

UWC MONTHLY

A publication of the James Madison University Writing Center

September/October 2012

New Faces, New Places, New Initiatives

The University Writing Center has been busy this semester.

With 33 peer tutors and more in training, four campus locations, a growing presence in classrooms across campus, and an expanded marketing program, the UWC team has been working hard to meet JMU's growing writing needs, whatever, whenever, and wherever they may be.

The University Writing Center's home on the fourth floor of Wilson Hall is abuzz with activity, with UWC Coordinator Jared Featherstone adding additional tutors and new walk-in times to meet the growing demand. "The number of hours available for students this semester is more than we've ever previously offered," said Featherstone, who has already recorded several days this semester when JMU writers reserved every available session on the UWC's online scheduler.

The UWC has been similarly active elsewhere on the JMU campus this

semester. In addition to Write Nights in the Carrier and Rose Libraries, the UWC has partnered with Student-Athlete Services to tee up a new satellite location in the Athletic Performance Center. Open to all JMU writers, the venue allows UWC tutors to meet with student athletes on their home turf. Check out Camille Corum's "Blue 42, Set... Write!" for the full story.

A second new partnership pairs the UWC with English Language Learner Services. ELLS Coordinator Kristen Shrewsbury has teamed with peer tutors Melissa Psallidas and Sarah Stacy to develop a peer education program for tutors working with international students and multilingual writers. Stacy reports on the collaboration in her page 4 article. The UWC also continues its partnership with JMU Libraries, with librarian Reba Leiding joining the UWC team this year as a faculty fellow. Reba shares her introduction to the tutoring world on page 3.

The UWC efforts this semester extend beyond traditional face-to-face, one-on-one tutoring, as a team of peer tutors and interns have fanned out across campus to offer presentations and workshops to JMU students in their classrooms. UWC faculty member Paige Normand has spearheaded the effort. "I work with faculty to develop discipline-specific presentations for writing or communication in their courses," said Normand, adding that she and her team members can customize a growing list of existing workshops for faculty teaching in any discipline at any stage of the writing process.

The UWC is also hard at work behind the scenes. In Spring 2012, recent SMAD graduate Stephanie Mappen began a complete overhaul of the UWC website to accommodate increased traffic. The site's features include YouTube videos and a growing number of UWC-authored handouts, as well as links to the UWC Twitter account (*continued on back*)



Photo credit: Carly Botero

The Magic Numbers

September / October

Wilson Hall consultations: 379 / 541
Carrier Library consultations: 53 / 92
Rose Library consultations: 42 / 63
FYI consultations: 39 / 52
APC consultations: 7 / 10
Total: 530 / 758
Workshops: 24 / 5
Students and faculty attending: 650 / 157
Link Library visits: 604 / 418

From Peer Tutor to Curriculum Development Editor

Alumna Patti Ro joined the Writing Center team back in 2008 when the peer tutor program was still new, and the experience has proven invaluable in her life post-graduation.

While attending James Madison University as an undergrad, Ro pursued a major in Justice Studies, with a minor in Writing and Rhetoric. She took first-year writing with Kurt Schick, who kept her class informed about the new peer tutor program at the UWC. In her junior year, she enrolled in the Tutoring Writing class, and worked as a peer tutor until she graduated in 2009.

“The experience was valuable as a student and as a graduate. It was a great way to become involved in critical thinking and writing, and be able to communicate those ideas and that process to your peers,” Ro said.

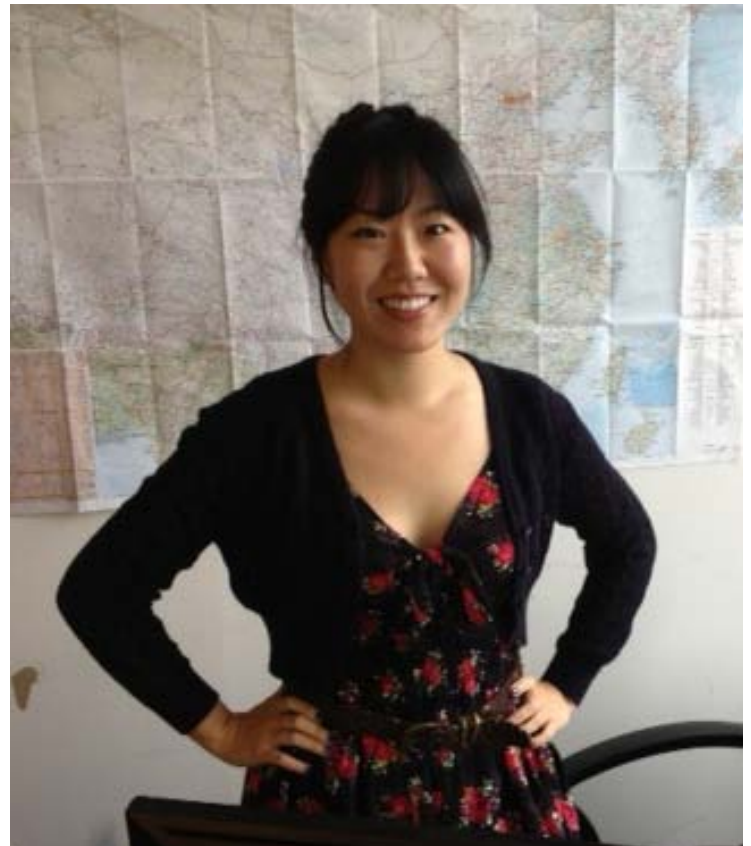
Since leaving the UWC, Ro has been busy working and continuing her education. Just after her graduation from JMU, Ro interned at WETA, a public broadcasting station, as a production assistant for several In Performance at the *White House* shows. While she interned, she attended George Mason University for an M.A. in Professional Writing and Rhetoric.

