13. Program as Product: UX and Writing Program Design in Technical and Professional Communication

Christine Masters-Wheeler
Francis Marion University

Gracemarie Mike Fillenwarth
Rowan University

Abstract: This chapter discusses the value that user experience (UX) can bring to programmatic assessment and design. After exploring previous work on assessment, we turn to UX as a methodology that can help expand the scope of assessment practices to cover not just learning outcomes and curricula, but the entire range of programmatic work. We next discuss the implications of this shift, particularly in viewing our programs as products and students as users. Through this discussion, we show the relevance of various UX methods for programmatic research, with a particular focus on Guo's breakdown of four UX fundamentals: value, usability, adoptability, and desirability. We conclude by describing interface mapping as a UX method applicable to programmatic research and discussing how further UX methods could be deployed.

Keywords: program assessment, UX and program design, interface mapping, UX and higher education

Key Takeaways:

- Faculty and administrators can use a UX lens for programmatic design, assessment, and redesign, framing the program as the product and the student as the user.
- To enact this lens, faculty and administrators can study a program's interfaces: the various ways that students interact with a program's representatives, spaces, activities, and artifacts.
- When assessing a program, we can ask questions about four aspects of UX: value, usability, adoptability, and desirability.
- Multiple UX approaches can be combined depending on program needs—surveys, focus groups, journey maps, and participatory design—but initial approaches, such as student and alumni surveys, can provide simple but effective feedback on a program's value, usability, adoptability, and desirability.

As undergraduate technical and professional communication (TPC) programs have continued to proliferate (Melonçon & Henschel, 2013), discussions of ap-

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/TPC-B.2022.1367.2.13

proaches to program design, redesign, and assessment have also continued. As TPC administrators consider the range of available approaches to building and improving programs, we argue that user experience (UX) methods can provide an innovative approach to program redevelopment. In this chapter, we explore how UX approaches to program redesign differ from existing approaches, and we forward the idea of program as "product" and students as "users" to theoretically ground this shift to UX-based research methods. Next, we offer a preliminary study that explores student interaction with program "interfaces" at two universities: a public liberal arts university in the southeast United States with an established TPC program and a public research university in the northeast United States with a young TPC program. Through this research, we demonstrate the value that UX-grounded research brings to program redesign, and we offer suggestions for initial and extended programmatic research based on the idea of students as users of programs.

Approaches to Program Redesign

Numerous scholars have addressed assessment both as a required element of university-level programs and as an opportunity to redesign TPC programs. Tammy Rice-Bailey (2016) points out that, at its core, assessment at the programmatic level is concerned with "assessing student learning outcomes against program learning objectives" (p.1), and much of the literature on assessment in TPC programs demonstrates this focus. Researchers have taken a theoretical approach to this task (Gulbrandsen, 2012), used evidence-based approaches (Allen, 2010; Hundleby & Allen, 2010; Thomas & McShane, 2007), and emphasized the value of portfolio assessment (Cargile Cook & Zachry, 2010; Rice-Bailey 2016). While much research on assessment has focused on learning outcomes and objectives and corresponding curricular elements, some scholars have branched out to consider additional program elements and approaches to assessment (Coppola et al., 2016; Lam et al., 2016). Yet traditional learning outcome-centered program assessment models remain typical. As Joanna Schreiber and Lisa Melonçon (2019) acknowledge, however, traditional assessment methods typically do not address larger programmatic issues. Focusing on whether or not learning outcomes have been met does not allow opportunities to reflect on the complexities of writing programs, for example, those related to staffing, faculty development, marketing, and internship programs. Schreiber and Melonçon (2019) as well as Meredith Johnson et al. (2017) propose integrating continuous improvement (CI) practices into program administration.

While applying continuous improvement paradigms to program design can be beneficial and productive, we argue that program design could be enhanced further through the application of UX models. (See Kelli Cargile Cook's chapter in this collection for more on CI.) CI models resemble UX models in that they work towards the systemic improvement of processes and designs. As Sch-

reiber and Melonçon (2019) note, "Continuous improvement, because it treats the workplace like a system of relations, can help uncover, credit, and situate a range of work processes that are often invisible and overlooked" (p. 8). Similarly, UX has the potential to illuminate the invisible or overlooked experiences of the users of an organization's product or service. Many programs include alumni when gathering feedback on program design processes, yet only including alumni in these processes may cause programs to miss out on gathering current or future students' perspectives. Feedback from alumni, who may have forgotten what it was like to be a student or may only recall program elements relevant to their current work, does not necessarily illuminate the full range of student experience as a continuous journey through an educational program from beginning to end. (Indeed, such surveys are susceptible to recall bias—a well-documented phenomenon especially in retrospective medical studies.) Michael Salvo and Jingfang Ren's (2007) positioning of students as valued stakeholders in a continuous improvement process and Jeffrey Jablonski and Ed Nagelhout's (2010) stakeholder focus that relies on the "complex use of assessment strategies" (p. 173) stand as strong examples of our larger vision for incorporating UX into programmatic assessment and revision.

UX methods can be applied to systems as well as to specific products, not only in profit-driven businesses, but also in non-profit organizations and governmental agencies. Nonprofits, hospitals, municipal offices, and other public entities have implemented UX methods to improve the experiences of the people they serve. Emma Rose et al. (2017) use UX strategies in working with a nonprofit organization, improving immigrant populations' access to health insurance. Lacey Kruger (2014) specifically argues that nonprofits should borrow UX strategies from for-profits by tailoring messages to donors as website users with the goal of convincing them to make online donations. In such a scenario, the website content on nonprofits' websites may be geared primarily toward donors, but the main "products" are the services that the organizations provide. In another hypothetical example, a soup kitchen's products would be the free meals that they serve to the public. Improving the user experience of people who receive the free meals would involve making sure that clients' needs are valued and met. UX researchers could gather information on areas such as how clients perceive the quality of food to how they are treated by staff and volunteers. The organization's primary mission may be to offer free meals, but how those meals are delivered and experienced by clients impacts how clients as well as donors perceive value in the organization. From these examples, we can see how nonprofit organizations of all kinds can use UX to improve stakeholder experiences of their products, whether those products are informational materials, goods, or services.

In higher education, our *products* are the programs that we offer to students. In this setting, an approach towards students as customers often carries through to student services personnel who arrange housing; offer tutoring, advising, and counseling; organize first-year-experience programs; and provide a range of other

programs that are designed to guarantee student satisfaction and success. These student services programs help to keep retention rates high. However, the emphasis on improving "student experience" per se usually stops before it gets to the level of academic programs. Here, and rightly so, faculty members as well as program administrators relate to students primarily as learners, not consumers. At the classroom level, the idea of regarding students as consumers seems ridiculous and out of place; the two identities of learner and consumer seem to inherently conflict. We argue, however, that applying UX to academic program design can respect students' roles as learners while also acknowledging their roles as "users" of educational products. The programs we shape and develop as educational experiences are products with perceived value from a student's perspective.

Why "Product"?

Should educational programs really be framed as products? Understandably, faculty members may feel strongly that consumerist attitudes do not belong in higher education. We are committed to providing students with rich learning environments. We expect that programs of study will challenge students to grow as human beings, to develop their capacities for critical thought, and to experience broad cultural ideas in addition to subject-area knowledge. A high-quality educational experience cannot be neatly packaged because it consists of many variables, including the variety of electives offered and the unique perspectives that individual faculty members share with students. A degree program is not a product in the sense that it can or should be manufactured or standardized. However, looking at a specific program as a product can help to identify what it offers students apart from other academic programs and from the larger university. While a program exists within a larger university system, it is a distinct entity with its own appeal and has its own specific kinds of students. Focusing on programs as products could help us to identify areas of student-user experience that we are able to influence and change as program administrators. For our purposes, a program-product could be viewed as a type of designed experience that has a structure, a brand identity, and a number of associated artifacts. Students encounter the idea of the TPC program-product and perceive it as having a certain worth or value.

