



University Writing Center Consulting Services Report

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The Perry-Castaneda Library, where the UWC is located today, was opened 35 years ago, August 29, 1977, as the main library for the UT campus.

Executive Summary

Every time students come to the University of Writing Center (UWC) to seek help from the writing consultants, the UWC records details of consultations. Based on the data, we can find the features of students. This report provides an analysis of consulting services and illustrates the aspects of consultations and the profiles of students by charts and tables.

The analysis shows that April and October are the peak seasons for the UWC. Moreover, the students often bring their essays (34%) to the UWC and most students come from the College of Liberal Arts (21%). The result also demonstrates the top-three primary languages of ESL (English as a second or foreign language): Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. Additionally, over seventy percent of students claim they fully understand assignment requirements before they come to the UWC. Lastly, the gender ratio of women to men is almost two to one. Females account for sixty-three percent and males account for only twenty-nine percent.

According to the analysis results, providing the solution for peak seasons is necessary. As a suggestion, starting the drop-in services could be a good idea. In off-seasons, seminars for students, who are working on essays, should be popular, especially for the students in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences. Lastly, further research on the relationship between ESL students' primary languages and the difficulty of writing in English is needed.



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About the UWC

The University Writing Center (UWC) is located in Perry-Castañeda Library, which is the main research library of the University of Texas at Austin. The UWC provides students writing consulting services. Every semester, many students schedule the appointments to meet writing consultants in order to improve their writing proficiency, and the consultations are usually no longer than forty-five minutes. Additionally, the consultants not only help students correct the grammar in their assignments but also teach the students how to improve their writing skill by themselves.

“The University Writing Center, a unit of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, helps UT students become more proficient, more versatile, and more confident in their writing abilities.”

–The UWC mission statement



Needs of the UWC

Kathleen Krysher, one of the writing consultants in UWC, kindly shared data and discussed what the UWC cares. First, they want to know when the most students schedule appointments in the semesters. In the past years, students complained that they could not get help from the UWC because all the consultants had been scheduled.

To solve this problem, perhaps the manager can arrange the shifts to provide more available spots in the busy season. Second, if most students usually bring the same kinds of writing problems to the UWC, it is possible to hold seminars to help students with the same issues or to teach them some general techniques. Lastly, the data includes many details of every consultation. Maybe we can find some surprising facts which might help the UWC to develop new services for the students at UT Austin.

Shaped the Design

According to the client's needs, the dashboard is designed to help the manager know more about the students, who have been to the UWC to seek their help, and improve their service. Therefore, the dashboard is expected to give the readers a clear view of who they serve. That is, it should provide a function like personas in user experience research. The more they know, the more they can prepare for the consultations, and even customize the services in the future.

Dashboard

The dashboard displays six kinds of information by graphs and tables: number of scheduled consultations, Most common primary languages of ESL students, Most common types of works, Most common colleges, the understanding of the assignments, and the gender ratio.

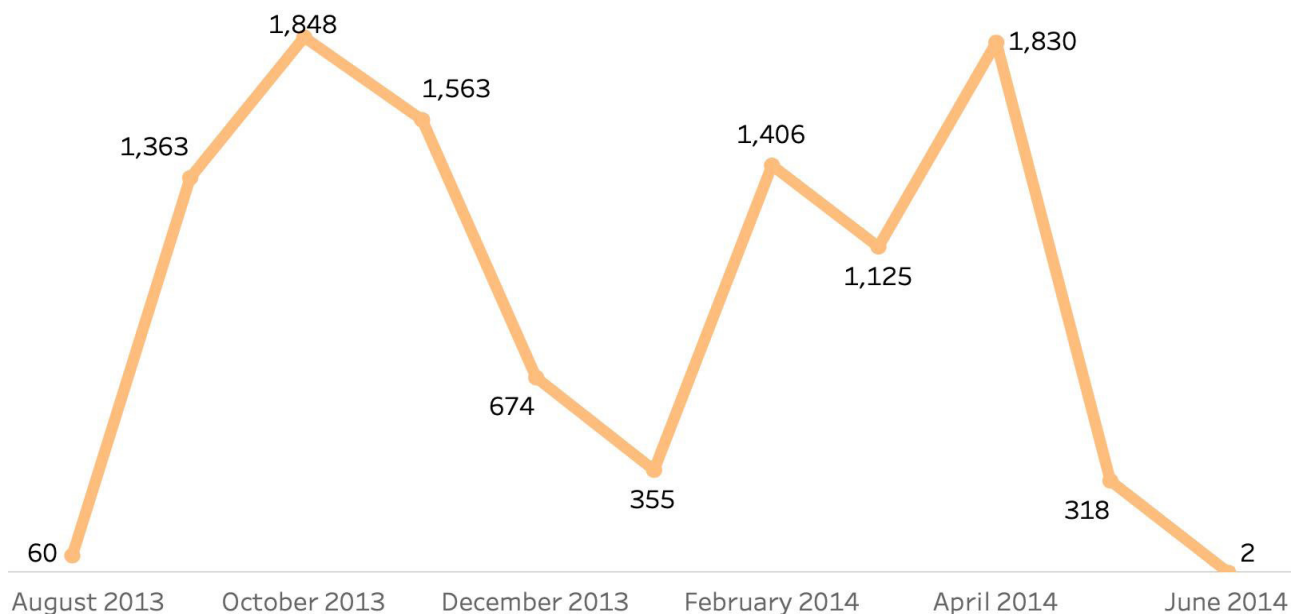


Demand by Months

To begin with, to know when the peak season is, Figure 1 calculates the numbers of records of consultations by each month from August 2013 to June 2014 and design a line chart to show the trend.

