Developing Writers in Higher Education

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APPENDIX 3

SAMPLE OF WRITING DEVELOPMENT SURVEYS

The questions below are drawn from across all survey items. Full surveys and results can be found on our Fulcrum platform at https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.10079890

The first set of questions was designed by researchers at the Sweetland Center for Writing. Students chose responses to the following set of questions on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating “very much” or “a lot” and 4 indicating “never” or “not at all.”

Questions about students’ high school writing experiences

1. **How often did you do the following writing tasks in high school?** (Exit survey version: How frequently did you do the following over the course of your college career?)

   *Sample response options include:* Write a sustained and detailed argument of more than five pages in length; summarize the main ideas from an assigned reading; evaluate and respond critically to an assigned reading; make an argument and support it using evidence; express a personal opinion on an issue; interpret a literary text; write essays or papers in subjects other than English; write a personal narrative.

2. **How often did you use the following writing processes during high school?**

   *Sample response options include:* Revise an essay multiple times; follow citation guidelines; provide and receive feedback on peer writing; conduct research using online databases or other web-based sources;

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1. An asterisk indicates questions that appeared in both entry and exit surveys.
identify credible research sources; compose or revise online; create a portfolio of your writing.

Questions about students’ first-year composition writing experiences

1. How much did you learn about the following in your First-Year Writing Requirement course? (Exit survey version: How much did you learn about the following in your courses at the University?)*
   Producing well-supported academic arguments; reading and using complex texts to create and support your argument; writing in a variety of different genres; shaping writing for different audiences and purposes; revising, editing, and proofreading writing over multiple drafts; giving and receiving feedback on writing-in-progress; knowing how to approach new kinds of writing tasks.

2. How frequently do you use what you learned in your First-Year Writing Requirement course about the following when writing for other courses?
   *Same response options offered as above.*

Questions about students’ writing experiences outside of class

3. Do you write for any of the following extracurricular activities? Mark all that apply.*
   *Sample response options include: Paid employment; internship; activist or advocacy work; faith-based activities; recreation or hobbies; fan activities (e.g., fan fiction, sports blogs, etc.); creative writing; personal writing (e.g., journaling); other (please specify); I don’t do any extracurricular writing.*

4. How important do you believe writing will be for the following? (Exit survey version: How important do you believe writing has been for the following?)*
   *Sample response options include: Your undergraduate academic success; your admission into the graduate or professional program; your ability to achieve your long-term academic and career goals; your ability to enter your chosen career field; your ability to change careers or pursue new opportunities*
5. In the last four years, what kind of writing has been most important to you, and why? (Free response)

6. Do you experience difficulties with any of the following in your academic writing? Please check all that apply.*

*Sample response options include:* Adapting how you write for different academic disciplines or genres; avoiding abstract, indirect language; coming up with a topic or idea to write about; constructing an argument using appropriate evidence; general English syntax; having a vocabulary for talking about writing; integrating and citing sources effectively; knowing where to get feedback on drafts; punctuation; register (e.g., appropriate degrees of formality, slang, etc.); revising a paper through multiple drafts; stating a clear, confident position; using visuals effectively in writing; writing in a variety of different media; no significant issues; other (please specify).

### Questions about student academic and intellectual engagement in their university

The following questions come from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Students chose their responses on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating “very often” and 4 indicating “never.”

1. **In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?**
   * Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions; made a class presentation; prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in; worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources; included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments; come to class without completing readings or assignments; worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments; tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary); participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course; talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor; discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class; received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance; worked harder than you thought you
could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations; worked with faculty members on activities other than course work (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.); had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own; had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values.

2. **During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done?**
   Number of: assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings; books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment; written papers or reports of twenty pages or more; written papers or reports between five and nineteen pages; written papers or reports of fewer than five pages.

3. **During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?**
   Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance; exercised or participated in physical fitness activities; participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.); examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue; tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective; learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept.

4. **Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?**
   Sample response options include: Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment; community service or volunteer work; participate in a learning community; work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements; foreign language course work; study abroad; independent study or self-designed major; culminating senior experience (Capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.).