Programs are products associated with university brands, and they are marketed to prospective students who have many choices about where to enroll. It may be a question of semantics, as Eric Stoller (2014) argues, yet "calling ourselves anything but a business seems unfair and untrue. Students pay a great deal for the product that is higher education" (n.p.). Almost all students and/or their families contribute at least some of their own funds towards their higher education. Students pay for opportunities to take classes and earn degrees, and they *should* understand that there is no guarantee as to whether they will pass, fail, or get a job just because they paid for an educational experience. However, because

they invest financially in these educational experiences, students are more than clients or the recipients of services; they assume roles as consumers, to a certain extent, in addition to their roles as learners. As program administrators, if we focus exclusively on students in their roles as learners, we may miss opportunities to enhance our programs in ways that could improve students' user experience of our products.

Emphasizing students' roles as consumers, university administrations often employ many of the same strategies used in businesses. Kevin Elliot and Margaret Healy (2001) found "student-centeredness" or "the extent to which students feel welcome and valued" as the most important factor in student satisfaction (p. 7). Studies like this one, while not explicitly framed as part of a user experience initiative, could represent a type of UX methods application in higher ed. Similarly, Bridget Burns (2016) has called for more institutions to adopt the practice of "process mapping" to improve student experiences. She makes the point that "[a]s consumers, we expect that retailers or service providers have designed the experience around the customer. We become frustrated when things are counterintuitive, bureaucratic, slow, difficult or painful. So why should we tolerate flawed processes that frustrate our students?" (n.p.). She gives examples of process mapping initiatives conducted by Georgia State University and Michigan State University that assisted students, especially first-generation students who lacked external support, with navigating university processes such as those surrounding admissions and financial aid.

Despite the apparent realities of higher education as a type of business, framing students as users for program development purposes does not mean that we should encourage students to identify primarily as consumers. Louise Bunce et al. (2017) found that students who identify as consumers tend to have "passive, instrumental attitudes to learning," "may have little interest in what is actually being taught," and "show reduced responsibility for producing their own knowledge" (p. 1959). However, the researchers also speculate that "students with a lower learner identity may develop a consumer orientation because they do not identify strongly as learners, and not because they necessarily come to university with a pre-existing higher consumer orientation" (p. 1970). Also, the researchers determined that more mature students and those who were involved in extracurricular or volunteer activities identify less strongly as consumers. As experienced teachers recognize, students' willingness to engage in active learning or see themselves as learners greatly depends on their own orientations, abilities, and access to the resources that they need. Improving student experiences could help them to identify as learners instead of as consumers and thereby improve learning outcomes.

Student experiences with an academic program may be influenced by a range of issues that are not apparently related to learning outcomes but that nonetheless may impact them indirectly. For example, the way we deliver specific program information in the course catalog, in the student portal, and in various materials

circulated by departments can impact how students understand program requirements and electives, how they understand what will be covered in individual classes, and whether they will enroll in our courses. Students may be affected by other concerns; for example, when joining a program or declaring a major or minor, they may not know where to go for advising. Student satisfaction also can be greatly impacted by access to extracurricular offerings within the major, such as workshops and clubs. Yet, while program administrators may be able to influence some of these concerns, larger institutional systems and processes are also in play.

Viewing student experience as user experience forces us to view programs from a new angle. Adding UX to our continuous improvement practices can challenge underlying assumptions about what education means—in a beneficial way. Framing students as users can be a disruptive and innovative program design practice (Johnson et al., 2017). UX in program design positions students as active learners who already possess valuable knowledge sets, even as they seek more skills and knowledge from an educational program.

Users and Interfaces

Students are the users of our *products*—the educational experiences facilitated by our programs. Yet, our unspoken assumptions may resemble the reverse scenario—we may tend to regard students as the products of our programs. However, programs cannot take all of the credit for creating professionals; rather, students take what they learn in courses, internships, and other related experiences and then determine their own career paths. By framing the program as the product and the student as the user, we are highlighting students' roles and responsibilities in their own learning. Program mission statements define our products, which are specific educational experiences designed for specific users. The continuous improvement and UX processes that we apply in program design can increase the quality of these educational experiences, but students ultimately determine how they interact with the product and how they use it in their lives and careers. Because students obviously enroll in academic programs to learn what they do not already know, it is easy to overlook areas where they do have expertise. Traditional assessment strategies that measure learning outcomes do not necessarily acknowledge what students already know outside of the program's content. UX research can reveal valuable insights that students have on topics such as how courses are being taught (not just what is being taught), whether accommodations for student needs are being addressed and met, whether advising practices are effective, how the program approaches the practicum or internship process, and how the program is marketed. Program design, ideally, would include researching how current and even future students view a wide range of issues related to their educational experiences at the program level.

Many students are already expert users of educational systems, and their orientations toward any aspect of a learning environment are based on what they

already know from their extensive careers as learners—from pre-K through their initial years of college. In this vein of valuing what students already know, Natasha Jones (2018) acknowledges that students are, in fact, "expert end-users" of course syllabi, and she discusses ways that syllabus design can impact student success in a composition program. Jones underscores how a human-centered approach could possibly reveal "concerns about accessibility, cultural and linguistic diversity, and varied learning styles," and she also emphasizes that human-centered design (HCD) is not necessarily a "magic bullet to be instituted without critical reflection, genuine collaboration, and careful implementation in an iterative and ongoing manner" (p. 34). A human-centered methodological approach is especially suited to doing UX design in professional and technical communication programs because it allows us to practice what we preach and apply the UX, HCD, and usability concepts that we teach in our courses.

As a first step in applying UX principles to program redesign, we now turn to our study of the various ways that students interact with a program's representatives, spaces, activities, and artifacts. These sites of interaction may be viewed as *interfaces*. Identifying these allows us to create a map of all the sites where students encounter the *idea* of an individual TPC program. These interfaces may fall into some of the "programmatic landscapes" as defined by Schreiber and Melonçon (2019); however, the focus for a UX methodology will be on how students experience these areas, which will be completely different from how a program administrator experiences them. Because we are, in fact, program administrators, we expect that this preliminary map of interfaces will be iterative; it may continue to change as we gather information from students about their actual experiences through methods such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Mapping out interfaces is important because the process identifies potential sites where students encounter *anything* program related. For example, students may encounter the idea of our programs through *artifacts* (such as promotional materials, web portals, or course catalogs), through talking with *programmatic administrators* (advisors and faculty), and through *experiences* (such as award ceremonies or student club events). With this understanding, we can then look more deeply at how individual students interact with and perceive various aspects of a program.

Employing UX Research Methods: A Preliminary Study

As explored in earlier chapters, professionals and academics have many models and frameworks available for thinking through user experience. In our preliminary study, we focus on an extremely simple and practical UX framework that can be applied to program development. This simple framework was created by industry expert Frank Guo (2012), who conceptualizes the four fundamental elements of UX as "value, usability, adoptability, and desirability." While Guo's approach is geared towards business products, these four elements of UX may also

be applied to the design of any system. Guo simplifies the purpose behind each element with a question:

- **Value** - Is it useful?
- **Usability** - Is it easy to use?
- **Adoptability** - Is it easy to start using?
- **Desirability** - Is it fun and engaging?

