

# GENERAL EDUCATION WRITTEN COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT REPORT

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**Submitted by:**

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## Background

The new General Education program at Chico State was implemented in Fall 2012 and included 10 explicitly defined Student Learning Objectives. Written Communication, defined as “Demonstrat[ing] the ability to question, investigate and draw well-reasoned conclusions and to formulate ideas through effective written communication appropriate to the intended audience,” is considered one of the most critical. Since the implementation of the program, CAB (the campus General Education committee) has undertaken two assessments of students’ writing capabilities – one in the 2012-13 academic year, and one in Spring 2017. A report on the 2012-13 Written Communication assessment has been submitted to the Academic Assessment Council and is available here: <http://www.csuchico.edu/ge/assessment.shtml>. This report contains results from the Spring 2017 assessment, as well as comparisons between this more recent assessment and the previous one.

Back in 2013, the CAB Written Communication Assessment Team took the AAC&U’s Written Communication VALUE Rubric (<https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/written-communication>) and modified it. This modified rubric, which involves four “traits”, was applied to papers from both 2012-13 and Spring 2017, and is included in Appendix A of this report. Each paper receives a score for each trait – either a **1** (Beginning), **2** (Competent), or **3** (Accomplished). A score of **2** can be considered the “benchmark” that demonstrates a student’s satisfactory ability in that particular trait.

In Fall 2012 and Spring 2013, students in a variety of General Education classes (see Table 1 for the list of classes) submitted samples of their work to the STEPS (Student Tracking Evaluation Portfolio System) assessment management system. Thousands of submissions were received, and 505 of their papers were scored by the Written Communication Assessment team: 311 from Area A2 courses, 141 from lower-division Writing Intensive (WI) courses, and 53 from upper-division WI courses.

Area A-2 Courses		Lower-Division WI Courses		Upper-Division WI Courses	
Course	Papers reviewed	Course	Papers reviewed	Course	Papers reviewed
ENGL 130I	227	GEOG 101I	50	POLS 365I	31
ENGL 130PI	44	UNIV 105I	32	POLS 401I	15
JOUR 130I	23	HUMN 281I	14	MCGS 401I	4
ENGL 130EI	17	NFSC 200I	13	POLS 324I	3
		WMST 275I	10		
		RELS 275I	9		
		RELS 204I	6		
		RELS 264I	4		
		ENVL 105I	3		
<b>TOTAL A-2</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>TOTAL LD</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>TOTAL UD</b>	<b>53</b>

Table 1: Courses involved in GE Written Communication Assessment in 2012-13

The assessment in Spring 2017 was focused on students in upper-division General Education courses, since those students would be “at or near graduation”, and WASC is particularly interested in assessment results for those students. The courses targeted for inclusion in this assessment were those with “Written Communication” as one of the course’s Student Learning Objectives (SLO’s), as well as “Capstone” and “Writing Intensive” sections of all upper-division GE courses. The scheme below shows how the committee narrowed its focus:

- The General Education Program at CSU, Chico includes 226 courses (not including foreign-language courses)
- Of those, 83 are upper-division courses
- Of those, 73 are offered in Spring (we chose to gather data only in Spring, so the Fall-only courses weren’t part of the assessment)
- Of those 73 courses, 49 courses were included in the assessment:
  - 18 are “Capstone” courses, all of which have a significant writing component
  - 10 more are “Writing Intensive” courses, which also have a significant writing component, and
  - 21 further courses include “Written Communication” as an explicit SLO.

Faculty teaching sections of these courses in Spring 2017 were contacted in late Fall 2016 to let them know about the upcoming assessment. We asked them not to create any “new” assignments for the purposes of assessment (unless they chose to of course), but rather choose one particular assignment that could be used to demonstrate their students’ writing skills, and to ask their students to upload their papers into STEPS for our review. The instructors only “extra work” involved uploading their assignment’s instructions into STEPS and reminding their students to please upload their work.

Table 2 below shows the numbers of sections, courses, and instructors that were invited to participate, submitted work, and whose students’ were ultimately included in the assessment. The amount of participation in this project was encouraging. More than half of the sections/courses/instructors had at least one of their students upload their work.

	Sections	Different Courses	Unique Instructors	Enrollment or Submissions
UD GE (WI/C/WC SLO)	113	49	60	4065
Submitted Work	72	37	40	1553
Included in Assessment	44	23	26	1042

Table 2: Participation in GE Written Communication Assessment in Spring 2017

An initial screening to the “type” of work submitted was carried out to ensure that the students’ work could effectively be evaluated by the rubric. Of the 72 sections from which student work was submitted, 9 were eliminated since 3 or fewer students from that section had uploaded their work. A further 19 sections were removed from consideration since the work uploaded wasn’t that of a typical “paper” that lent itself to review by the rubric. Some examples of such work eliminated from consideration included short blog posts, journal log entries, and short opinion pieces. Those types of work certainly can be important types of writing students do and can lead to improvement of writing skills, but since they were very different from the format of a long-form paper (with citations, an organized structure, etc.) they were left out of the review. Nevertheless that still left the committee with over 1000 pieces of student work to consider. Table 3 shows the complete list of courses, the number of papers received and reviewed from each, and the instructors of those sections. Special thanks goes out to those instructors for encouraging their students to upload their papers and participating in this assessment initiative.

