Writing and Speaking Studio 2021-2022 Annual Report

Executive Narrative

Section One

I. Unit's Mission Statement

The Writing and Speaking Studio offers students one-to-one and group feedback on their writing and presentations. Writing and speaking consultants work collaboratively with students during the composing process to help:

- develop, focus, and execute ideas for specific audiences,
- understand expectations and communicate for different purposes,
- discover and build upon strategies for effective communication in local, global, and digital contexts.

In addition, the Writing and Speaking Studio collaborates with faculty to provide students with quality writing and speaking experiences across the curriculum. The Writing and Speaking Studio directors offer faculty support in developing assignments, facilitating workshops, responding to and assessing writing/speaking, cross-cultural communication, writing for the web, and their own manuscript and presentation preparation.

II. Key Functions

In order to fulfill its mission, the Writing and Speaking Studio performs these key functions:

- Advocates for students in college-wide conversations about communication teaching and learning.
- Provides online and in-person tutoring to FIT students working on writing and oral communication projects for academic, personal, and professional purposes.
- Educates and develops a staff of peer and professional writing and speaking consultants through an ongoing practicum focused on reading, writing, applied linguistics, rhetorical studies, and oral communication.
- Supports faculty and staff in their writing, speaking, and teaching activities through one-to-one feedback and workshops.

III. Overall Unit Accomplishments

During AY 2021-2022, the Writing and Speaking Studio offered tutoring services and support for faculty both online and in person, engaged in learning support initiatives, and accomplished projects that enhanced written and oral communication learning and teaching on campus. Over the course of the year, the staff included 32 members (1 director, 2 associate directors, 1 administrative assistant, 5 professional writing and speaking consultants, 30 peer writing and speaking consultants, and 1 student aide). We hired and trained over 10 new peer consultants, anticipating that 10 to 12 would be leaving at the end of this academic year.

Student Support:

In AY 2021-2022, WSS peer and professional consultants conducted 3103 (last year: 2548) tutoring sessions with 1078 (last year: 573) individual writers. Appointments were offered online and in person.

AY2021-2022 Appointments

In-person	1611
Online	1492
Total	3103*

The demand for virtual appointments was strong, with 48% of appointments held online. Like last year, we saw a significant drop off in use during the spring semester. Despite this significant decrease in the spring, the numbers were closer to pre-pandemic use, with about 13% of the total student population using Writing and Speaking Studio services

(the national benchmark for writing center usage is around 10%). In Fall 2021, the department worked closely with FBM to support all students enrolled in their new first-year experience course, which helped boost usage and introduced a significant number of new students to the services. 297 appointments focused specifically on oral communication support, which is roughly similar to last year's 304 sessions. Although the number of appointments did not increase, there were significant in-class workshop and feedback engagements focused on oral communication. We expect to see the number of visits increase in the next year, especially if a more appropriate space for speaking support is secured. The following tables break down Writing and Speaking Studio use by visitors, the top reasons for visits, and what they worked on:

Visitors by Standing

Standing	Unique Visitors	Total Sessions
First-year	492	1289
Sophomore	146	391
Junior	156	552
Senior	92	280
Graduate	78	307
1-year Associate	86	162
Visiting Student	5	11
Non-Degree	6	31
Staff/Faculty	13	63
Alums	3	16

Reasons for Visit: Top Courses/Communication Support Sought

Personal Statements, Scholarship Essays, Resume, Cover Letter, Artist Statement, and other non-curriculum writing help	948 Sessions
EN121; EN321	160; 64 Sessions
FM108	360 Sessions
HA112	50 Sessions