While Guo's examples usually involve actual consumer products like iPhones, his elements and their associated question can help us think about improving program design from a UX perspective. Our preliminary study, therefore, examines user (student) experience with our programs by asking the following questions:

- Through which interfaces do students encounter our programs?
- What are students' experiences with our programs and program interfaces like in terms of value, usability, adoptability, and desirability?
- To answer these questions, we employed surveys of current students and alumni; this data will assist in identifying what specific interfaces need to be redesigned and in what way. In this section, we explain our methodology for creating the survey questions, and we report our results in the next section. Our research protocol was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Francis Marion University and declared as exempt under the federal human subjects protection regulations (reference number Masters-08-12-2019-001). These initial survey findings will direct us to refine more detailed questions for future focus groups and interviews.

To explore Guo's four UX elements in our programs' interfaces, we have developed and administered a survey to current students and alumni at our respective programs that have some similarities and many differences. Gracemarie's program at an R2 university (formerly a regional comprehensive university only three years prior) has recently developed a minor, certificate (for non-writing arts majors), and concentration (for writing arts majors) in technical and professional writing. These programs came in response to calls for increased marketability and improved writing skills in students as well as new faculty expertise. Despite this growth in the program and the addition of new courses such as Scientific Writing and Rhetoric, Medical Writing and Rhetoric, and Writing for Nonprofits, it remains largely under enrolled, especially when compared to creative writing courses in the writing arts department, which are nearly always at capacity. Increasing student awareness of these programs is a major concern of faculty, so we focused the survey to collect data about students' interactions with artifacts, people, and experiences that helped them learn about the program and choose to enroll. Surveys targeted writing arts majors, non-writing arts majors who enroll in technical and professional writing courses, and program alumni.

Christine's program, in contrast, is situated at a regional comprehensive university and has a well-established major and minor in professional writing. En-

rollments have remained fairly constant over the last 15 to 20 years. Currently, the program advisory committee is in the process of evaluating course offerings, deciding whether adding more electives would be welcomed by students, and considering whether these course additions would be feasible and sustainable. The program would like to investigate how current students experience the program as well as gather alumni opinions about the program.

Absent a baseline model for this type of survey, we combined elements of other types of surveys used in our programs and in academia more broadly. Our survey is different from the type of "alumni relations" surveys that Schreiber and Melonçon (2019) describe, not only because its target audience is both alumni and current students, but because the questions center on perceptions of the program on a broad level rather than seeking specifically to gather opinions about course content or about the workplace importance of specific skills and knowledge that are taught in the program.

Similar to the work of Salvo and Ren (2007), our survey elicits student feedback as a valuable source of information about the program, rather than relying only on "expert" feedback common in more traditional approaches to programmatic assessment. Like Salvo and Ren's survey, our survey questions determine basic information about participants' progress through programs. Our survey diverges from this model, however, in the focus and scope of our questions. While Salvo and Ren focus on students' individual experiences with technologies, genres, and skills developed in specific classes and student approaches to learning, our survey takes a more open-ended approach that invites participants to share the program experiences that they found to be most and least valuable, practical, and useful. As a result, our survey focuses far less on curriculum and more on the overall interaction a student has with a program.

Through this survey, we seek to identify the multimodality of student interactions. Some interfaces are concrete artifacts, while some interfaces are immaterial—they involve exchanging ideas about the program by talking to people and participating (voluntarily or involuntarily) in experiences. We must also keep in mind that the interfaces through which students encounter our programs actually involve varying degrees of programmatic involvement (and therefore control). For example, some interfaces may be experienced in a non-university environment (such as a brochure distributed at a college fair) or a non-program sanctioned encounter (such as students talking in a lounge about the easiest courses to take in a program). While we may not have the ability (or desire) to control each of these interfaces, the experience of mapping an individual program's interfaces is an essential step in moving toward a robust analysis of user experience.

Questions About Participant Identity

The first set of survey questions asks students four questions about their institution, major or minor area of study, and how far they have progressed in their

program. In our analysis of survey results, we evaluate significant differences in the answers of current students versus alumni across both institutions. Responses from current students and alumni of each institution's technical / professional writing program are considered valid. A complete list of questions for each section may be found in Appendix A.

Questions About Value

Of course, we want our students to perceive value in our programs as well as in our institutions. High school graduates interested in going to college have many choices for where they will enroll and what they will study. Therefore, the perceived value of a program is important to prospective students as well as current students and alumni. Keshab Acharya (2016) argues that users should define a product's *value* by participating in the design process. As current users of a program, current students can become co-creators of value in an educational setting when they give feedback. This section of the survey includes five questions that center on value in terms of how useful students perceive the program to be. It is similar to marketing surveys that assess brand loyalty and perception of value by asking whether or not customers would recommend the product to others. Here, we purposely stay away from leading questions about course content, the evaluation of specific courses, or the assessment of specific learning outcomes. However, there's nothing preventing our respondents from mentioning those topics in their open-ended answers. This UX survey focuses on general attitudes about the program's worth or usefulness, but the primary focus is not on evaluation of program content. Survey questions about perceived value from students' perspectives should complement, not replace, alumni and employer surveys that help determine which TPC curriculum areas are valuable in professional settings.

Questions About Usability or Use

The term *usability* can refer to a product's usefulness as well as to the research methods that measure user experience at specific points in time. Guo chooses the term usability to refer to the stage of user experience after the adoption of a product when users become engaged in active, regular use of the product. In other words, this category refers to experiences that users have while they are interacting with the product. We adopt Guo's "usability" category because we want to measure how easy it is for students to "use" our programs without encountering practical or logistical problems. This category is separated from user perceptions of value and desirability, although somewhat arbitrarily—user perceptions about value and desirability cannot be completely divided from the more practical aspects of use. With a physical product such as an iPhone interface, users could have difficulties if they did not recognize an icon or know where to press on the screen. However, their inability to navigate an interface will also affect their

perceptions of the product's value and desirability. With our programs, students could have difficulties, for example, if they could not find and understand the program requirements. UX methods that focus on "usability," understood as students' "use" of a program, can help us to identify and remove any barriers that may hinder students' progress through these requirements. Our survey asks five questions concerning usability that focus on how easily students progress through the program. In contrast to the adoptability section, which deals with how easy it is for students to learn about and enter the program, this section focuses on students' progression as program users. In order for the program to be "usable," students should easily be able to find information about how to complete the program and then make effective progress toward completing the program.

Questions About Adoptability

Questions around the idea of *adoptability* center on whether students have access to information that allows them to know that the program exists and then to easily understand what they can expect to learn in it. This section asks five questions that help to establish how students perceive what we have called the program interfaces—the sites where the *idea* of the program surfaces for students. Becoming aware of the program and what it entails allows student to evaluate whether it suits their needs. This section of the survey also measures how easy students thought it was for them to join the program by declaring it as their major/minor (or certificate, if applicable). The first question in this section helps us to identify where students interface with the idea of the program. Respondents are given a list of sites that they can check off to indicate where they have heard about the program. In the survey, this list appears as continuous, but we have identified the answers as possibly belonging to three distinct groupings: artifacts, people, and events or activities (see Appendix A for a complete list of options). Respondents also may write in their own answers in the "other" response.

