

University Writing Center

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## 2016-2017 Annual Report

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Version 1.0

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# UWC Annual Report

## Significant Achievements

- The University Writing Center exceeded all recorded accounts of yearly total appointments in the center's history. This year, the UWC had 3,878 appointments.
- The UWC also had a record number of online appointments with 180 for the year.
- The UWC conducted its first international outreach tutoring sessions, tutoring students online from TED University in Ankara, Turkey

## *Mission*

The University Writing Center empowers students, faculty, and staff to develop writing and critical thinking skills by providing personalized consultations, resources, and programs that strengthen writing across campus.

## *Vision*

To be a leader for the JMU community and the writing centers discipline as they use writing to engage with ideas and audiences.

## *Values*

Personalized Learning – We consider the variety of learning styles and collaborative teaching methods in working with writers.

Inclusivity – We strive to be a safe, comfortable place where people of all backgrounds and groups are treated with respect and kindness.

Mindfulness – We strive to be focused and nonjudgmental in our work by cultivating awareness of mental activity, managing stress, and reducing distraction.

Critical Thinking – We inspire and practice careful analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and expression of ideas.

Connection – We strive to build relationships through understanding, authenticity, and compassion.

## Usage and Programming

The University Writing Center held 3878 appointments during the 2016-2017 academic year, which is up from the previous year's total, again, by over 400 appointments. The UWC continues to operate a single location in the student success center with no designated walk-in tutors.

The breakdown of writing consultations by type and semester is as follows:

Fall 2016

Total appointments: 2010 (up from 1713 in Fall 2015)

Face-to-face appointments: 1953

Online appointments: 57

SSC appointment usage: 77%

Spring 2017

Total appointments: 1855 (up from 1691 in Spring 2016)

Face-to-face appointments: 1738

Online appointments: 117

SSC appointment usage: 60%

Summer Session 2017

SSC Appointments: 13

SSC appointment usage: 22%

Total UWC appointments for the year: 3878 (up from 3404 in 2015-2016)

Although the fall and spring usage is slightly down, appointment numbers are at a record high. Here are some demographic stats for the year, made possible by the revised appointment, session report forms, and client survey forms.

Top six course subjects of UWC clients this academic year.

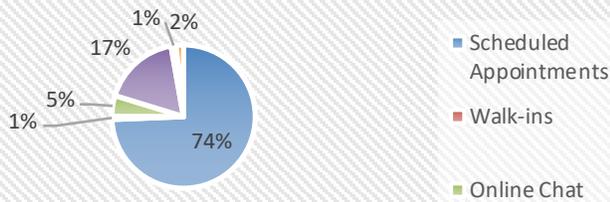
1. Writing Rhetoric and Technical Communication
2. English
3. History
4. Personal Statements
5. Health
6. Psychology

Top instructors of UWC clients this academic year.

1. Cathy Copeland (Writing Rhetoric and Technical Communication)
2. Kayti Schumann (College of Business)
3. Jeannie Harding (History)
4. Eric La Freniere (Writing Rhetoric and Technical Communication)
5. Stephanie Baller (Health Sciences)

As a complementary way to look at the UWC's use of resources, we asked Joan Fahrney to compile information about the distribution of hours and money among UWC services.

**AY 16/17 UWC PAID TUTORS - % - of \$34,395 wages...**



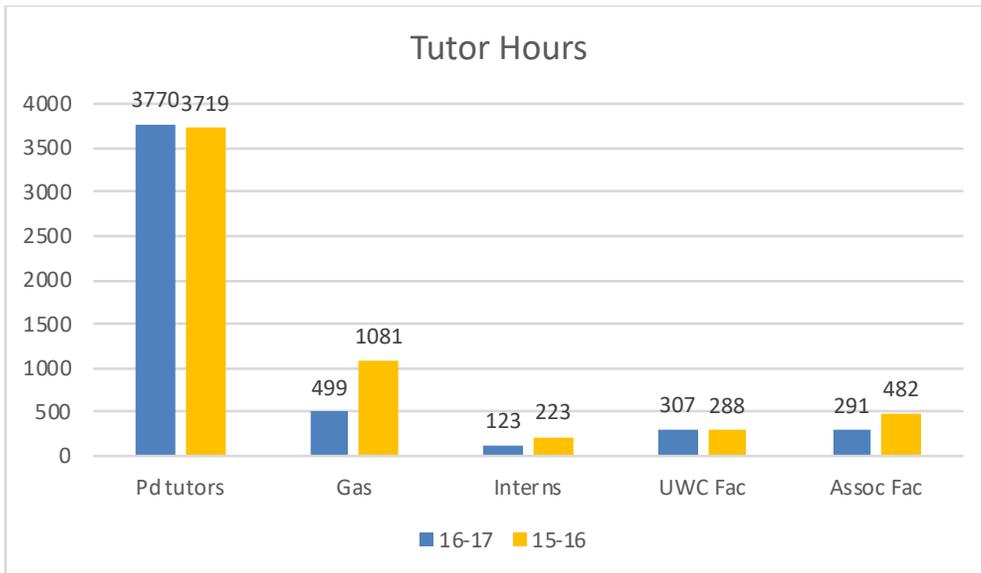
AY - 16-17					
Tutor hours	Pd tutors	GAs	Interns	UWC Fac	Assoc Fac
hours	3770	499	123	307	291
cost	\$33,364	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
%	76%	10%	2%	6%	6%