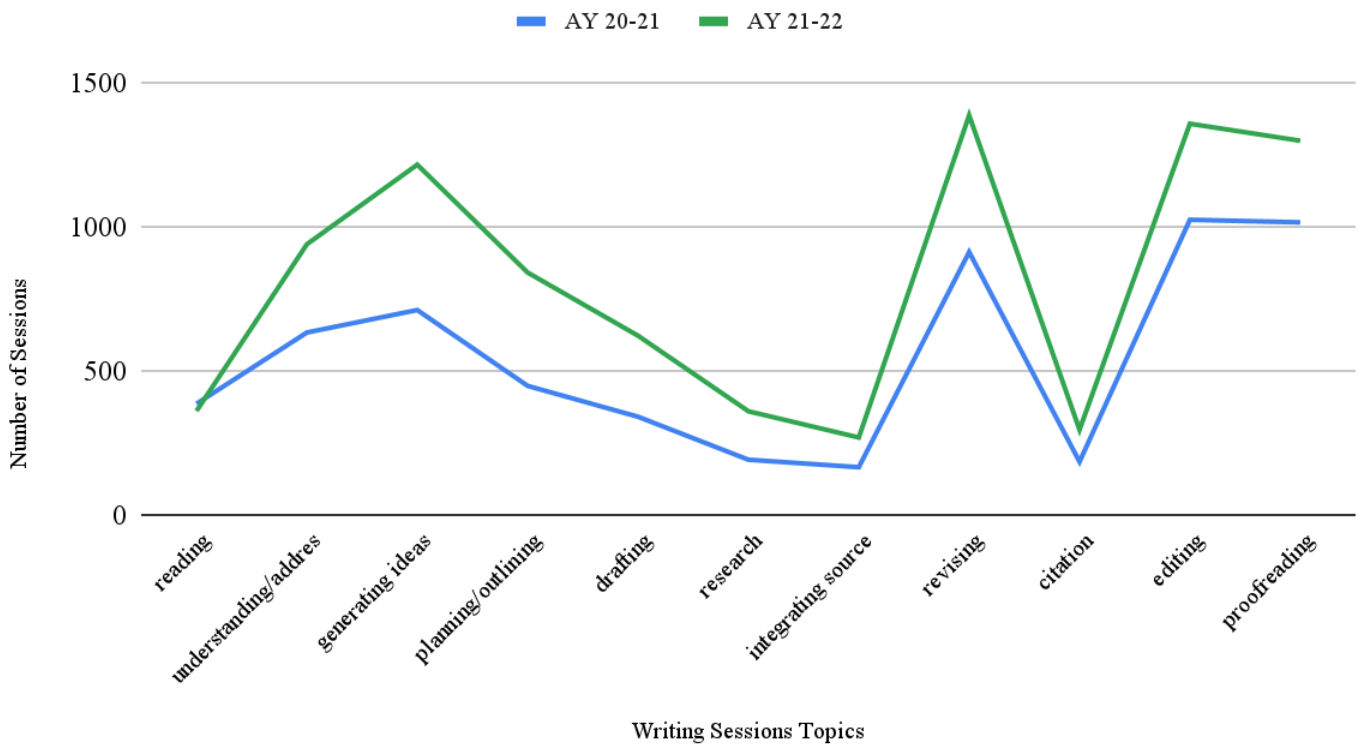
EN 121 (English Composition); EN 321 (Strategies of Business Communication); FM108 (First Year Experience I); HA 112 (History of Western Art and Civilization: Renaissance to the Modern Era).

What Visitors Worked On: Needs/Session Topic Focus (Students can work on multiple needs per session)