Questions About Desirability

The element of *desirability* involves students' satisfaction with the program. Education is not entertainment—it is not supposed to be "fun." Nonetheless, as we address in our discussion of UX methods, there may be ways to evaluate whether students are engaged and satisfied that go beyond data usually gathered through traditional course evaluations, which come with their own controversies about gender bias, racial bias, and general ineffectiveness in evaluating personnel. The four questions in this section assess student attitudes about general program characteristics, including program names, course titles, related activities, and logistical or other aspects of the program. Desirability questions specifically allow us to gather data on student attitudes towards potential program changes that may be in the very early brainstorming stages. As with the other survey sections,

the data gathered from these questions should be used in combination with other expert and professional sources when considering program improvements. The survey concludes with an open-ended question asking for additional comments or ideas regarding program improvement. Although the responses may touch on any of the areas discussed previously, we include this question in the desirability section.

Survey Results

After receiving IRB approval, we distributed our survey link via email to student and alumni lists, department Facebook groups, and LinkedIn messages in late August and early September of 2019. Based on student and alumni lists that we compiled as program administrators, we attempted to directly email or message 40 of the approximately 140 current and former professional writing students from Francis Marion University. However, others may have found the survey link on social media, even though we did not message them directly because we had no current contact information. At Rowan University, we directly contacted 22 students and alumni of the estimated 27 individuals who are either program alumni or current students. After keeping the survey open for approximately three weeks, we received a total of 39 responses. Of these 39, we discarded three; one was a duplicate made by a software error, and two were from students not in the program who answered only questions about their major and minor before abandoning the survey. The total 36 valid responses gave us a response rate of 58 percent across both programs from the 62 individuals to whom we directly reached out and a response rate of 22 percent out of the estimated total current students and alumni across both programs. In the next sections, we report the survey results following the participant identity, value, adoptability, use, and desirability groupings.

Participant Identity

Francis Marion University students and alumni comprised 58 percent (21) of the total responses, and 42 percent (15) of the total responses were from Rowan University. Of the 36 responses, 44 percent (16) reported that they graduated prior to Fall 2019. The earliest graduation year reported was 2003, and the most recent graduate earned a degree in August of 2019. Fifty-six percent (20) of the participants reported that they are current students, and of these, three expect to graduate in the current semester (Fall 2019), 12 expect to graduate in 2020, and four expect to graduate between 2021 and 2023. Of the current students, five indicated that they needed one to two more classes to graduate, three needed three to five more classes, five needed six to nine more classes, and one needed ten or more classes. Two responded that they have finished all of their classes, 12 responded that they are not current students, and eight (all Rowan students) indicated that

they were not sure how many classes they needed to graduate. Of the program graduates, five were from Rowan and 11 were from Francis Marion. Of the current students, ten attend Francis Marion and ten attend Rowan.

Survey participants represent a range of writing majors and minors. Francis Marion professional writing majors numbered 17 and were the largest group of respondents; Rowan writing arts majors submitted eight responses. Eleven "other" majors participated in the survey (four from Francis Marion and seven from Rowan). A total of eight writing minors, collaterals, concentrations, or undergraduate certificate students participated—four from Francis Marion and four from Rowan. Four students reported that they currently were not pursuing a declared major, minor, or certificate in writing (all from Rowan). We considered these responses as valid because the students had attended classes in the program, had knowledge of the program, and potentially could still declare the program in their plan of study.

Value

Feedback on the value of both programs was positive. Sixty-nine percent (25) of participants said that they would recommend "Technical / Professional Writing as an area of study," and 28 percent (10) said "maybe-it depends." One respondent (3%) left the question blank. None of the participants indicated that they would *not* recommend Technical / Professional Writing as an area of study. When asked to explain the reasons for their answers, 11 respondents (31%) explicitly commented on the value of the program in preparing them for future careers; a number of others talked more vaguely about "skills" that their programs provide.

When asked "What could be changed to make the Technical / Professional Writing program more practical, useful, or valuable to students?" responses were largely class-centered, with multiple students suggesting the following:

- adding more classes that speak to specific skills needed for technical and professional communication, such as graphic design, typography, Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA), resume writing, and grammar
- providing more experiential learning opportunities, including service learning or client projects
- providing more opportunities for cross-disciplinary study
- removing required courses, such as creative writing and literature, that felt irrelevant to technical and professional writers
- allowing more flexibility in classes for students to apply their own interests

Beyond courses, respondents offered four additional suggestions. One participant requested help with internship placement, one requested help with job placement, and one sought help with developing a broader understanding of what the field of technical and professional writing encompasses. A final comment suggested running more classes in the summer.

The most valuable qualities of the programs reported by multiple respondents included both course-related and broader aspects of the program. In terms of course-related feedback, respondents appreciated client projects that gave the opportunity for real-world writing experiences and the variety of classes available (one respondent in particular noted the value of literature and creative writing classes for their current jobs). More generally, students noted the value of having "good" professors; the benefits of developing real-world skills, such as document design, workplace communication, HTML, professionalism, and grammar/punctuation; the breadth and applicability of these skills; and the family-like feeling the program had.

In regard to our question about least valuable qualities of the programs, we received far less data, with 67 percent (24) of respondents either not responding or stating that everything they learned was valuable. The only common response among respondents who provided commentary on the least valuable aspects was required coursework in creative writing and literature.

Use

One of the primary ways students "use" our programs is through classes, so it is critical to understand how students learn about what courses are available during a given semester. A healthy majority of 43 percent (15) of the 35 respondents who answered the question indicated that they consulted their advisors first when figuring out which classes to take. The remaining respondents consulted course catalogs (31%, 11), an online student portal (11%, 4), the semester schedule (9%, 3), and a department website or advising sheet (6%, 2).

Most students reported that it was easy to progress through their courses and understand course requirements. Of the 35 responses to the question "How easy or difficult was it to progress through your Technical/Professional Writing courses?" 40 percent (14) responded "5" on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating highest level of ease), 26 percent of participants (9) answered "4," 29 percent (10) answered "3," and 6 percent (2) answered "2." When asked how understandable they found the program's course requirements, 43 percent (15) of students answered "5" on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating the highest level of ease), 34 percent (12) answered "4," 20 percent (7) answered "3," and 3 percent (1) answered "1." Notable obstacles to progressing through the program or understanding course requirements included the limited availability of course offerings and course times, particularly for respondents who noted they were working in addition to attending school full time.

In response to the question "How could we make the Technical/Professional Writing program requirements clearer?" there were ten meaningful responses (i.e., responses other than "everything is clear" or "N/A"). Out of these, eight requested that clearer documentation about plans of study be provided, particularly by advisors or online. Several students noted that they found the course catalog complicated, and they requested simplified documents with more clearly stated requirements.

Adoptability

For a program to be adoptable, students must first hear about it, become interested, and decide to declare its offered credential within their plan of study. Our survey found that students heard about the program from a range of sources, and we consider these sources as interfaces for the *idea* of the program—the sites where students see or hear the program mentioned by people, through artifacts, or at events. When asked the question "At any time in the past or present, where do you remember hearing about the Technical/Professional Writing program?" students most often mentioned "professors" (17). The second most common way students heard about the program was through sources that list courses offered, including catalogs, schedules, and student portal sites (16; see Table 13.1). None of the participants indicated that they had heard about the program from student showcases, high school counselors, or high school teachers. Overall, when grouped into the categories of artifacts, people, and events, students most commonly heard about the program through artifacts (55), followed by people (41) and events (7).