**AY 16/17 UWC tutor hours provided by resource...**



- Includes scheduled appointments, walk-ins, online chat, professional development, and workshops
- Does not include Fellowships

AY 16-17						
Paid Tutors	Scheduled Appointments	Walk-ins	Online Chat	Prof. Dev.	Workshops	Fellowships
hours	2884	26	182	678	43	65
cost	\$25,523	\$230	\$1,611	\$6,000	\$381	\$650
%	75%	1%	5%	18%	0%	2%
hours	Pd tutors	GAs	Interns	UWC Fac	Assoc Fac	
16-17	3770	499	123	307	291	
15-16	3719	1081	223	288	482	



## Program Evaluation and Learning Outcomes Assessment

### Program Evaluation

Following each tutorial, students are emailed a post-session survey. We continue to value this method of eliciting feedback from UWC clients. This year, we've collected a total of 537 post-session surveys. The most valuable results from this survey illustrate that we are fulfilling one of our mission-statement objectives: The University Writing Center empowers students, faculty, and staff to develop writing and critical thinking skills by providing personalized consultations, resources, and programs that strengthen writing across campus.

The post-session surveys indicated:

- 94% of respondents felt that the advice they received from their tutor was “useful” or “very useful.”

- 96% of respondents felt more prepared to write or revise their paper following the session.

- 93% of respondents stated that they learned something about writing that they could apply to future writing tasks.

These post-session surveys are reviewed regularly and incorporated into reminder emails and professional development meetings. Accordingly, client feedback is immediately addressed in our writing center practice.

Interestingly, the overall split between repeat and first-time users was about 56/44, which was about a 5% shift toward first time users from last year's data.

The post-session survey results also show that professor recommendation continues to be our number one reason why students visit the center. Knowing this, we will continue connecting with campus faculty.

Here are some highlights from the session survey comments:

"Since it was my first time coming to the Writing Center, and I'm not a very strong writer, I was very intimidated. However, Marissa was very friendly, welcoming, and super helpful, so I immediately felt much more comfortable. After about 25-30 minutes of reading through my essay and discussing it, I feel very well prepared to revise this draft. It was very useful how she would ask me questions and we would work through it together instead of just telling me my mistakes. Overall, a great experience. When I need help in the future with my papers, I will definitely come back to the Writing Center."

"I came in very overwhelmed by this assignment and not sure where to start, but Jemma helped me get my thoughts together and structure the ideas into an outline. I feel much more prepared to write this paper and I will definitely come back to Jemma for help in the future!"

"I came into the writing center to have someone help me look over a speech that I plan on presenting. I sat down with Jo Trombadore and she was excellent. She allowed me to kind of explain things as we talked about them, and she gave me great feedback and suggestions on how to finalize my speech. She was very friendly and easy to talk to which definitely helped with me feeling comfortable about speaking on the subject. I plan on coming back later on in the process to have her look it over again. Thanks Jo!"

"I was a little nervous going in with no writing done but it was a very comfortable environment that really helped me to talk through what I wanted to write about. There was also a student observer who was very nice and professional"

"Jackie was super friendly! I felt very comfortable going through my paper with her. She helped me 'reverse outline' my essay which is definitely something I am going to do in the future. It was so helpful and I think it made a really big improvement on my essay. She helped me brainstorm ideas and helped me build confidence in my paper. I will definitely be back! Thank you :)"

"KC was absolutely amazing at giving feedback and guiding me to turn my paper from C quality to A+ quality and I'm definitely much more motivated to visit the writing center when need be! And yes you may show my response as an advertisement for the writing center lol :) "

"Lucy was absolutely wonderful, and I am so grateful for her help. Lucy helped me rethink my personal statement, negotiate the theme, and draft an outline. I completely redrafted the statement and feel much more confident in my work. Lucy provided highly useful constructive feedback and helped me think critically. THANK YOU!!! I have used help and advice from the writing center and have been overwhelmed by the excellence of the tutors here! Thank you for providing online support!"

"Taylor was extremely non-judgmental even though I brought anxieties about my writing to the table, and she was really helpful. I also appreciated that she was patient and allowed for us to have time for silence and thinking collaboratively. She was great! :)"

The negative comments were few but, as always, taken into account. If specific tutors are mentioned, I followed up with them to discuss the issues raised by the client. Most of them seem to be clashes of expectations. This may mean that tutors need to be more explicit about the UWC's mission, particularly with first-visit clients.

## **Learning Outcomes**

### *Session Observations*

Every UWC peer tutor and grad is now observed in a tutoring session at least once per semester. This offers the possibility of tracking progress from semester to semester and identifying areas for improvement. This year, we revised the session observation form from a Word file to a Qualtrics survey. The new form also streamlines some session information so that we can easily collect, compare, and search the data. A copy of the new form can be found in the Appendices. These observations are conducted by faculty, and the observations are discussed in UWC faculty meetings. From there, we decide whether an immediate intervention is needed (beyond the required follow-up debriefing with the observed tutor), if we need to alter our professional development plans, and if we need to revise the tutor training course. The observations function as an assessment of our professional development and tutor training course.

