

UWC Monthly

A publication of the James Madison University Writing Center

November
2011

UWC in the Classroom

Writers across campus, the word is out! Students and faculty alike are seeking out Writing Center services in record-breaking numbers.

This semester—along with the five faculty members, five graduate assistants, and two marketing interns—the University Writing Center has fifteen trained and practiced peer tutors ready to help students tackle their writing assignments, a significant expansion from last fall where the Center was home to only seven peer tutors. And with writers steadily pouring into the UWC and the libraries, these are definitely well-needed additions.

Not only is Wilson experiencing an increase in traffic, but the libraries are as well. Just within the first month of the 2011 semester, over 100 students attended Write Nights, and short waiting lists for these walk-in sessions are becoming more and more common. Sophomore Cori O'Shaughnessy doesn't mind the occasional wait. "I visit Write Nights all the time, and if the tutors happen to be busy, it is definitely worth a 10-15 minute wait," O'Shaughnessy



Taylor Hudson and Jennelle Martin consult the schedule. Photo by Evan McGrew

says. "I really appreciate the evening hours! It is incredibly helpful for an insanely busy person like myself."

So, why did this semester bring a significant influx in Writing Center activity?

Some credit can be given to the new marketing interns, Faizah Butt and Kelsey Feurer, who have focused their time creating awareness for the Center. Butts and Feurer have focused

their efforts on strengthening the Center's involvement in popular social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter, but they have also run weekly ads in the dining service table tents and have

delivered UWC informational flyers to all 5,800 on-campus mailboxes in order to, as Butt says, "get the Center into people's heads so that they recognize that the Center exists and that it is a resource they should use."

In addition to general campus publicity overseen by the marketing interns, professors are major assets for the Center in that their support is a highly influential in a student's decision to visit. Professors who want to formally encourage their students to use the resources available to them at the Writing Center can contact the Learning Centers Administrator, Paige Normand (normanap@jmu.edu) and arrange for UWC tutors to give their classes a five-minute, informational presentation. Last fall, when the UWC

The magic numbers

Wilson Hall consultations: 347
Carrier Library consultations: 105
East Campus Library: 71
Total: 523

Workshops conducted: 9
Students and faculty attending: 259
Overall web site hits: 7,015
Resource downloads: 81

Total # of writers helped in October: 863



The University Writing Center
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www.jmu.edu/uwc

tutors presented to two classrooms, reaching only 47 students; however, this semester, Normand arranged for tutors to visit 37 classrooms, reaching a grand total of 1,204 students.

The UWC classroom presentations alert students to the services the University Writing Center offers, whether it's to help organize ideas, strengthen an argument, or understand sentence-level mistakes. Many students are persuaded to visit the Center after they see how adamantly their professors support the cause. Professor Brian Charrette, who teaches COB 202, says, "I always invite representatives from the

center to speak to my classes early in the semester because I know the value of their help." During the UWC presentation, Charrette highly recommended the Center to his students. "My students that visit the Center," Charrette told his class, "not only turn in better papers, but they develop better writing habits for future assignments."

Professor Daisy Breneman is another faculty member who strongly encourages students to visit the Writing Center. She frequently promotes the UWC to students in her GHUM 200 class; however, Breneman recognizes that another factor affecting the increased traffic

is word of mouth. "Often the best encouragement," Breneman says, "comes from other students who went to the center and are willing to share their positives stories with their peers."

Indeed, Cori O'Shaughnessy is a testament to the power of word of mouth: "I finally decided to visit the Writing Center after my friend told me how much the tutors help with her papers, and I'm glad I did. I go now all the time now," O'Shaughnessy says, "and I tell all my friends the should go too!"

~ Kaitlyin Schmit, Senior/Peer Tutor

Not Just for First Years



Sarah Stacy brings her assignment to the UWC.