Course	Sections	Submitted	Reviewed	Instructor(s)
ANTH 333	1	39	4	Melody Yeager
ANTH 340Z	2	44	5	Melody Yeager, Ariane Belanger-Vincent
BIOL 322I	3	56	8	Donald Miller, Adrienne Edwards
ENGL 338Z	2	14	3	Kendall Leon
ENGL 342Z	1	27	7	Heather Fisher
ENGL 350I	2	46	8	Nathaniel Heggins Bryant, Kelly Candelaria
ENGL 354	1	16	4	John Traver
ENGL 364I	3	55	14	Aiping Zhang, Ayde Enriquez-Loya
HIST 381	1	33	6	Stephen Lewis
HUMN 300Z	1	4	1	Susanna Boxall
MCGS/POLS 401I	1	15	5	Shephen Sherlock
PHIL 323Z	4	97	12	Anthony Greybosch
PHIL 327Z	4	58	7	Eric Gampel, Troy Jollimore
PHIL 340I	1	11	3	Eric Gampel
PHIL 341Z	4	73	23	Thomas Imhoff
PHIL 370	2	54	9	Zanja Yudell
POLS 365Z	3	72	11	Suzanne Hilderbrand, Nathaniel Heggins Bryant
PSYC 345	1	49	10	Mary Dolan
PSYC 391	2	139	14	Dory Schachner
RELS 357I	2	53	6	Patricia Lennon
SOCI 354	1	14	4	Chunyan Song
SOCI 420	1	34	6	Nicholas Janos
SOSC 300	1	39	12	Alan Gibson
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1042</b>	<b>182</b>	

Table 3: Breakdown of courses involved in GE Written Communication assessment Spring 2017

## Spring 2017 Assessment Protocol

Fourteen (14) members of CAB were selected or volunteered as reviewers for the papers submitted. A norming session for reviewers was conducted to maximize consistency. The reviewers were paired together, and each reviewer was assigned 25 papers for review. The reviews were conducted between May and September 2017. A few papers were submitted in an unreadable format, and due to an assignment mix-up, one pair of reviewers had several papers that only one of them reviewed. The net result was that a total of **182** papers (out of 1042 submitted, or 17.5%) were reviewed, with 25 of them reviewed once and 157 of them reviewed twice – a total of 339 aggregate scores (min = 4; max = 12) were obtained for the 182 papers. The reviewers submitted their scores through the STEPS system, and once all reviewers had completed their reviews, the aggregate data was analyzed.

## Spring 2017 Assessment – Student Profile

There were 182 papers analyzed in Spring 2017 from 179 different students (three students each had two papers from two different courses randomly selected for analysis). The breakdown of those 182 students (with those with two papers reviewed counted twice) is in Table 4.

Characteristic	Count
Asian	7
Black/African American	3
Hispanic/Latino	72
White	82
Two Or More Ethnicities/Race	9
Decline To State, Not Specified, or Unavailable	9
Female	104
Male	77
Unavailable	1
Sophomore	26
Junior	78
Senior	77
Unavailable	1
First Time Freshman	114
Transfer	65
Returning Transfer	2
Unavailable	1

Table 4: Demographic Profiles of the students whose papers were assessed

## Spring 2017 Initial Scoring and Adjustment

Each category in the rubric has three possible scoring levels:

“Beginning” (lowest score) = 1.00

“Competent” (benchmark score) = 2.00

“Accomplished” (maximum score) = 3.00

Each paper was scored once or twice (for a total of 339 aggregate scores). With four categories of review and a score of 1-3 in each category, each paper received an aggregate score between 4 and 12 points from each reviewer. To ensure reviewer consistency, scores for each paper were compared. Figure 1 below shows the differences in the aggregate scores for each paper between the two reviewers. Note that 25 papers had only one reviewer.

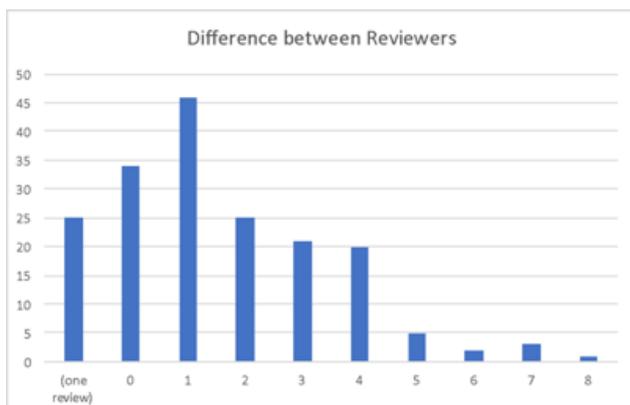


Figure 1: Differences between the two scores awarded for each paper before adjustment

Eleven (11) of the 157 papers with two reviews (7%) had an aggregate score that varied by 5 points or more. Each of those papers was thus reviewed once again by 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer that hadn't participated in the initial scoring. In five cases the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer's score was nearer to that of the lower-scoring initial reviewer, in five other cases the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer's score was nearer to that of the higher-scoring initial reviewer, and in one case the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer was right in between the initial scores. The scores from the reviewer whose scored differed substantially from the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewers were dismissed and replaced by those of the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer.

