

**A REPORT ON GRADUATE WRITING  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

for

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## **Executive Summary**

A Report on Graduate Writing at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas is based on our recent study, which sought to gather information that describes and makes visible writing practices and the culture of writing in the various graduate curricula at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The primary goal of the study was to understand current graduate student writing practices, experiences and expectations of graduate students and graduate faculty, and the various ways writing functions as part of the graduate student experience at UNLV.

The goal of this report is to initiate new conversations on campus about the role, place, and value of graduate student writing at UNLV, and, more importantly, we hope these conversations will motivate all of the stakeholders to reassess writing practices in the graduate curriculum, as well as reassess appropriate and necessary levels of institutional support for graduate writing at UNLV.

The study was proposed in Fall 2014 and initiated in Spring 2015. The design of the study included:

- An online survey of graduate students about their writing practices, program writing experiences, and attitudes toward writing
- An online survey of graduate faculty about their writing practices, attitudes toward writing, and use of writing in their graduate courses
- Focus Groups: three groups of graduate students and two groups of graduate faculty participated in group discussion sessions
- External research of current practices and support for graduate student writing across the country

### *Graduate Student Survey Responses*

Overall, 1,047 graduate students responded to the survey. 81% of respondents were between the ages of 21-40, with 63% identifying as female and 37% as male.

Graduate students responding to the survey are generally positive about writing and express confidence in their writing ability, with a majority reporting that their writing process has changed since beginning graduate school

When it comes to writing in class, on average, respondents indicated that the total amount of writing required in all graduate courses combined per semester is between 26-50 pages, and report that, on average, they always or often receive clear instructions from faculty in how to complete writing assignments. The most frequent kinds of writing completed in their graduate courses include research papers, summaries, abstracts, and reflection papers.

When planning their writing, students tend to discuss their ideas with the instructor and/or their peers before they begin drafting. A majority of respondents state that faculty rarely or never require multiple drafts of papers before final submission, and while strategies for revising drafts prior to final submission are sometimes discussed, a substantial portion of respondents stated that this rarely or never happens, which may account for the fact that most students

only complete one or two drafts for their graduate writing assignments. Most respondents stated that instructor feedback on writing assignments is given after the assignment has been submitted for evaluation and that the feedback received is primarily in-text content comments or editing.

Although a substantial proportion of respondents stated that collaborative writing is key to their professional development, half of the respondents stated that they are rarely or never asked to write collaboratively for their graduate student writing assignments. In addition, a substantial portion of students do not engage in informal peer review outside of class for their graduate writing assignments, nor are they part of regular writing groups.

A vast majority of respondents support a campus-wide graduate writing initiative, and indicated these should focus on helping students to write papers, theses, and dissertations, develop strong writing skills, and provide writing support and resources. Likewise, respondents overwhelmingly support writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College.

#### *Graduate Faculty Survey Responses*

Overall, 365 graduate faculty responded to the survey. Faculty rank was broadly represented in the respondents, with 25% identifying as Assistant Professor, 36% as Associate Professor, and 36% as Full Professor. 39% identified as female and 57% as male.

Faculty overwhelmingly indicated that they like to write and “see” themselves as “writers.” As writers, most indicated confidence in their ability to write well in their professional discipline. Most graduate faculty feel collaborative writing is a key to their professional development and typically read and respond to other faculty writing informally. While they share their writing with colleagues at UNLV, they actually share their writing more often with colleagues outside of UNLV.

Most graduate faculty respondents require each student to produce 0-25 pages in a semester in each of his or her graduate courses, while a considerable proportion of respondents required 26-50 pages. The three most frequently papers assigned are: research papers, critiques, and summaries. For graduate writing assignments, a majority of graduate faculty believe their evaluation criteria are always in line with the professional standards of their discipline and always discuss their evaluation criteria with students prior to submission.

Most graduate faculty respondents describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment, though a large proportion of them rarely or never provide time in class for peer review, nor do they encourage peer review outside of class. A majority of graduate faculty indicated that they offered feedback to graduate students on their writing assignments after the planning stage or after a first draft. On average, graduate faculty members expect students to produce two drafts before final submission of a writing assignment. Collaborative writing is rarely or never asked of graduate students by graduate faculty in their writing assignments.

A majority of graduate faculty members expect that graduate students should, before graduation, complete writing for the publication, most notably a presentation at a conference and/or a multi-authored article.

Most respondents believe that a campus-wide graduate writing initiative could assist their graduate program and its students and that graduate students would benefit from writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College. These should focus on overall writing improvement, thesis/dissertation writing and formatting, writing as a professional, help with preparing for publishing, facilitating the peer review process, discipline-specific writing workshops, grant writing, and support for international students.

A majority of respondents indicated that their graduate program does not offer faculty workshops for creating effective writing assignments at the graduate level. A majority of faculty respondents would be interested in workshops sponsored by the Graduate College on teaching writing at the graduate level.

### *Conclusions*

Different universities across the country offer a range of initiatives to assist graduate students write more effectively, including boot camps, writing center services, graduate writing courses, writing groups, and writing institutes.

Virtually everyone agrees that writing at the graduate level is an important skill that students at UNLV must develop more fully, and virtually everyone agrees that support for graduate student writing is an institutional necessity. One conclusion from our study would argue that the majority of respondents want opportunities to engage more often and more effectively about writing and writing practices at the graduate and professional levels both within their discipline and across disciplines, that writing should be made more transparent across campus.

We believe this report should encourage larger conversations across campus and encourage all of us to discuss writing, and the teaching of writing at the graduate level, in more comprehensive and complex ways.

## **Introduction**

The study, and its attendant surveys, was proposed in Fall 2014 and supported by Kathryn Korgan, Interim Dean of the Graduate College, and Kendall Hartley, Associate Dean of the Graduate College. The primary purpose of the study was to gather information that describes and makes visible writing practices and the culture of writing in the various graduate curricula at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

We began with the assumption that writing was taught directly or indirectly throughout the graduate curriculum in all departments on campus. There is much myth and lore concerning the quality and quantity of graduate student writing, as there is much myth and lore about faculty practices and faculty expectations. In this respect, the study sought to gain initial insights about current practices at UNLV, to give voice to the experiences and expectations of graduate students and graduate faculty, and to articulate some of the various ways writing functions as part of the graduate student experience at UNLV.

Based on the findings, we believe this report should be used to initiate new conversations on campus about the role, place, and value of graduate student writing at UNLV. More importantly, these conversations, fully supported by the Graduate College, should motivate all of the stakeholders to reassess writing practices in the graduate curriculum, as well as reassess appropriate and necessary levels of institutional support for graduate writing at UNLV.

The report begins by describing background information and research methods. It follows with an overview of the findings from the surveys and focus groups. The findings section attempts to catalog the findings from both graduate students and graduate faculty. The report then provides some initial conclusions, including a comparison and contrast of responses from each group. Finally, after an overview of initiatives at other universities across the country, the report offers a set of conclusions and recommendations for possible next steps to promote and support graduate student writing on the UNLV campus.

## **Background/Methods**

Based on a proposal by Ed Nagelhout, Professor of Rhetoric and Writing, to study graduate student writing at UNLV, a research team was assembled that included Ed Nagelhout, Kendall Hartley, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, Valarie Burke, Executive Director of Graduate Student Services, and Kathryn Korgan, Interim Dean of the Graduate College. During the Spring 2015 semester, they distributed online survey questionnaires focused on graduate student writing practices and attitudes to 3,720 graduate students and 736 graduate faculty members.

The design of the study was as follows:

- An online survey of graduate students about their writing practices, program writing experiences, and attitudes toward writing
- An online survey of graduate faculty about their writing practices, attitudes toward writing, and use of writing in their graduate courses

- Focus Groups: three groups of graduate students and two groups of graduate faculty participated in group discussion sessions
- External research of current practices and support for graduate student writing across the country

We began with two survey questionnaires: one designed specifically for graduate students and a second designed specifically for graduate faculty. Both surveys sought to elicit information about writing practices and attitudes at the graduate and professional academic levels.

Both surveys were designed to gather as much information as possible. Each survey organized questions thematically around the following areas:

- Demographics
- Attitude toward Writing
- Writing Practices
- Writing in Courses
- Writing Resources

The Graduate Student survey had 52 questions, and the Graduate Faculty survey had 56. An initial set of questions for each survey was circulated among the research team. These questions were revised and edited over the course of two weeks. Once there was general agreement, the questions were uploaded into the Qualtrics survey software system. A unique link to the survey was distributed via email to UNLV graduate students and UNLV graduate faculty on March 19. Two follow-up reminders were sent before Spring Break, and one was sent after to individuals who had not yet completed the survey. The surveys were closed on April 17. Compensation for student respondents was the opportunity to be placed in a raffle for a \$500 scholarship prize upon completion of the survey.

Focus group participants were recruited through the Graduate College writing survey. At the end of the survey, graduate student and graduate faculty respondents were asked if they would be interested in being contacted at a later date for the opportunity to further discuss the culture of writing at UNLV and graduate writing practices. The Focus Groups were designed to follow-up on findings from the survey and allow individuals to speak freely about their understanding of graduate student writing at UNLV and to offer suggestions for initiatives that the Graduate College might promote in the future. The writing survey provided a sizable amount of information on the writing practices of graduate students and faculty at UNLV, but given the nature of survey research, new questions were borne out of the survey results. The focus group questions were developed to best fill in the gaps left by the survey. The open-

ended discussion based format of the focus groups allowed for us to obtain a more precise and holistic understanding of graduate writing practices at UNLV.

