

Serving Student Writers through a Digital Resources Page

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Project Link

[RRCC Writing Resources Page](https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/writing-resources): <https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/writing-resources>

Problem

The Writing Center at Red Rocks Community College (RRCC) has been in operation for over 15 years to serve students who seek to gain skills and confidence in their writing abilities. The Online Writing Center has best been characterized as an email submission box until the past two years, when the Writing Center director implemented an online solution, [WC Online](#), for all scheduling and record keeping. As a result, any student now using the Writing Center, whether for face-to-face or online services, must register and schedule appointments online. The [Writing Center's home page](#) (<https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center>) directs all students to the online scheduling service.

The technological shift to an online scheduling tool means that the Writing Center (WC) has more student traffic online than ever before. The staff of the WC recognize the opportunity to better serve RRCC students with a more robust online presence. Tutors have offered print resources to students for years on various topics of interest to student writers, with handout topics ranging from construction of sentences to paragraph development to style guide handouts. Considering the frequency with which students are now accessing the WC website, however, the WC director agrees that we are in a good position now to meet students where they are at and provide a **digital resources page** housed within our current website. This digital resources page, as developed, includes screencast demo videos to lead students through online scheduling processes, accessible versions of relevant handouts, and original multimedia resources to tailor the relevant concepts of composition to the unique needs of target audience.

Writing centers are traditionally physical locations that serve students in a face-to-face capacity. High-profile writing centers like [UNC](#), however, are creating robust digital resource pages to serve students. Although there is not systematic research available that argues for why writing centers need to develop online resources for students, the University of Wisconsin-Madison ([Hamper, 2018](#)) has reported on the research supporting the need for writing centers' online *presence* to serve students, citing sociomaterial equity and accessibility needs. As writing centers move toward digital pathways to serve their users, it is likely that more attention will be paid to the role centers can play in curating and creating resources for students who are prevented from visiting a physical location or prefer digital spaces.

As a WC tutor and English composition instructor at RRCC since 2012, I am well positioned to collaborate with project stakeholders in order to complete a needs assessment, organize and contribute to the web page design and creation of content materials, and plan for evaluation of quantitative student use and qualitative benefit to student writers.

Intervention

The intervention was to create a digital resources page within the existing WC website in order to provide more convenient resources for student writers affiliated with the RRCC campuses.

Project Goals

The goals of the digital resources page project were to:

- Serve students by providing accessible multimodal resources related to use of Writing Center tools and application of composition concepts to a variety of writing contexts.
- Increase visibility and use of Writing Center web page and perceived value to students.

Timeline for Implementation

- **February 2019:** Met with WC director to define scope of project and review timeline.
- **February 2019:** Met with RRCC Instructional Technology director to discuss relevant media creation tools.
- **February 2019:** Created initial resources; used Yuja to screencast scheduling process within WOnline and published to website. Sent links to WC director to disseminate.
- **March 2019:** Met with RRCC Marketing digital media specialist to obtain superuser authorization in order to create and update digital resources page within the existing WC website.
- **March 2019:** Consulted with WC director to determine handouts and newsletter materials to post online.
- **March 2019:** Updated Online Writing Center student response form template to include verbiage regarding digital resources and link. Used the new template locally with expected broader distribution summer 2019.
- **March – April 2019:** Converted handouts to accessible documents and updated digital resources page.
- **April 2019:** Created qualitative Google Form survey to post on digital resources page in order to determine perceived value to students.
- **April 2019:** Consulted with WC director to determine priorities for creation of original multimedia resources.
- **April-May 2019:** Created and published original multimedia resources to digital resources page.
- **June 2019:** Market digital resources page through campus marketing initiatives and user-directed emails.
- **June – July 2019:** Collect feedback from quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods and review with WC director to determine next steps.

Change Theory

The theory that most directly informs the digital resources project is the [SAMR Model](#) for implementation of technology in educational contexts. According to the SAMR model, the digital resources page will enable technology to both *augment* and *modify* student interaction with a resource concept. For instance, an accessible handout posted online could be read by a screen reader and link to appropriate web pages online (augmentation). A video resource allows multimodal engagement with a concept that may otherwise have been conveyed through a textual handout alone (modification). In this way, a digital resources page is poised between the enhancement and transformation spheres of technological impact, according to the SAMR framework ([H. L., 2017](#)).