From the line chart, readers can find out that April and October are the peak seasons for the UWC. This results shows that the peak seasons are matched to the midterm in the semesters; however, May and December, when are the last months before the breaks, there are less students need writing consultations.

Figure 1. Number of scheduled consultations



April and October are the peak seasons

Primary Languages of ESL Student

Figure 2 demonstrates that Spanish, Chinese, and Korean are the top-three primary languages of ESL students.

According to the data released by the international office at UT Austin, the top-three original countries of international students are China (33%), India (18%), and South Korea (5%). However, the 10th country, Mexico, is the only country in which the primary language is Spanish. Therefore, there are many resident students who speak Spanish come to the UWC with writing issues.

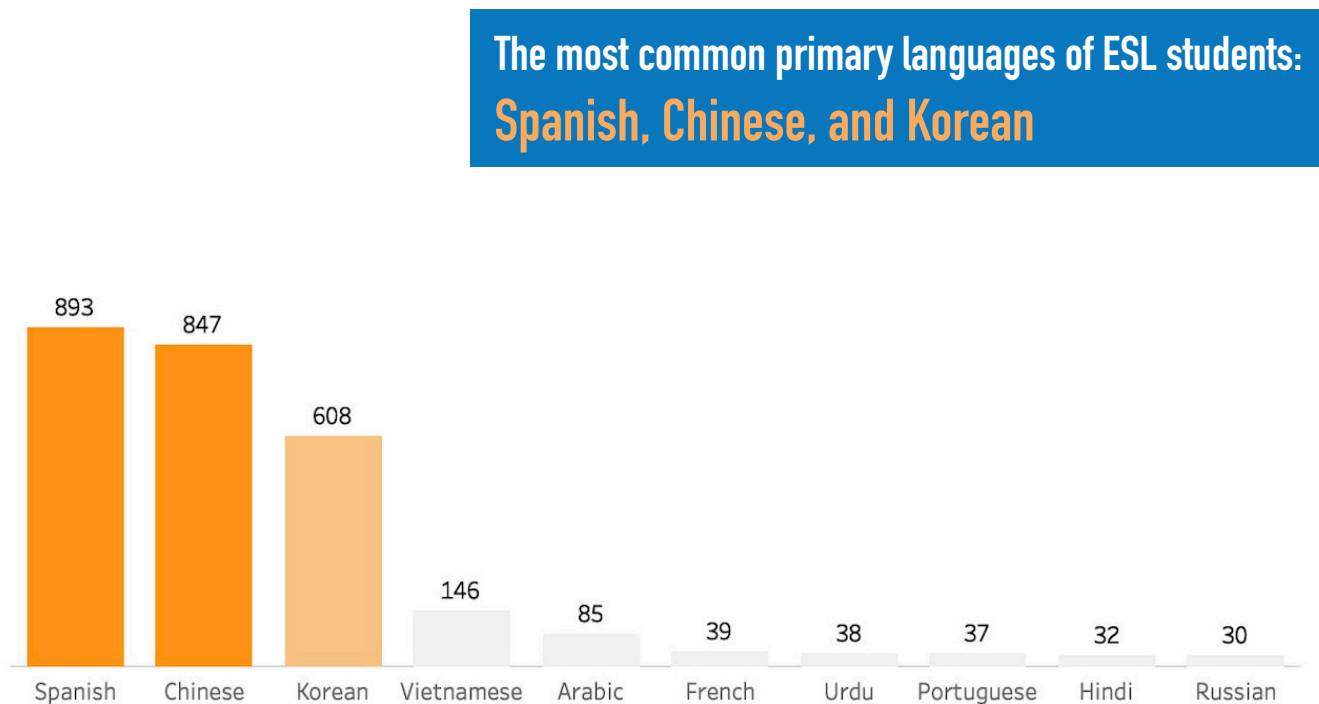
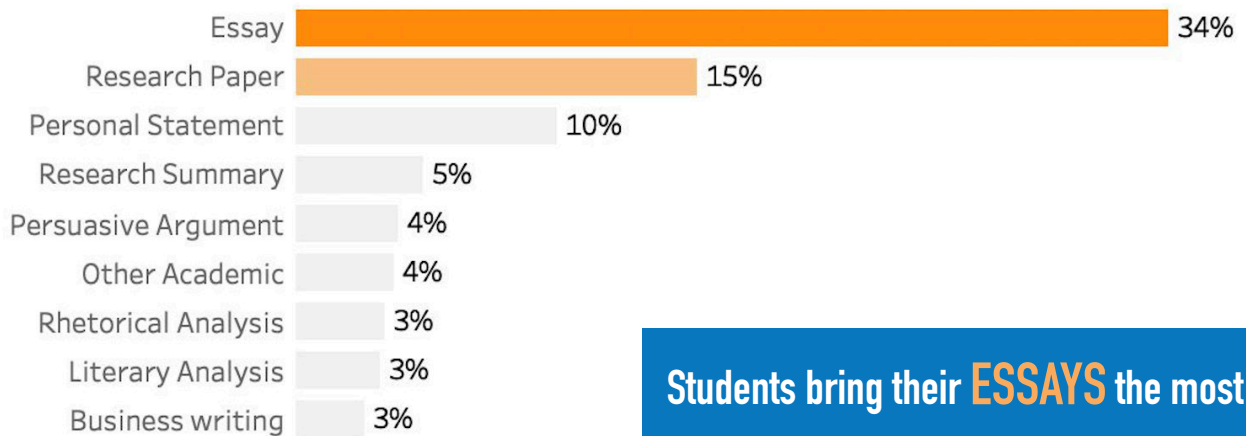