An example of a tutor training need that emerged from this year's observations is the tutors were not explicitly or strategically teaching with an eye toward future application. Although clients could potentially extract strategies, techniques, and patterns to apply to future projects, we noticed that undergraduate peer tutors, for the most part, were not as explicit about the skill transfer as faculty tutors. We focused on this issue of transfer during an all-staff meeting, and we will continue to find way to address it in tutor training.

The annual peer tutor survey responses indicated that peer tutors found observations to be very helpful in their development.

“Observations were very helpful for me, especially observing multiple tutors to see how they differ and are successful tutors in their own ways.”

“...having Jared look over my sessions was extremely beneficial for both parties.”

### *Tutoring Writing Course*

Based on client survey data, observations of current tutors, and peer tutor survey data, several new interventions, presentations, and readings were introduced into the Tutoring Writing course. We introduced two grammar diagnostic self-scoring tests, one toward the beginning of the semester and one toward the end. The tutors-in-training were asked to read over their scores (which included information about the issues being tested in missed questions) and write a reflection about the state of their working knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and usage.

Another course intervention that is ripe for assessment is the use of asynchronous online tutoring sessions.

In the fall semester, we sequenced the tutors' online session with a literature review paper before Lucy Malenke's in-class presentation on literature reviews. In the spring semester, we sequenced the online session after Lucy's class visit. The differences in responses from the tutors were dramatic. It was clear that Lucy's presentation (and the student example discussed in that class period) significantly enhanced the genre knowledge of the average tutor-in-training. For formal assessment could be done in future semesters. We have also crafted a timed genre exam. This year, it was used as an exit measure at the end of the course, but we could easily give this exam at the beginning of the course to get a baseline. Then we could see exactly how the course correlates with genre knowledge.

## New Programs and Changes

### **UWC 4-year Strategic Plan**

The UWC faculty, using input from the SWOT analysis, research, tutor surveys, client surveys, and stakeholder surveys, developed and finalized a four-year strategic plan. The plan aligns with the mission, values, and strategic plans of the department and the university. When applicable, UWC strategic planning goals are mapped to specific core qualities of the JMU strategic plan. The finalized plan is available in the Appendices.

### **Online chat tutoring platform switch**

This year we switched from using the LibChat system of the University Libraries to the online tutoring platform that comes with our existing WC Online appointment system. This enables us to track session statistics automatically, and it enables us to schedule shifts that can be online or face-to-face. In this way, we are not separating online and face-to-face shifts. This has been a more efficient way to schedule tutoring hours, offering students a wider range of possibilities and maintaining the interactivity of real-time sessions. Because of the whiteboard system, we are able to retrieve student writing samples, along with full session transcripts.

### **BRCC Tutoring**

Faculty Associates in the UWC often have a project that they complete during their year in residence at the center. Vanessa Rouillon, our faculty associate from WRTC this year, focused her efforts on community outreach projects. Last year, her focus was on tutoring for the refugee community in Harrisonburg. This year, the focus was on a partnership with Blue Ridge Community College. Because BRCC does not have a writing center and often has students hoping to continue their education at JMU, this seemed like an appropriate place to do community outreach. We offered f2f sessions at BRCC, f2f sessions at JMU, and online sessions. Tutors were asked to volunteer hours for this service. We conducted a total of 10 sessions for BRCC students.

## **TED University Tutoring**

In partnership with Professor Nuray Grove, we provided tutoring service for students at TED University in Ankara, Turkey. Professor Grove had approached the Learning Centers as a model she wanted to replicate at TED University. The services she needed most were writing and language, as many of her students were having trouble passing the English proficiency requirements needed to move forward in their degree programs. In this pilot program, our tutors conducted 12 sessions with Turkish students. Professor Grove told us her students were excited about the service and grateful for the opportunity. They also enjoyed connected with American students. The UWC tutors also found the sessions different because, unlike the stateside tutoring of international students, the Turkish students were still in their own cultural context. This exposed JMU tutors to questions and perspectives they would be unlikely to encounter in local tutoring sessions.

## **Peer Tutor Development**

UWC faculty and graduate students all contributed ideas, and we created a semester plan together. The plan included topics, speakers, and activities for large group meetings but also options for the additional professional development hours required for tutors. According to the annual peer tutor survey, 90% of tutors surveyed felt that professional development helped them grow as tutors.

### All staff Meetings

1. Opening Meeting: review of tutoring best practices, policies, and procedures; introduction of professional development projects
2. LGBTQIQA Awareness training with Chris Ehrhart from the Ally and Education Program; discussion of identity awareness and potential writing issues, such as pronoun use with the transgender population
3. Student essay norming sessions for literature reviews and rhetorical analysis; Librarian-in-residence Brian Flota gave a presentation on how tutors might respond to the issue of fake news;
4. ELL Grammar and close analysis of later order concerns in an ELL essay;
5. Presentation of small-group scenarios for the entire staff; send-off toast/roast for graduating tutors

### Small Group Projects

We had five small, faculty-led professional development groups this semester. Each group met five times over the course of the semester, allowing some time to debrief about sessions but focusing efforts on the creation of tutoring session simulation projects. Each group selected a topic and designed an interactive tutoring scenario using the University of Wisconsin's innovative CSCR scenario builder software. Although groups faced some technological glitches with the beta version of this software, each group completed a project that will be uploaded to Canvas for use in upcoming sections of the Tutoring Writing course. The primary audience for these interactive scenarios is tutors in training. The following topics were covered in the scenarios.