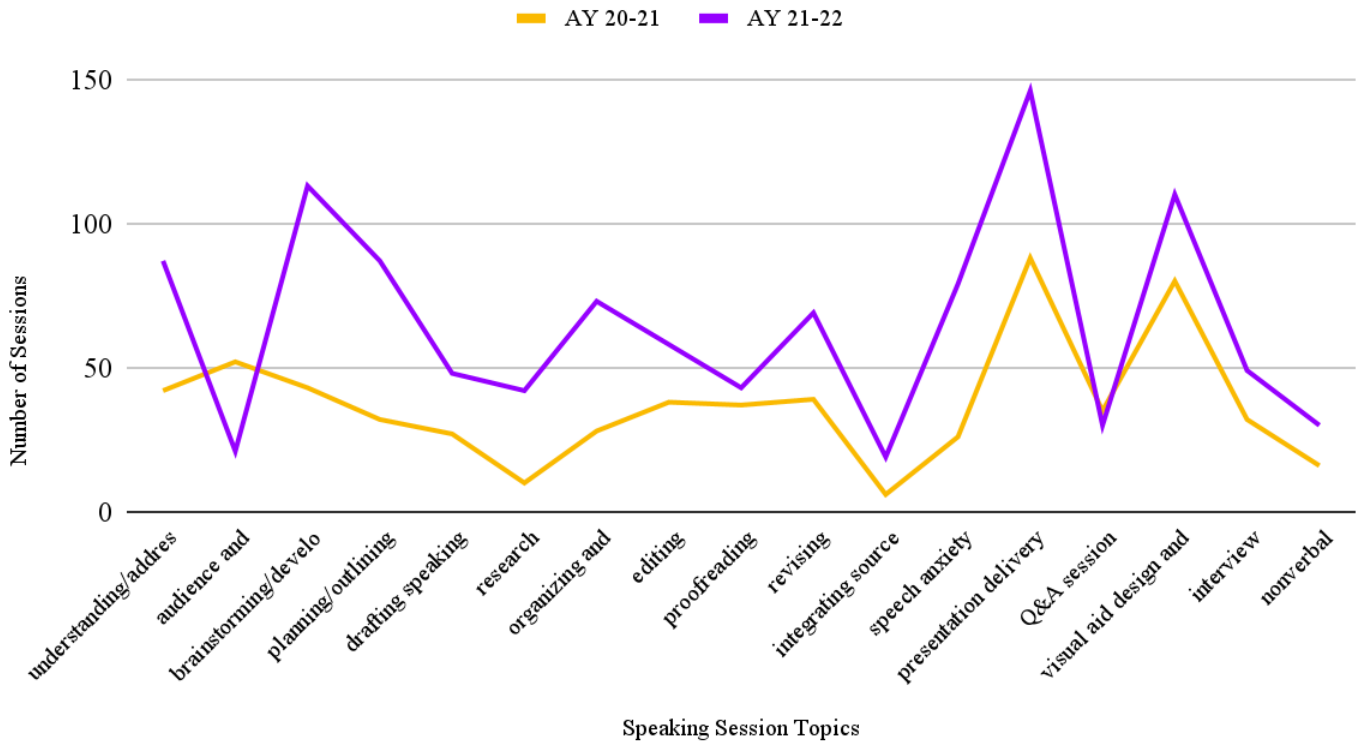
Writing Session Topics	AY 20-21	AY 21-22	Speaking Session Topics	AY 20-21	AY 21-22
reading	385	360	understanding/addressing assignment guidelines	42	87
understanding/addressing assignment guidelines	632	938	audience and occasion analysis	52	21
generating ideas	710	1214	brainstorming/developing speech topics and specific purposes	43	113

planning/outlining	447	840	planning/outlining	32	87
drafting	340	621	drafting speaking outlines and delivery notes	27	48
research	191	359	research	10	42
integrating source material in texts	165	268	organizing and structuring	28	73
revising (adding/deleting/moving/ connecting content)	911	1385	editing	38	58
citation	184	295	proofreading	37	43
editing	1023	1356	revising (adding/deleting/moving/ connecting content)	39	69
proofreading	1014	1297	integrating source material in texts and speaking	6	19
			speech anxiety strategies	26	79
			presentation delivery practice	88	146
			Q&A session preparation	35	30
			visual aid design and use	80	110
			interview communication prep	32	49
			nonverbal communication	16	30

Writing Session Topics by Year



Speaking Session Topics Covered



Noteworthy points revealed in this year's data:

(Standing & Top Courses/Communication Needs)