In total, there were five focus group sessions. Each focus group session lasted for approximately one hour. The composition of the focus groups included graduate students or graduate faculty from different colleges, departments, and disciplines including: Liberal Arts, Urban Affairs, Sciences, Education, Business, and Engineering. Each session consisted of between two and six faculty or student participants with one or two moderators helping to steer the conversation. Each session was audio recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

A survey of current programs and services offered at universities across the country for enhancing writing at the graduate level was also completed by Matthew Martinez, a graduate research assistant in the Graduate College. The sample was comprised of both public and private institutions. The types of graduate writing programs and services found in our survey included writing centers, workshops, peer review / writing groups, and thesis/dissertation boot camps and/or writing fellowships. Further research also reviewed institutional support for graduate student writing at similar universities to UNLV in the region.

## **Findings**

This section reports general findings from the two surveys (Graduate Student and Graduate Faculty) and the five Focus Group sessions. The findings from our external research on writing initiatives at graduate colleges nationally and regionally will be reported in separate sections later in this report. Since the study sought to gain initial insights about current practices at UNLV, to give voice to the experiences and expectations of graduate students and graduate faculty, and to articulate some of the various ways writing functions as part of the graduate student experience at UNLV, we have organized our discussion of findings on the kinds of questions that we asked (see Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3, and Appendix 4).

The graduate student responses are organized around six basic categories:

- Who We Are
- How We Write
- Who We Write With
- What We Write
- Obstacles to Successful Writing
- Writing Resources

The graduate faculty responses are organized around four basic categories:

- Who We Are
- How We Write
- Who We Write With
- How We Teach Writing

The categories are basically the same, with the differences only reflecting the depth we sought from graduate students about their writing practices. Most of this depth was mirrored in graduate faculty questions, but were organized in the How We Teach Writing category.

Our intention in organizing the data in this way is to provide as complete a picture as possible of graduate student writing at UNLV. The common data organization also allowed us to see similarities and differences between respondents more clearly, which we explore in some depth in a later section: Comparing/Contrasting Graduate Student and Graduate Faculty Responses.

## Graduate Student Responses

### *Who We Are*

Overall, 1,047 graduate students responded to the survey. This represents 28% of all UNLV graduate students.

81% of respondents were between the ages of 21-40, with 63% identifying as female and 37% as male.

Respondents represented a range of degree plans on campus:

### **Degree Plan**

PhD	33%
MS	25%
MA	18%
DPT	3%
MFA	3%
EdD	1%
EdS	1%
DMA	1%
DNP	1%
Clinical	0%
Other	15%

All schools and colleges were represented from 97 different departments or programs.<sup>1</sup>

### *How We Write*

Graduate students responding to the survey are generally positive about writing. For example, when asked if they enjoy writing, 42% answered Yes and 46% answered Sometimes. Only 12% answered No.

<sup>1</sup> The Law School and the Dental School were not included in the survey distribution.



When graduate students were asked if they “think of yourself as a writer,” the numbers show a bit more insecurity:

Yes	26%
Sometimes	37%
No	37%

But graduate students, in general, express confidence in their writing ability, with 65% selecting High or Very High, although a larger proportion of MS and DPT students do not find writing as enjoyable as students pursuing other degrees (38%). This number seems to correlate with the confidence they felt as undergraduates (60% High or Very High). Similarly, another possible correlation to their confidence is the fact that 62% state that they understand their “strengths and weaknesses as a writer.”

The software of choice for many graduate students when planning, drafting, and revising are word processing applications, with Microsoft Word the overwhelming choice. Students in certain disciplines (e.g., computer science) prefer specialized word processing software, such as Latex, Vim, and Emacs. Furthermore, word processing applications specifically designed for note taking are also widely used, such as Evernote and Microsoft OneNote. Reference management software is widely used, including online and desktop tools such as Refworks, Endnote, Mendeley, and Zotero.

A majority of graduate students report that their writing process has changed since beginning graduate school (47% responding yes and 33% responding somewhat).

When it comes to writing in class, on average, respondents indicated that the total amount of writing required of them in all graduate courses combined per semester is between 26-50 pages.

0-25 pages	30%
26-50 pages	37%
51-75 pages	17%
More than 75 pages	15%

Students from the College of Engineering and the College of Sciences tend to write less per semester (0 – 50 pages) than students from the College of Liberal Arts, College of Education, and College of Urban Affairs (50+ pages).

Graduate students report that, on average, they always or often receive clear instructions from faculty in how to complete writing assignments (59%), while 39% feel they sometimes or rarely do:

Always	17%
Often	42%
Sometimes	31%
Rarely	8%
Never	2%

For their graduate writing assignments, students are sometimes asked to write for different audiences; however, a substantial proportion report that they are rarely or never asked to do so (45%).

When planning their writing, students tend to discuss their ideas (if they discuss them at all) with the instructor and/or their peers before they begin drafting:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
my instructor	14%	25%	29%	22%	9%
my peers	10%	25%	34%	22%	9%
others outside UNLV	8%	14%	26%	28%	23%

This process is restricted to UNLV faculty and peers as a majority of students do not discuss their ideas with someone from outside UNLV before drafting.

In preparation for a writing assignment, instructors sometimes provide opportunities to discuss the assignment in class:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
provide discussion time in class to prepare students for completing the assignment	11%	29%	36%	14%	9%

Strategies for revising drafts prior to final submission are sometimes discussed, but a substantial proportion of respondents stated that this rarely or never happens (36%).

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment	7%	20%	36%	24%	12%

According to 53% of respondents, faculty rarely or never require multiple drafts of papers before final submission:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
require the submission of multiple drafts before final evaluation	5%	14%	28%	30%	23%

Which may account for the fact that most students only complete one or two drafts (37% and 33%, respectively) for their graduate writing assignments. Graduate students from the College of Sciences tend to work on more drafts before final submission, with over half the respondents indicating 3 or more completed drafts before final submission.

In addition, a substantial proportion of students do not engage in informal peer review outside of class for their graduate writing assignments with 65% of respondents indicating that they rarely or never do, with only 11% indicating always or often.

Always	2%
Often	9%
Sometimes	23%
Rarely	32%
Never	33%

Furthermore, this lack of peer review seems to align with classroom practices, as respondents stated that instructors rarely or never provide time in class for peer review (66%) and rarely or never encourage peer review outside of class (51%).

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
provide time in class for peer review	3%	7%	24%	33%	33%
encourage peer review outside of class	7%	15%	27%	27%	24%

Receiving instructor feedback on writing assignments prior to final submission is encouraged (27%), but optional (51%). Few respondents stated that it was discouraged or not allowed (14%). Even for those who get feedback from their instructor, only 11% state that revision based on this feedback is required.

Most respondents stated that instructor feedback on writing assignments is given after the assignment has been submitted for evaluation (62%). The feedback received is mostly in-text content comments and editing (41%), but also includes margin and/or end comments (33%).

Respondents can often find their own problems in reasoning/logic, organization/structure, and grammar/punctuation in early drafts. Despite their belief that they can find their own problems in their drafts, the revisions graduate students make to their writing assignments are only sometimes major changes to organization (47%). The more likely changes are to surface-level errors, such as grammar and punctuation (53% responding with always or often).

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
include major changes to content	3%	15%	45%	33%	4%
include major changes to organization	4%	21%	47%	26%	2%
focus primarily on surface-level errors, such as grammar and punctuation	13%	39%	31%	13%	4%

Respondents stated that they are sometimes given the chance to reflect formally on their writing process (35%). Although, a substantial proportion stated that they rarely or never are given the opportunity (24% and 15%, respectively).

On average, respondents stated that the expectation of faculty for the quality of writing at UNLV is high (47%).

### *Who We Write With*

Respondents sometimes read and respond to other graduate students' writing (34%), with 26% doing this often, while 23% stated they do this rarely; and yet, most believe collaborative writing is key to their professional development:

Yes	28%
Somewhat	38%
No	34%

Although a substantial proportion of respondents stated that collaborative writing is not key to their professional development. Half of the respondents stated that they are rarely or never asked to write collaboratively for their graduate student writing assignments. However, there were differences between colleges. A majority of graduate students from the Lee School of Business stated that they were asked to write collaboratively, which deviates substantially from the average distribution of responses among other colleges. Still, nearly all respondents stated they were not a part of a graduate student writing group that meets regularly (95%).

*What We Write*

The three most frequent kinds of writing completed in their graduate courses include research papers (85%), summaries (70%), abstracts (59%), and reflection papers (57%).

**I have been asked to produce the following kinds of writing in my graduate courses**

Rank	Genre	%
1	Research Papers	84%
2	Summaries	70%
3	Abstracts	59%
4	Reflection Papers	57%
5	Critiques	56%
6	Opinion Papers	55%
7	Annotations and Annotated Bibliographies	48%
8	Research Proposals	43%
9	Article Reviews	43%
10	Analytical Essays	40%
11	Journal Articles	40%
12	Outlines	38%
13	Peer Review	34%
14	Conference Papers	26%
15	Grant Proposals	26%
16	Lab Reports	22%
17	Conference Proposals	19%
18	Book Reviews	18%
19	Web Site(s)	15%
20	Problem Sets	14%

21	Portfolios	12%
22	Blog Posts	11%
23	Creative Writing	9%

Other notable kinds of writing include Clinical and Professional Case Notes, Case Analyses, Case Studies, Assessment Reports, Posters, Literature Reviews, Business Plans, and Professional Presentations.