Ro currently works as a Curriculum Development Editor for Diplomatic Language Services, one of the leading language service providers to government and military agencies. In this position, she edits and rewrites the English language instruction and foreign language lesson content for a U.S. Government client, flags pedagogical issues, and formats for publishing. She works with critical languages including Urdu, Dari, Pashto, Farsi, Russian, and Mandarin.

Ro believes the skills she acquired at the UWC help in several areas of her job. “At the UWC we learned and practiced recognizing issues in language, content, and process. As a blanket statement, that process makes you a better writer and a better reader. Working primarily with text, those skills come in handy for the different levels of editing I’m responsible for,” Ro said.

The experience Ro gained while working at the UWC has shaped the way she thinks about the next stages of her career. During her time as a peer tutor, she discovered that she most likes to work with the beginning stages of writing—brainstorming and researching. Someday, Ro would like to find a career where she can write and edit or re-draft material that has a specific voice, such as alternative news or public policy research. “I’m still figuring it out as I go,” she said. Regardless of her future career path, Ro will take everything she learned while working in the UWC with her.

- Megan Brenneman, graduate tutor



Meet Reba Leiding: JMU Librarian and New UWC Faculty Fellow



Photo credit: Caroline Prendergast

As the second librarian from Carrier Library to serve as a faculty fellow in the UWC, I am excited to take up where Kathy Clarke left off last year, and to learn new ways of assisting JMU students.

For a while now, I have been interested in what information literacy scholar Carol Kuhlthau calls the “zone of intervention”: the place and time when a little help offered in the right way can make a big difference. Librarians usually see students at particular points in a particular kind of academic writing—either at the beginning when they are working on their preliminary research, or at the end when they need help with their citation style. It has been eye-opening to work with students who have all kinds of writing assignments, and to see students at all the different stages in their writing projects. In the information literacy world, we encourage students to think of research and writing as all part of the

same process: now I am “walking that talk.”

My headfirst dive into the world of writing center tutoring has helped me to begin exploring the differences and similarities between tutoring and what we call the “reference interview” in library-ese. An unexpected bonus has been the WRTC 336 Tutoring Writing class, and being in the midst of a new crop of aspiring peer tutors. It has truly been exciting to watch as these students prepare to become writing tutors, with all that the role entails: good listener, co-brainstormer, critical yet supportive reviewer, even grammar coach. I feel lucky to be learning alongside them.

I am also participating in a UWC professional development group with current peer tutors. Led by Kristen Shrewsbury, Coordinator of English Language Learner Services, we have been gaining a deeper perspective on international students and language learning. Group members meet every week to share experiences in tutoring ELL students, and to learn from each other how best to assist these students with their writing.

As I work to improve my own tutoring skills, I want to serve as a resource in the Center through my knowledge of library research. I’d also like to learn more about writing assignments. For the past few months, I have been investigating literature review assignments and the ways students engage them. I know: it sounds a little boring; maybe that’s why there’s not much research on the subject. But a literature review assignment is often how a student is introduced to the scholarship in his or her discipline. It can seem like a scary, overwhelming task, and many students ask for help. It’s also a place where research and writing meet: a zone of intervention.

Looking forward, Kathy Clarke and I hope to form the basis of a cadre of librarians who strengthen the UWC-JMU Libraries partnership as we increase awareness of student academic writing among library services staff. In other words, we hope to get in that zone where we can assist students in all stages of their research and writing.

Blue, 42, Set... Write!

And the University Writing Center peer tutors are off and running, to JMU's Athletic Performance Center.

Two years ago, the UWC partnered with JMU Libraries to kick off the popular Write Nights program in the Carrier Library. A semester later, the UWC served up a second Write Nights location in the new Rose Library. This Fall 2012 semester, the UWC has again expanded its mission—to empower JMU's students, faculty, and staff to develop their writing skills—to a third satellite base: the APC.

To JMU's dedicated student-athletes, we would like to say that we are now just a short corner away. We know that your demanding courses, extracurricular activities, and team commitments can make scheduling a daytime session in the Wilson Hall Writing Center difficult. Fret no more: UWC tutors now offer one-on-one writing consultations two evenings each week in the APC.