Shown in Figures 2 and 3 are the differences in review scores after incorporating the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer's results, as well as the count of the various aggregate scores. All of the results presented hereafter include the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer's scores.

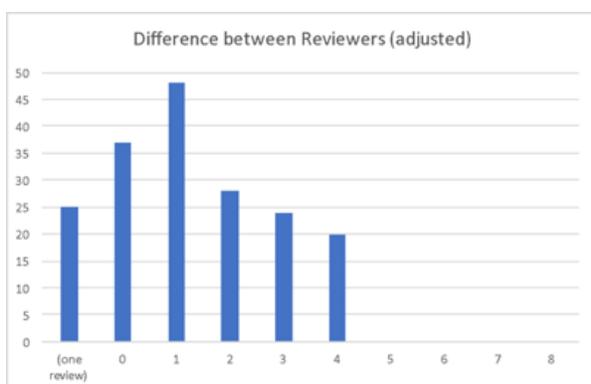


Figure 2: Differences between the two scores awarded for each paper after adjustment

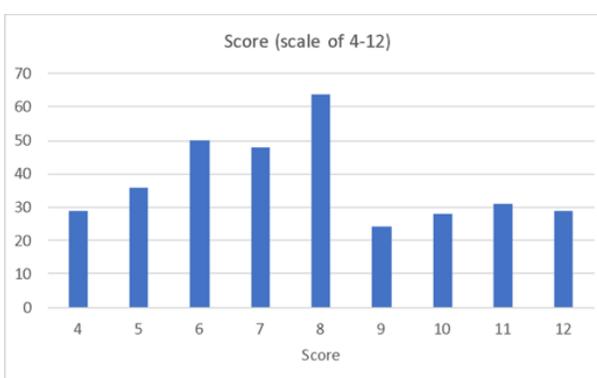


Figure 3: Aggregate scores awarded by reviewers after adjustment

## Section 1: Spring 2017 – Assessment Results

In all of the data below, student achievement is calculated in two ways:

1. The “average” score for a set of papers in a category, based on this correlation:  
 “Beginning” (lowest score) = 1.00  
 “Competent” (benchmark score) = 2.00  
 “Accomplished” (maximum score) = 3.00
2. The percentage of scores that met or exceeded the benchmark – the sum of the “Competent” (2) scores and “Accomplished” (3) scores

Table 5 shows the mean scores, standard deviations, and the % meeting the benchmark in each of the four rubric categories for the entire sample. Students scored highest in “Content” and lowest in “Sources and Evidence”. Details of what the various scores mean in each of those categories is found on the rubric in Appendix A.

Trait	UD GE 2017		% Meeting Benchmark
	Mean	SD	
Content	2.041	0.678	79%
Grammar and Other Surface Features	1.906	0.699	71%
Organization and Argumentation	1.953	0.720	72%
Sources and Evidence	1.855	0.750	64%
SUM	7.755		

Table 5: Mean, SD, and % achieving benchmark for the entire assessment sample

Comparisons were done of scores of these papers to look for differences based on class characteristics and student demographics. Any differences in mean scores that are significant to a 95% confidence level are marked, with **red** showing the higher score and **green** showing the lower score.

Table 6 compares the average scores in the four categories for papers from Capstone (Z) courses, Writing Intensive (I) courses, and courses with neither designation (but which had Written Communication as an SLO). There was not much variation in individual category or aggregate scores, except for a statistically significant difference in the “Sources and Evidence” scores between WI sections (higher) and Capstone sections (lower).

Trait	Neither	WI	Capstone
Number of Papers	69	44	69
Content	2.04, 76%	2.02, 80%	2.06, 82%
Grammar and Other Surface Features	1.90, 66%	1.85, 72%	1.96, 74%
Organization and Argumentation	2.00, 70%	1.93, 70%	1.91, 75%
Sources and Evidence	1.84, 64%	<b>2.03</b> , 76%	<b>1.74</b> , 55%
TOTAL	<b>7.77</b>	<b>7.84</b>	<b>7.67</b>

Table 6: Mean scores (and % meeting benchmark) based on the type of class section

Tables 7 through 10 below break down student results based on different demographic characteristics. The scores labeled “3” are “Accomplished”, “2” are “Competent” and “1” are “Beginner”. The data shows that:

- There was no statistically significant difference between female and male students
- There were statistically significant differences between juniors/seniors (higher) and sophomores (lower)
- There was a statistically significant difference between transfer students (higher score) and first-time freshmen (lower score). This however is in large part an artifact of a different ethnic composition between the groups of first-time freshmen and transfer students; see Table 9A for details.
- There was a statistically significant difference between White students (higher) and Hispanic/Latino students (lower). There was also a 23% gap between White (83%) and Hispanic/Latino (60%) students in the number of scores meeting the benchmark. The numbers of students from other ethnic groups were too small for any statistically significant differences to be measured.