*Group Writing with business plans (Lucy)*

Although our professional development group spent the first 15-20 minutes of every meeting debriefing (our conversations touched on dealing with emotional clients, required visits, online sessions, and working with graduate students), we spent the bulk of our time working on our interactive online scenario. We wanted to choose a topic that was likely to arise in our writing center, complex enough to present lots of choices and learning opportunities, and something that we could turn to scholarship (Writing Center and beyond) to help resolve. We also considered what everyone wished they had known more about when they started tutoring, as well as the expertise of professional development group members. Everyone came to our first professional development meeting with ideas, and ultimately, we chose to base our scenario on the COB 300 group business plan project.

In the fall semester, we acquired the business plan assignment from the faculty coordinator of the class, as well as a sample business plan that we could use in our scenario from our group member, Brandon. We investigated and shared writing center, communications, and psychology scholarship relevant to group writing, discipline-specific writing, and group dynamics. We then story-boarded and began scripting our scenario. In the spring, we finished scripting our scenario, and I adapted it using the software.

I observed many benefits to our sessions: seeing tutors think about their work through a more critical, scholarly lens; hearing tutors talk about the ways they'd used what we'd discussed and learned in their own tutoring sessions; and watching veteran tutors transfer their knowledge to new tutors. I think everyone enjoyed building relationships in our small group, and I know they took pride in creating something that would be useful to tutors-in-training.

#### *English Language Learners, moving past preconceptions and assumptions*

Jared's group decided to design an interactive ELL tutoring session that tempts users into making tutoring choices based on assumptions about ELL writers. First, we discussed common novice tutor perceptions about ELL writers and ELL sessions. They we storyboarded a scenario using the dry erase board, Google Docs, and photos. Once we settled on a session story, we began entering the scenario into the CSCR builder software. Once we began working with the software, we scaled down our initial scenario so that we did not take on more work than we could handle, given the deadlines. Our group had a lot of fun creating the scenario, and the discussions highlighted some important aspects of tutoring that were unlikely to have arisen otherwise.

#### *Working with distressed students (Kevin)*

#### *Understanding the role of client's mindsets*

Laura's group created a simulator project based in mindset theory. The goal of the simulation was to describe techniques for promoting a growth mindset during tutoring sessions. In order to complete this project, tutors learned about growth and fixed mindsets and their respective influences on learning and achievement. The group discussed different ways of handling sessions that seemed to be hindered by a fixed mindset, which helped tutors reflect on their typical reactions and identify more productive responses. They also learned to see resistant tutees in a new light, as they discussed signs of a fixed mindset. Although the simulator project promoted

learning, the software logistics were a hindrance. The group had difficulty working with the software initially, and these problems sometimes became the focus of meetings. Still, the group was a supportive environment for tutors, and they enhanced their relationships with each other as the semester progressed. Frequently, tutors used professional development meetings to debrief challenging tutoring sessions. They learned from each other as they commented on each other's sessions and shared advice. The group was a balanced mix of seasoned and new tutors, which provided useful perspectives. At times, tutors even discussed outside influences on their stress and tutoring performance, which built camaraderie and gave them opportunities to vent and de-stress.

*Working with First-year writers (Rudy)*

In the staff survey, multiple tutors identified the small professional development groups as helpful to them in their work at the UWC.

“It allowed me to better understand how to work with a group and understanding group dynamics in writing, specifically business writing”

“It was an awesome experience, in which I learned invaluable research and interpersonal skills. We came together to achieve something for a greater good, and learned a lot along the way”

### **Tutor Awards Ceremony**

The UWC participated in the Learning Centers Tutor Awards Ceremony, honoring Rehan Ahmed, Jackie Seeman, KC Collazo, and Marissa Bricker for semesters of outstanding contributions to the center.

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## Collaborations and Partnerships

### **CHBS**

Three years ago, Lucy Malenke began working as the Writing Center's liaison to JMU's largest college, the College of Health and Behavioral Studies. In these years, she has exported writing and instructional expertise to CHBS and imported disciplinary expertise from CHBS into the Writing Center. CHBS's move to a building adjacent to the Student Success Center made UWC presentations, workshops, and consultations for CHBS students and faculty much more convenient. Recently, the Learning Centers' office administrator, Joan Fahrney, analyzed usage data to explore how this relationship has impacted who we serve in the Writing Center.