Photo by Evan McGrew

This semester alone, the University Writing Center has met with 184 freshmen students. Compared to the 215 non-freshman students, it is safe to say that freshmen represent the largest grade level of students visiting the UWC. The difference in numbers might stem from a common misconception that the UWC is mainly for freshmen. While freshmen writers face challenges

their first year, I can attest that as a senior, challenges in writing still exist for upperclassmen. By design, the UWC is aimed at improving the writing process for all students. Since writing development cannot be "completed," students of all levels can benefit from writing consultations.

Essentially, a consultation is a conversation between a tutor and the student about an

idea or piece of writing. As tutors, we like to get students thinking. Accordingly, we like to think too! Before good writing can begin, there must be some spark or burning question embedded in the mind of the student. I speak from experience that all of my ideas for writing become more refined through conversation.

This is also to say that students visiting the UWC are not required to have a draft prepared.

Brainstorming and outlining are vital aspects of the writing process; some of the most engaging sessions involve these prewriting practices. For upperclassman, organizing ideas for longer essays and thesis driven papers is crucial for setting the right framework for writing. Students

UWC Monthly
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who visit the UWC for prewriting purposes will find that the actual writing process runs more smoothly when they have considered things such as structure, scope, purpose, audience, and source integration.

As a writer, challenges are a necessary part of the craft. I have noticed that through these challenges, we mature as students and citizens. The process of writing is rigorous. It requires the most of our attention

and can be mentally exhausting. As upperclassman especially, we become more ambitious in our writings as the years go by. Thus, we must constantly develop our skills as writers; we cannot take for granted our writing is perfected after a few semesters.

Writing is a process. It is something that is never quite complete; there is always something that can be improved. The idea that college students complete their

writing development within their first two years at a University is a misconception. At the UWC, we know it takes a lot of thinking to write an effective paper, and regardless of grade level or discipline, we want to think, along with you, about your next writing assignment.

~ Evan McGrew, Senior/Peer Tutor

Strength in Numbers

Recently, the University Writing Center's Write Nights have experienced a huge increase in student traffic. This high number of consultations may be caused by the unified schedule that is now offered in both Carrier and East Carrier library. This year, Write Nights is featured in both libraries on a consistent basis, offering free tutoring services Sunday through Wednesday from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Each night, at least two tutors are present in either library to help students with all aspects of the writing process. Graduate tutor Jennelle Martin believes that one reason for higher usage is "the increase in the number of tutors working for the center."

In the past two months, the total number of sessions in both Carrier



Photo by Evan McGrew

and ECL has reached overwhelming numbers. Clearly, the implementation of the unified schedule and the increase in tutors has had a positive effect on Write Nights.

~ Brooke Covington, Sophomore/Peer Tutor

More than Tutoring

While the University Writing Center is mostly known for tutoring, it provides several other helpful resources as well.

The UWC has a computer lab that is open to all JMU students. This computer lab sees less traffic than other on-campus computer labs, making it a great place to visit for students who are having trouble

finding a computer or looking for a quiet place to work.

And from any computer students can access the UWC's link library. This link library guides students to online and UWC-created resources that can help with any step of the writing process.

Soon enough, the UWC will also feature its own mobile app which will

serve as a condensed version of the link library in order to help rushed students quickly find the writing tips they are most likely to need. Our app will also present information in a way that models the steps of an effective writing process.

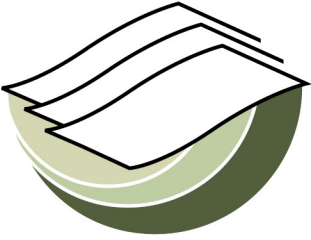
~ Justin Thurston, Senior/Peer Tutor

University Writing Center

www.jmu.edu/wvc

The University Writing Center offers

- Free individualized writing help for all students and faculty
- Easy online scheduling system
- Online tutoring for those unable to visit Wilson Hall
- In-class workshops on a variety of writing topics
- Hundreds of writing resources hosted on the UWC web site
- Computer lab and study space
- Faculty consultations for designing assignments and responding to student writing



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