A majority of respondents have not completed writing for publication or professional conferences (54%). Most respondents who have completed writing for publication or professional conferences state that they have presented at a professional conference (35%) or submitted a multi-author article (20%).

### *Obstacles/Challenges to Successful Writing*

Graduate students list a number of challenges/obstacles for achieving success in writing at the graduate level:

#### **What challenges do you face in your graduate writing processes? (select all that apply)**

	%
Scheduling / Time	75%
Life Obligations	58%
Work	55%
Uncertainty About What to Say or How to Say It	35%
Writer's Block	29%
Fear of Failure	24%
Lack of Writing Confidence	21%
Lack of Preparation / Experience	18%
Lack of Organization	16%
English-as-a-Second-Language	13%
Mental or Physical Health Issues	10%
Poor Understanding of English Grammar and Punctuation	8%

Inadequate Childcare	6%
Inadequate Place / Space to Write	6%
Inadequate Access to Writing Technologies	5%

Most respondents indicated that the primary challenge they face in their graduate writing process is scheduling / time (75%). Furthermore, the next two most frequently mentioned challenges are related: life obligations (58%) and work (55%). Open-ended responses included coursework load and homework load throughout the semester preventing students from dedicating adequate time to writing, while others stated the lack of funding playing a major role in restricting the amount of time available for writing.

### *Writing Resources*

Most respondents use library resources. Sixty-five percent stated they use library resources from home and forty-nine percent stated they use library resources on campus.

A substantial majority of respondents stated that they do not use Graduate College thesis/dissertation workshops (83%). However, there are interesting differences between colleges. Close to half the respondents from the College of Engineering indicated that they do use such workshops, either from campus or from home. In addition, a similar proportion of overall respondents indicated that they do not use Writing Center resources (82%). Again, students from the College of Engineering were more likely to use Writer Center resources.

Aside from library, Graduate College, and Writing Center resources, most respondents stated that they use online/internet resources (82%), friends/peers (59%), Purdue University's OWL (54%), professor/adviser/committee (49%), and, lastly, librarians/other libraries (20%).

Approximately half of respondents reported that their department offers graduate research and/or writing support. A few departments offer writing services at the department level. This includes thesis/dissertation writing groups, weekly writing seminars, department level writing centers, and/or writing fellows on staff for assistance. Although 52% of respondents indicated yes to the question, this response is somewhat ambiguous. For example, students who have access to research support could respond yes, but may not have access to writing support.

A substantial majority of respondents indicated that a campus-wide graduate writing initiative could assist in their graduate program. Students from some programs were much more in favor of this than others. Close to half the students from the College of Sciences and the College of Fine Arts responded that it would not assist their graduate program.

A campus-wide graduate writing initiative should focus on: helping students to write papers, theses, and dissertations (75%), develop strong writing skills (67%), provide writing support and resources (61%), and/or provide a forum for sharing research and writing (44%).

Help Students to Write Papers, Theses, Dissertations	75%
Develop Strong Writing Skills	67%
Provide Writing Support and Resources	61%
Provide a Forum for Sharing Research and Writing	43%
Other (please explain)	7%

Some Other responses included: scientific writing, assistance with formatting (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.), and providing resources that do not conflict with work or class schedules.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents believe that graduate students would benefit from writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College. Respondents indicate that these workshops should include topics on: thesis/dissertation writing and formatting (74%), writing as a professional (69%), overall writing improvement (67%), help with preparing papers for publishing (59%), grant writing (58%), discipline-specific writing workshops (51%), peer reviewing (49%), international student support (25%).

Thesis / Dissertation Writing and Formatting	74%
Writing as a Professional	69%
Overall Writing Improvement	68%
Grant Writing	59%
Help Prepare for Publishing	59%
Discipline-Specific Writing Workshops	51%
Reviews / Feedback / Peer Interactions	49%
Specific Support for International Students	25%
Other (please explain)	4%

Open-ended responses to this question included workshops in the evening and on weekends, APA workshop, and online workshops.

Respondents would be most likely to attend activities such as: online tutorials (62%), evening writing workshops (43%), designated writing space on campus (36%), virtual writing groups



(34%), once-a-semester weekend writing retreats (35%), week-long writing camps/retreats over Winter, Spring, and/or Summer break (23%).

Online Tutorials	62%
Evening Writing Workshops	43%
Designated Writing Space on Campus	36%
Once-a-Semester Weekend Writing Retreats	35%
Virtual Writing Groups	34%
Week-long Writing Camps/Retreats over Winter, Spring, and/or Summer Break	23%
Other (please explain)	7%

Some respondents indicated that within-department writing groups and department specific courses would be beneficial, as well as daytime workshops.

## Graduate Faculty Responses

### *Who We Are*

Overall, 365 graduate faculty responded to the survey (50%).

Faculty rank was broadly represented in the respondents, with 25% identifying as Assistant Professor, 36% as Associate Professor, and 36% as Full Professor. 39% identified as female and 57% as male.

All schools and colleges were represented from more than 60 departments or programs.<sup>2</sup>

### *How We Write*

Overall, when asked if they like to write, faculty overwhelmingly selected Yes (68%) or Sometimes (30%). Likewise, a similar percentage “see” themselves as “writers”: Yes (53%) and Sometimes (33%). As writers, ninety-nine percent of respondents have an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as a writer. And eighty percent indicated that their confidence in their ability to well in their professional discipline was either High or Very High.

Most faculty were confident writers as graduate students (54% High or Very High). And while the vast majority of respondents believed their graduate work prepared them, for the most part, to write well in the professional discipline (93%), with 46% indicating that graduate school is where they learned the most how to write like a professional, most respondents indicated

<sup>2</sup> The Law School and the Dental School were not included in the survey distribution.

that their writing process has changed since finishing graduate school (54%). Only eight percent of graduate faculty stated that their writing process has not changed.

Similar to graduate students, various word processing software packages are used for the planning, drafting, and revising stages of the writing process. This includes Microsoft Word, Open Office, and more specialized text-editing programs, such as Latex and Emacs. Also similar to graduate students, graduate faculty members employ various note taking software during the writing process, such as Evernote. Reference management systems such as Refworks, Endnote, and Mendeley are also popular among graduate faculty.

*Who We Write With*

Most graduate faculty either agree or somewhat agree that collaborative writing is a key to their professional development (43% and 33%, respectively). Respondents from the College of Liberal Arts differed; close to half of the graduate faculty respondents within the College of Liberal Arts disagreed.

Typically, faculty read and respond to other faculty writing informally, with only 19% of respondents indicating rarely or never. Similarly, on average, graduate faculty share their writing with colleagues at UNLV. Although, more often, graduate faculty actually share their writing with colleagues outside of UNLV.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I read and respond to other faculty writing informally	11%	28%	42%	15%	4%
I share my writing with colleagues at UNLV	5%	20%	41%	26%	9%
I share my writing with colleagues outside of UNLV	12%	33%	40%	11%	4%

A significant portion of faculty are not part of a faculty writing group that meets regularly (91%).

*Obstacles/Challenges to Successful Writing*

The main challenge that graduate faculty faces to their writing process is scheduling/time (89%). Work and life obligations also provide a considerable challenge (59% and 50%, respectively).

Scheduling / Time	89%
Work	59%
Life Obligations	50%
Writer's Block	18%
Fear of Failure	14%
Uncertainty About What to Say or How to Say It	13%
English-as-a-Second-Language	10%
Lack of Writing Confidence	9%
Lack of Organization	9%
Inadequate Place / Space to Write	8%
Inadequate Childcare	7%
Mental or Physical Health Issues	5%
Lack of Preparation / Experience	3%
Inadequate Access to Writing Technologies	3%
Poor Understanding of English Grammar and Punctuation	2%
Other (please explain)	9%

The open-ended responses reveal a pattern suggesting obligations towards university and department services, course load, and administrative responsibilities interfere with graduate faculty's writing process. The lack of grant writing support and research assistants appears to be an obstacle, as well.

#### *How We Teach Writing*

Most graduate faculty respondents require each student to produce 0-25 pages in a semester in each of his or her graduate course (54%). A considerable proportion of respondents required 26-50 pages (39%):

0-25 pages	54%
26-50 pages	39%
51-75 pages	6%
More than 75 pages	1%

Graduate faculty in the College of Liberal Arts, School of Law, College of Urban Affairs, College of Hotel Administration, and College of Education require more writing in their assignments compared to other colleges (26-50 pages).

The three most frequently assigned papers are: research papers (69%), critiques (50%), and summaries (45%).

**I have asked graduate students to produce the following kinds of writing in my graduate courses (please select all that apply):**

Rank	Answer	%
1	Research Papers	69%
2	Critiques	50%
3	Summaries	45%
4	Annotations and Annotated Bibliographies	38%
5	Reflection Papers	35%
6	Opinion Papers	31%
7	Abstracts	31%
8	Article Reviews	29%
9	Research Proposals	28%
10	Analytical Essays	27%
11	Journal Articles	22%
12	Conference Papers	21%
13	Outlines	17%
14	Lab Reports	15%

15	Problem Sets	15%
16	Peer Review	15%
17	Book Reviews	14%
18	Grant Proposals	12%
19	Conference Proposals	12%
20	Portfolios	8%
21	Web Site(s)	7%
22	Creative Writing	6%
23	Blog Posts	6%
24	Close Readings	5%

Other notable kinds of writing that faculty assign include Scholarly Reviews, Program Notes, Book Chapters, Syllabi, Imitations of Works Read in Class, Case Studies, Posters, Literature Reviews, and Professional Presentations.

