Online Writing Tutoring and Accessibility
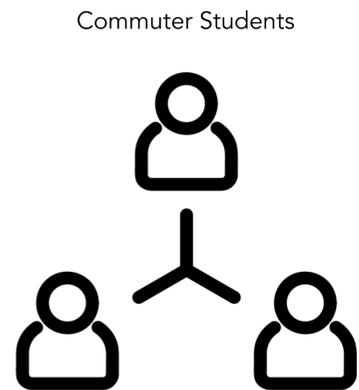
Research Question

In what ways might online tutoring change writer accessibility to tutoring services at campus writing centers?

Context

Access to writing centers on campus relies upon students' availability to go to sessions on campus because currently there is no online tutoring at UW. This could exclude some populations such as those with disabilities, or those with social anxiety. Many writing centers are now facing a tipping point of sorts, the technology is now readily available for face to face tutoring to be accessible to many. We want to learn about the subset of students at UW who want to get help from the tutors at the writing center but do not attend sessions. Identifying the characteristics of this population we could better tailor future writing center growth towards this population.

Approach

- Interviews
  - Writing center administrators
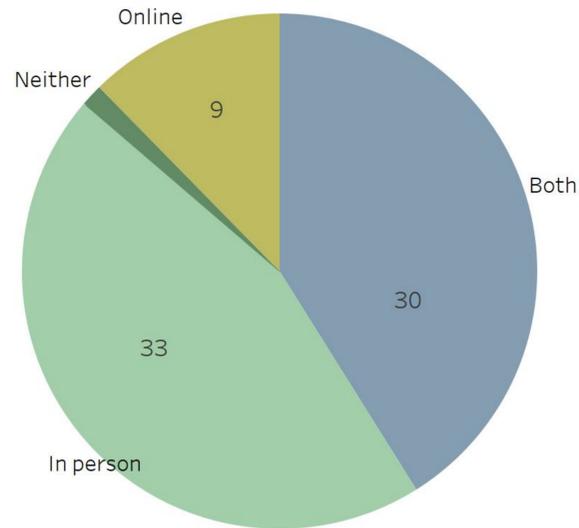- Focus Groups
  - Tutors
- Survey
  - Students

Commuter Students

Created by shashank singh
from Noun Project

Students with Disabilities   English Language Learners

Online vs In Person Academic Support Preference

- Online — 9
- Neither
- Both — 30
- In person — 33

Main Takeaways

Online tutoring may be able to address some gaps

Help students who don't have large chunks of free time or live far away from UW/don't spend much time on campus

In person seems to be prefered by both students and tutors, if possible

Without support (money, making it a goal/priority) from University leadership, centers may not be able to implement a program in a way that adheres closely to their philosophy

Perspective

- We drew upon perspectives of writing center administrators, tutors, users, and potential users to gain a better understanding of barriers to access.

Population

- Our population of interest is students at the UW Seattle campus as well as a subset of these students that identify as: Commuters, ELLs, and students with disabilities and may benefit most from an increase in writing center accessibility.
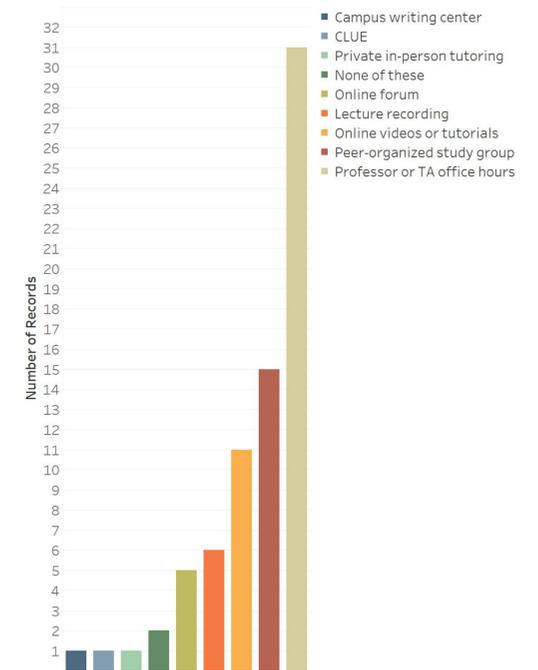
Findings

- online tutoring could improve access for those who experience disability, commute long distances, identify as English Language Learners (ELL) or are non-traditional students.

Conclusion

Tutor and admin main concerns were: preserving center philosophy and logistics. We also found that student and admins were cost while tutors and students were both concerned with the impersonal aspect and the prospective technical difficulties.

Benefits we identified were that asynchronous tutoring helps overcome student temporal constraints and can be implemented using technology all students already have access to. While synchronous tutoring would help by compensating for geographical distance and allow for closer to face-to-face sessions (more personal).

Which Types of Academic Support are Most Used?

- Campus writing center
- CLUE
- Private in-person tutoring
- None of these
- Online forum
- Lecture recording
- Online videos or tutorials
- Peer-organized study group
- Professor or TA office hours

Recommendations

What is required to roll out online tutoring program

- Larger budget
- Support from university leadership

Critical for success of online tutoring program

- Student population that needs it (on-the-go, far away)
- Training and support for tutors
- Tech accessible to everyone
- Buy-in from everyone

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