**Background**

According to NSSE 2011 results, UW-L seniors report that their experience at UW-L contributed to their ability to write clearly and effectively to a greater degree than students in all other comparison groups (UW Comprehensives, Carnegie Peers, and NSSE Participating Institutions). This follow-up survey was developed to:

- Assess UW-L students’ perceptions of writing experiences, improvements in writing, and writing practices
- Develop an institution-wide picture of student writing
- Gather data that may inform direct and indirect assessments of writing courses
- Generate conversations about writing among faculty and staff

**Survey Design and Analysis**

The survey had five parts: demographic information, writing experiences (WPA-NSSE questions), writing improvement, writing practices, and open-ended questions.

A total of 1271 complete responses were received (16% of 7,825 full-time undergraduates).

A review of overall results examined average scores and frequency of response for each item. Possible differences across classification levels was analyzed using ANOVA and post-hoc t-tests. Additional analyses of possible differences between juniors and seniors in Writing in the Major programs (WM) and Non-WM majors was conducted using t-tests.

**Student Perceptions of Improvement**

Students in general reported improvement in each skill area. **On average 74% of students reported some or a lot of improvement across all skill areas.** Below are some highlights, sorted by overall means for all students:

- **A Lot of - Some Improvement:** Incorporating sources into their writing, citing or referencing sources in a bibliography, focusing ideas in their writing, analyzing or evaluating something they have read, researched, or observed
- **Some - Very Little Improvement:** Narrating or describing one of your own experiences, writing informally to figure out ideas, explaining in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data, creating a project with multimedia, allowing enough time to work through the composing process, and including drawings, tables, photos, or visual content.

First-year students reported more improvement than any other group in "using feedback from peers to make revisions" and "giving feedback on writing to peers." **Seniors reported more improvement than any other group in numerous areas.**

**Typical Writing Practices**

First-year and sophomore students reported the following items as more typical of their writing process than other groups:

- I include a thesis statement in the opening paragraph of each paper I write (Fy > So, Sr; So > Jr, Sr);
- I write using an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion (Fy > Jr, Sr; So > Jr, Sr);
- I assume my readers are unfamiliar with the subjects I am writing about (Fy > Sr; So > Sr);
- I use feedback from others to improve my own writing (Fy > So, Jr, Sr).

**Typical Writing Practices (continued)**

Seniors reported the following items as more typical of their writing process than other groups:

- I refer to assignment guidelines when I am writing (Sr > Fy);
- It is easy for me to be detailed while I write (Sr, Jr > Fy).

**Writing in the Major**

The following significant differences were revealed between upper division students who were enrolled in Writing-in-the-Major (WM) programs versus those who were not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Practices Item</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>WM</th>
<th>Non-WM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing different types of writing</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being clear and concise in your writing</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing or referencing sources in a bibliography</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing enough time to work through the composing process</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using UW-L Library resources such as books, reference materials, etc.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in the style and format of a specific discipline</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next Steps**

Additional future indirect assessments—by level, discipline/major, and college—could provide a higher level of resolution on student writing experiences, writing improvement, and writing practices.

For more information about this survey, which is available for use in your program, please visit: [https://sites.google.com/a/uwlax.edu/writing-survey](https://sites.google.com/a/uwlax.edu/writing-survey)