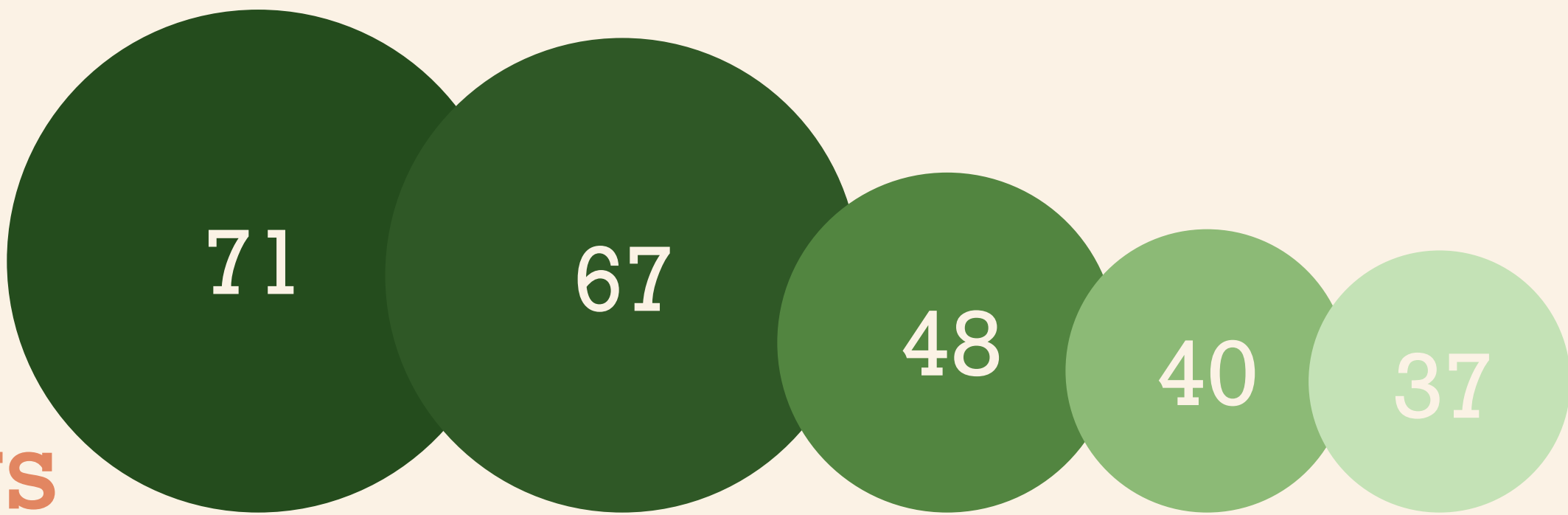
1 inch = 40 students



A total of 277 women and 166 men visited Writers' Corner in a 1 year period.

1 inch = 30 students

Top 5 Majors



71 students reported their major as undecided.
67 students reported Kinesiology as their major.
48 students reported English as their major.
40 students reported Communication Studies as their major.
37 students reported Education or Liberal Studies as their major.

