This study examines students’ perceptions of the Dissertation Writing Institute (DWI) from 2009-2011. The DWI was developed to provide time, space, and writing consultation to assist graduate students through the dissertation writing phase. Since 2003, the DWI has supported 144 graduate students from disciplines across the humanities, social, and natural sciences. The eight-week writing intensive program combines one-on-one sessions, accountability meetings, and interdisciplinary workshops aimed at instilling successful writing practice and speeding time-to-completion. The program includes:

- Individual offices / required hours
- $3000 stipend
- Weekly accountability meetings
- Weekly interdisciplinary workshops
- Individual writing consultation

We analyzed 2009-2011 pre- and post-program surveys completed by 72 DWI participants. We further focused our analysis on student perceptions of the influence of SCW faculty consultants. We coded student survey responses for references to:

- affective changes (confidence, security, enthusiasm, motivation, validation)
- behavioral changes (momentum, changes in practice)
- conceptual changes (understanding, clarity, perception of dissertation writing)

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This exploratory study focused its examination on the role of Sweetland faculty support in the DWI. Our findings suggest that students value their interactions with writing consultants because those interactions support the affective, conceptual, and behavioral facets of dissertation writing. Student responses show that interactions with writing consultants helped them conceptualize their dissertation. This finding indicates that non-expert but experienced writing center faculty can effectively promote positive change in dissertation writers.