A majority of graduate faculty members expect that graduate students should, before graduation, complete writing for the public (86%). Most notably in the following domains: presentation at a conference (76%) and/or multi-authored article (50%).

Most graduate faculty respondents indicated that they help graduate students analyze and understand the features of the genres that they will be expected to produce as professionals (41% responded always, 40% responded often).

On average, graduate faculty members expect students to produce two drafts before final submission of a writing assignment.

One	26%
Two	33%
Three-Four	29%
More Than Four	12%

For their graduate student writing assignments, graduate faculty sometimes provide discussion time in class to help plan writing with over half the respondents from the College of Liberal

Arts, College of Education, College of Fine Arts, College of Hotel Administration, and College of Urban Affairs indicating always or often. They often recommend students discuss their ideas with them before drafting. In addition to discussion with the professor, it is recommended that students discuss their ideas with their peers before drafting. A majority of respondents indicated that they always or often recommend this (22% and 30%, respectively). Rarely does graduate faculty recommend that students discuss their ideas with others outside UNLV.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I provide discussion time in class to help them plan their writing	26%	23%	30%	13%	11%
I recommend that students discuss their ideas with me before drafting	45%	29%	18%	4%	3%
I recommend that students discuss their ideas with their peers before drafting	22%	30%	26%	13%	8%
I recommend that students discuss their ideas with others outside UNLV	7%	14%	29%	30%	21%

For graduate writing assignments, a majority of graduate faculty believe their evaluation criteria are always in line with the professional standards of their discipline (54%). A majority of graduate faculty always discuss their evaluation criteria with students prior to submission (58%). A considerable portion of graduate faculty respondents describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment (42% responding always, 29% responding often).

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I believe my evaluation criteria is in line with professional standards in my discipline	54%	38%	7%	1%	1%
I discuss evaluation criteria with the students prior to submission	58%	30%	9%	1%	1%
I describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment	43%	29%	18%	7%	3%

A majority of graduate faculty indicated that they offered feedback to graduate students on their writing assignments after the planning stage (58%) and after a first draft (77%).

**When do you offer feedback to graduate students on their writing assignments?**

After the Planning Stage	58%
After a First Draft	78%
After at Least One Revision	40%
Only After the Assignment Has Been Submitted for Evaluation	28%

On average, the feedback provided explains how the draft matches up with professional expectations. Thirty-one percent of graduate faculty responded that they always do this, while 38% responded that they often do this. Only 9% indicated that they rarely or never provide this type of feedback.

For graduate writing assignments, revisions of writing assignments are typically encouraged (40%), but a substantial proportion of respondents indicated that these revisions are required, as well (31%). No respondents indicated that revisions were discouraged, while very few stated that revisions were not allowed (6%). This latter statistic may be due to the ambiguity of the question with some respondents interpreting it as whether or not students are allowed to make revisions and corrections to already graded assignments.

Typically, the kind of feedback offered on graduate student writing assignments can be described as a mix of in-text content comments and editing (72%). Graduate faculty in the College of Liberal Arts are more likely to use margin or end comments when giving feedback than respondents from other colleges. A majority of respondents stated that the feedback provided prepares graduate students to be a writer in their discipline with 54% of respondents indicating yes, 39% indicating somewhat, and only 8% stated no. Close to a third of the respondents from the College of Fine Arts indicated that their feedback does not prepare students to be a writer in their discipline.

Graduate faculty usually expect graduate students to be capable of finding problems in their reasoning or logic in early drafts on their own with only 13% responding rarely or never. They expect graduate students to find errors in grammar and punctuation in early drafts as well, but not to such an extent as errors in logic and reasoning.

A large proportion of professors either rarely or never provide time in class for peer review (23% and 26%, respectively). Additionally, on average, peer review outside of class is sometimes encouraged, but a notable number of respondents indicated that they rarely or never do so (36%).

Collaborative writing is rarely or never asked of graduate students by graduate faculty in their writing assignments (28% and 27%, respectively). Graduate faculty in the College of Engineering and the College of Education are more likely to ask students to write collaboratively.

Graduate faculty sometimes require students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing process, but a similar proportion of responses can be found on both ends of the response spectrum.

**For my graduate writing assignments, I require students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing process**

Always	16%
Often	21%
Sometimes	27%
Rarely	18%
Never	18%

A majority of graduate faculty respondents indicated that their expectation for the quality of graduate student writing at UNLV is moderate (56%), with only 13% indicating that their expectations are low.

Generally, graduate faculty members sometimes provide an overview of campus library resources (17% stating always, 22% stating often, and 25% stating sometimes), but a considerable number of respondents rarely or never do (19% and 16%, respectively).

The other resources recommended for graduate writers include professor/adviser/committee (69%), online/internet resources (64%), librarians/other libraries (55%), databases/guidebooks (41%), and Purdue University OWL (27%).

A large majority of respondents indicated that they do not recommend software to graduate students to help them write more effectively (85%). Graduate faculty members in the College of Engineering are more likely to recommend software to students than graduate faculty from the other colleges.

About half the respondents stated that their department offers support for graduate research and/or writing. Similar to the graduate student survey, this question may be ambiguous in that some departments may offer graduate research support, while not offering writing support. The response options available for this question cannot tease apart this distinction. Respondents indicated that their departments typically offer equal access to writing resources for both Master's and doctoral students. Some departments offer writing boot camps, workshops, and seminar courses.

Most respondents believe that graduate students would benefit from writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College (96%). These workshops should focus on overall writing improvement (82%), thesis/dissertation writing and formatting (73%), writing as a professional



(63%), help with preparing for publishing (53%), facilitating the peer review process (52%), discipline-specific writing workshops (50%), grant writing (49%), and support for international students (44%).

Overall Writing Improvement	82%
Reviews / Feedback / Peer Interactions	52%
Thesis / Dissertation Writing and Formatting	73%
Grant Writing	49%
Writing as a Professional	63%
Help Prepare for Publishing	53%
Specific Support for International Students	44%
Discipline-Specific Writing Workshops	50%

Eighty-six percent of respondents believe that a campus-wide graduate writing initiative could assist their graduate program and its students. Respondents from the College of Sciences were less likely to endorse a campus-wide initiative with over a fourth of the respondents indicating that such an initiative would not assist their graduate program.

Graduate faculty would encourage their students to attend evening writing workshops (69%), online tutorials (55%), virtual writing workshops (46%), once-a-semester weekend writing retreats (44%), designated writing spaces on campus (40%), and week-long writing camps/retreats over winter, spring, and/or summer break (33%).

The majority of respondents indicated that they have high or moderate confidence in their graduate programs ability to develop graduate student writing in their professional discipline (29% and 45%, respectively).

A majority of respondents indicated that their graduate program does not offer faculty workshops for creating effective writing assignments at the graduate level (66%). A majority of faculty respondents would be interested in workshops sponsored by the Graduate College on teaching writing at the graduate level (63%). This was less popular in some colleges than others. A majority of respondents in the College of Sciences and close to half the respondents in the College of Liberal Arts, College of Education, and College of Engineering, Lee Business School would not be interested.

**What kinds of workshops would you like to see offered?**

Responding to and Evaluating Student Writing	80%
Consistent Response and Evaluation as a Department	49%
Creating Assignments	46%
Dealing with the Paper Load	46%

Faculty responses varied when asked what types of workshops they would like to see. Many stated that these workshops would be beneficial, but they would not fit into already busy schedules for professors. Additionally, some respondents stated that faculty who actively publish should be running the workshops.

**Comparing/Contrasting Graduate Student and Graduate Faculty Responses**

While these surveys can only serve as a brief glimpse into writing practices on campus, when reviewing results from the surveys, we found it helpful to compare and contrast some of the ways that students and faculty responded to select questions. In order to better understand the different ways that students and faculty view an aspect of writing, many of the questions were the same or similar for both groups, which allowed us to account for perspective in their responses. Interrogating the similarities and differences between groups, therefore, can serve to promote wide-ranging conversations on campus in the future.

For example, gender identification among respondents offers a particularly telling contrast:

<b>Graduate Students</b>	
Female	Male
<b>63%</b>	37%
<b>Graduate Faculty</b>	
Female	Male
39%	<b>57%</b>

Does gender play a role in writing practices in our disciplines and at the graduate level? Does the gender distribution of respondents match that in the Graduate College? How might these gender differences influence our approach to writing? Or our approach to teaching writing? How cognizant should we be of gender when we think about writing in our discipline? How cognizant should we be when mentoring graduate students on writing in our discipline?

When comparing the writing practices of graduate students and faculty, the most interesting findings clustered around the broad categories of attitude and collaboration.

Both students and faculty basically enjoy writing for the most part, although the numbers skew a little more when responding to the question, "Do you think of yourself as a writer?" Faculty

are twice as likely to respond positively to this prompt. Both groups state that scheduling/time, along with work and life obligations, are the most difficult obstacles to overcome for success in writing. But “time” is a matter of perception. While we all feel overworked, some might not have enough “time” for writing because they feel the need to schedule large blocks of time to devote to writing. Others might find 30 minute blocks sufficient. Future study might categorize external pressures and internal pressures, which would make it easier to see where interventions would be helpful or even possible.

How do faculty account for the different obstacles that graduate students have to overcome to be successful writers (which mirror their own)? Do faculty believe that graduate students basically enjoy writing? What strategies might faculty develop in order to help their graduate students “feel” like a writer? Did a shift in attitude about writing occur for faculty? And if so, when did that shift occur?