Table 13.1. Number of Times Students Heard about Programs from Artifacts, People, and Events

Interface	Artifacts	People	Events	Grand Total
Professors		17		17
Catalog, schedules, or student portal	16			16
Department or program website	14			14
University website list of degrees and programs	13			13
University staff		8		8
Advisors		8		8
Brochures, flyers, or marketing handouts	7			7
Current students		5		5
Department or program social media pages	4			4
Alumni		3		3
Student clubs and activities			2	2
Open houses or orientations			2	2
Department workshops or events			2	2
Major requirements sheet	1			1
College fairs			1	1
Grand Total	**55**	**41**	**7**	**103**

Sixteen out of the 36 participants indicated that they *first* heard about the program from a faculty or staff member (15) or another student (1). Twelve respondents reported that they first heard about the program from an artifact such as a catalog (5), website (5), email (1), or flyer (1). The other eight respondents gave vague or non-applicable answers, or they left the question blank. When asked who or what was the biggest influence on their decision to study technical/professional writing, survey respondents reported advisors as having the biggest influence (33%, 12). The second biggest factor was a desire for skills or opportunities (22%, 8), followed by a passion for writing (11%, 4) and practicality of the program and its requirements (8%, 3). Just one respondent named "interesting classes" as a top factor, and another student named "other students." The remaining respondents left the question blank.

In terms of ease of declaring technical/professional writing, students rated their experience on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "Difficult" and 5 being "Easy." An overwhelming majority of participants, or 24 out of 36 (67%), rated their experience as a 5. Another 22 percent (8) were split evenly between a 4 and a 3. Only two respondents (6%) selected 1, believing the process to be difficult. Interestingly, most students responded to the question "What made declaring Technical / Professional Writing as an area of study easy or difficult?" by describing their personal reasons for choosing technical and professional writing as an area of study, rather than describing the physical process of formally declaring the program through the university.

Desirability

Gauging desirability is important for helping program administrators build programs that appeal to students. In responding to the question "Do you prefer an open plan of study (with many course options) or a well-defined plan of study (with fewer course options)?" of the 32 respondents who did not leave the question blank, most prefer a balance between an open plan of study and a well-defined plan of study (61%, 20). Approximately 15 percent (5) favored an open course plan, and 12 percent (4) favored a more rigid plan of study. One respondent, an alum, noted their opinion that the course plan itself ultimately wasn't that important: "What's most important, I think, is that students are able to connect the dots between course trajectory and future job prospects."

The courses that sounded the most interesting or engaging to survey participants were Editing, Writing for Nonprofits, and Writing for the Workplace, with 67 percent of respondents (24) rating themselves as being "very interested" in these courses. Twelve of the remaining courses listed received "very interested" ratings from 50 to 59 percent of respondents, and nine additional courses received "very interested" ratings from 33-47 percent of respondents. Three remaining classes—Video Production for Tech Comm, Writing for Engineering, and DITA/Structured Content Authoring—received "very interested" ratings from just 25 to 28 percent of students. (See Appendix B for more detailed information

on rankings.) Ratings for most classes were approximately proportional to the number of respondents from both programs, with a few notable exceptions. The Rhetoric of New Media "very interested" ratings were broken down into 21 percent from Rowan and 79 percent from Francis Marion. User Experience Design had a similar distribution, with 25 percent of "very interested" ratings coming from Rowan and 75 percent from Francis Marion. The most striking difference in ratings, however, was for Advanced Business Communication, which received "very interested" ratings from seven percent of students from Rowan and 93 percent of students from Francis Marion.

Turning to major names that piqued student interest, the major that participants perceived as most interesting was Professional and Technical Writing, which earned "very interesting" ratings from 75 percent (27) of participants. Technical and Professional Writing received the next highest rating of 61 percent (22). The remaining categories received "very interesting" ratings from approximately 50 to 58 percent of students, with the exception of the three lowest-rated major names: Creative Writing (47%, 17), Rhetoric and Writing Studies (42%, 15), and Digital Writing and Rhetoric (39%, 14). (See Appendix C for additional information on these ratings.)

In addition to opinions on naming, participants gave feedback on changes that would make a technical/professional writing program more interesting and engaging to students. Out of the choices we provided, participants most often answered that adding more career preparation workshops would make the program more interesting and engaging to students (72%, 26). The next highest-rated options, both at 47 percent (17), were "Offer a greater variety of electives" and "Offer a wider variety of class times" (which could also fall into the Use category). Garnering fewer, but still substantial responses were "Teach a wider range of software and technology" and "Allow students more choices for projects" (both at 44%, 16). Thirty-one percent of respondents (11) thought that existing course content should be updated, and the same percentage thought that more social activities should be provided for students. Only eight percent of participants (3) responded "Nothing—keep everything the same."

At the end of the survey, we provided a space for respondents to comment regarding ideas for program improvements. The 15 non-blank responses were widely varied. In terms of overlapping responses, two respondents requested that the program name be changed from "Professional Writing" or "Professional Communication" to "Technical Communication" to clarify to employers the type of writing students were learning. Three respondents also expressed interest in taking a medical writing course.

Discussion

In reflecting upon this data, we can garner a number of insights from each of the four fundamentals of UX that can be used as a starting point for additional re-

search. In this section, we discuss the most significant of these for our programs, modeling how a UX-based survey can provide helpful input for technical and professional writing program administrators. Though this analysis is particular to our own programs, we hope that our discussion of our findings will help faculty and administrators gain insight into the iterative process of UX methodologies (Nielsen, 1993), with each iteration helping to enhance the user experience. Understanding this approach is helpful as administrators map out their own plans for engaging in program (re)design.

One of the consistent findings of our survey was the importance of people—particularly professors and advisors—and artifacts as program interfaces. Professors were mentioned, often by name, in questions surrounding program value, and advisors were cited as an essential component of ease of use. Professors also played a large role in adoptability by introducing students to available programs, and advisors contributed through their assistance in helping students go through the steps of formally adopting their program. At Francis Marion, where faculty members function as student advisors, a professor and advisor may be the same person. At Rowan, however, faculty advisors have been recently replaced by professional advisors. The significant role played by both groups highlights the importance of understanding when and how students interact with professors and advisors through their journeys in our programs, and it speaks to the critical need for both groups to be well informed about their programs. To further study the role that non-technical and professional writing faculty and advisors can play in helping students shape their programs of study, we envision also interviewing a few students individually. These interviews could build on survey questions and result in *journey mapping* (a tool to visualize a user's process accomplishing a goal) that could pinpoint key opportunities where we could introduce more students to our programs.

Artifacts also played a large role in respondents' experiences in their programs, particularly in the areas of adoptability and ease of use. Though students' first exposure to the program was typically through a person, artifacts more commonly provided information throughout students' experience in a program. As artifacts also came up as a highly requested way to clarify program requirements for questions regarding ease of use, we need to seriously consider the role of documents in helping students understand and navigate our programs. Learning what specific artifacts were most impactful would be an aim of additional research; follow-up interviews and focus groups should certainly focus on students' experiences with encountering and using various program documents to determine how specifically artifacts impact students. Questions regarding content, design, and access to these artifacts would all be relevant. Participatory design projects, as described by Salvo and Ren (2007), could follow, perhaps assigned as course projects where students would develop engaging and useful program artifacts. Depending on administrators' expertise and available resources (including time), methods such as eye-tracking of web-based artifacts, participatory design (in which participants actually help create their ideal experience), card sorting (in which partici-

pants organize topics according to categories), or tree tests (in which participants demonstrate how they would work through a site map) could also be implemented. Whichever methods are chosen, the priority should remain on understanding users' experiences and taking their feedback to heart during the redesign process.