Row Labels	1	2	3	Average	SD	% meeting benchmark
Female	232	392	160	1.908	0.702	70%
Male	158	267	139	1.966	0.726	72%

Table 7: Score breakdown based on student gender

Row Labels	1	2	3	Average	SD	% meeting benchmark
Junior	151	302	119	1.944	0.685	74%
Senior	168	257	147	1.963	0.742	71%
Sophomore	71	100	33	1.814	0.691	65%

Table 8: Score breakdown based on student class status

Row Labels	1	2	3	Average	SD	% meeting benchmark
First Time	270	427	147	1.854	0.688	68%
Returning Transfer	1	8	3	2.167		92%
Transfer	119	224	149	2.061	0.736	76%

Table 9: Score breakdown based on student transfer status

Category	Count	%	% Beg (1)	% Comp (2)	% Acc (3)	Average	% Meeting Benchmark
First Time Freshmen	114		32%	51%	17%	1.85	68%
Hispanic	53	46%	41%	47%	12%	1.70	59%
White	42	37%	17%	55%	28%	2.11	83%
Other	19						
Transfer	65		24%	46%	30%	2.06	76%
Hispanic	19	29%	38%	45%	17%	1.80	63%
White	38	58%	18%	45%	36%	2.18	82%
Other	8						
Returning Trans/Unk.	3						

Table 9A: Score breakdown based on student transfer status and ethnicity

Row Labels	1	2	3	Average	SD	% meeting benchmark
Asian	15	24	9	1.875	0.703	69%
Black/African American	10	12	2	1.667	0.637	58%
Decline To State	12	17	3	1.719	0.634	63%
Hispanic/Latino	216	249	71	1.729	0.681	60%
Not Specified	7	12	13	2.188	0.780	78%
Two Or More Ethnicities	24	36	8	1.765	0.649	65%
White	106	309	193	2.143	0.687	83%

Table 10: Score breakdown based on student ethnicity

The difference between Hispanic/Latino and White students was further broken down into scores by scoring category in Table 11. In each of the four categories, there was a statistically significant difference between white students (higher) and Hispanic/Latino students (lower), with between a 21-26% gap in the percentage of students meeting the benchmark in each category. The data is also shown graphically in Figure 4.

Row Labels	1	2	3	Average	SD	% meeting benchmark
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	216	249	71			
Content	42	70	22	1.851	0.677	69%
Grammar and Other Surface Features	52	69	13	1.709	0.635	61%
Organization and Argumentation	55	61	18	1.724	0.687	59%
Sources and Evidence	67	49	18	1.634	0.710	50%
<b>White</b>	106	309	193			
Content	17	84	51	2.224	0.632	89%
Grammar and Other Surface Features	27	78	47	2.132	0.687	82%
Organization and Argumentation	26	75	51	2.164	0.695	83%
Sources and Evidence	36	72	44	2.053	0.726	76%

Table 11: Score breakdown based on student ethnicity and by scoring category

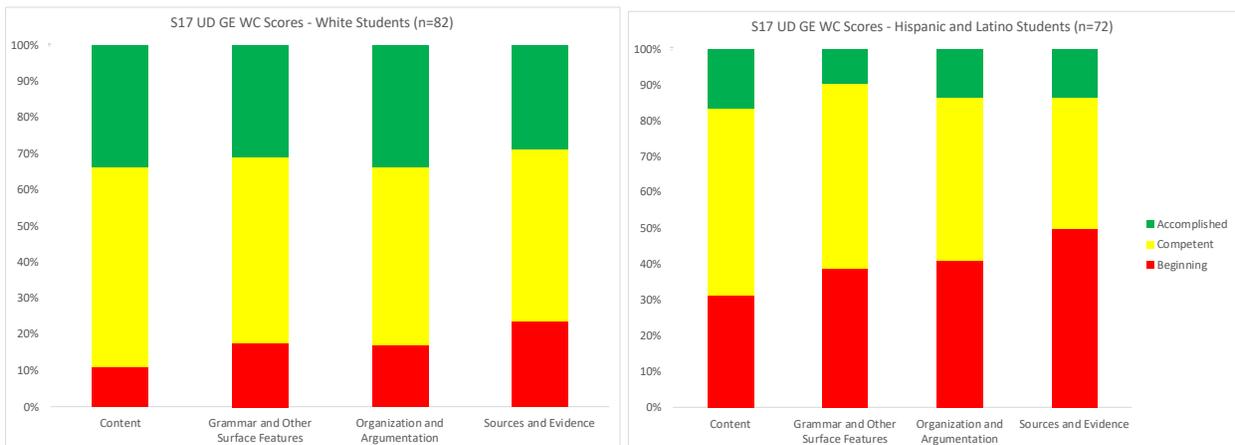


Figure 4: Comparison of scores of White students (left) vs. Hispanic/Latino students (right). Colors represent a rating of **Accomplished**, **Competent**, and **Beginning**.