Visits to the UWC for CHBS courses and by CHBS majors have increased over the past three years (see Figure 1). We've seen increases in visitation from CHBS students in every course level, and the increases have been particularly strong among sophomores (63% increase in visits), juniors (85% increase in visits), and seniors (58% increase in visits) (see Figure 2). This may connect to Malenke's in-class workshops and presentations in CHBS

classes, which show students how the UWC can serve students writing in their disciplines (not just students in general education courses). Students are coming to the UWC from courses across the college, but especially from Health Sciences, Nursing, and Psychology (see Figure 3). Moreover, we're seeing many more repeat visits by CHBS majors (see Figure 4), which indicates that these students perceive the tutoring they receive as beneficial. It's possible that the training Malenke has provided to tutors in science and research writing has enabled them to better tailor their consultations to CHBS majors. Finally, since the 2014-2015 academic year, the number of students seeking assistance with their personal statements has increased 275% (from 67 to 251 visits). Many of those students come from CHBS. This increase may relate to the Personal Statement Seminar Malenke offered in fall 2014 and the training she's provided UWC tutors on personal statements.

Figure 1: CHBS-related Visits to the UWC

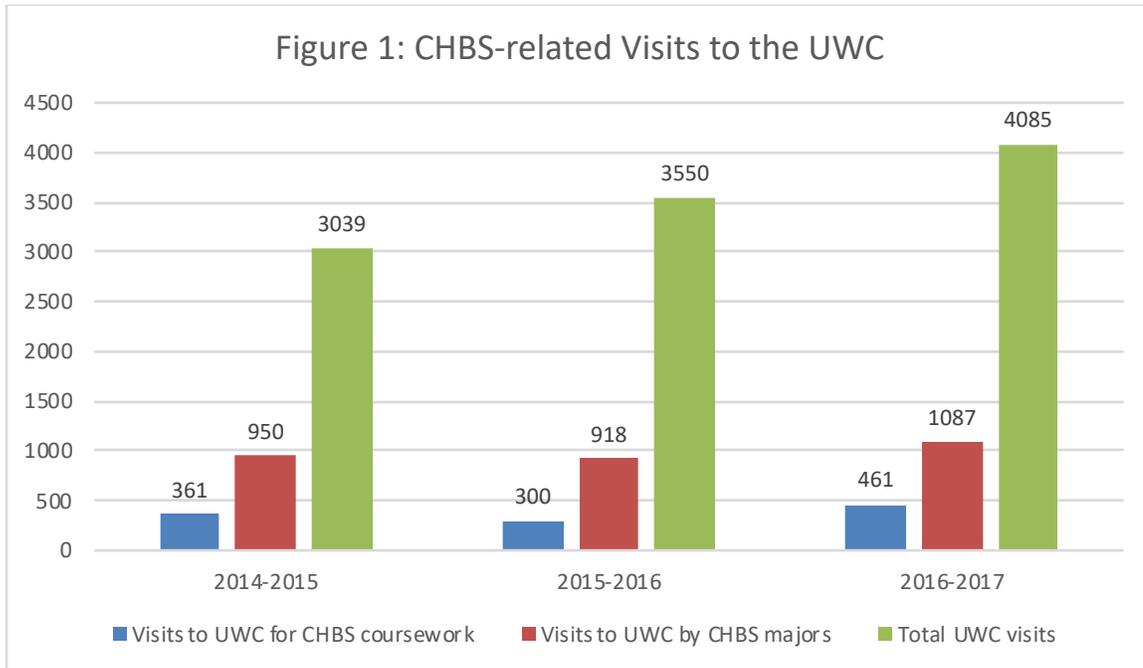


Figure 2: CHBS Major Visits to the UWC by Graduation Level

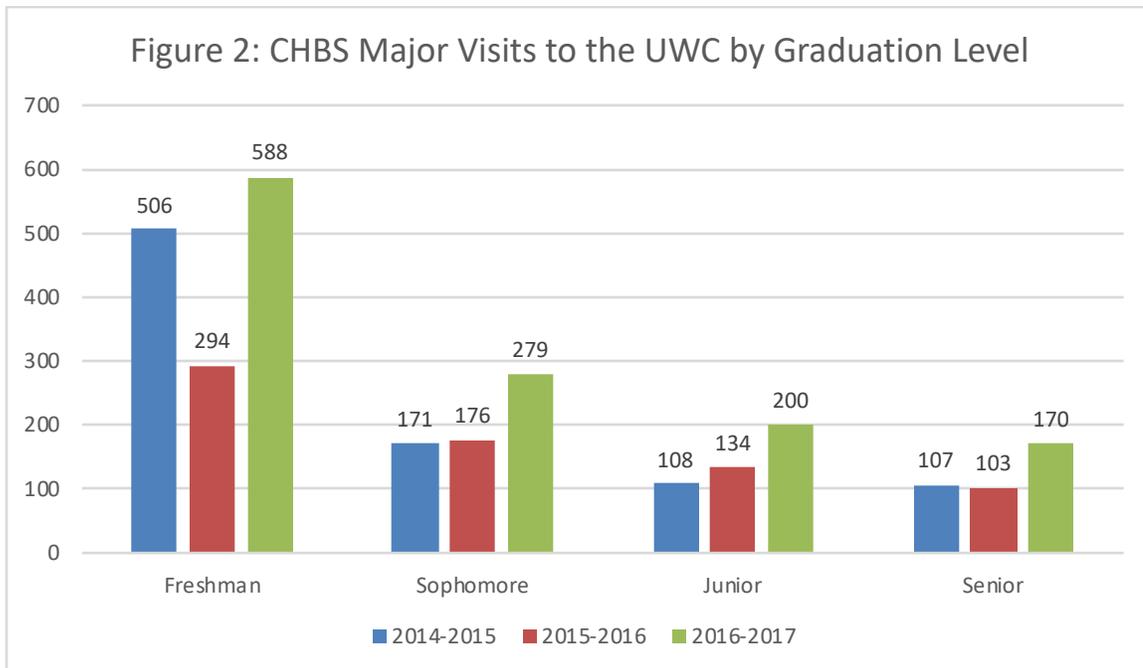


Figure 3: UWC Visits for Assignments in CHBS Courses

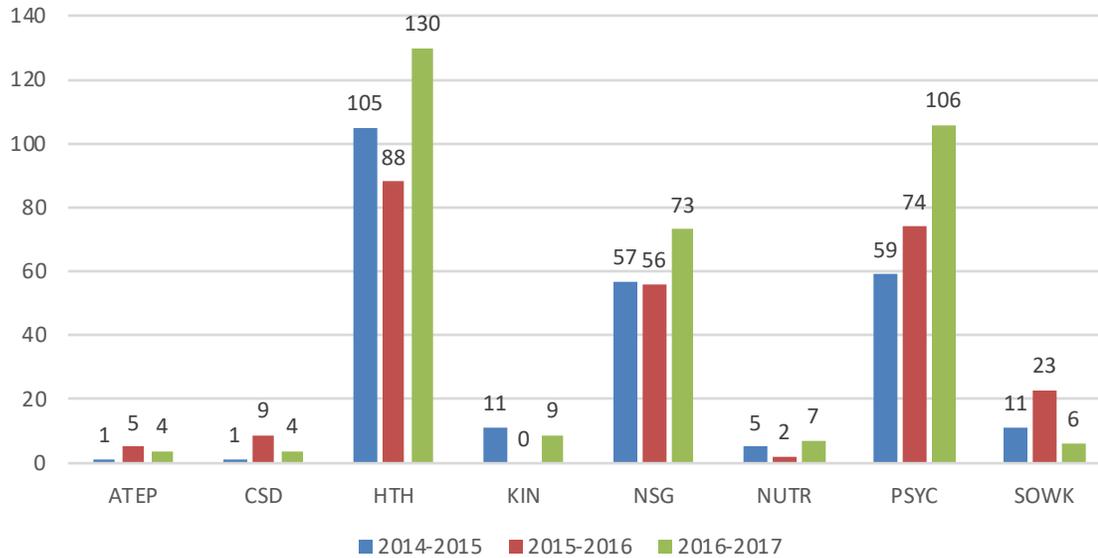
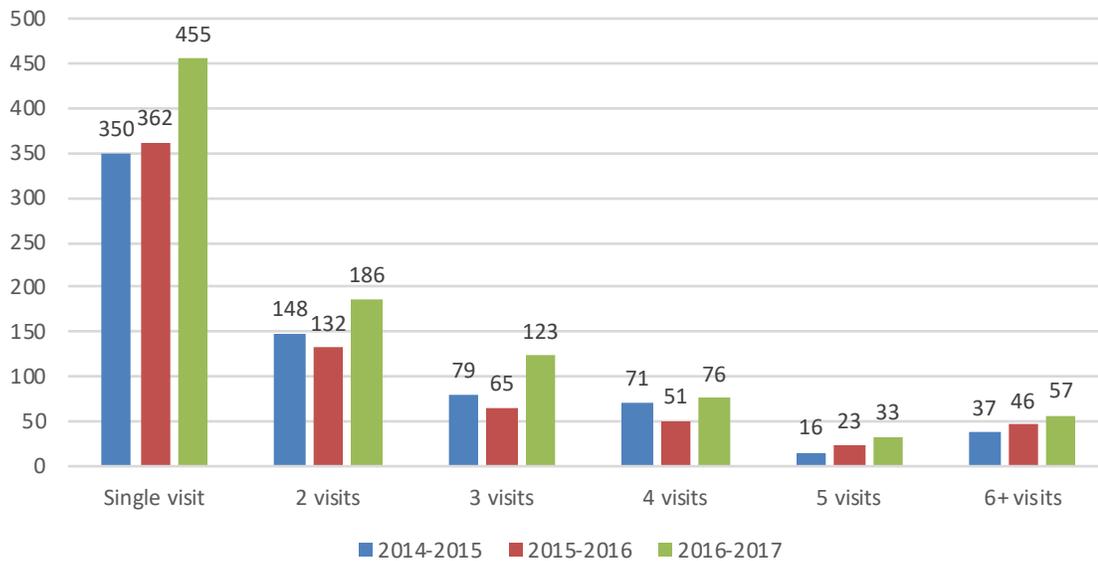


Figure 4: Repeat Visits to the UWC by CHBS Majors



This year, Lucy Malenke led (or trained a UWC representative to lead) 25 in-class presentations and workshops that reached more than 1,200 students and graduate students in CHBS. These events included newly developed presentations on writing scholarly introductions, group writing strategies, and revising scholarly manuscripts.

