



University Writing Center

University Writing Center

2017-2018 Annual Report

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UWC Annual Report

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 3735 appointments during the 2017-2018 academic year, which is down from the previous year by about 125 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 2017

Total appointments: 1882 (down 128 from Fall 2016)

Face-to-face appointments: 1794

Online appointments: 88

SSC appointment usage: 75%

Spring 2018

Total appointments: 1827 (down 30 from Spring 2017)

Face-to-face appointments: 1743

Online appointments: 84

SSC appointment usage: 56%

Summer Session 2018

Total Appointments: 25 (double the number from last May term)

Face-to-face appointments: 17

Online appointments: 8

Appointment usage: 23%

Although the fall and spring usage is slightly down, appointment numbers are about normal. The spring semester usage dropped more than usual, due to flu and mumps outbreaks. 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.

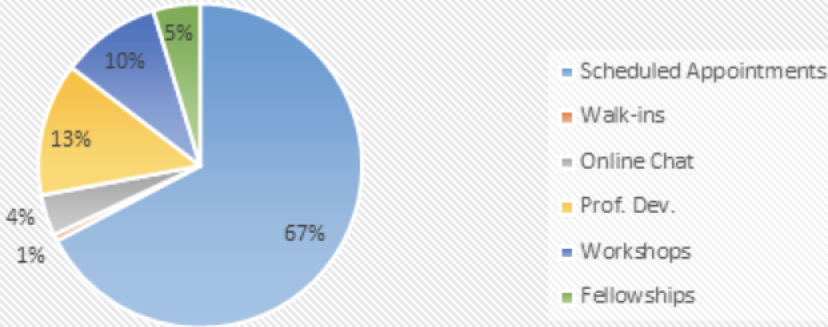
- Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication
- History
- English
- Health
- Finance
- Nursing

Top writing tasks of JMU writers this year.

- Research paper
- Personal statement
- Rhetorical analysis
- Literary analysis
- Reflection paper
- Historical analysis

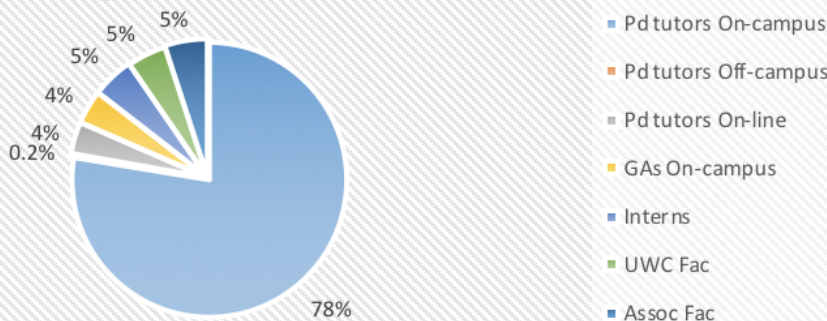
As a complementary way to look at the UWC's use of resources, we asked Joan Fahrney to compile information about the distribution of hours and money among UWC services.

AY 17/18 UWC PAID TUTORS - %
 - of \$48,810 wages
 - of 4270 hours



AY - 17-18						
Paid Tutors	Scheduled Appointments	Walk-ins	Online tutoring	Prof. Dev.	Workshops	Fellowships
hours	2876	28	175	567	425	200
cost	\$ 39,709	\$ 256	\$ 1,606	\$ 5,240	0*	\$ 2,000
%	81%	1%	3%	11%	N/A	4%
total cost	\$ 41,570				*Cost of Paid tutor hours for workshops is unavailable at this time. Costs are counted under Scheduled Appointments	