- We experienced a significant increase in the number of students from FM courses, mostly due to FM108; in addition, there was an increase in students visiting for EN121.
- As usual, the Writing and Speaking Studio continues to be a primary support for students seeking feedback on communication projects that enrich their personal and professional development outside the classroom. The number of sessions focused on non-curriculum-related writing remains significantly higher than other areas with nearly a third of our sessions (948 total) focused on these types of rhetorical situations.
- More first-year students visited the Writing and Speaking Studio than any other group with 492 students making 1289 visits, and graduate students continue to use the services frequently (78 students making 307 visits total), especially for qualifying papers, presentation support, and thesis writing. Also notable, 156 juniors visited a total of 552 times.

(Needs/Areas of Focus)

- As in past years, editing and proofreading remain frequently discussed issues during sessions, but students seeking support in revising surpassed those numbers for the first time.
- Students working on integrating sources and citations continue to be a less frequent session focus in both writing and speaking. As noted last year, this may be evidence of a drop in the assignment of research-based projects, as we have speculated from other indicators as well.
- We included last year's numbers for speaking and writing session topics to highlight the promising increase in students seeking support for early-stage work like brainstorming and idea generating, which for speaking increased from 43 to 113. It's also interesting to note that we see similar trends in what students are seeking support for when it comes to their writing and speaking across years.

Faculty and Staff Support:

As noted above, 13 faculty/staff made 63 appointments using WCOnline, which means they met with one of our peer or professional consultants for written or oral communication support. In addition, the directors logged 31 one-to-one consultations with faculty. These consultations addressed communication teaching/learning concerns and/or written or oral communication projects, including manuscript drafting, presentations, candidate statements for CCE, tenure, and promotion, and other professional projects.

Prof. Brian Fallon and Prof. Sarah Blazer supported the CET's Adjunct Summer Institute in planning and facilitating the event on May 18, 2022. This event focused on culturally responsive teaching and decolonizing the curriculum.

Prof. Stephen Keating and Prof. Brian Fallon facilitated a workshop at the UCE of FIT Staff Development Day on June 15, 2022. Prof. Keating led the conversation on strategies for recognizing and responding to tension and conflict in workplace communication.

IV. Individual Faculty/Staff Accomplishments

Faculty Accomplishments

Sarah Blazer, Associate Director for Writing and Assistant Professor

- Promoted to Associate Professor
- Invited Talks:
    - "Supporting a Culture of Engagement with Source Material" at FIT English and Communication Studies Writing Event, Successfully Scaffolding Student Research, Fall 2021
    - Corpus Research for Situated Literacy Instruction, invited presentation at the WAC Professional Development Meeting, City University of New York, October 2021
- Conference Presentation:
    - Blazer, S. & Fallon, B. (2021, October). Ideals and impact: Studying tutors' efforts to practice inclusivity. Presentation at the International Writing Centers Association Conference (IWCA).
- Leadership and Service:
    - FIT Service: Co-chair, MSCHE Standard 5 Working Group.

- Service to the Field: Reviewer for *The Writing Center Journal* and *English for Specific Purposes Journal*; Mentor, International Writing Centers Association

Brian Fallon, Director and Professor

- Invited Talks:
  - Keynote Speaker with Lindsay A. Sabatino, Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association Conference, April 2, 2022
- Conference Presentation:
  - Blazer, S. & Fallon, B. (2021, October). Ideals and impact: Studying tutors' efforts to practice inclusivity. Presentation at the International Writing Centers Association Conference (IWCA).
- Leadership and Service:
  - FIT Service: Faculty Senate Executive Committee; Presidential Scholars Honors Committee; Goal 4 Student Engagement Think Tank Leader; MSCHE Standard III Working Group
  - Service to the Field: SUNY Council on Writing Executive Committee Member; Reviewer for *The Writing Center Journal*; Development Chair, National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing.