When looking at questions that cluster around peer engagement and collaboration, we once again see similarities and differences and wonder whether one might have an effect on the other. For example, while both faculty and graduate students believe that collaborative writing is a key to their professional development, collaborative writing is rarely or never asked of graduate students by faculty in their writing assignments. This may be for evaluative purposes, or this may reflect a competitive environment in certain graduate programs, or maybe a sense of writing insecurity surrounds potential collaboration.

A lack of widespread collaboration extends to the ways that students and faculty share their writing with peers, with only about one-third of both groups stating they do so on a regular basis. While, on average, graduate faculty share their writing with colleagues at UNLV, graduate faculty actually share their writing more often with colleagues outside of UNLV. Since both faculty and students overwhelmingly stated that they are not currently part of a writing group that meets regularly, most of the sharing would appear to be primarily informal or situational. And this lack of sharing extends to the classroom. A large proportion of professors either rarely or never provide time in class for peer review. Additionally, on average, peer review outside of class is sometimes encouraged, but a notable number of faculty respondents indicated that they rarely or never do so; likewise, a substantial proportion of students do not take individual initiative by stating that they do not engage in informal peer review outside of class for their graduate writing assignments.

How important is peer response to successful writing? How important is critical feedback to an individual's growth as a writer? What strategies might promote more open practices in writing? Would more peer review in the classroom initiate more peer review outside the classroom?

To continue along the classroom line of thinking, we see both similarities and difference when examining clusters of survey questions around current practices in the graduate classroom.

While there is general agreement between graduate students and graduate faculty on the kinds of genres they are most often asked to write for their assignments, the sheer number of genres

selected could use a lot more investigation, especially relative to the interrelationship between programs and disciplinary practices. How are faculty developing their assignments? Are they adapting what they were taught in their own graduate programs? How do they stay current with the kinds of writing being practiced in various professional contexts?

There is general agreement about the front end of writing assignments, with students stating that they receive good instructions for completing writing assignments. And while there is general agreement that faculty recommend students discuss their ideas with them before drafting, as well as discuss their ideas with their peers before drafting, little of this, according to the surveys, occurs in the classroom.

There is general disagreement, however, if faculty describe strategies for revising papers, with nearly three-quarters of students stating this does not happen very often and the same number of faculty stating that it occurs always or often. While this may be misunderstanding of what constitutes a strategy for revision, it is clear that not much time is spent discussing writing or aspects of the writing process in the classroom. A similar disagreement arose about when faculty provide feedback for graduate student writing assignments. 62% of students state that they only receive feedback on writing assignments after it has been submitted for evaluation, while 58% of faculty indicate that they provide feedback after the planning stage and 77% provide feedback after a first draft. This difference may come from how faculty and graduate students define “feedback,” as well as the expectations for feedback on a piece of writing.

How might we define parts of the writing process more precisely and more consistently? What are the benefits for responding at multiple points in the process? How can responding to student writing at multiple points in the process help graduate students write more effectively? What strategies can we create for responding to student writing more often without drastically increasing the workload of the faculty?

According to a majority of graduate student respondents, faculty rarely or never require multiple drafts of papers before final submission, and the majority of faculty agree with this by only requiring one or two drafts. This may account for the fact that most students only complete one or two drafts for their graduate writing assignments. But these expectations for drafts seem to be at odds with faculty practices. As one graduate student stated in one of our focus group discussions:

. . . we put on a workshop graduate student group it was called like the publishing pipe line and we had like four faculty on the panel and it was at the beginning of my PhD program and it probably changed the way I looked at writing a lot because one of the faculty was like usually I have like seventeen drafts of a paper and I was like, “are you kidding me?” Like really and, you know, I guess that is normal like that is how much revision you have to do.

Finally, the kinds of writing initiatives and workshops that graduate students want compares favorably with what graduate faculty feel they need. But are these initiatives and workshops

enough? While 71% of graduate students believe that faculty expectations for the quality of writing at UNLV is Very High or High, only 30% of faculty believe this.

Do the graduate faculty numbers reflect a distrust of other faculty on campus? Do they reflect a concern for the quality of the graduate students? Do they reflect a belief that they have lowered their standards based on their current experience with graduate student writing? What discussions do we need to have to improve the quality of writing in graduate curricula at UNLV? What support structures need to be in place to promote quality writing? What strategies can we develop to improve writing practices across the university?

Our analyses have only scratched the surface and, in most cases, lead to more questions than answers. From our perspective, this only heightens the need for more constructive conversations about graduate writing practices and teaching writing to graduate students on the UNLV campus.

### **Brief Overview of Writing Initiatives at Graduate Colleges Nationally**

Different universities across the country offer a range of initiatives to assist graduate students write more effectively, including boot camps, writing center services, graduate writing courses, writing groups, and writing institutes.

#### *Thesis and Dissertation Writing Boot Camps*

Thesis and dissertation writing boot camps have become a popular resource on university campuses. These boot camps are meant for Master's and doctoral students currently in the writing stage of their thesis or dissertation. The programs range from weekend-long retreats to multi-week programs with daily writing sessions, peer review, and writing workshops. Usually, these programs take place during the spring, winter, or summer break. This allows students to dedicate themselves to writing, workshops, and peer review with minimal distraction from course work or other university obligations.

Month-long dissertation boot camps, typically taking place over the summer, are offered at several universities. UCLA offers one such boot camp (<http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/programs/>). This boot camp is designed to help students finish a dissertation draft or make substantial progress on their draft. UCLA offers multiple boot camps, each with a different focus depending on field of study. This allows students to attend a boot camp with other students in their field or a related field. UCLA offers three types of boot camps: 1) humanities and arts, 2) qualitative social sciences, 3) sciences, engineering, and quantitative social sciences. By grouping different, yet somewhat related, fields of study together, students may receive feedback from others who are not entirely familiar with their line of research, but still possess the ability to effectively critique and offer feedback.

The dedication required in a month-long boot camp can prove to be too much of an obligation for some students. To accommodate these students, shorter boot camps are also offered. A shorter thesis and dissertation boot camp is offered by Boise State University (<https://writingcenter.boisestate.edu/boot-camp/>). This boot camp takes place over one-week

during winter break. Although it is not as in-depth as a month-long boot camp, the Graduate College and Writing Center provide students with tools to ensure their week of writing is efficient and fruitful. The boot camp provides students with an environment conducive to writing, refreshments and snacks, various writing supplies, and, most importantly, coffee. In addition, a writing consultant is available who can provide support to students with writing questions through one-on-one consultations. The weeklong format of this boot camp is convenient for students who cannot dedicate time during the semester or several weeks over summer break to writing without interruption.

A week-long retreat may not be feasible for some students with particular obligations and responsibilities in their life. Some schools offer weekend writing retreats catering to this demographic. One example is offered by Yale University (<http://gsas.yale.edu/academic-professional-development/writing-center/writing-groups/dissertation-boot-camps>). This boot camp is designed for advanced PhD candidates who are in the process of writing research papers, prospectuses, or dissertation chapters. The boot camp not only provides an environment for writing, but it attempts to turn graduate writing into a social event, rather than a solitary process. Students will enjoy breakfast, lunch, and coffee/snack break together, while also engaging in light physical exercise between the 3-4 hour long writing sessions. Previous attendees state that they think the environment is perfect for writing extensively, without burning yourself out or losing focus.

### *Writing Center Services*

Universities throughout the country, both public and private, have implemented writing centers designed specifically to cater to the needs of graduate students: writing research papers for seminar courses, conference papers, prospectuses, theses, and dissertations. Similar to the undergraduate writing center, graduate writing centers provide services such as one-on-one consultations and writing workshops. The workshops are geared towards issues graduate students typically encounter during their writing process, such as: writing/formatting theses and dissertations, writing scientific articles, and writing for disparate audiences.

The Graduate Writing Center at the University of Maryland offers a wide range of services (<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/graduate-school-writing-center>). Similar to many other graduate writing centers, the Writing Center at UMD offers one-on-one consultations for graduate students looking for support and feedback on research papers, theses, and dissertations. They also offer English editing for international graduate students. International students electronically submit their paper and the editors edit and proofread the paper using a combination of track changes and comments. The Writing Center also welcomes graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty to come to a weekly write-in session, an informal writing boot camp. The Writing Center provides 3 hours of structured time to write. Caffeinated beverages are available and support staff will be available for brief one-on-one consultations. Lastly, the Writing Fellows program is a program for select graduate students who have demonstrated mastery and interest in the writing process. They receive a stipend and are expected to work one-on-one with graduate students regularly, facilitate workshops and weekly write-ins, attend monthly training and support workshops, and develop a project on

writing over the course of the semester. The Graduate Writing Center at UMD is unique in that it provides multiple services that cater to a wide demographic of students, while also including graduate students directly in the development and management of the program through the Writing Fellows program.

Most writing centers stress that the writing services or consultation sessions are not meant as editing or proofreading services. A unique program at Syracuse University does just this—the Graduate Editing Center (<http://wc.syr.edu/grad2.html>). The Graduate Editing Center is distinct from the Writing Center. It is meant for students who wish to receive feedback on grammatical correctness, Standard American academic English, word arrangement, and punctuation mechanics. For students who are not concerned about the organization or clarity of their writing, such a service may prove to be quite useful. Although, without the dynamic of a one-on-one consultation this kind of editing and proofreading process may not result in the student receiving the most effective feedback that can be applied towards future writing projects.