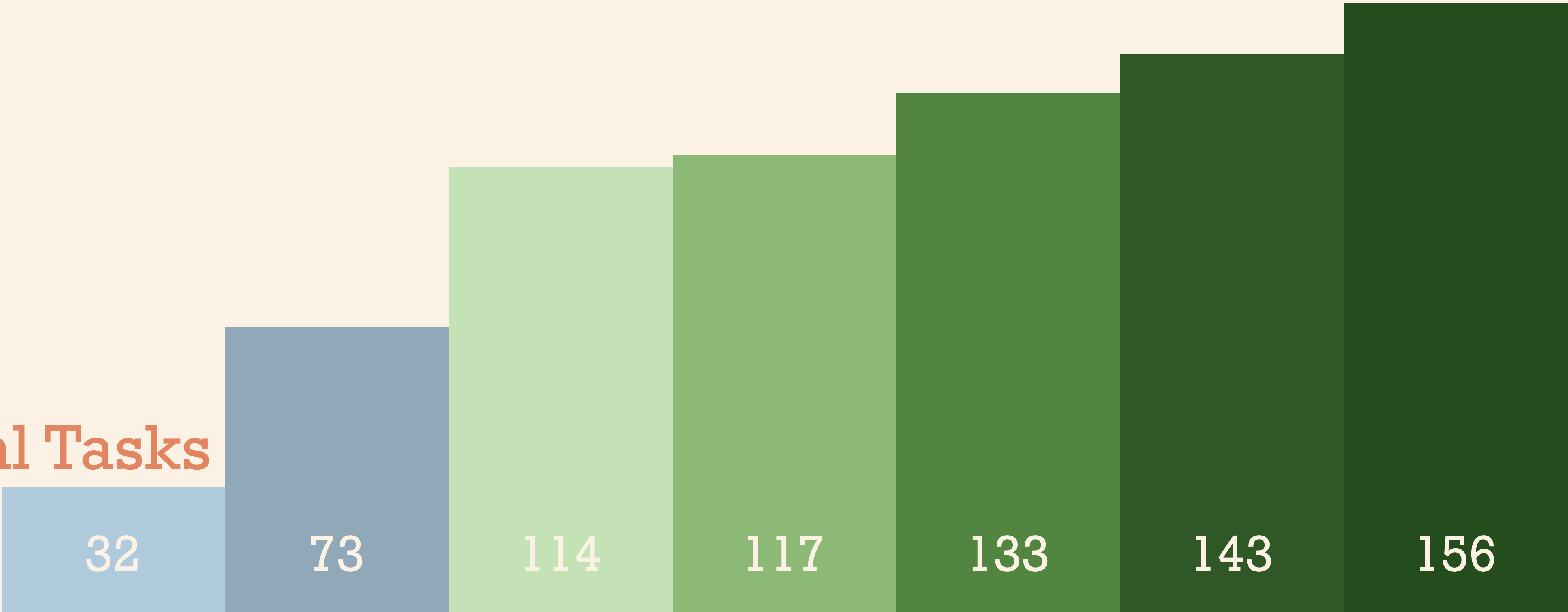
1 inch = 20 students



A total of 243 Freshmen, 70 Sophomores, 69 Juniors, and 50 Seniors visited Writers' Corner in a 1 year period.

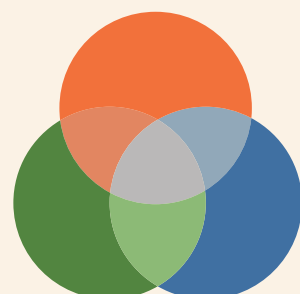
1 inch = 30 students

Tutorial Tasks



32 tutorials addressed understanding the assignment.
73 tutorials addressed forming a thesis.
114 tutorials addressed developing students' ideas.
117 tutorials addressed improving students' style.
133 tutorials addressed organizing students' ideas.
143 tutorials addressed identifying errors in punctuation.
156 tutorials addressed identifying errors in usage.

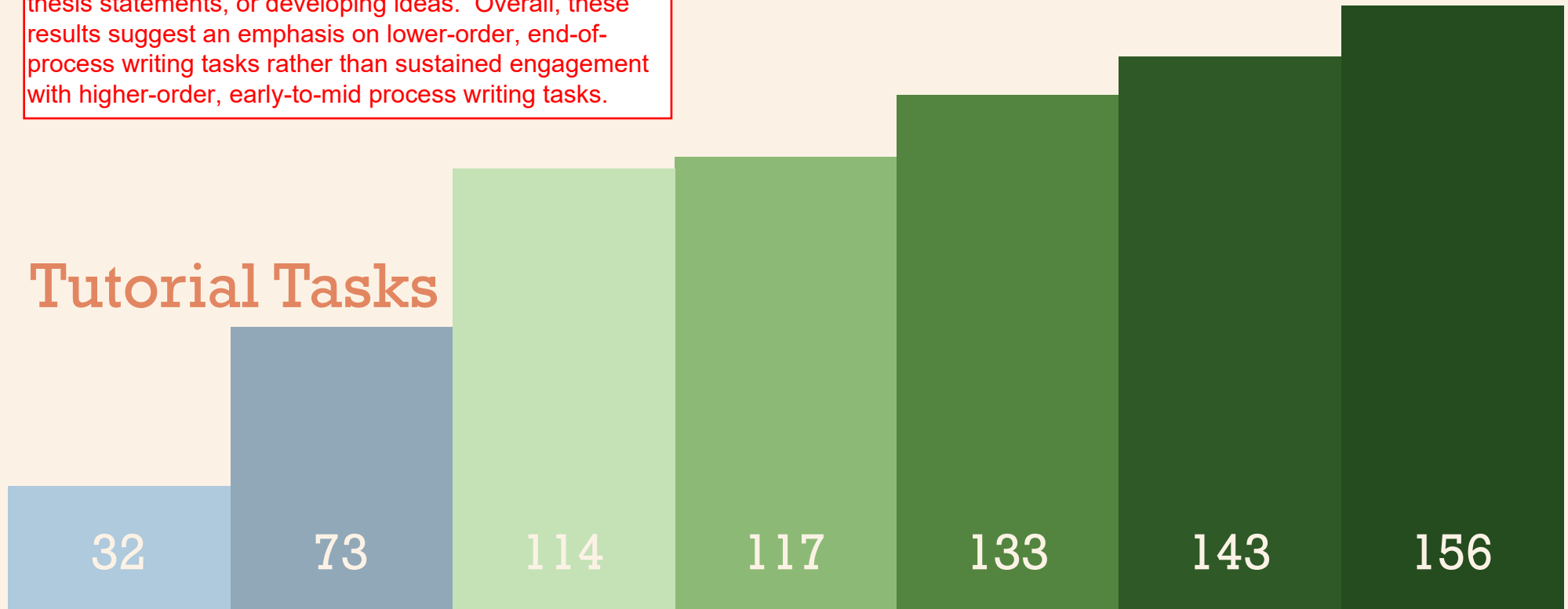
1 inch = 20 students



WRITERS' CORNER AT A GLANCE: TUTORIAL TASKS

The following help requests from writing center clients were collected during 2010-2011. Most students request help with issues of style and form and are less likely to request help with understanding assignments, forming thesis statements, or developing ideas. Overall, these results suggest an emphasis on lower-order, end-of-process writing tasks rather than sustained engagement with higher-order, early-to-mid process writing tasks.