Inspired by her research into the state of writing in the health sciences major and her experiences and observations throughout the college, Malenke also expanded her efforts to include several faculty development events this year. In the fall, she introduced and led an interactive workshop on the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for writing

in the health studies major that the Health Sciences Writing Committee (HSWC) developed in Spring 2016. Based on the results of a survey of Health Sciences faculty about development needs, Malenke led a workshop on low-stakes, no-grade, and write-to-learn writing activities for the faculty in that department in January. The workshop went so well that she offered an adapted version to faculty from a variety of disciplines at the 2017 May Symposium.

Malenke continues to teach in CHBS. In both the fall and the spring, she taught a section of Honors 300—an interdisciplinary class designed to help students in the first semester of their honors project sequence design and propose their projects. This class continues to receive strong reviews from both students and project advisors.

### **Outreach**

Because we changed the way tutors fulfill their professional development requirements in the UWC, we have limited resources to provide the 15-minute in-class presentation that tutors have historically given to introduce peers across campus to the University Writing Center. In response to this problem, UWC Outreach Coordinator Lucy Malenke designed and produced (in collaboration with UWC staff and faculty and Innovation Services) an animated YouTube video that introduces the UWC, describes its services for students and faculty, and gives basic information about making appointments. This video can be shown in courses, embedded in syllabi and Canvas pages, and shared in promotional materials. It is an efficient, effective, and low-resource way to market the UWC. Already, more than 150 people have viewed the video since its completion in March.

Additionally, Lucy Malenke established a new relationship with the College of Business this year and was invited to give a presentation on group writing strategies to all COB 300 sections (147 students) this spring.

### **Writing Fellows (Laura Schubert)**

The Writing Fellows program supported two classes in the engineering department (ENGR 331 and ENGR 332) this year. In those classes, writing fellows delivered in-class presentations on writing skills and met with students individually and in groups to offer feedback on students' literature review assignment. In the Fall, Laura gathered assessment data by conducting a study in ENGR 331. She surveyed students at the beginning and end of the semester to see whether students who met with the writing fellow improved their mindsets—that is, whether they saw themselves more capable of improving in writing. Laura found that students who met with the writing fellow had statistically significant improvement in their mindsets. This finding demonstrates empirically that the program is effective at improving student learning, since mindsets directly influence student achievement. Laura also assessed students' literature review drafts to see whether students who had met with the writing fellow earned higher scores on their final papers. This data will be available for review next year.

Writing fellows also assisted the engineering department with online course module creation. One writing fellow collaborated with Elise Barrella to create a video module on collaborative writing strategies for group reports. The video lesson consisted of a script, PowerPoint slides, and mini assignments. After creating these resources, the writing fellow consulted with engineering students to assess the video modules.

### **Library Faculty Associate**

Librarian Brian Flota served as Faculty Associate in the UWC this year. As the liaison to English, Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures, and Theater and Dance, Brian offers some possibilities for connecting with departments we do not currently have a strong connection with. Brian sat in on the Tutoring Writing course during

the spring semester and began tutoring shifts midway through the semester. He has been a research resource to students in the class and tutors on shift in the UWC. During one of our all-staff professional development meetings, he gave a talk on "fake news," offering tutors tips for identifying and responding to fake news sources in student papers.

## Community Engagement

(Vanessa Rouillon's report)

During the academic year Fall 2016-Spring 2017, the University Writing Center (UWC) started collaborating with students at Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC). In particular, UWC faculty and peer tutors offered writing assistance—on a volunteer basis—to students from English and formative writing classes in Pamyla Yates' courses (English 111 and 112, introductory writing) at BRCC. All students served were ESL writers; some had been refugees in the US; most intended to complete their Associates' degrees at BRCC, and continue their education at James Madison University (JMU). All sessions were held on site at the Student Success Center (SSC), and all were offered face-to-face, even when online tutoring was a possibility. A few sessions were held in teams; most were individual. BRCC writers received detailed explanations and modeling, and were able to use our online scheduling system to register and choose convenient hours, just like our students do.

While initially (Fall 2016) peer tutors had been more resistant to offering volunteer hours—due perhaps to their heavy schedules or relatively recent membership at the UWC—we saw, after several individual conversations, email announcements, and talks during all-staff meetings, an important increase in hours offered during the Spring 2017. Overall, from February to May 2017, 49 hours were offered, with faculty and peer tutors offering comparable amounts throughout: Five faculty tutors offered 22 hours, and peer tutors (larger number) offered 27 (See summary table attached). We had only requested an hour per month per tutor, both for faculty and peer tutors. This number, however, still suggests not every tutor—in particular, peer ones—decided to offer this community service. My sense is that having their service distributed among many options on campus, makes this opportunity—not paid—less attractive. I would recommend, in the spirit of this campus commitment to diversity and service, an introduction to or further development of the notion of community engagement in the syllabus for WRTC 336, Tutoring Writing. Furthermore, during the interviews prior to hiring tutors, questions about volunteer commitments connected to tutoring writing could be added so as to frame this service, not as mandatory, never paid, but highly expected of newly hired tutors.