In sum, artifacts play an important role in advertising and helping students move through programs; however, our survey results underscore that people are often the first site of encounter, or interface, for potential enrollees in our programs. Our field acknowledges and discusses methods to improve the user experience of artifacts such as websites and documents; however, we think it is important to also acknowledge how people serve as sites of encounter with our programs. As program administrators, we would like to strategize how to better equip professors inside and outside of our departments, as well as university staff and advisors, with more knowledge about and familiarity with what we have to offer students. Implementing UX tools such as interviews, focus groups, or observations would be a starting point for additional research to help us learn more about student-faculty/advisor interactions. Methods such as think-aloud testing could also be implemented with faculty and advisors to help improve the usability of the documents from which they draw their knowledge.

In considering the value of our programs, respondents often mentioned career readiness and specific skills for use on the job, indicating, perhaps unsurprisingly, the connection most participants felt regarding the value of studying technical and professional writing. Along these lines, it is also unsurprising that participants would express negative views toward literature and creative writing, which have less explicit applicability to most workplaces. This emphasis on jobs is also useful in thinking about how Rowan, with its goal of expanding student enrollment, might better convey the value of its program. In the next stage of research, we can use this data to develop journey maps of program users and their experiences, delving into exactly when in their experience as students job preparation becomes a priority.

In reflecting on the ease of use of our programs, the results of our survey indicate a conflict between respondents' reports. On one hand, most respondents reported that progressing through a program is relatively easy; on the other hand, it is remarkable that 8 of the 20 students who participated in the survey didn't know how many classes they needed to finish their programs. This data further points to the importance of pinpointing how students access information about our programs and providing resources—whether through people, artifacts, or experiences—that help them confidently navigate through their course of study. As a next phase of research, *task analysis*, which examines the actions users take as they work toward completing a task, would be a particularly helpful research tool to implement. In the case of our programs in particular, task analysis relating to advising and course selection would provide helpful insights into the ways that various people, artifacts, and experiences come into play as students navigate the course registration process.

In terms of desirability, we see interesting similarities and differences in how Rowan and Francis Marion students favored courses. Editing, one of the top three courses students expressed interest in, had not been offered at Francis Marion prior to 2020, and it is a new course at Rowan that was first offered in Fall 2020. While we could speculate about student interest in this course as perhaps being connected to perceived workplace usefulness or a reflection of participants' acknowledgement of editing as an area in which they lack expertise, there is no way from our survey to draw these conclusions. Instead, further research should be done to understand how an editing course fits into what students desire from a technical and professional writing program. Similarly, participants' slight preference for the major name "Professional and Technical Writing" over "Technical and Professional Writing" is noteworthy, especially given a few participants' beliefs that the degree title "Professional Writing" was unhelpful for job seeking. While we could again speculate about students' reasoning for preferring one variation over the other, additional research could more productively illuminate students' perceptions regarding this distinction. Interviews or focus groups could be particularly helpful for learning more about major and course preferences.

Next Steps

As indicated through our discussion in the previous section, UX methodologies are best enacted as an iterative process. The survey discussed here is an example of what an initial step in applying a UX perspective to programmatic design might look like. Keeping in mind the iterative nature of UX design, after this initial round of user data collection, the next stage is to employ additional UX research methods that will be helpful in more deeply investigating the key areas illuminated through survey responses. Our plan moving forward, and our advice to other programs who choose to conduct a survey as the first step in a UX research and design process, is to identify one to three insights from the survey for additional research.

Yet, we also want to emphasize that reflecting on insights and deciding on how to proceed takes time—these processes cannot happen all at once. Administering programs while teaching and advising students is a challenge in itself, and over the past several months as the COVID-19 pandemic has hit, this challenge has intensified. After completing the work of compiling and analyzing survey data, we found it challenging to take time to reflect on the results and ask ourselves exactly what we wanted our follow-up research questions and methods to be.

For both programs, a shared follow-up question was "Which artifacts are valued most by students and which artifacts could be improved?" This question was posed in a focus group at Francis Marion after the initial survey was conducted. When asked which artifacts made an impact on students, one student mentioned that she remembered being struck by a small, quarter-page handout that she

found on a professor's door. The handout listed jobs for professional writing majors. Seeing these potential career paths helped to convince the student to major in professional writing. The handout was not one of the official program materials—the professor independently provided it. So, while the program's website lists potential careers as a way to advertise the major, students actually may pay more attention to other types of artifacts, especially when they are presented by professors (even when just on their office doors). In the focus group, students indicated that they are influenced more by offline materials than by online materials. This response leads us to question whether faculty members and administrators may be overestimating the impact of websites and social media pages on students' decision-making processes. A next step would be to work with students to develop more appealing offline materials and figure out how to distribute them in ways that will have a personal impact.

While we believe that UX methods have the potential to transform programmatic assessment redesign, we recognize that this approach also comes with its own challenges. One of the most obvious is the commitment of time and resources that is required when including users in the assessment process. Especially given the layered nature of UX methods and the breadth of user interfaces, a single initial user survey can end up spiraling into dozens of distinct projects. While it may be possible to incorporate this work into existing demands for assessment or even use these areas of investigation as class research topics, it is also likely that administrators will need to prioritize what can be studied and what must wait for future work. We hope that other programs might improve upon our survey questions if they decide to use this method as a first step in an ongoing UX program design process. However, programs could also gather valuable feedback from students by skipping a survey and holding interviews or focus groups as their initial UX-based research method.

In designing both the initial and follow-up portions of usability-based programmatic research, it is vitally important to be attentive to the ethical dimensions of our research methods. Given its focus on people and their experience, user-based research provides the opportunity for radical inclusivity as we seek to learn about the range of user experiences with our programs. Nevertheless, we must take care to ensure our research designs do in fact allow us to engage with the diversity of program users, taking care both to *not exclude* as well as *purposely include*. For example, holding a focus group in the evening hours may prohibit students who are parents or students with jobs from participating; choosing to run a focus group during a class period instead would ensure that students with diverse backgrounds, life circumstances, and experiences could contribute. Similarly, we must intentionally seek out perspectives of minority or marginalized students (as well as faculty or administrative collaborators) as we incorporate user experience methods, not only to ensure a representative research sample, but to ensure we have the information needed to build welcoming, inclusive programs.

In a similar vein, we must keep in mind that UX methods for programmatic (re)design are not a "one and done" approach. Just as program (re)development is a continuous process (Schreiber & Melonçon, 2019), UX research is a continuous process. As our students, institutions, and worlds change, so too will student needs and experiences with our programs. For example, in a pre-COVID-19 world, Christine's focus group finding leads us to reassess the value of physical artifacts. In the world in the midst of a pandemic (as of this writing), however, when students may not be physically on campus, such physical artifacts will obviously shift in importance in students' experience. As we move to a post-pandemic world, there will surely be lasting changes on institutions and departments that make it necessary to reconsider students' experience in our programs. All of this is not to discourage user research in the present moment or to demand incessant research that never allows us to make changes, but simply to encourage faculty and administrators using UX-based approaches to programs to adopt an attitude of continual curiosity toward user experience, as advocated by Schreiber and Melonçon, and to be attentive to context and time in planning and analyzing data.

Finally, we want to emphasize that UX shouldn't be seen exclusively as a problem-solving or trouble-shooting methodology. While it is natural to begin our programmatic work with consideration of known trouble spots in our programs, we view user involvement as a method that can truly transform what we conceive program administration and assessment to be. The involvement of students as co-producers of our programs is the ideal to strive toward, even if not immediately practical.