Stephen Keating, Associate Director for Speaking and Assistant Professor

- Conference Presentation:
  - Keating, S. (2022). Record, review, and revise: Prezi video in the remote public speaking course. Presentation at the State University of New York's Conference on Instruction and Technology in Oswego, NY (Virtual).
- Leadership and Service:
  - FIT Service: Served on two Faculty Senate Committees (Academic Assessment and Information Technology) and the Faculty Development Grants and Awards Committee; Served on the Search Committee for the First-Year Mentoring Program Coordinator; Advised commencement speakers in their Speech Writing for Commencement 2022; Liaison for the First-Year Mentor Program, a Perkins Grant Supported Program
  - Service to the Field: Reviewed papers for the Communication Centers, Community Colleges, and Training and Development sections of the National Communication Association; the Community Colleges, Instructional Communication, and Undergraduate Scholars sections of the Eastern Communication Association; and the Undergraduate Scholars Research Conference section of the Western States Communication Association; Member of the National Association of Communication Centers Conference Planning Committee; Revised a manuscript for the Carolinas Communication Annual Journal

Staff Accomplishments

India Adolfsson, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant

- VPED Medal of Excellence
- Selected to present senior thesis project at the Presidential Scholars Research Fair, February 16, 2002

Eleanor Burholt, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant

- Featured 2022 Graduating Fashion Design Student in Vogue.com: https://www.vogue.com/article/14-standout-graduates-from-fit-s-class-of-2022

Prerna Chaudhry, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant

- Editor in Chief, W27
  - Published three issues AY 2021-2022

Julie Forgione, Professional Writing and Speaking Consultant

- Awarded the Creatives Rebuild New York Grant

Nicole Scioscia, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant

- Publication: *Sentient Sidewalk: Lessons from New York City's Wild Medicinal Plants*, (2022)

Muskaan Vatvani, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant
- Gabrielle Arthurton-Crumb Award for Rookie of the Year, Residential Life, 2021-2022
- Women's Media Group Scholarship FIT Recipient

Rebecca Yoo, Peer Writing and Speaking Consultant
- Publication: "Mother's Hands," Gandy Dancer: A student-led literary magazine of the State University of New York, Issue 10.2, Spring 2022

Stephanie Zlotnick, Professional Writing and Speaking Consultant
- Conference Presentation: "Political Polarization as Motivation: How Today's Political Climate Can Improve Writing Education." SUNY Council on Writing Conference, 23 Oct 2021.
- Publication: "Dear Sister: A Literacy Narrative." *Promethean: The Official Literary Journal of The City College of New York*, (49), 64-68. 2022. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xv_gxAnTNbM75ncrpmHdRb9KEGsxPhel/view
- Awarded Honorable Mention for the Marilyn Sternglass Overall Merit Award

Section Two

I. Summary, 2021-2022 Goals

Goal 1: Continue establishing Writing and Speaking Studio as FIT's Writing/Communication Across the Curriculum program and provide speaking and writing across the curriculum resources for students and faculty through building relationships with departments, developing a faculty fellows program, building learning modules, and facilitating events.

Goal 2: Employ Staff Education to (re)acclimate staff to on-campus tutoring; prepare all new and returning tutors to confidently tutor in both writing and speaking through the use of regular staff meetings.

Goal 3: Outreach and student contact opportunities responsive to the challenges of returning to campus by seeking and creating informal and formal events to engage students.

II. Assessment, 2021-22 Goals

Goal 1: We had success working with FBM to support their new first-year course. We visited 22 sections to talk to students about written and oral communication, and students were asked to visit the Writing and Speaking Studio. In total, we logged 382 sessions with FM108 and FM109 students, and others possibly marked resume, cover letter, or other when signing up for appointments. The collaboration clearly had a successful impact on student usage.

