Department: Health & Community Studies, Human Services Program
Program Improvement & Assessment Coordinator: Raine Dozier, Chair

Departmental Mission:
The goal of the Human Services Program is to offer a rigorous, liberal-arts focused, professional education that cultivates both professional skills and a critical analysis of human services and need. The curriculum of the Human Services Program emphasizes a social justice approach, collaboration, community engagement, the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills, and the development of both written and verbal critical thinking abilities.

Department Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon graduation, Program majors will be able to:

1. Examine and describe the dynamics of a variety of structures and systems (e.g., global, community, institutional) and their impact on the human experience
2. Understand the scope of conditions that promote or inhibit human functioning
3. Define and assess processes and dynamics of creating change including historical and contemporary strategies
4. Understand how to critically analyze and evaluate a variety of types of claims and evidence
5. Identify the practical, political, and ethical considerations of working in the field of human services
6. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of strengths-based approaches to working with people and communities
7. Demonstrate knowledge, theory, and skills pertaining to the administrative aspects of the services delivery system
8. Effectively communicate information verbally, visually, and in writing to a variety of audiences

GUR Student Learning Outcomes
N/A

Description of Program Improvements
Human Services Program faculty met at the end of Spring Quarter 2017 to discuss potential program improvements. During the meeting, they chose to prioritize providing additional support to students to improve their writing skills. While almost all students have room to improve their writing, approximately 15% of Human Services Program students are at risk of taking additional time or failing to graduate due to their writing struggles. These students need intensive writing support that is not provided at the university level; they would benefit from writing support that uses a variety of strategies including writing instruction that is embedded within a content-area course and additional writing support that addresses basic writing concepts such as using commas, eliminating the passive voice, and
writing topic sentences. Western’s library offers writing help through the Hacherl Writing Studio, but it mainly addresses essay organization and content rather than sentence- and paragraph-level issues. Addressing writing weaknesses that may prevent students from succeeding in the Human Services Program aligns with the University’s new strategic plan in addition to Wofford College’s college goals that prioritize the success of diverse students, particularly underrepresented and first-generation students. These students are disproportionately likely to be underprepared for college-level writing.

Over the summer, the program recruited two part-time instructors who teach in Western’s Intensive English Program (IEP). Their expertise in teaching basic English writing skills was a good fit for developing a new writing support program that addresses basic writing issues. In Fall 2017, the instructors spent time gathering information by looking at samples of student writing submitted by faculty, surveying faculty, and speaking with some students about their writing process and priorities for improving their writing skills. Over the course of the year, the instructors experimented with several strategies including small group tutorials, creating instructional videos, and embedding writing instruction with two online courses; that is, requiring all students in the course to participate in the writing improvement modules. Writing support was in high demand from faculty for their courses and for “just-in-time” tutoring for students who were at risk of failing a course. The work required exceeded the compensation paid the instructors. In an effort to reduce the load on writing instructors, one of the instructors sought and received a summer teaching grant to create writing modules including video lectures, worksheets, and short writing assignments. Materials on the created Canvas site will address many different aspects of academic writing, but will focus especially on sentence- and paragraph-level techniques. These materials, along with the support provided by the instructors, will be integrated into various HSP classes and would serve, in effect, as a course supplement.

Assessment: Beginning Fall 2018, faculty will review writing examples in courses that mostly contain juniors. The selected students’ writing will be reviewed again at the end of the academic year. Faculty will develop a list of writing skills they will evaluate in both writing examples provided by students. In addition, faculty will share their perspectives on the writing program and improvements (if any) in student writing over the year. Faculty will have an opportunity to discuss this in a special faculty meeting. Students will also provide feedback in written form during the spring quarter. In addition, a select group of students will participate in a focus group to discuss the program and their writing. Finally, the instructors will also write a report summarizing their approach and activities and their view of the successes and improvements needed in the program.

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<th>Type of Change</th>
<th>SLOs Targeted</th>
<th>Description of Program Improvement</th>
<th>Rationale and Level of Faculty Involvement</th>
<th>Evidence that will demonstrate if this change improves student learning.</th>
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| Student Support Pedagogy | 4, 8 | Create a writing program that provides instruction and support, especially at the sentence and paragraph level. The program is open to all students, but designed to serve student writers who have the greatest need for improvement. Program includes developing writing modules addressing common writing challenges and errors, instructional videos, individual tutoring, small group instruction, and instruction embedded in particular content-area courses. | Approximately 15% of students are at risk of failing to graduate or taking additional time due to their writing challenges. These students need intensive writing support including basic writing concepts focused at the sentence and paragraph level. The program aligns with the University’s new strategic plan and Woodring College’s college goals that prioritize the success of diverse students, particularly underrepresented and first-generation students. All tenured and tenure-track faculty are involved in meeting to discuss writing issues, prioritizing needs, and providing guidance in developing the program. A few faculty will experiment with embedding writing instruction into their course, thus serving all students in the course. All faculty (including NTT faculty) will have access to materials for their students, if desired. The program director will work directly with the writing instructors to develop content and approaches. | Evaluation of student writing at the beginning and end of academic year 2018-19. End-of-year faculty meeting to look at writing samples and discuss perceptions of the program including student performance and strengths and weaknesses of the program. Written in-class evaluation by students at the end of the year. Focus group for students discussing their experiences and perceptions of the program. Report from program instructors summarizing their approach and activities and their view of the successes of and improvements needed in the writing program. |