Tutorial Tasks



32 tutorials addressed understanding the assignment.

73 tutorials addressed forming a thesis.

114 tutorials addressed developing students' ideas.

117 tutorials addressed improving students' style.

133 tutorials addressed organizing students' ideas.

143 tutorials addressed identifying errors in punctuation.

156 tutorials addressed identifying errors in usage.

1 inch = 20 students

Westmont Senior Writing Portfolios (GE assessment)	
June 15, 2012	
Criteria Rating Averages for 22 Portfolios	
1A. Rhetorical Sensitivity	3.86
1B. Rhetorical Mobility	3.70
2. Content/ Message	4.13
3. Form/ Organization	4.10
4. Style	4.26

PORTFOLIO CODE	ASSIGNED READERS (2 MINIMUM)	ADDITIONAL READERS (IF TIME ALLOWS)
1/B	Berky, Zehner	<i>Nazarenko</i>
2/BW	Docter, Zehner	<i>Andrews</i>
3/AX	Blondell, Ochieng	<i>Nazarenko</i>
4/AXZ	Andrews, Blondell	<i>Nazarenko</i>
5/A	Friedman, Ochieng	<i>Blondell</i>
6/AXZ	Andrews, Friedman	<i>Nazarenko</i>
7/ABZ	Andrews, Berky	<i>Nazarenko</i>
8/BWZ	Docter, Nazarenko	<i>Skripsy</i>
9/A	Friedman, Ochieng	<i>Blondell</i>
10/ASXZ	Docter, Skripsy	<i>[Spanish speaker/reader--anyone?]</i>
11/ACX	Contakes, Julio, Kihlstrom	<i>Skripsy</i>
12/B	Berky, Zehner	<i>Contakes, Julio, Kihlstrom</i>
13/A	Andrews, Docter	<i>Ochieng</i>
14/BW	Berky, Zehner	<i>Docter</i>
15/AB	Berky, Zehner	<i>Nazarenko</i>
16/A	Blondell, Friedman	<i>Ochieng</i>
17/BYZ	Berky, Zehner	<i>Contakes, Julio, Kihlstrom</i>
18/CW	Contakes, Julio, Kihlstrom	<i>Skripsy</i>
19/ABS	Docter, Skripsy	<i>[Spanish speaker/reader--anyone?]</i>
20/ACZ	Contakes, Julio, Kihlstrom	<i>Skripsy</i>
21/BZ	Berky, Zehner	<i>Andrews</i>
22/A	Blondell, Ochieng	<i>Friedman</i>

Portfolios coded by major(s): A=Humanities, B=Social Sciences, C=Natural and Behavioral Sciences

Portfolios coded by outside-the-major sample(s): W=Humanities, X=Social Sciences, Y=Natural and Behavioral Sciences, Z=Other

Faculty Members	Assigned Portfolio Tallies (Top Priority)	Additional Portfolio Tallies when Acting as Third Reader (If Time Allows)
Karen Andrews	4	2
Brad Berky	7	0
John Blondell	4	2
Stephen Contakes	3	2
Mary Docter	4	1
Jamie Friedman	4	1
Steve Julio	3	2
Ken Kihlstrom	3	2
Tatiana Nazarenko	1	6+ *floater/3rd reader, data analysis
Omedi Ochieng	4	2
Sarah Skripsky	2	4+ *floater/3rd reader, data analysis *may sub for any absentees
Edwin Zehner	7	0

Faculty Members	Departments, Areas // Academic Divisions
Karen Andrews	WSF: English, Urban Studies // Humanities
Brad Berky	WSF: Urban Studies, Social Ethics // Humanities, Social Sciences
John Blondell	Theatre Arts // Humanities (GE Committee Member)
Stephen Contakes	Chemistry // Natural and Behavioral Sciences
Mary Docter	Spanish // Humanities
Jamie Friedman	English // Humanities
Steve Julio	Biology // Natural and Behavioral Sciences
Ken Kihlstrom	Physics // Natural and Behavioral Sciences
Tatiana Nazarenko	Language/Lit., Education // Humanities, Social Sciences (Dean of Curriculum & Educational Effectiveness)
Omedi Ochieng	Communication Studies (Rhetorician) // Humanities
Sarah Skripsky	English (Rhetoric/Composition, Writing Centers) // Humanities
Edwin Zehner	Anthropology // Social Sciences