5. **Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people (other students, faculty members, administrative personnel) at your institution.**
   Relationships with other students
   Relationships with faculty members
   Relationships with administrative personnel and offices
6. To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?*

Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work; providing the support you need to help you succeed academically; encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds; helping you cope with your nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.); providing the support you need to thrive socially; attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.); using computers in academic work.

7. To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?*

*Sample response options include: Acquiring a broad general education; acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills; writing and speaking clearly and effectively; thinking critically and analytically; analyzing quantitative problems; using computing and information technology; working effectively with others; voting in local, state, or national elections; learning effectively on your own; understanding yourself; understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds; solving complex real-world problems; developing a personal code of values and ethics; contributing to the welfare of your community; developing a deepened sense of spirituality.

Questions about student experience with writing at their university

The following questions were adapted from NSSE’s “Experiences with Writing” Topical Module, which was developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) and NSSE.

1. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have you done each of the following?*

*Sample response options include: Brainstormed (listed ideas, mapped concepts, prepared an outline, etc.) to develop your ideas before you started drafting your assignment; talked with your instructor, classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before you start-
ed drafting your assignment; received feedback from your instructor, classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment; visited a campus-based writing or tutoring center to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in; used an online tutoring service to get help with your writing assignment before turning it in; proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in.

2. **During the current school year, in how many of your writing assignments did you***:

   Narrate or describe one of your own experiences; summarize something you read, such as articles, books, or online publications; analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed; describe your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.; argue a position using evidence and reasoning; explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data; write in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.); include drawings, tables, photos, screen shots, or other visual content in your written assignment; create a project with multimedia (web page, poster, slide presentation such as PowerPoint, etc.).

3. **During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments has your instructor done each of the following***?

   *Sample response options include:* Provided clear instructions describing what he or she wanted you to do; explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn and the criteria he or she would use to grade your assignment; provided a sample of a completed assignment written by the instructor or a student; asked you to: do short pieces of writing that he or she did not grade, give feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline the classmate had written, write with classmates to complete a group project, or address a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, nonexperts, etc.

**Questions about students’ comfort and confidence in writing**

The following questions come from the Daly-Miller Writing Questionnaire. Students chose responses to the following set of questions on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating “strongly agree” and 5 indicating “strongly disagree.”
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements*:

Sample response options include: I avoid writing; I look forward to writing down my ideas; I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated; handing in a composition makes me feel good; my mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition; I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication; I’m nervous about writing; writing is a lot of fun; I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course; it’s easy for me to write good compositions; I don’t think I write as well as most other people.

Self-reporting and English-language acquisition questions

The following questions were designed by researchers at the Sweetland Center for Writing.

1. Thank you for participating in this survey. Before you submit your responses, we have just a few more brief questions. How would you describe yourself as a writer? (Free response)
2. Do you speak or write in languages other than English? If so, please indicate which languages you speak and/or write with proficiency.
3. What language(s) do you speak at home with your family?
4. When you were growing up, did at least one parent or guardian speak English as a first language?
5. Where did you attend school for the following years? (Students indicate whether they were in the US, outside the US, or a mixture of both.)
   - Kindergarten or preschool, ages 3–5
   - Elementary school (grades 1–4), ages 6–10
   - Intermediate school (grades 5–6), ages 11–12
   - Middle school or junior high school (grades 7–8), ages 13–14
   - Secondary school or high school (grades 9–12), ages 15–18

In this section, students chose responses to the following set of questions, designed in-house, on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating “very much” or “a lot” and 4 indicating “never” or “not at all.”
1. How frequently did you do the following over the course of your college career?

Sample response options include: Create and use video digital media and audio digital media; create web pages; create and work with podcasts or enhanced podcasts, blogs, or microblogs; create electronic presentations using PowerPoint, Prezi, or other presentation software; evaluate websites for credibility, scholarly sources, etc.; create online games; create remixes or mashups; publish or write online; create and use electronic portfolios; create animation; create apps; use digital editing tools such as Photoshop or other software.

2. In the last four years, what kind of writing has been most important to you, and why? (Free response)