Figure 2. Most common primary languages of ESL students

Most Common Writing Works

Figure 3, a horizontal bar chart, illustrates the most common writing works which students bring with to the UWC. Although there are many kinds of academic-related works, the essay is the most common work, which accounts for thirty-four percent.

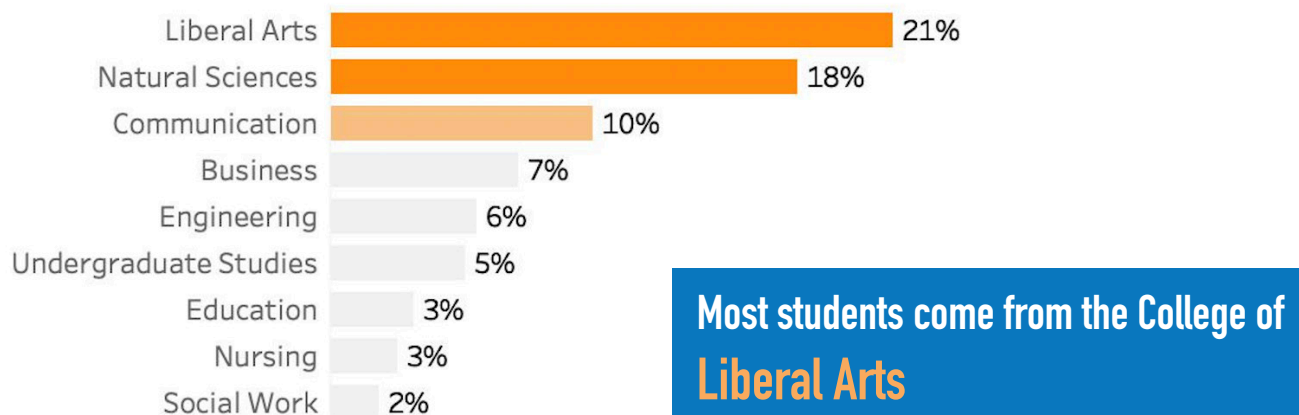
Figure 3. Most common types of works



Most Common Colleges

Figure 4 describes the most common colleges which students come from. As our expectation, the College of Liberal Arts takes the first place, but surprisingly the college of Natural Sciences is in the second place.

Figure 4. Most common colleges



Preparedness

Table 1 shows the understandings of assignments which were claimed by the students. The understandings of assignments are the crucial factors in consultations because if the students can describe their needs and goals of their writing works, consultants are able to guide the students to meet the requirements.

Table 1. Understandings of the assignments

Fully understood	77%
A little confused	21%
Did not understand	1%

Gender Ratio

Table 2 points out the ratio of women to men is almost two to one. The gender ratios in the College of Liberal Arts may account huge factor here. Also, male students seem to be more unlikely to seek help from other people.

Table 2. Gender ratio

Female	63%
Male	29%
Choose not to answer	7%



Conclusions

First, the report recognizes the peak seasons, April and October. The UWC should find solutions for these two busy months to alleviate pressure when students cannot schedule consultations to improve the quality of assignments before deadlines. Providing more available spots and initiating the drop-in services can be good solutions for quick and immediate questions and needs.

Moreover, in the off-season, the UWC can hold writing seminars, especially for the colleges of Liberal Arts and Natural Science. The activities can answer the most common questions and teach the students how to improve writing skills by themselves. Also, by attending the seminars, students will know more about how consulting services work in the UWC and what they should prepare before each consultation.

Additionally, for some ESL students, one of the reasons why they seek more help from the UWC is because their primary language has very different grammar structures compared to English. Further research on this topic is needed to know more about the relationship.

Finally, the analysis of consulting services in the UWC is highly suggested to continue in the future. Research will keep helping the UWC to improve or maintain the way they provide services and ensure the high quality of the consulting services.



**Writing in English is the most ingenious torture ever
devised for sins committed in previous lives.**

-James Joyce