## Section 2: Comparison of results from 2012-13 (Area A2 courses) and Spring 2017 (UD GE courses)

To look for student growth, scores using the same Written Communication rubric from students in ENGL 130I in 2012-13 (89% Freshmen) and from students in UD GE courses (86% Juniors/Seniors) were compared. There were 311 papers reviewed in 2012-13 from Area A2 courses, which provided a robust basis for comparison with the 182 papers reviewed in UD GE courses in 2017.

Table 12 summarizes the overall results. There was a strong statistically significant difference (with scores in 2017 higher) in both the “Content” and “Organization and Argumentation” categories, with increased numbers of students meeting those benchmarks. There was a smaller but still statistically significant increase in scores in “Sources and Evidence” between 2012-13 and 2017, though the % of students meeting the benchmark was unchanged. There was essentially no change in the scores in “Grammar and other Surface Features”, and the % of students meeting the benchmark fell from 79% to 71%.

Trait	A2 2012-13			UD GE 2017			Change
	Mean	SD	% benchmk	Mean	SD	% benchmk	
Content	1.882	0.618	74%	2.041	0.678	79%	0.159
Grammar and Other Surface Features	1.886	0.536	79%	1.906	0.699	71%	0.019
Organization and Argumentation	1.751	0.643	64%	1.953	0.720	72%	0.202
Sources and Evidence	1.753	0.649	64%	1.855	0.750	64%	0.102
SUM	7.272			7.755			0.483

Table 12: Comparison of scores from Area A2 courses in 2012-13 vs. UD GE courses in 2017

Tables 13 through 15 break down these results further by various student demographic characteristics. The data in the tables shows:

- While male students had a statistically significant increase in scores from 2012-13 (A2) to 2017 (UD GE), there was only a small (and non-statistically significant increase) in scores of female students.
- While white students had a statistically significant increase in scores from 2012-13 to 2017, there was only a small (and non-statistically significant increase) in scores of Hispanic/Latino students. The gap between White and Hispanic/Latino students meeting the benchmark increased from 10% (2012-13 A2) to 23% (2017 UD GE). Figure 5 shows this data graphically. *Note: the number of students from other ethnicities was too small to make meaningful comparisons.*
- The changes in scores for White and Hispanic/Latino students can be further broken down by category. The data shows a statistically significant increase in scores in each category for White students, but no statistically significant changes in scores for Hispanic/Latino students. There was also a higher % of white students meeting the benchmark in three categories (except “Grammar”, which essentially remained the same), while the % of Hispanic/Latino students meeting the benchmark in three categories changed only slightly and in “Grammar” fell by 14%.

Gender	A2 2012-13	% benchmk	UD GE 2017	% benchmk	Difference
Female	1.856	73%	1.908	70%	<b>0.052</b>
Male	1.771	68%	1.966	72%	<b>0.196</b>

Table 13: Comparison of A2 (2012-13) vs UD GE (2017) scores by gender

Ethnicity	A2 2012 13	% benchmk	UD GE 2017	% benchmk	Difference
Hispanic/Latino	1.715	63%	1.729	60%	0.014
White	1.876	73%	2.143	83%	<b>0.268</b>

Table 14: Comparison of A2 (2012-13) vs UD GE (2017) scores by ethnicity

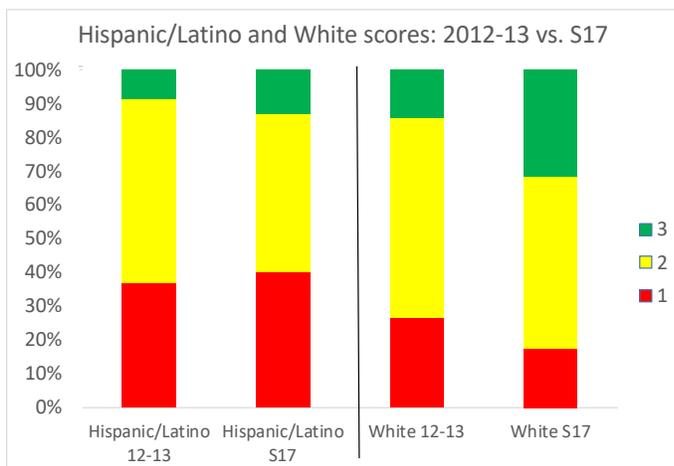


Figure 5: Figure 4: Comparison of changes in scores of Hispanic/Latino students (left) and White students (right) between A2 (2012-13) and UD GE (S17)

Colors represent a rating of **Accomplished**, **Competent**, and **Beginning**.