Accessibility and Diversity

Since the WC digital resources page is an externally-facing website, it was required to meet the [RRCC Web Accessibility Plan](#), part of the [CCCS Web Accessibility Procedure](#). All posted materials needed to meet accessibility guidelines. Further, the project needed to meet the needs of diverse learners by presenting multimodal content that would be applicable to a range of composition contexts on campus—from English composition to science lab reports, from scholarship essays to creative writing. The WC supports student composition within any course on campus as well as writing projects that extend beyond the scope of academic assignments.

Feasibility

The digital resources project drew upon resources already available to the RRCC Writing Center, ensuring no additional cost over normal operations. The time and effort of project creation were on the shoulders of current WC tutors who made progress within the timeline during regularly scheduled hours. The WC director supported the project and allowed contributing tutors block appointment times during scheduled tutoring hours in order to develop content materials. I had received prior website superuser training with RRCC and had experience updating RRCC web pages with content. In addition, I had prior experience on the RRCC Web Accessibility Committee and have completed relevant accessibility trainings on campus; thus, I was comfortable updating Word documents, images, and videos to ensure that they would be accessible for placement on an externally-facing website. The cost to the Writing Center was negligible, making it worth the effort to complete and evaluate for positive student impact.

Evaluation

I created and posted a Google Form survey on the digital resources web page to capture voluntary feedback related to the quality of resources and benefit student users perceive related to the digital resources page. The evaluation process will launch for the summer 2019 semester. We will also send this survey out in a targeted email message to all students with WCOnline information captured at the end of the semester in order to determine their awareness of the digital resources page, use of the page, and perceptions on quality of resources on the page. This data will enable the team to determine the success of the project during its short duration as well as to determine next steps as the digital resources page persists as an initiative to serve students into the future.

Description of Implementation

The implementation began with exploratory meetings with the WC director, RRCC Marketing, and RRCC Instructional Technology as stakeholders. In some ways, these meetings altered or refined the scope of the project.

Writing Center Director

After agreeing to the scope of the WC digital resources page project, the WC director indicated a priority of need of which she was aware. Since the WC had shifted to the WOnline platform, student uncertainty had increased about how to make an appointment online. The WC director desired screencast videos to demonstrate the processes of creating an account, setting a face-to-face appointment, and setting an online appointment. Ultimately, we determined that these how-to student resource videos would *not* be best placed on the student resources page, but rather within a link directly off of the home page, labeled “[Learn more about scheduling an appointment here](https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/learn-more)” (<https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/learn-more>). I embedded the videos to support existing text, which does meet the goal of increasing multimodal resources to support student writers. With this re-placement, we were able to allow the [Writing Resources](https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/writing-resources) page (<https://www.rrcc.edu/writing-center/writing-resources>) to target issues related to the topic and process of composition, rather than logistical issues.

RRCC Instructional Technology

A February 2019 meeting with the RRCC director of instructional technology (IT) gave me excellent insight into ways this project could develop in the future. For instance, the IT director suggested creating a Writing Center module within the LMS that could be dropped into all English courses and any other course at RRCC. For this purpose, the IT director created a WC user account within the LMS, Desire2Learn (D2L), that we can leverage for future expansions of the project.

More immediately, I was seeking cooperation from the IT director to use a licensed Camtasia account in order to create screencast videos of WOnline processes. The director requested that I test Yuja for this project, as Yuja is an ed tech tool that RRCC is piloting and is well-integrated with D2L. While Yuja enabled me to screencast easily, it also presented some challenges related to captioning, which made the tool less ideal as a final hosting platform.

RRCC Marketing

In order to obtain superuser permissions to edit the WC website, I consulted with the digital media specialist in the RRCC Marketing department in March 2019. He was able to verify permissions to give me editing access and was a resource to review the process of editing web content. The digital media specialist created the web page that I was then able to edit.

Process

The first phase of the project was to create screencast videos demonstrating WOnline student processes. This phase relied upon collaboration with the WC director and one of her students. Since the WC director, and I as a tutor, have administrative access to the WOnline program, we needed a student partner willing to share the student view of the program for the account creation screencast video. I created scripts and recorded the appointment creation process videos, and

then was able to meet with the student to complete the account creation video at the end of February. I posted the videos on the [schedule resource page](#) of the WC website and shared the link with the WC director for dissemination to interested instructors. The scheduling resource videos will be shared in a more systematic way beginning in the summer 2019 semester.