In addition, we received positive feedback from FBM faculty, who shared the following student reflection on their Writing and Speaking Studio visit:

> "I admit when I first learned that it was mandatory to make an appointment for the writing and speaking studio I was not happy. I know it is one of my most deteriorating traits but I don't take criticism well, and I honestly didn't want anyone judging my work or my thought process. The thought of someone I didn't know helping me with my writing and speaking scared me…However, I was pleasantly surprised. I got to meet with Julia on April 21 at 8:30, off the bat I really liked how she approached the meeting. She had a kind voice which put me more at ease, and she made sure I understood how the studio works…. I had never written a cover letter before, therefore I was clueless to how one was supposed to be structured, however she shared examples with me and walked me through the whole process. We first looked up specific internships Nike had to offer and settled for a product development internship. We brainstormed what the letter should include based on what Nike looked for in a person applying for this position….I am glad this was mandatory, because if I had an option I wouldn't have made the appointment. So far I have made three other appointments. This has taught me to not let preconceived notions stop me from utilizing resources that are available to me."

In addition to class visits and student visits to the Writing and Speaking Studio, we produced videos, learning modules and materials for FM108 that discussed topics such as writing for discussion forums, research writing, and elevator pitches.

The successful use of these materials in the FM108 classroom set the groundwork for enhancing these resources. We also worked closely with faculty in Interior Design, MFA Fashion Design, and Exhibition and Experience Design to support students working on high-stakes communication projects like industry presentations and theses.

In addition to the course specific materials for FM108, Prof. Keating created a speech video archive that students and faculty can use to learn about a variety of speaking occasions and rhetorical principles. Each video is annotated to provide some analysis of what makes the speech effective (https://sites.google.com/fitnyc.edu/speech-archive/home).

Since most events remained online this academic year, we decided to focus our attention on student support and direct interventions with faculty needing communication teaching and learning support. That said, the Writing and Speaking Studio supported the planning and facilitation of the CET's Adjunct Summer Institute on May 18, 2022.

Unfortunately, we were unable to establish a faculty fellows program, which received a soft yes when proposed; we were reluctant to put department time and resources into developing the program as we were navigating the campus return and the FM108 collaboration. We hope to revisit some variation of this plan in the future.

Goal 2: On-going staff education included 5 full staff remote meetings and one in-person meeting at the end of the spring semester. In addition to full staff meetings, smaller groups met throughout the year to discuss a variety of written and oral communication issues. Topics covered this academic year included public speaking anxiety, elevator pitches, preparing digital presentations for e-portfolios, focusing on the writer and session management, ethical editing, research-based writing, interview preparations, and punctuation as a rhetorical tool. The private staff blog where tutors discuss staff development topics included 56 posts and 78 comments. These rich conversations demonstrate tutors exploring new ideas, reflecting on practice, and constructing new knowledge on communication teaching and learning in relation to their own experiences (see example blog post discussions that demonstrate quality of reflection and critical thinking).

Furthermore, peer consultants created e-portfolios and were asked to write and revise tutoring philosophy statements as they progressed through the program. These statements demonstrate consultants' developing knowledge and practice as they continue to learn from staff education. Here are some excerpts from consultants at various stages in their development:

- New Peer Consultant: "I try to unearth a tutee's strength as well as help them navigate their process. The cornerstone of this approach is attentive listening. I steer clear of promptly suggesting changes and resort instead to building on the student's thoughts. My goal as a peer tutor is to empower students to develop their own unique voice." -Tanya
- Experienced Peer Consultant: "Understanding the factors surrounding the development and expectations of writing is a part of holistic writing education. Everyone comes from various backgrounds and with these different backgrounds comes a range of language experiences. By dissecting language as a construct and tool we can better grasp the nuances that make it impossible to know what is the 'norm'. I wish to stray away from 'norms' while retaining audience expectations in my own writing and hope to promote this amongst students as well." -Julia
- New Peer Consultant: "Creating a safe space for students to express their thoughts throughout their time in the studio is my main priority. Getting to know each student I work with allows for a comfortable flow of communication. My favorite part of a session is being able to navigate a student's own voice in a professional piece." -Justin
- Experienced Peer Consultant: "It's important to me to listen to stories from a neurodiverse population. I hope to help people to convey their unique way of thinking to others, and share their perspectives on the world around them. Not everyone benefits from the same means of expression, and I would like to work with students to find what is most comfortable and empowering for them. In tutoring, I want to encourage people to share pieces of their identity, and to celebrate individuality." -Eleanor