### *Graduate Writing Courses*

Graduate level courses on writing are not as prevalent as other graduate writing programs or workshops. The courses are typically found within the Department of English or another department that focuses on studying writing or literature. The courses are taught by professors who are trained in writing, as opposed to professors trained in a specific discipline. One such example is The University of Minnesota's Department for Writing Studies that offers seminars on writing as a graduate student and professional (<http://www.grad.umn.edu/writing-resources/services-workshop-courses>). The classes offered include topics such as writing proposals and grants, technical writing, theses and dissertation writing, as well as graduate writing courses specifically designed for non-native English speakers. In addition, they offer several other seminars that may be of interest to a broad section of graduate students including courses on writing for different audiences, rhetoric, and argumentation. These classes are open to graduate and professional students from all disciplines.

Specifically targeting teaching the art of communicating complex scientific research, Princeton University offers two courses on effective scientific writing designed for students in programs stressing quantitative methods and analyses (<http://writing.princeton.edu/wse/graduate-writing-courses>). These courses intend to make students more effective readers of scientific literature, while fostering the skills needed to make concise scientific arguments, logically and persuasively, with limited space. The first course is designed to teach students how to read and write scientific literature. The second course builds on this material to teach students how to write scientific research articles. The courses offered at Princeton are unique due to their length—they are only half a semester long, but they are offered twice during each semester. This allows students to take both courses consecutively during one semester.

More broadly, the University of Chicago offers a course on academic and professional writing open to students from all fields of research (<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/courses/grad.htm>). It is intended to teach graduate and professional students how to communicate complex and difficult material to expert and non-expert

audiences. The course is writing intensive; students are expected to write one paper a week for 10 weeks. Enrollment is capped at six or seven students, which allows for weekly feedback on your writing from other students. The assignments vary in who the intended audience is and the rhetorical task. This course enables graduate student writers to practice communicating ideas to disparate audiences of varying technical ability using different modes of communication, such as persuasive or simply informative.

### *Writing Groups*

The peer review process can be an important tool for enhancing the writing process. Some writing centers also offer a service to graduate students assisting them with putting together a writing group. A writing group provides the opportunity for regular critiques, feedback, and accountability on writing assignments. Generally, the writing center offering such a service has an application process and then matches students who have expressed interest with those who wish to accomplish similar goals in the writing group. This service may be a useful asset for graduate students in small departments who may not be able to establish their own writing group. Additionally, this allows students who are looking to address similar issues in their writing to be matched. Stanford University supplements such a service with a handbook on how to effectively schedule, manage time, and keep all members accountable so that the writing group is productive. The handbook also provides worksheets focusing on goal setting and familiarizing writing group participants with one another.

### *Scholarships / Writing institutes / Genre-Focused Initiatives*

Although it is not as prolific as the above outlined programs, some universities offer graduate students currently writing their dissertation an incentive to finish. Similar in nature to the dissertation and theses boot camps, these writing institutes are meant to provide space and support for graduate students currently in the final stages of dissertation writing. These programs are longer in duration compared to the boot camps and they also provide compensation and/or other amenities for the duration of the program. I will outline two programs in particular, one implemented at the University of Michigan and another by New York University.

The University of Michigan's Sweetland Center for Writing offers a program designed for graduate students whose research is complete and have already started writing their dissertation (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>). The Dissertation Writing Institute is a six-hour a day, eight-week long program taking place during the spring semester. The time is spent making substantial progress on their dissertation through mandatory daily writing time and group discussion/feedback. The programs schedule is strict and it does not allow participants to hold other positions at the university during the time at the institute. The University of Michigan compensates for such an obligation by providing a \$3000 stipend. For a student to be accepted into the program they must first be nominated by their department and then apply/interview with the Institute. The effectiveness of such a program is demonstrated by the difference in dissertation completion and graduation rates; 80% completing/graduating among those in the program compared to 50-60% in the rest of the university.



The summer dissertation writing program offered at New York University is similar with its intended goals: supporting students who are nearing completion of their doctoral dissertations (<https://www.nyu.edu/research/provosts-global-research-initiatives/summer-dissertation-writing-program.html>). The program is meant for students who plan on submitting their dissertation during the subsequently fall semester. The program transports students to a different city where they will be expected to work on their dissertation and participate in group discussions full-time. Funding for travel, lodging, and a meal plan are provided. Six students are selected and they will be a dissertation writer in residence for six weeks with the expectation of holding regular office hours during the week. The program requires full-time participation without distraction from family or friends. If you are selected for the program, you must be willing to disengage from your familial or social life for a brief period of time in order to focus on your writing process. There are several restrictions placed upon the selected writers-in-residence, including: restriction on travel (e.g., cannot travel during the week and you are discouraged from weekend travel), significant other cannot share the residency or stay overnight, and children are not allowed. If an interested participant cannot find alternative means for childcare or cannot be away from their family and friends for the required period of time, NYU also offers an alternative dissertation writing grant. While the requirements and expectations may be strict, the writing process may benefit greatly from such a structured program.

Two particular graduate colleges have developed initiatives tied directly to the kinds of writing that graduate students are expected to do.

Meagan Autry and Michael Carter describe the new Thesis and Dissertation Support Services at the Graduate School at North Carolina State University (<http://compositionforum.com/issue/31/north-carolina-state.php>). The program provides a “rhetorical, genre-based approach to assisting students with their graduate writing.” While designed to help students with their current projects and reduce time to degree, the primary goal is to develop “life-long scholarly writers” by providing workshops, seminars, and other events to examine the genre systems related to graduate education.

Similarly, Christine Sundstrom describes an interdisciplinary Graduate Writing Program at the University of Kansas (<http://compositionforum.com/issue/29/kansas.php>). The program “employs a rhetorical genre-based approach in a series of courses organized around the genres of graduate school and beyond.” The program also sponsors a Summer Writing Institute and workshops for both graduate students and graduate faculty throughout the year. Their argument is that “rhetorical genre studies is ideally suited for teaching graduate writing and supporting students as they create their professional identities.”

### **Brief Overview of Writing Initiatives at Graduate Colleges in Our Region**

The promotion of writing and the support structures for helping graduate students write more effectively vary broadly among Graduate Colleges at universities in the western region.

### *University of Nevada, Reno*

The University of Nevada, Reno Graduate School web site (<http://www.unr.edu/grad>) does not promote any writing initiatives specifically for graduate students.

### *University of Arizona*

The University of Arizona's Graduate Center offer a series of resources for writing and publishing (<http://gradcenter.arizona.edu/resources#Writing&Publishing> ). From their web site:

UA Libraries' For Graduate Students website - The University Libraries has a variety of resources to help with research, writing, and publishing. The For Graduate Students page packages much of the Library's tools and resources into one place to help you find what you need. The Thesis Support and Managing your Research tabs are particularly useful.

UA Think Tank's Writing Center - The Think Tank's Writing Center is home to its Graduate Writing Circles program, a peer to peer writing program that helps graduate students with publication, thesis, dissertation, and general writing. For more information about the Graduate Writing Circles program, email Chris Hamel-Brown at [chamel@email.arizona.edu](mailto:chamel@email.arizona.edu).

UA Writing Skills Improvement Program (WSIP) - The WSIP offers a wide variety of workshops and services to help you enhance your writing to the next level. Examples of their programs include the tutoring, the Graduate Writing Institute, and Graduate Writing Groups.

How to Write a Great Research Paper, and Get it Accepted by a Good Journal (link is external), a video presentation by Elsevier's Anthony Newman, PhD (hosted by the Cancer Biology Seminar Series 2/24/2015). Download Newman's slides

Video: Panel on Academic Writing and Publishing(link is external) featuring Gender and Women's' Studies Professor Monica Casper, Dean of the James E Rogers College of Law, Marc Miller, and Molecular and Cellular Biology Professor Tricia Serio

### *Arizona State University*

Arizona State's Graduate College offer different types of resources for graduate student writers. The most pertinent to writing for graduate students include the following:

Getting Published (<https://graduate.asu.edu/cos/getting-published>)

The articles and podcasts in this section provide expert advice from faculty in a variety of fields on: remaining passionate; improving your chances of getting published; converting your dissertation into a scholarly book; or sharing your research with audiences beyond your discipline.

### Grant Writing (<https://graduate.asu.edu/cos/grant-writing>)

For many scholars, obtaining research grants is an essential part of being successful, whether as a faculty member or as a researcher in government or industry. Here you'll find information on locating funding sources, writing grant proposals, and tips to help improve your chances of receiving grant funding.

Community of Scholars ( <https://graduate.asu.edu/cos>), which includes the following workshops in Fall 2015:

- **Introduction to a Literature Review** - Have to write a lit review? We'll discuss what it is and isn't, how to start one, and where to find a mentor text. Having trouble starting or stopping your literature review process? Presenters will discuss tips on creating a literature review and incorporating it into your paper, as well as practice methods to evaluate their literature review.
- **Planning for Long Term Projects** - Going to graduate school is important and so are the other commitments in your life. Join us for a workshop that will discuss strategies for planning your long-term projects in graduate school while balancing commitments outside of school.
- **Writing Effectively: Success in Graduate Writing** - Success in writing is often predetermined before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). Before beginning a piece of writing, it is important that you have devised a plan for that writing. This could entail familiarizing yourself with the conventions of the specific genre, creating an outline, ensuring that you are prepared to fully support your argument, or developing a strategy for revising your draft. These considerations and others will be discussed in detail to help you better prepare before sitting down to write.
- **Writing Effectively: The Art of Argument** - Much academic writing takes the form of argument. You begin with a claim and then set out to write in support or opposition depending upon the results of the research. This workshop will help you understand how to make a sound argument and how to review your argument.
- **Writing and Submitting a Conference Proposal** - Gear up for conference season! If you've got a conference you'd like to go to, join us to discuss tips on writing conference proposals and deciphering conference proposal calls.