Ethnicity/Trait	A2 2012-13	% benchmk	UD GE 2017	% benchmk	Difference
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>n=65</b>		<b>n=72</b>		
Content	1.783	69%	1.851	69%	0.068
Grammar and Other Surface Features	1.823	75%	1.709	61%	-0.114
Organization and Argumentation	1.618	54%	1.724	59%	0.106
Sources and Evidence	1.638	55%	1.634	50%	-0.004
<b>White</b>	<b>n=171</b>		<b>n=82</b>		
Content	1.910	75%	2.224	89%	<b>0.314</b>
Grammar and Other Surface Features	1.947	83%	2.132	82%	<b>0.184</b>
Organization and Argumentation	1.814	67%	2.164	83%	<b>0.350</b>
Sources and Evidence	1.830	69%	2.053	76%	<b>0.222</b>

Table 15: Comparison of A2 (2012-13) vs UD GE (2017) scores by ethnicity, broken down by scoring category

**Section 3: Comparison of results from 2012-13 (UD GE courses) and Spring 2017 (UD GE courses)**

Because there were a number of papers from UD GE courses scored in 2012-13, a comparison between those scores and the scores of papers from UD GE courses in 2017 was possible. Table 16 shows the sources of those papers:

UD 2012-13	UD GE 2017
53 papers reviewed	182 papers reviewed
POLS/MCGS 401I, POLS 324I, POLS 365I	23 UD GE courses

Table 16: Sources of papers for comparison of UD GE papers from 2012-13 and 2017

Tables 17 through 20 below show the aggregate scores comparing these papers, and further break down the results by student demographic categories. The data shows:

- That there was a statistically significant difference in scores in three categories (all but “Organization”), with the scores in 2017 being lower. The % of students rated as meeting the benchmark in each category also went down by 7% to 26%.
- That there was a statistically significant difference in scores for female students (with 2017 scores lower), but a smaller and non-statistically significant difference in scores for male students.
- That there was a statistically significant difference in scores for Hispanic/Latino students (with 2017 scores lower), but a smaller and non-statistically significant difference in scores for white students. *Note: the number of students from other ethnicities was too small to make meaningful comparisons.*
- When the differences in scores for Hispanic/Latino students and white students are further broken down by category, no statistically significant differences are determined (in part because there were only 8 Hispanic/Latino students’ papers evaluated in 2012-13). In any case all scores for both ethnic groups were lower in 2017, except for the “Organization” score for white students, which was marginally higher.

Trait	UD 2012-13 n = 53		UD GE 2017 n = 182		Change
	Mean	% Benchmark	Mean	% Benchmark	
Content	2.235	87%	2.041	79%	-0.194
Grammar and Other Surface Feature:	2.198	91%	1.906	71%	-0.292
Organization and Argumentation	2.078	79%	1.953	72%	-0.125
Sources and Evidence	2.127	90%	1.855	64%	-0.272
SUM	8.638		7.755		-0.883

Table 17: Comparisons of average scores and % of students meeting the benchmark in each category between UD GE courses in 2012-13 vs. 2017

Gender	UD 2012-13	UD GE 2017	Difference
<b>Female: Average (% Benchmark)</b>	2.221 (90%)	1.908 (70%)	<b>-0.313 (-20%)</b>
<b>Male: Average (% Benchmark)</b>	2.049 (81%)	1.966 (72%)	<b>-0.083 (-9%)</b>

Table 18: Comparisons of average scores and % of students meeting the benchmark between UD GE courses in 2012-13 vs. 2017 by student gender

Ethnicity	UD 2012-13	UD 2012-13 scor	UD GE 2017	UD GE 2017 scor	Difference
Hispanic/Latino	n = 8	2.133 (82%)	n = 72	1.729 (60%)	<b>-0.404</b>
White	n = 33	2.204 (89%)	n = 82	2.143 (83%)	<b>-0.061</b>

Table 19: Comparisons of average scores and % of students meeting the benchmark between UD GE courses in 2012-13 vs. 2017 by student ethnicity

Ethnicity/Trait	UD 2012-13		UD GE 2017		Difference
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>n=8</b>		<b>n=72</b>		
Content	2.267	80%	1.851	69%	-0.416
Organization and Argumentation	2.000	73%	1.724	59%	-0.276
Sources and Evidence	2.200	87%	1.634	50%	-0.566
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.533</b>		<b>6.918</b>		<b>-1.615</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>n=33</b>		<b>n=82</b>		
Content	2.250	88%	2.224	89%	-0.026
Grammar and Other Surface Features	2.286	95%	2.132	82%	-0.154
Organization and Argumentation	2.109	81%	2.164	83%	0.055
Sources and Evidence	2.172	92%	2.053	76%	-0.119
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.817</b>		<b>8.572</b>		<b>-0.245</b>

Table 20: Comparisons of average scores and % of students meeting the benchmark between UD GE courses in 2012-13 vs. 2017 by student ethnicity and by scoring category

#### Section 4: Longitudinal Assessment: A direct comparison of results between 2012-13 (A2) and 2017 (UD GE) papers from the same student

The STEPS system has allowed for the student work from prior years to be maintained. That allowed for members of the Written Communication Assessment Committee to look through the thousands of papers submitted from A2 courses in 2012-13 and the 1042 usable papers uploaded for the 2017 assessment. Upon review there were **30** individual students who had papers uploaded in both assessment terms, although one of the students had her 2012-13 paper in a format that no reviewers could read. An assessment effort was initiated to review the 58 papers from the other 29 students. The 2012-13 papers were all from ENGL 130I or ENGL 130PI, and Table 21 below shows the sources of the papers from 2017 used in this assessment.