The next phase of the project was to adapt and design WC handouts for the digital environment, including accessibility. The Lakewood campus WC offers a number of paper handouts, but a major gap that this project sought to fill is that none of the handouts were available digitally. Since the handouts were created for physical distribution, however, they were not created according to accessibility guidelines. After consultation to determine the most impactful handouts to convert to an accessible format, the WC director sent me two handouts in March 2019: Writing Effective Body Paragraphs and Writing Strong Thesis Statements. I updated these handouts according to the following accessibility principles ([WebAIM](#), 2016):

- Headings consistently used and structured according to hierarchical logic
- Alternative text for images
- Accessibility check to identify reading errors such as excessive use of tabs/spaces

I also edited for consistent design, including creating WC Styles in Word and a color palette. The Writing Effective Body Paragraphs handout was fairly straightforward, and I posted this in March 2019. The Writing Strong Thesis Statements file was not editable and included more graphics. I retyped this document to ensure control over accessibility features and posted in April 2019. I also created a new handout for the WC Resources Page in April 2019 to complement a video I had posted about quotation analysis. I converted all handouts to PDF according to the *Content Editor Guide* I received from RRCC Marketing (internal document). Although there is now some debate on our campus about whether PDFs are indeed most accessible, the guide indicates that “PDF format is the most accessible option for documents and should be used whenever possible.”

During this document creation phase of the project, I became aware that another WC tutor was in the process of creating newsletters on behalf of the WC. The WC director had been in the process of working with RRCC Instructional Technology for a feasible way to disseminate, and the digital resources page project provided a solution. The WC tutor created two newsletters that I was able to post as PDFs in March 2019. A challenge related to this project is currency of the WC digital resources page when there are dated newsletters. Although I originally posted the newsletters with the text “January 2019” and “February 2019,” lack of further newsletter content led me to later change the link text to refer to the featured article titles instead.

The final phase of the project in terms of content development was video curation and production. In April 2019, I curated video content in that I identified existing videos I had already created (Revision Lists and Quotation Analysis) and posted them on the WC digital resources page with brief descriptions. However, these videos were not captioned, as I had been accustomed to sharing the videos in my online courses along with a transcript. In order to meet web accessibility guidelines ([Loftus](#), 2019), I edited the videos (hosted in YouTube) so that the captions would be accurate in terms of content and timing. This meets the project goals in terms of adhering to the CCCS Web Accessibility Plan and serving diverse student writers.

Part of project goal was to determine unique needs of student writers at RRCC and to create original content to respond to these needs. The RRCC English Department subscribes to the National Council of Teachers of English's position in favor of multimodal literacies ([NCTE, 2005](#)), which results in a departmental emphasis on multigenre composition. Students seeking tutoring and resources from the WC, then, are often concerned about genre conventions, including citation. Through conversation with the WC director, we determined to promote a possible video series on citation conventions in various genres. From the end of April 2019 to May 2019, I designed and recorded a first installment in the series "Citation Station," focusing on citation strategies in infographics. The video learning objects meet the goal of serving students via multimodal resources and align with the SAMR framework in amplifying user interactions via the digital technology.

During the semester, the scope of the project altered a bit in terms of the dissemination plan. In order to stay on track with my proposed timeline, I revised the Online Writing Center tutor feedback letter to direct students to the Writing Resources page and sent it to the WC director in March 2019:

Once you have made revisions, please feel free to return to the Online Writing Center so that I or another tutor can read your work again. You may also hold an appointment with our Lakewood or Arvada campus writing center if you'd like to try talking through ideas in person. I also encourage you to check out the RRCC Writing Center's website for [Writing Resources](#) with tips to help you develop in areas such as writing process, development, and citations (<https://www.rccc.edu/writing-center/writing-resources>). Thank you for allowing me to read your work, and I look forward to seeing you again!

However, the WC director indicated that she would prefer to focus on developing content during the spring 2019 semester and would begin a dissemination and promotion plan for the summer semester.

In order to fully develop the Writing Resources page, then, I created a formative evaluation form via [Google Forms](#) and included this link in a "Feedback Requested" section of the student resources page. This evaluation will be important to determine how well the resources page is meeting its goal of increasing visibility of the RRCC WC website and perceived value to students. However, data collection will not begin until the WC director proceeds with marketing efforts in the summer 2019 semester.

The evaluation tool asks users to identify their role at RRCC; to rate the value of handouts, newsletters, and videos; to rate the perceived value of the resources page on the Likert scale; and to provide open-ended feedback on topics that would help the WC develop future resources. The nature of a web page is dynamic; it needs to be updated regularly to continue to provide value to users.

Findings

At this point, it is possible to reflect on the successes and challenges of the process of resource curation and creation. As the WC director chooses to collaborate on marketing and outreach

opportunities, it will become possible to evaluate the successes and challenges of meeting user expectations and tracking traffic to resource objects.