### *University of Utah*

While there do not appear to be writing initiatives aimed at all graduate students at the University of Utah, the initiative most important for graduate writers offered by the Utah Graduate College is the Dissertation Writing Boot Camps (<http://postdocs.utah.edu/dissertation-writing-boot-camps/>). From their web site:

**The Dissertation Boot Camp is a free program sponsored by the Graduate School and the Marriott Library** that gives you a chance to make some serious progress on your dissertation during fall and spring breaks. You must commit to showing up ready to write,

every weekday during breaks from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (You may, of course, stay later. The library closes at 6 pm during breaks.)

We provide quiet, comfortable writing spaces and provide you with a nourishing breakfast each day. The library offers workshops that will help you prepare you as you research your dissertation, and will also provide referrals to subject matter experts if you require additional research help.

### *Utah State University*

Utah State's Graduate College offers Thesis and Dissertation Workshops (<http://rgs.usu.edu/graduateschool/htm/value-added/training/workshops>), although they appear to be primarily focused on formatting. The Graduate College also provides a publication guide (<https://usu.box.com/shared/static/84z9u8fo2g9wxzcgchibx1skwvs1n7la.pdf>), a 37-page document that is, once again, focused primarily on formatting. They do sponsor a number of writing workshops, including a grant writing workshop (<https://rgs.usu.edu/opd/htm/usu-workshops/>)

Write Winning Grant Proposals is tailored to **faculty researchers** and comprehensively addresses both practical and conceptual aspects important to the grant proposal writing process.

a workshop on writing proposals

Getting Started as a Successful Proposal Writer and Academician is tailored to **graduate students** and **postdoctoral fellows** looking for training on how to get started writing grant proposals.

as well as workshops for creating graphs, posters, and slides.

### *University of California, Riverside*

UC-Riverside offers a Graduate Writing Center ( <http://gwrc.ucr.edu/> ). The Graduate Writing Center also:

- Hosts workshops on various forms of academic and professional writing
- Facilitates writing groups to a create a greater sense of a professional writing community
- Offers by-request programming for departments across the campus
- Organizes weekly write-ins for dissertation writers

### **Some Initial Conclusions from This Research**

Virtually everyone agrees that writing at the graduate level is an important skill that students at UNLV must develop more fully, and virtually everyone agrees that support for graduate student writing is an institutional necessity. As Mike Rose and Karen McClafferty (2001) also state, "We seem to do little to address the quality of writing in a systematic way at the very point where scholarly style and identity is being shaped" (2001:27, quoted in Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, Kim,

Manthey, & Smith 2015). Based on our findings, we can offer a number of conclusions that should help us think about graduate student writing more completely and help us overcome potential obstacles to writing initiatives at UNLV in the future.

Despite the fact that all colleges and all programs offering a graduate degree at UNLV use writing in a variety of ways, no central point exists for consistent discussion, articulation, and decision-making regarding writing at the graduate level. This does not mean that graduate programs at UNLV want or need a writing tsar, but, at the same time, graduate students and faculty understand that writing does not occur in a vacuum. One conclusion from our study would argue that the majority of respondents want opportunities to engage more often and more effectively about writing and writing practices at the graduate and professional levels both within their discipline and across disciplines, that writing should be made more transparent across campus. This should happen as initiatives developed from within the Graduate College, or the Graduate College could promote and support initiatives originating within colleges (or even departments) that actively promote writing on the UNLV campus.

This study shows clearly that graduate faculty and graduate students would support and participate in initiatives that help with writing and teaching writing at the graduate level. If UNLV is serious about becoming a Top Tier institution, then improving writing at the graduate level is both important and necessary. But these kinds of initiatives and workshops require financial support. To avoid possible skepticism from stakeholders, we would recommend that the Graduate College propose a dollar amount and a timeframe for achieving success in improving writing at the graduate level at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and share it with the larger UNLV community.

The Graduate College must initiate conversations about the role, place, and value of graduate student writing by establishing open forums for discussion. These forums can be both face-to-face and/or virtual, but they need to be cultivated, promoted, and monitored on a regular basis so that an initiative like this one on graduate writing does not wither away. One strategy for achieving a goal like this one would be to create a faculty fellowship position that would provide the time and space for a faculty member to promote graduate student writing more fully across campus, including leading forum discussions, creating new workshop initiatives for students, as well as new workshop opportunities for helping graduate faculty implement and teach writing more effectively and more efficiently. In this way, the graduate college would show its commitment to graduate student writing and, by establishing an annual fellowship, create a long-term resource necessary for maintaining momentum over time.

Graduate faculty at UNLV all have robust research agendas on top of their teaching load, and while virtually all faculty respondents advocate for the value of writing for graduate student development, many faculty may not have the tools, skills, or resources to teach writing effectively and efficiently in their graduate courses. Like our graduate students, faculty struggle to find the extra time necessary outside of their schedules, work, and life commitments to learn more about teaching writing effectively and efficiently. An important conclusion from this study would argue that the Graduate College work with the colleges and schools on campus to create

faculty development opportunities for teaching writing. An initiative like this, however, should not be overtime, should not be an additional expectation of faculty, but should seek to provide an opportunity for growth and development that fits within the already too-busy schedules of our faculty.

A majority of faculty acknowledge that they describe the expected genres for publication in their discipline, which would imply that different programs expect (or require) graduate students to be familiar with genres and genre systems common to their discipline, but the "invisibility of genre, voice, style, data presentation, active versus passive writing, structure, and epistemology in writing instruction often allow students to refrain from critically examining their presentation of information and recognizing that the way something is written is just as important as the content being written about (and that the two are often intertwined)" (Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, Kim, Manthey, & Smith, 2015).

As novice academics, graduate students are all working to understand and deal with a workload that is very different than the work that they did as undergraduates. The expectations are higher and the workload is heavier; some are performing full-time research, some are teaching, all are meeting myriad responsibilities. And while virtually all graduate student respondents understand the value of writing for their professional development, many of them struggle with finding the extra time necessary outside of their schedules, their work, and their many life obligations to improve their writing skills. For these reasons, many graduate students at UNLV feel like they do not have adequate access to the tools, skills, or resources to write effectively and efficiently in their graduate programs. An important conclusion from our study would argue that the Graduate College, in particular, work with the colleges and schools on campus to make a commitment to improving graduate student writing by creating short- and long-term initiatives, as well as a comprehensive series of writing workshops.

One thing that the survey did not do was ask faculty directly their thoughts on current graduate student writing, although these attitudes certainly show up indirectly through a variety of questions on the survey. Even so, a recommendation that certainly arises from this study is that the Graduate College do more focused research about graduate student writing, asking faculty directly about their thoughts on the quality of writing that they are seeing and what they believe they would need to improve that quality. This could be done by a working group or as part of the responsibilities of a Graduate College Writing Fellow, but the Graduate College must perform a complete assessment of writing practices across the graduate curricula, as well as a complete assessment of the ways that writing is supported institutionally across the UNLV campus.

Currently, the UNLV community has very few conversations about the use of writing at the graduate level, about the teaching of writing at the graduate level, about what counts as necessary writing skills for graduate students, or about expectations for graduate-quality (or professional-quality) writing in disciplinary genres or even in genres common to all disciplines (like the dissertation, for example). Much of what we are working with currently is primarily lore, innuendo, and personal experience. We believe this report should encourage larger

conversations across campus and encourage all of us to discuss writing, and the teaching of writing at the graduate level, in more comprehensive and complex ways.

**Finally . . .**

We value multiple perspectives and would welcome any insights that individuals reading this report might offer. We would also like to make our research available to interested researchers and/or collaborate with faculty interested in pursuing this type of research in the future. Please contact Ed Nagelhout ([ed.nagelhout@unlv.edu](mailto:ed.nagelhout@unlv.edu)) with any questions / comments / concerns / insights that you may have gleaned from this report.

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## Appendix 1 – Graduate Student Survey Questions

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Years at UNLV
4. Degree Plan
5. School/College
6. Department (please specify)
7. Program (please specify)
8. Do you enjoy writing?
9. Do you think of yourself as a writer?
10. I understand my strengths and weaknesses as a writer
11. I would describe my confidence level in
  - my writing ability as an undergraduate as
  - my current overall writing ability as
  - my current ability to write well in my professional discipline as
  - my graduate program to prepare me to write well in my professional discipline as
12. My writing process has changed since I started graduate school
13. I read and respond to other graduate students' writing
14. I am part of a graduate student writing group that meets regularly (at least once per month)
15. Collaborative writing is a key to my professional development
16. What challenges do you face in your graduate writing processes? (select all that apply)
17. On average, the total amount of writing required in all of my graduate courses combined per semester is
18. I have been asked to produce the following kinds of writing in my graduate courses (please select all that apply)
19. Have you completed (submitted) writing for publication or professional conference presentations?
20. I receive clear instructions in how to complete writing assignments from faculty in my graduate courses
21. For my graduate writing assignments, I am regularly asked to write for different audiences
22. For my graduate writing assignments, I am asked to write collaboratively
23. For my graduate writing assignments, BEFORE drafting, I discuss my ideas with
  - my instructor
  - my peers
  - others outside UNLV
24. For my graduate writing assignments, I participate in informal peer review outside of class
25. For my graduate writing assignments, I share drafts with others outside UNLV
26. For my graduate writing assignments, instructors
  - provide discussion time in class to prepare students for completing the assignment
  - describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment
  - require the submission of multiple drafts before final evaluation
  - provide time in class for peer review