The UWC-JMU Athletics partnership began this past summer, with new student-athletes who may not have known about Writing Center services and locations especially benefiting. Alise Svihla, UWC-APC liaison and Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Services, reports that athletes' frequent requests for writing tutoring made the new UWC satellite location a slam dunk. Svihla said that the APC tutoring "has given our student-athletes greater access to your services and more awareness of the center."

Part of the UWC mission involves tutoring across disciplines. Now the UWC is reaching across similar lines in the Athletic Performance Center. Veteran UWC tutor Jennelle Martin, who has worked in four other UWC venues, appreciates her new playing field in the APC. "JMU Athletics requirements for student athletes hold them to high standards of participation, not only in their sport, but in their academic lives as well," she said. Martin

added that the atmosphere at the APC location is one in which student-athletes feel comfortable approaching writing tutors for help.

The UWC has already made a big splash this semester at the APC. While there have been bumps and spikes in attendance numbers, JMU student-athletes have displayed a set interest in developing their writing skills. And that, sports fans, is the goal.

- Camille Corum, peer tutor



Jennelle Martin with XC runner Kathleen Stewart and football player Jake Marten.

Photo credit: Caroline Prendergast

The APC location is open to all JMU students, faculty, and staff on a walk-in basis on Wednesday and Sunday evenings from 6:30-9:30. UWC tutors can help JMU writers with all their writing concerns, whether they are just puttering around, in an unsettled situation, working on a full down extension of a project, or confronting what might seem like insurmountably high hurdles.

UWC-ELLS Collaboration Benefits Learning Centers, Tutors, Students



ELLS Coordinator Kristen Shrewsbury with ESL Writing Specialist Melissa Psallidas

Photo credit: Melissa Psallidas

In response to the increased number of international students on campus, the UWC has teamed up with English Language Learner Services (ELLS) to develop a new peer tutor training program.

The collaboration strengthens the already close relationship between the two JMU Learning Centers while better serving the Centers' diverse clientele. As ELLS Coordinator Kristen Shrewsbury noted, "What I do is really complementary to the Writing Center, because students can simultaneously use our services and get different help on the same assignment." By working together, the two Centers can gain a deeper understanding of students' needs and can address them more effectively.

As ELLS Coordinator, Shrewsbury works with fully matriculated ELL students at JMU, typically focusing on language and language acquisition; however, she saw a need for specialized training to help provide better, more inclusive services for the university's growing ELL population. "I found from talking with the directors of the University Writing Center and University Communication Center that sometimes student tutors, who are very well

trained, feel a little uncertainty when working with ELL students, because some of the issues are slightly different," Shrewsbury said.

The training program this Fall 2012 semester features an introduction to ELL pedagogy and discussion of specific ELL needs, as well as observation and participation in language and writing consultations at the ELLS and UWC locations. The program's two UWC tutors, now designated as "ESL Writing Specialists" on the UWC scheduler, have both shaped their own learning and started to share it with their peers. Shrewsbury observed that the semester-long effort has already "opened up dialogue about the differences between language and writing support and the separate issues that arise."

Encouraged by the collaboration, the Centers are discussing further possibilities for tutor training, including an ELL-specific option. The new program has also served as a pilot for a class that will be offered for the first time this coming Spring 2013 semester. EDUC 490: Tutoring English as an Other Language will include language acquisition information, concepts and theories, and best models for practice in small group and one-on-one consultations.

Shrewsbury is confident that the peer community afforded by a classroom setting will foster even deeper insights into ELL concerns. The class is "going to be amazing," she said, "so everyone should take it."

- Sarah Stacy, peer tutor

UWC Monthly

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New Faces, New Places continued

and Facebook page.

The new user-friendly site is part of an ongoing effort to improve the UWC's existing marketing plan and to utilize social media to help promote the Center. Two new marketing interns, SCOM senior Emily Hendrix and WRTC and SMAD sophomore Mackenzie Kelley, bring their skills and enthusiasm to the initiative. Hendrix oversees the Twitter efforts, while Kelley is in charge of the Facebook page, but the two also coordinate a fierce ground game. They create and distribute posters and flyers, set up informational tables in academic buildings, and participate in classroom presentations.

A second behind-the-scenes initiative provides a welcome weekly anchor for all UWC tutors. Peer Education Coordinator Laura Schubert has created professional development groups that afford faculty, graduate, and undergraduate tutors opportunities to share their experiences and to deepen their knowledge of writing

center pedagogy. The aim, Schubert said, is "more substantive, in-depth discussions that introduce new ways of thinking about ourselves as tutors."

And the result of all these efforts? The "Magic Numbers" in this *UWC Monthly* issue tell only a part of the story. In September 2010, UWC tutors conducted 374 writing consultations; a year later, the September numbers remained steady at 369 consultations. In September 2012, the number of consultations jumped to 530!

The October numbers are even more impressive. UWC tutors conducted 429 writing consultations in October 2010, and 523 consultations in October 2011. In October 2012, UWC tutors conducted an astounding 758 consultations.

In short, the UWC's new faces, new places, and new initiatives in Fall 2012 have met with a record-breaking level of new success.

- Alexa Livezey and Sarah Stacy, peer tutors



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