Successes

One key success of the WC Resources page project is that collaboration has facilitated conversations about the priorities and goals of the RRCC Writing Center. The WC director has stated that this change project is “the kick I needed” to think strategically about how to leverage the WC website to better serve all stakeholders. The project has encouraged collaboration between the WC and Instructional Technology as well as inviting participation from WC tutors (newsletter initiative) and students (screencasting collaboration). Related, success of this project was facilitated through strong administrative support of the WC director.

Challenges

Challenges also emerge related to collaboration, however, as well as challenges related to technology.

- The time constraints and preference of the WC director have influenced the timeline of the change project and demonstrate the realistic obstacles that occur when implementing change within an institution that places increasing demands on its faculty/staff and is already heavily structured within a semester timeline.
- Yuja was a tool suggested by RRCC Instructional Technology, and while it offers some affordances in terms of sharing capabilities within the LMS, it is not a tool that presents an intuitive or easy process for captioning. The screencast videos are not captioned, and I am certain that I will decide to download the video files from Yuja and host through YouTube simply for the ease of captioning.
- These two challenges led to another related to ownership. Ultimately, a WC digital resources page should be branded consistently, including a departmental YouTube account. I created the Yuja videos and other video media within my personal LMS and YouTube accounts, which could present difficulties within the lifespan of the project. If I leave the employ of RRCC WC, future directors and tutors may find it difficult to access video content for editing. The WC director was not open to the idea of creating a dedicated YouTube account during the project, but in a reflection conversation today is willing to look into this option in the future.
- A web page is dynamic and will require commitments to update frequently. A potential challenge for this project is organization of the digital resources page. If the WC continues to create content to respond to the needs and requests of student writers, the web page may need to be redesigned to facilitate content searches. The current organization reflects the need to represent limited file and video content to best advantage.

Next Steps

In order to take full advantage of digital resources page, the following steps need to be considered.

1. Align the WC Resources page to WC strategic goals. The WC director is planning to turn much attention to assessing and revamping the WC website on a broader scale this summer. It will be necessary to articulate how website redevelopment can help the WC

- meet its strategic goals and how the WC digital resources page specifically fits into that plan in order to make determinations about how to allocate resources such as tutor time.
2. Create a distribution plan and market the WC digital resources page. It is in many ways understandable that the WC director did not wish to embark on an initiative to promote a still-in-progress web page in the middle of the spring semester. This makes it imperative, however, to work proactively now to prepare for a systematic rollout for the summer semester, including email communications to ENG instructors and possibly the broader group of summer instructors campus-wide, updated templates for Online Writing Center feedback forms, and messaging in the physical WC locations.
 3. Collect and analyze data. The Google form provides a means to collect qualitative data, and the video resources provide analytics related to user traffic. The evaluation form, in particular, enables the WC to collect impressions related to perceived value as well as gives users a voice in shaping future content creation.
 4. Commit to a long-term content creation, oversight, and organization plan. If the WC digital resources page is to be successful, it needs to be treated as a dynamic content curation page. Use is likely to decrease over time if users perceive that the page is not kept current with new information. This raises questions, however, about whether the current organizational layout will work for the longer term or whether a more robust digital filing system will be necessary to manage content on the page. It will also be necessary to determine whether to create a dedicated WC YouTube account and Gmail account (for the evaluation form), as the current materials are managed through a single tutor's personal accounts. Administrative oversight also must consider content collaborators. If multiple tutors will contribute content to an ongoing digital resources page, what will be the criteria for determining new additions? Who will moderate content? How will consistency of design be ensured?

Conclusion

The change project, creating a WC [Writing Resources](#) page for RRCC student writers, was an excellent opportunity to leverage my own interest in curating and creating accessible multimodal learning objects in order to begin to fulfill a distinct need that I recognized in the RRCC Writing Center. Since I am currently a tutor with the Writing Center, I was in a good position to identify initial content needs and to use my own contacts on campus to help bring the project to fruition. The project has given me the opportunity to practice alignment of goals to instructional decisions, skills in web editing, skills in applying accessibility standards, and to demonstrate my continued investment in improving the student experience at RRCC.

While there are additional steps we must take in order to fulfill the ultimate goal of the WC digital resources page to increase visibility of the WC and its perceived value to students, the developed content and structure provides a necessary baseline. My employment with the RRCC WC will extend at least through summer 2019 and probably through fall 2019, giving me the continued access to consult with the WC director to ensure that the web page is meeting strategic needs of the department, and then to follow through on the identified next steps.

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