Goal 3: We took every opportunity to make connections both in person and online throughout the academic year. Over the course of the year, we made 76 visits to classes to introduce the Writing and Speaking Studio and discuss strategies for effective communication. We participated in every virtual and in-person event from orientation to admitted students day. Alongside Academic Skills Tutoring Center colleagues, tutors worked information tables in the Dubinsky lobby to advertise services. In the spring, a small committee of peer consultants brainstormed ways to engage students and invite them into our space. The result was an open mic on May 4 attended by 14 individuals, each of whom performed or showed their own creative work. The committee is planning events for next year.

III. Lessons Learned

We learned to be adaptable. We had high hopes that a return to campus would translate to increased opportunities for engagement with all our constituents, but we quickly realized the limitations imposed by the necessary preventive measures still in place. In addition, low morale and a general sense of fatigue made it difficult to pursue our goals. We saw a significant drop in the number of students using our services in the spring semester. Although the spring semester is historically less busy than the fall, this spring was particularly quiet. We might explore more departmental relationships like the FBM collaboration as a way to encourage more students to try our services. Furthermore, as we transition into next year, our goals will focus on the quality of interactions we have rather than the number in order to inform our practices and policies going forward. With more focused attention on developing tutors, supporting and connecting with faculty, and understanding the oral communication landscape, we aim to discover new ways for the department to position itself across the curriculum and in students' writing and speaking processes.

IV. Goals for Next Year, 2022-23

Goal 1: Educate peer and professional consultants to meet the learning needs of students working on written and oral communication projects by engaging them through scholarship, meaningful discussions, and professional development opportunities.

Goal 2: Engage faculty through development events and programs that encourage written and oral communication as tools for teaching and learning.

Goal 3: Assess oral communication expectations and needs across the disciplines to explore how oral communication is practiced and taught across the curriculum and determine how the Writing and Speaking Studio can best support students and faculty.

V. Implementation and Assessment Plans, 2022-2023 goals

Goal 1 - Space for oral communication tutoring and support:

Secure space where students can engage in both speech preparation and practice. This space would include designated private spaces for practicing and producing oral presentations and be equipped with appropriate resources to support students with oral communication projects such as access to presentation and video/audio recording technology.

Assessment plan: Identify appropriate locations for oral communication tutoring and support, and work with key constituents to create and furnish a productive site for speaking tutoring and presentation practice and production.

Goal 2 - Staff education and development implementation:

Use regular staff meetings to address relevant topics and e-portfolios to facilitate tutors’ demonstration of their learning.

Assessment plan: All new tutors need to have e-portfolios prepared, including a first draft of their tutoring philosophy statements. Returning tutors will need to update their philosophy statements. All statements will reflect appreciation for both writing and speaking situations. Furthermore, the staff blog provides evidence of critical reflection and growth in practice and knowledge.

Goal 3 - Faculty engagement and development:

Reinstate the Spotlight series which invites faculty across the college to showcase how they use written and oral communication in their courses. All faculty will be invited to this event and will have the opportunity to explore creative options for using writing and speaking as tools for teaching in their classes.

Assessment plan: Survey participants to assess what was valuable or new to them and explore how they might use the content in their own teaching.

Goal 4 - Oral communication assessment:

Begin an assessment of oral communication needs and practices across the college that explores how oral communication is practiced and taught across the curriculum. Findings will be used to determine how the Writing and Speaking Studio can best support students and faculty.

Assessment plan: Invite faculty from the schools of Art and Design and Business and Technology to participate in focus groups during the fall semester. Analyze focus group data to determine how to best support practices and needs.