Even as the 49 hours offered seemed very promising, unfortunately, not very many BRCC writers made use of them: We only had 10 hours of actual tutoring throughout the semester, with 8 of those hours worked by faculty tutors, and only 2 by peer tutors. Three reasons might explain this low usage. First, I consider this semester was a pilot one in terms of BRCC commitment. Many writers I served thought, per my conversations with them, that they could only attend one session with us, and thus felt hesitant to return. Second, to increase tutor commitment on our end (given the distance between JMU and BRCC), and to give guest writers a sense of space and university culture, we offered all our sessions in Success. For BRCC writers, driving to our location is also a big undertaking. Third, most writers made their appointments with the faculty tutor—Vanessa Rouillon—whom they had known via their own instructor at BRCC, Pamyla Yates. While I did try to offer more than one hour per month (and mostly, I did), my times might not have always accommodated BRCC writers' needs.

Nevertheless, I firmly believe we have identified an important service opportunity, and one that should make use of our tutors' training in writing. In particular, given the support we have received from the faculty person in charge of writing at BRCC, Pamyla Yates, we could plan—in the long term—for the training of BRCC students and faculty who could become tutors, and serve their own constituents. Regardless, session reports strongly suggest our training in writing was very valuable, and that these writers experienced comparable needs and difficulties as the ones we see for JMU students. For instance, a peer tutor observes, "Although there were quite a few grammatical problems as I

read the paper (probably why she wanted me to read silently), I decided it was better to focus our time explaining the assignment and how to better organize the paper first.” A faculty tutor comments, “The writer had questions about citations, so we consulted the Purdue OWL and I explained several things.” Another faculty tutor recalls, “We composed a working thesis to include in her introduction. We created an outline and talked about the structure of her paragraphs.” Overwhelmingly, most comments highlight writers’ engagement during sessions.

Most notably, perhaps, many of these writers choose to write about their own migratory circumstances, many of which contain narratives of peril or economic hardships. Such narratives humanize writing and I believe our own students, typically from safer backgrounds and stronger means, could benefit enormously from reading and helping shape such stories. An important need that has emerged from these few sessions concerns securing and training bilingual tutors or Spanish speakers (here and there), as some sessions—as was my case—took place in Spanish, as grammar seems to have been a common concern, and as most ESL writers in BRCC were Hispanic.

On their end, Ms. Yates has only expressed gratitude toward our services, and has seen progress in those students who saw us the most. She is also very willing to continue this collaboration. And I remain committed to continuing coordinating efforts, as/if needed, during transition and after my service at the UWC is concluded.

## Scholarly Achievements

### Conferences

- Jared Featherstone, along with CFI Assistant Director Ed Brantmeier, presented, "Holistic Faculty Development: Writing Renewal Retreats and Contemplative Practices" at the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education Conference in Amherst, MA.
- Lucy Malenke presented, “Systematically Improving Writing Outcomes in Undergraduate Health Sciences Education Programs” with Sarah Rush (Health Sciences) and Amy Russell-Yun (Occupational Therapy) at the National Health Science Curriculum Conference (October 2016, Louisville, KY).
- Barrett, Rodolfo. “Non-white and Unbooked: The Effect of Ethnically-identifying Tutor Names on Appointment-based Writing Center Consultations.” International Writing Centers Association Conference, Denver, CO, October 2016.
- Kevin Jefferson (Professional Tutor), Sarah Kennedy (Graduate Student Tutor), Maria Castro (Undergraduate Tutor), Dansen Mayhay (Undergraduate Tutor), and Emmie Lacy (Undergraduate Tutor) presented, “Playing Hurt: Helping Stressed and Distressed Students in the Writing Center” at the Mid Atlantic Writing Centers Association Conference in Reading, PA.
- Laura Schubert and Kurt Schick presented, “Evidence-Based ‘Micro-Assessment’: Proposing a Writing Center Research Collaboration” at the International Writing Centers Association Conference in Denver, CO, October, 2016.

### Publications

- Schick, Kurt and Schubert, Laura. *So What? The Writer’s Argument*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and *So What? The Writer’s Argument*, Readings edition (November, 2016).

## Program Challenges

One recurring challenge is the recruitment of Faculty Associates from the school of Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication. We received no applicants to fill the position of outgoing Associate Vanessa Rouillon. The problem has been discussed with Learning Centers Director Kurt Schick and with WRTC Unit Head Traci Zimmerman, but no solution has been reached.

An emerging challenge in tutor training, one that has been easier to identify and articulate after increasing the number of peer tutor observations, is the gap between tutors working knowledge of writing center theory and practice, and what happens in observed tutoring sessions. Although tutors exit the tutoring writing course with solid theoretical knowledge and demonstrate understanding in professional development meetings, faculty observers are noting widespread lapses in consistency of tutoring practice. The faculty have identified a few interventions to implement during the 2017-2018 academic year.

## Goals for 2017-2018

- Begin carrying out the goals of the UWC 4-year strategic plan
- In response to tutor survey input, find ways for faculty to have more interaction with peer tutors on shift
- Expand online tutoring offerings

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## Approval

**Learning  
Centers**

**Director:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**        /        /

**UWC Associate**

**Director:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**        /        /

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