References

Acharya, K. R. (2016). User value and usability in technical communication: A value-proposition design model. *Communication Design Quarterly*, *4*(3), 26-34.

Allen, J. (2010). Mapping institutional values and the Technical Communication curriculum: A strategy for grounding assessment. In M. N. Hundleby & J. Allen (Eds.), *Assessment in technical and professional communication* (pp. 39-56). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225098-4

Bunce, L., Baird, A., & Jones, S. E. (2017). The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(11), 1958-1978. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1127908

Burns, B. (2016, September 27). Reverse engineering the student experience. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/09/27/redesigning-college-processes-student-mind-essay

Cargile Cook, K., & Zachry, M. (2010). Politics, programmatic self-assessment, and the challenge of cultural change. In M. N. Hundleby & J. Allen (Eds.), *Assessment in technical and professional communication* (pp. 65-79). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225098-6

Coppola, N. W., Elliot, N., Newsham, F., & Klobucar, A. (2016). Programmatic research:

An interpretive framework for writing program assessment. *Programmatic Perspectives*, *8*(2), 4-46.

Elliott, K. M., & Healy, M. A. (2001). Key factors influencing student satisfaction related to recruitment and retention. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *10*(4), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1300/J050v10n04_01

Gulbrandsen, K. (2012). Revising the technical communication service course. *Programmatic Perspectives*, *4*(2), 243-254.

Guo, F. (2012, April 24). More than usability: The four elements of user experience, Part I. *UXmatters.* https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2012/04/more-than-usability-the-four-elements-of-user-experience-part-i.php

Hundleby, M. N., & Allen, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Assessment in technical and professional communication*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225098

Jablonski, J., & Nagelhout, E. (2010). Assessing professional writing programs using technology as a site of praxis. In M. N. Hundleby & J. Allen (Eds.), *Assessment in technical and professional communication* (pp. 171-187). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225098-13

Johnson, M. A., Simmons, W. M., & Sullivan, P. (2017). *Lean technical communication: Toward sustainable program innovation*. Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group.

Jones, N. N. (2018). Human centered syllabus design: Positioning our students as expert end-users. *Computers and Composition*, *49*, 25-35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2018.05.002

Kruger, L. (2014). Designing nonprofit experiences: Building a UX toolkit. *User Experience Magazine*, *14*(2). https://uxpamagazine.org/designing-nonprofit-experiences/

Lam, C., Hannah, M. A., & Friess, E. (2016). Connecting programmatic research with social media: Using data from Twitter to inform programmatic decisions. *Programmatic Perspectives*, *8*(2), 47-71.

Melonçon, L., & Henschel, S. (2013). Current state of U.S. undergraduate degree programs in technical and professional communication. *Technical Communication*, *60*(1), 45-64.

Nielsen, J. (1993). Iterative user-interface design. *Computer*, *26*(11), 32-41.

Rice-Bailey, T. (2016). *TC program assessment* [White paper]. Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication.

Rose, E. J., Racadio, R., Wong, K., Nguyen, S., Kim, J., & Zahler, A. (2017). Community-based user experience: Evaluating the usability of health insurance information with immigrant patients. *SIAS Faculty Publications*, *756*. https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/ias_pub/756

Salvo, M. J., & Ren, J. (2007). Participatory assessment: Negotiating engagement in a technical communication program. *Technical Communication*, *54*(4), 424-439.

Schreiber, J., & Melonçon, L. (2019). Creating a continuous improvement model for sustaining programs in technical and professional communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *49*(3), 252-278. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281618759916

Stoller, E. (2014, June 5). The business of higher education. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/student-affairs-and-technology/business-higher-education

Thomas, S., & McShane, B. J. (2007). Skills and literacies for the 21st century: Assessing an undergraduate professional and technical writing program. *Technical Communication*, *54*(4), 412-423. JSTOR. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43090954

Appendix A: Survey Form

Student and Alumni Survey

You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by Christine Masters from Francis Marion University, in the Department of English and Gracemarie Fillenwarth from Rowan University, in the Department of Writing Arts.
The purpose of the project is to gain an understanding of student and alumni experiences with our Technical and Professional Writing Programs.

Read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

• Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop participating at any time for any reason. Answering the questions will take about 20 minutes depending upon the depth of your responses.

• You will not be compensated for your participation.

• All of the information you provide will be confidential and stored in a secure place. However, the researcher cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and data collection point. Please consider this carefully when responding to these questions.

• If this is a written or online survey, only the researchers will have access to your responses. Your responses, made anonymous, may be quoted or referenced within future academic work.

• I understand that I am ONLY eligible to participate if I am over the age of 18.

Please contact the following investigators with any questions or concerns: Christine Masters cmasters@fmarion.edu, 843-661-1806; Gracemarie Fillenwarth, fillenwarth@rowan.edu, 570-301-7075. If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Teresa Herzon, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the Francis Marion University, therzog@fmarion.edu; Phone: 843-661-1562.

* Required

1. **Informed Consent** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ I am over 18 and consent to participate in this survey.
   ◯ I am under 18 or do not wish to participate in this survey. *Stop filling out this form.*

Note to participants

We use the phrase "Technical / Professional Writing program" throughout the survey to refer to both the Technical and Professional Writing program at Rowan University and the Professional Writing program at Francis Marion University.

2. **Which school do you/did you attend?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Francis Marion University
   ◯ Rowan University
   ◯ Other: _____ *After the last question in this section, stop filling out this form.*

3. **What is (or was) your undergraduate major?**

   _____

4. **What is (or was) your undergraduate minor?**
   For FMU students with collaterals, please list both collaterals.

   _____

5. **In which month and year do you expect to graduate, or when did you graduate?**

   _____

6. **If you are a current student, approximately how many more classes do you need to finish your Technical / Professional Writing major, minor, or concentration/CUGS?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 10 or more classes
- ◯ 6 to 9 classes
- ◯ 3 to 5 classes
- ◯ 1 to 2 classes
- ◯ I'm not a current student.
- ◯ I'm not sure.
- ◯ Other: _____

7. **At any time in the past or present, where do you remember hearing about the Technical / Professional Writing program?**
Check all that apply.
Check all that apply.

- ☐ Brochures, flyers, or marketing handouts
- ☐ University catalog
- ☐ Semester schedules
- ☐ Student portal
- ☐ University website list of degrees and programs
- ☐ Department or program website
- ☐ Department or program social media pages
- ☐ High school counselors
- ☐ High school teachers
- ☐ University advisors (student services)
- ☐ Departmental or program advisors
- ☐ Current students
- ☐ Alumni
- ☐ University staff
- ☐ University professors
- ☐ College fairs
- ☐ Open houses
- ☐ Orientations
- ☐ Graduation or award ceremonies
- ☐ Student clubs and activities
- ☐ Student showcases
- ☐ Department or workshops or events
- ☐ Other: _____

8. **Where did you FIRST hear about the Technical / Professional Writing program?**

_____

9. **Who or what was the biggest influence on your decision to study Technical / Professional Writing?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **How easy or difficult was it to declare your Technical / Professional Writing major, minor, or concentration/CUGS?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Difficult	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Easy

11. **What made declaring your Technical / Professional Writing major, minor, or concentration/CUGS easy or difficult?**

12. **How easy or difficult was it to progress through your Technical / Professional Writing courses? If you are a current student, rate your experience so far.**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Difficult	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Easy

13. **Please describe any obstacles that you encounter(ed) as a Technical / Professional Writing student.**

14. **How understandable are the Technical / Professional Writing program's course requirements?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Confusing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Clear