Course	Count
ANTH 333	2
ANTH 340Z	5
BIOL 322I	1
ENGL 338Z	2
ENGL 342Z	3
HIST 381	1
MCGS 401i	1
PHIL 323Z	1
PHIL 327Z	5
PHIL 341Z	1
PHIL 370	3
PSYC 391	2
RELS 357I	1
SOCI 420	1

Table 21: sources of papers used in longitudinal assessment

All 58 papers were downloaded along with the instructions given by their instructors. All identifying information from the students and their classes (names, class names, instructor names, due dates, etc.) were redacted from those papers to attempt to prevent any bias being introduced into reviewers' scores.

Ten reviewers were recruited to carry out the assessment. For this smaller assessment effort the STEPS system was not used. Instead, reviewers were given access to pdf files of the papers (with instructions) and met on Wednesday, January 17 for a normal session and then immediately carried out their reviews. Their scores in the 4 categories were then sent to a scorekeeper who compiled the results.

Of the 232 pairs of scores recorded (for 58 papers in 4 criteria), there were 15 cases (6.5%) where one reviewer scored a "1" and the other scored a "3" – those all went to a third reviewer, whose score (unless it was a "2") replaced the score the 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer didn't match.

The results are summarized below in Tables 22 and 23. They show:

- For these same 29 students, they had a statistically significant increase (from A2 to UD GE) in their “Organization” scores, but a statistically significant decrease in their “Sources and Evidence” scores.
- Of the 29 students, 15 had higher aggregate scores on their UD GE paper, 3 had identical scores on their two papers, and 11 had lower aggregate scores on their UD GE paper. The greatest number of students had increased scores in “Organization” and had decreased scores in “Sources and Evidence”.

Averages	Content	Organization	Sources	Grammar	TOTAL
LD (ENGL 130)	1.91	1.66	2.07	2.03	7.67
UD GE	1.98	1.90	1.78	2.14	7.79
Change	0.07	0.24	-0.29	0.10	0.12

Table 22: Average scores for the longitudinal review showing differences between LD and UD scores for the same student

29 students	Content	Organization	Sources	Grammar	TOTAL
UP	13	14	8	12	15
NO CHANGE	6	8	5	9	3
DOWN	10	7	16	8	11

Table 23: Count of increase/unchanged/decreased scores for individual students in the longitudinal review

## Conclusions and Areas of Concern

1. The results from this assessment show that we can do a much better job in serving our diverse student population. According to the data, there are substantial achievement gaps between the two largest ethnic groups on campus, with White students not only starting off with better (as measured) writing abilities compared to Hispanic/Latino students (see Tables 14 and 15, and Figure 5), but with the gap increasing from introductory to advanced writing courses, with White students improving but with no significant improvement shown by Hispanic/Latino students. **This disparity** needs to be addressed in a meaningful way.
  - It's important to note that students' names (and therefore, in large part, their gender and ethnicity) were not anonymized during assessment except in the longitudinal study, so intrinsic bias may have affected students' scores. An effort to remove that possibility by removing a student's identifying information would be worthwhile in future.
2. The data in Table 12 shows that the one trait not improving between A2 and UD GE courses is "Grammar and other Surface Features", with the average scores roughly equal and the % of students meeting the benchmark decreasing by 8%. [Research](#) has shown this to not be particularly unexpected – that grammatical mistakes persist as the assignments, arguments, and content grows more complex. Nevertheless the data shows that one cannot assume students already have competence in this area and focus on the other areas (content, organization, and use of sources), particularly for Hispanic/Latino students, whose average grammar scores decreased as they progressed through their college career. Instructors **must not neglect** the importance of helping students use proper grammar and mechanics in all our writing courses, in both Area A2 and across all of the curriculum.
3. Section 3 was completed to compare students who had been through the new GE program's writing/capstone requirements (those reviewed in 2017) and those who hadn't (those reviewed in 2012-13). There was **no evidence** that the new GE writing requirement had a positive effect on students' writing capabilities – in fact for Hispanic/Latino students the scores were much lower for those who had been through the new GE program.
  - Note that this comparison includes small numbers of UD GE papers from 2012-13 (only 53, only 8 of which were from Hispanic/Latino students) all from one discipline (POLS), as opposed to papers from a large number of disciplines in 2017. This could be confounding the results.
  - Note also that the GE Writing requirements (including WI and Capstone courses) are already changing, with new regulations to be introduced for Fall 2018. Writing is no longer a subset of the GE domain, but rather is now a fully-fledged University-level requirement., governed by the University Writing Committee.