- encourage peer review outside of class
27. In my graduate courses, receiving instructor feedback on my writing assignments prior to final submission is generally
28. In my graduate courses, revision of my writing assignments in response to instructor feedback is generally
29. In my graduate courses, instructor feedback on my writing assignments is given (please select all that apply)
- After the Planning Stage
  - After a First Draft
  - After at Least One Revision
  - Only After the Assignment Has Been Submitted for Evaluation
30. In my graduate courses, instructor feedback on my writing assignments can be described as
- A Mix of In-Text Content Comments and Editing
  - Primarily In-Text Content Comments
  - Primarily Margin and/or End Comments
  - Primarily Editing
31. For graduate writing assignments, how many drafts do you complete before final submission?
32. For my graduate writing assignments, in early drafts, I can find on my own
- problems in my reasoning or logic
  - problems with organization or structure
  - most grammar and punctuation errors
33. For my graduate writing assignments, my revisions
- include major changes to content
  - include major changes to organization
  - focus primarily on surface-level errors, such as grammar and punctuation
34. For my graduate writing assignments, I am given a chance to reflect formally on my writing process
35. Do you use the campus library resources?
36. Do you use the Graduate College thesis/dissertation workshops?
37. Do you use the Writing Center resources?
38. What other resources do you use to help with your writing (select all that apply)?
39. Does your department/program currently offer support for graduate research and/or writing?
40. What does your department offer? To whom? (equal access to all students, or limited to dissertation writers, etc.?) (please describe)
41. Do you believe a campus-wide, graduate writing initiative could assist your graduate program and its students?
42. If yes, what should a campus-wide, graduate writing initiative focus on?
43. Do you believe graduate students would benefit from writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College?
44. If yes, what kinds of workshops would you like to see for graduate students (please select all that apply)?

45. If available, which of the following activities would you be most likely to participate in (please select all that apply)
46. List any/all software that you use to plan your writing (i.e., MindMap, Outline, etc.)
47. List any/all software that you use for drafting (i.e., Evernote, Word, etc.)
48. List any/all software that you use for revising and editing (i.e., Scrivener, GrammarCheck, etc.)
49. The expectations of graduate faculty for the quality of writing at UNLV are
50. I would like to have my email address entered for the \$500 scholarship drawing.
51. I would be interested in discussing my ideas on graduate student writing at UNLV in more detail
52. Please provide an email address. Your email will not be associated with your responses.

**Appendix 2 – Graduate Faculty Survey Questions**

1. Gender
2. Faculty Status
3. School/College
4. Department (please specify)
5. Program (please specify)
6. Do you enjoy writing?
7. Do you think of yourself as a writer?
8. I understand my strengths and weaknesses as a writer
9. Collaborative writing is a key to my professional development
10. My confidence in my writing ability as a graduate student was
11. I believe that my own graduate work prepared me to write well in my professional discipline
12. I learned the most how to write as a professional
13. My writing process has changed since I finished graduate school
14. Sharing Your Writing
  - I read and respond to other faculty writing informally
  - I share my writing with colleagues at UNLV
  - I share my writing with colleagues outside of UNLV
15. I am part of a faculty writing group that meets regularly
16. As a faculty member at UNLV, my confidence in my ability to write well in my professional discipline
17. List any/all software that you use to plan your writing (i.e., MindMap, Outline, etc.)
18. List any/all software that you use for drafting (i.e., Evernote, Word, etc.)
19. List any/all software that you use for revising and editing (i.e., Scrivener, GrammarCheck, etc.)
20. What challenges do you face in your writing processes? (please select all that apply)
21. On average, the amount of writing that I require each student to produce in a semester in each of my graduate courses is
22. I have asked graduate students to produce the following kinds of writing in my graduate courses (please select all that apply):
23. I expect that graduate students should, before graduation, complete (submit) writing for publication or professional conference presentations (please select all that apply):
24. I help graduate students analyze and understand the features of the genres that they will be expected to produce as professionals
25. For your graduate writing assignments, how many drafts do you expect students to complete before final submission?
26. For my graduate writing assignments,
  - I provide discussion time in class to help them plan their writing
  - I recommend that students discuss their ideas with me before drafting
  - I recommend that students discuss their ideas with their peers before drafting
  - I recommend that students discuss their ideas with others outside UNLV
27. For my graduate writing assignments,



- I believe my evaluation criteria is in line with professional standards in my discipline
  - I discuss evaluation criteria with the students prior to submission
  - I describe strategies for revising drafts prior to the final submission of the assignment
28. When do you offer feedback to graduate students on their writing assignments (please select all that apply)?
- After the Planning Stage
  - After a First Draft
  - After at Least One Revision
  - Only After the Assignment Has Been Submitted for Evaluation
29. When providing feedback to graduate students on their writing assignments, I offer criterion-based feedback, explaining how the draft matches up with professional expectations
30. In my graduate courses, revision of writing assignments in response to my feedback is generally
- Required
  - Encouraged
  - Optional
  - Discouraged
  - Not Allowed
31. In my graduate courses, my feedback on their writing assignments can be described as
- A Mix of In-Text Content Comments and Editing
  - Primarily In-Text Content Comments
  - Primarily Margin and/or End Comments
  - Primarily Editing
32. In my graduate courses, my feedback on their writing assignments prepares them to be a writer in my discipline
33. For my graduate writing assignments, I expect that graduate students can find problems in their reasoning or logic in early drafts on their own
34. For my graduate writing assignments, I expect that graduate students can find all grammar and punctuation errors in early drafts on their own
35. For my graduate writing assignments, I provide time in class for peer review
36. For my graduate writing assignments, I encourage peer review outside of class
37. For my graduate writing assignments, I ask students to write collaboratively
38. For my graduate writing assignments, I require students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing process
39. I provide an overview of campus library resources with my graduate writing assignments
40. In my graduate program, we expect students to use the Writing Center resources
41. What other resources do you recommend for graduate student writers (please select all that apply)
42. Do you recommend software to graduate students to help them to write more effectively?
43. Does your department/program currently offer support for graduate research and/or writing?
44. What does your department offer? To whom? (equal access to all students, or limited to dissertation writers, etc.?) (please describe)

45. Do you believe graduate students would benefit from writing workshops sponsored by the Graduate College?
46. If yes, what kinds of workshops would you like to see for graduate students (please select all that apply)?
47. Do you believe a campus-wide, graduate writing initiative could assist your graduate program and its students?
48. If yes, what should a campus-wide, graduate writing initiative focus on?
49. If available, which of the following activities would you encourage your graduate students to participate in (please select all that apply)
50. My graduate program offers faculty workshops for creating effective writing assignments at the graduate level
51. Would you be interested in workshops sponsored by the Graduate College on teaching writing at the graduate level?
52. If yes, what kinds of workshops would you like to see (please select all that apply)?
53. My confidence in my graduate program to develop the graduate student's ability to write well in my professional discipline is
54. Overall, across the university, the expectations of faculty for the quality of graduate student writing at UNLV are
55. I would be interested in discussing my ideas on graduate student writing at UNLV in more detail
56. Please provide an email, and you will be contacted. Thank You.

**Appendix 3 – Graduate Student Focus Group Questions**

1. Introduction to study; introduce ourselves; recording the session so please remind respondents to speak up
2. Introduce yourself by stating your education level and your discipline and specialty.
3. 66% of survey respondents said instructors rarely or never provide time in class for peer review and 51% said they are rarely or never encouraged to seek peer review outside of class. Would formal arenas for peer review make students feel more comfortable with asking/engaging in the peer review process?
4. 95% of survey respondents stated they were not a part of a graduate student writing group that meets regularly. Would you be interested in writing/thesis/dissertation groups (i.e. intra-department writing groups and/or college wide writing groups)?
5. What are the biggest obstacles in keeping you from your writing goals? How can the Graduate College help you overcome them?
6. How often do you meet with your instructor, typically, when you are writing a paper for a graduate course? What kinds of questions do you typically ask when you meet?
7. What can be changed about the Graduate College workshops that would lead to higher levels of participation? (For example, 73% of survey respondents indicated the need for workshops on T/D writing and formatting, but 83% of survey respondents said they do not attend Graduate College T/D workshops)
  - a. Better advertising?
  - b. Time of day?
  - c. Day of the week?
  - d. Online options?
8. 75% of respondents stated their biggest obstacle in the writing process is scheduling/time

#### **Appendix 4 – Graduate Faculty Focus Group Questions**

1. Introduction to study; introduce ourselves; recording the session so please remind respondents to speak up
2. Introduce yourself by stating your rank and your discipline and/or college.
3. Does the way you teach writing mirror the ways that you write?
4. How is it the same?
5. How is it different?
6. How can the graduate college support successful teaching of writing on the UNLV campus?
7. Would you be interested in a workshop sponsored by the graduate college that helps you create more effective graduate writing assignments?
8. Would you be interested in a workshop sponsored by the graduate college that helps you respond more effectively and more efficiently to graduate student writing? To help you reduce the paperload?
9. What kinds of information would you expect from workshops like these?
10. Do you typically assign the same kinds of papers that you anticipate graduate students publishing in your discipline?
11. How are they the same?
12. How are they different?
13. What are the common mistakes found among the writing of graduate students? What is the best way to alleviate these mistakes?
14. How might graduate student writing assignments be modified that would allow them to reflect the peer review/revision process?
15. How can the graduate college support successful writing on the UNLV campus?