15. **How could we make the Technical / Professional Writing program requirements clearer?**

16. **At registration time, where would you typically go FIRST to figure out which Technical / Professional Writing classes to sign up for?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Advisor
- ◯ Course Catalog
- ◯ Semester Schedules
- ◯ Student Portal
- ◯ Other: _____

17. **Would you recommend Technical / Professional Writing as an area of study?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Maybe - it depends
- ◯ No
- ◯ Other: _____

18. **Please explain your reasons for recommending or for not recommending Technical / Professional Writing to others.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. **What could be changed to make the Technical / Professional Writing program more practical, useful, or valuable to students?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. **What qualities of the Technical / Professional Writing program are most valuable to you?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. **What qualities of the Technical / Professional Writing program are least valuable to you?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. **Do you prefer an open plan of study (with many course options) or a well-defined plan of study (with fewer course options)?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ An open study plan with many course options
- ◯ A balance between freedom and structure
- ◯ Well-defined study plan with fewer course options
- ◯ No opinion
- ◯ Other: _____

23. **If you could take any combination of courses for your Technical / Professional Writing major or minor, which of these courses sound interesting or engaging to you? For alumni, check the courses that you would find interesting or useful based on your current preferences, experience, or professional knowledge.**
Mark only one oval per row.

	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Neutral - no opinion
Editing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Digital Content Development	◯	◯	◯	◯
Web Design	◯	◯	◯	◯
Copyediting	◯	◯	◯	◯
Intercultural Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯
Video Production for Technical Communicators	◯	◯	◯	◯
Foundations of Professional Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technical Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯
Business Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
The Rhetoric of New Media	◯	◯	◯	◯
Multimedia Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing for the Health Professions	◯	◯	◯	◯
Scientific Writing and Rhetoric	◯	◯	◯	◯
Medical Writing and Rhetoric	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing for Engineering Professions	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing for Nonprofits	◯	◯	◯	◯
Grant Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
User Experience Design	◯	◯	◯	◯
DITA / Structured Content Authoring	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing, Research, and Technology	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing for the Workplace	◯	◯	◯	◯
Magazine Article Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Publication Layout and Design	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professions in Writing Arts	◯	◯	◯	◯
Creative Writing – any type	◯	◯	◯	◯
Literature – any period / type	◯	◯	◯	◯

24. **How interesting or engaging do the following majors seem to you, based on the name alone?**
Mark only one oval per row.

	Not interesting	Somewhat interesting	Very interesting	Neutral - no opinion
Technical Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯
Digital Writing and Rhetoric	◯	◯	◯	◯
Creative Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing and Publication Studies	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing Arts	◯	◯	◯	◯
Rhetoric and Writing Studies	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional and Technical Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technical and Professional Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯
Publishing and Writing for the Public	◯	◯	◯	◯

Appendix B: Course Names Table

Course Name	Existing @?	"Very Interested" as % of Total	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not Interested	Neutral	Blank	Rowan "Very"	% of "Very"	FMU "Very"	% of "Very"	Alumni "Very"	% of "Very"
Editing	Rowan*	67%	24	9	1	0	2	8	33%	16	67%	9	75%
Writing for the Workplace	Rowan	67%	24	8	1	1	2	8	33%	16	67%	9	75%
Writing for Nonprofits	Both	67%	24	7	2	0	3	9	38%	15	63%	8	67%
Foundations of PW	FMU	58%	21	10	3	1	1	7	33%	14	67%	6	50%
Technical Communication	Both	58%	21	9	2	1	3	5	24%	16	76%	10	83%
Business Writing	FMU	58%	21	8	4	2	1	5	24%	16	76%	8	67%
Advanced Tech Comm	FMU	56%	20	10	3	0	3	5	25%	15	75%	9	75%
Grant Writing	Neither	56%	20	8	7	0	1	8	40%	12	60%	7	58%
Multimedia Writing	Neither	56%	20	8	3	1	4	8	40%	12	60%	7	58%
Digital Content Development	Neither	53%	19	11	4	1	1	6	32%	13	68%	8	67%
The Rhetoric of New Media	Both**	53%	19	8	6	1	2	4	21%	15	79%	8	67%
Creative Writing	Both	53%	19	7	8	0	2	7	37%	12	63%	4	33%
Publication Layout & Design	Rowan	50%	18	12	4	0	2	6	33%	12	67%	6	50%
Copyediting	Neither	50%	18	10	3	1	4	4	22%	14	78%	7	58%
Web Design	Neither	50%	18	9	6	1	2	5	28%	13	72%	7	58%
Writing, Research, Technology	Rowan	50%	18	9	6	1	2	5	28%	13	72%	8	67%
Magazine Article Writing	Rowan	47%	17	10	5	1	3	8	47%	9	53%	4	33%
Professions in Writing Arts	Rowan	47%	17	6	8	1	4	8	47%	9	53%	5	42%
Writing for the Health Professions	FMU	44%	16	7	10	1	2	7	44%	9	56%	5	42%
Advanced Business Communication	FMU	42%	15	11	6	2	2	1	7%	14	93%	7	58%
Intercultural Communication	Neither	42%	15	8	8	2	3	5	33%	10	67%	7	58%
Medical Writing & Rhetoric	Rowan	42%	15	5	10	2	4	5	33%	10	67%	7	58%
Scientific Writing & Rhetoric	Rowan	36%	13	10	7	3	3	8	62%	5	38%	5	42%
Literature	Both	33%	12	11	10	0	3	6	50%	6	50%	5	42%
User Experience Design	Neither	33%	12	10	10	1	3	3	25%	9	75%	6	50%
Video Production for Tech Comm	Neither	28%	10	10	11	1	4	3	30%	7	70%	4	33%
Writing for Engineering	Neither	25%	9	9	12	2	4	3	33%	6	67%	4	33%
DITA/Structured Content Authoring	Neither	25%	9	6	12	5	4	1	11%	8	89%	5	42%

*Rowan has two editing courses, "Editing for Publication" and "Editing the Literary Journal"
**Rowan's New Media class is called "Introduction to New Media"

Appendix C: Majors Table

Program / Major Name	Existing @?	"Very Interesting" as % of Total	Very Interesting	Somewhat Interesting	Not Interesting	Neutral	Blanks	Rowan "Very"	% of "Very"	FMU "Very"	% of "Very"	Alumni "Very"	% of "Very"
Professional and Technical Writing	Neither	75%	27	6	2	0	1	8	30%	19	70%	11	92%
Technical and Professional Writing	Rowan	61%	22	10	2	0	2	6	27%	16	73%	8	67%
Professional Writing	FMU	58%	21	12	1	1	1	6	29%	15	71%	7	58%
Professional and Digital Writing	Neither	56%	20	11	3	1	1	5	25%	15	75%	8	67%
Writing & Publication Studies	Neither	53%	19	11	4	1	1	9	47%	10	53%	5	42%
Publishing & Writing for the Public	Neither	53%	19	11	4	1	1	7	37%	12	63%	6	50%
Technical Communication	Neither	50%	18	12	5	0	1	6	33%	12	67%	6	50%
Writing Arts	Rowan	50%	18	8	8	1	1	7	39%	11	61%	3	25%
Creative Writing	Both	47%	17	9	8	1	1	6	35%	11	65%	4	33%
Rhetoric & Writing Studies	Neither	42%	15	12	7	1	1	6	40%	9	60%	5	42%
Digital Writing & Rhetoric	Neither	39%	14	12	6	1	3	3	21%	11	79%	6	50%

Note. The green shading indicates the highest-rated responses from each program.