4. While there were improvements between A2 courses and UD GE courses in the three traits other than “Grammar” (see Table 12 again), the improvements were not particularly substantial. Perhaps ENGL 130I (A2) papers were more ‘polished’ through resubmission whereas those in the UD GE courses were more ‘raw’, with less faculty review. Working on students’ writing skills through revision is a powerful teaching tool that can be used in any writing course, but knowing whether or not a paper was wholly student-produced and edited (or not) would help us understand this result better.
5. Table 13 shows that while female students started off (A2) with a higher average score than male students, by the UD GE courses that had flipped, with male students making much more progress. Note that the faculty teaching UD GE courses were very evenly split between male and female instructors (14 male, 12 female)
6. The longitudinal study (Section 4) showed higher aggregate scores from only half the students. A major cause of that was 16/29 having lower “sources” scores – that could be in part due to the different “sources” students use in 2017 (mostly online) vs. in 2012 (less so), or to a lesser emphasis on use and proper citation of sources in UD GE courses compared to ENGL 130I. This result shows that instructors in UD GE courses should also pay attention to and help students with the proper use and citation of their sources.

Clearly if we are to be able to help all of our students improve their writing from their first year to their last, additional efforts are called for, including:

- Action taken by the University Writing Committee, which is assuming primary responsibility for administration of writing courses on campus. That action should directly address both the marginal gains in writing ability over a student’s career (including no gain at all in Grammar) and the disparities present between students in different populations.
- Ensuring that W-courses, current and future, are following the guidelines as described in [EM 17-009](#) (the new document governing University writing requirements) and using pedagogy proven conducive to improving students’ writing skills.
- Maximizing the use and effectiveness of the Student Writing Center – making sure any students who want or need help can get it promptly, and fostering a strong collaboration between staff at the Student Writing Center and faculty teaching both introductory and advanced courses with writing components.
- Further faculty development, as called for in EM 17-009. For example, workshops and Faculty Fellows programs, and consultations between the University Writing Committee with faculty and departments on writing course design. Specific efforts addressing diversity and gender should be encouraged.

The GE Committee (CAB) and the University Writing Committee (UWC) will be revisiting writing assessment five years hence or sooner. A campus-wide focus on writing, using the results of this assessment report as a place to begin discussion, will help us make decisions that benefit all of our students, making sure that an important part of the “value-added” by attending CSU, Chico is a demonstrable improvement in their writing skills.

Appendix A: Chico State Written Communication Rubric, modified from the AAC&U VALUE rubric for Written Communication:

California State University, Chico  
General Education Scoring Guide for Writing

Scoring Level	Content	Organization & Argumentation	Sources & Evidence	Grammar & Other Surface Features
<b>3 - Accomplished</b>	In addition to meeting the requirements for a "2," the writing shows evidence of deep engagement with intellectual material of course/discipline, imagination, and creativity. Few or no errors of fact or interpretation. Writing could be used as a model of how to fulfill the assignment.	In addition to meeting the requirements for a "2," writing flows smoothly from one idea to another. The reader can easily follow the claims and examples used to support the ideas expressed. The writer's decisions about <b>focus</b> and <b>organization</b> facilitate reading.	Sources used to support argument are valid, appropriate to the topic being explored, and support major points according to assignment and disciplinary conventions. Citation style clear and consistently applied.	In addition to meeting the requirements for a "2," the writing is essentially error-free in terms of mechanics and shows considerable evidence of proofreading and editing. Models the <b>style</b> and <b>formatting</b> appropriate to the assignment.
<b>2 - Competent</b>	Content of text fulfills the assignment. Writing demonstrates engagement with intellectual and/or creative material of the course/discipline. Few errors of fact or interpretation.	Sequencing of ideas and transitions makes the writer's points accessible. Examples are adequately developed and claims supported in most cases. The organization and tone communicate ideas effectively.	Most sources used to support argument are appropriate to the topic being explored, the assignment and disciplinary conventions. Demonstrates competence in documenting sources; the reader would have little difficulty referring back to cited sources.	While there are minor errors, the paper follows normal conventions of spelling and grammar throughout. Errors don't interfere with reading. Appropriate conventions for style and format are used consistently throughout the writing sample.
<b>1 - Beginning</b>	Requirements of the assignment have not been fulfilled. Little/no evidence of engagement with material of the course/discipline. The paper reveals numerous errors of fact or interpretation.	Writing lacks transitions and/or sequencing of ideas, making reading and understanding difficult. Examples and/or claims are weak or missing in many cases. The writer's decisions about focus and organization interfere with communication.	Sources are unclear or inappropriate to topic being investigated, assignment or disciplinary conventions. Source documentation is incomplete. It may be unclear which references are direct quotes and which are paraphrased.	Writing contains numerous errors in spelling, grammar (such as subject/verb agreements and tense), sentence structure and/or other writing conventions that interfere with comprehension.

**SOME BRIEF DEFINITIONS**

**Focus:** the purpose, theme, or overall argument in a text—and the way that other features in a text point toward this focus.

**Organization:** the arrangement of ideas or points in a text according to the writer's purpose and knowledge of disciplinary conventions.

**Style:** an author's choices about vocabulary, tone, clarity, and connotation that project her sense of purpose and audience.

**Formatting:** conventional visual and layout elements (such as bulleted lists, graphs, and pictures) that writers use to organize a document.