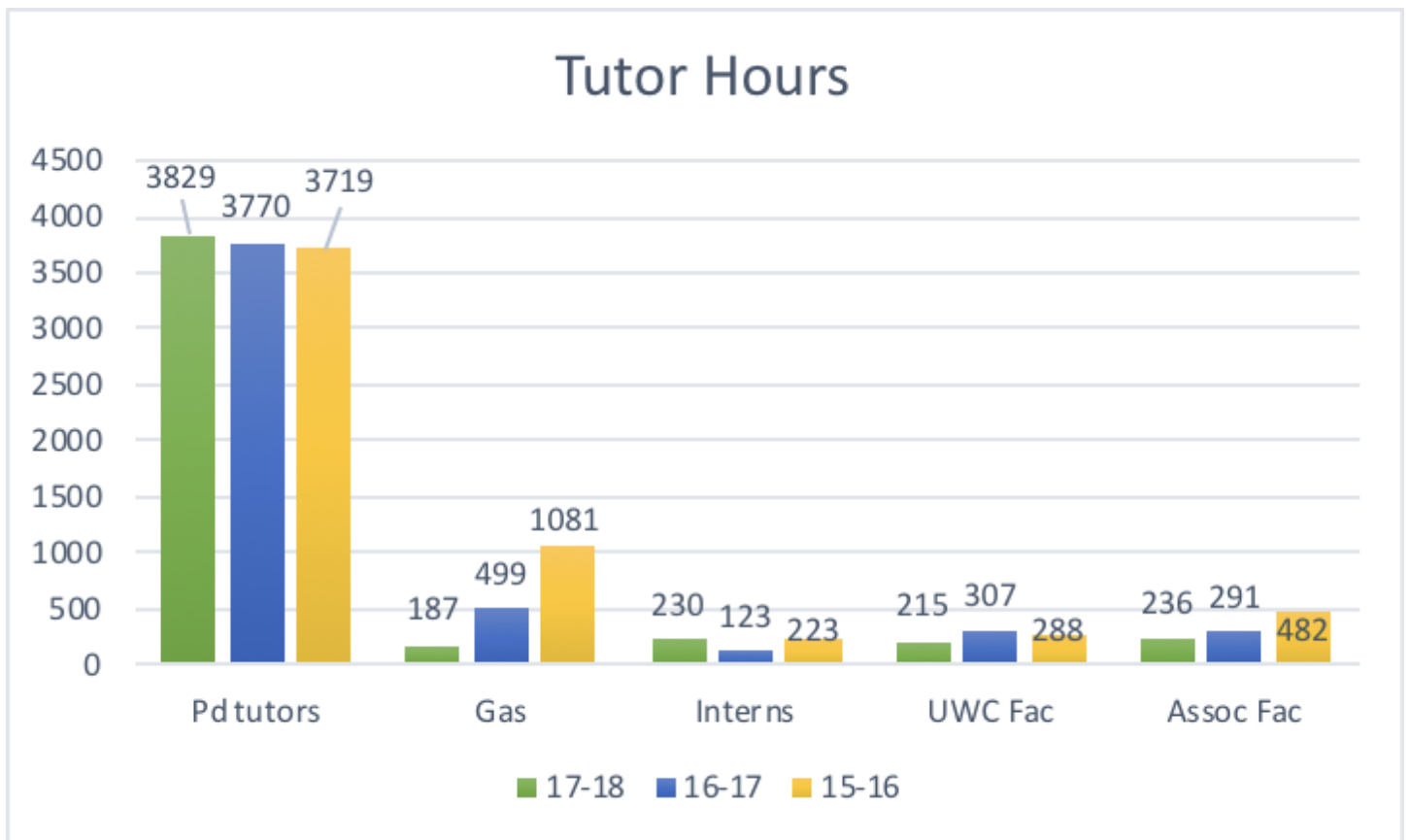
AY 17/18 UWC
 tutor hours provided by resource
 - of \$44,192 (pd) student wages
 - of 3829 (pd) student hours



AY - 17-18	Pd tutors			GAs	Interns	UWC Fac	Assoc Fac
Tutor hours	On-campus	Off-campus	On-line	On-campus			
hours	3645	9	175	187	230	215	236
cost	\$ 44,192	\$ 840	\$ 1,609	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
%	78%	0.2%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%
total cost	\$ 46,641						

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

hours	Pd tutors	GAs	Interns	UWC Fac	Assoc Fac
17-18	3829	187	230	215	236
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 502 post-session surveys. The most valuable results suggest that we are fulfilling our mission-statement: 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:

-93% of respondents felt that the advice they received from their tutor was "useful" or "very useful."

-97% of respondents felt more prepared to write or revise their paper following the session.

-94% 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.

Overall, 61% of appointments were from repeat users and 39% were from first-time users, which shows a 5% shift toward repeat users this year.

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:

"Everyone I worked with so far has been very helpful with all of my papers. I'm not a strong writer but after going to the writing center for all of my papers this semester I feel like I am gradually getting the hang of things. So thank you jmu writing center"

"I have worked with Jemma in the past, so having her available as a resource here in Spain is amazing! She was extremely helpful, and after the session I felt much better about my assignment."

"I love the ability to do online appointments there are advantages to meeting in person however this was incredibly convenient for my hectic schedule to just be able to sit at home at a time that worked best and brainstorm with someone and I will definitely use this again for my next (and final before I graduate) paper. I wish that I would have had this four years ago when I started."

"I really enjoyed how intently Blake listened and how she genuinely cared about my assignment. She simplified everything that was causing me stress and gave me the tools necessary to finish my paper with no sweat or troubles. Greatly appreciated her help and will be more open to utilizing the writing center in the future!"

"Jordan has been helping me write for a few months now and my writing has noticeable improvements after each session. I have only words of praise for the writing center."

"KC is a great supporter for me, especially that I'm an international student. She is aware of my needs as English is my second language. I'm sad that she is leaving by the end of this semester."

"She was awesome. My paper was definitely a hard one, because my assignment is so open and I only had the beginning finished, but I definitely walked away with a much clearer head about how I wanted to form my paper. She was really engaged the entire time and really tried to understand my paper and how to best structure it."

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.

In addition to the session surveys, the UWC conducts an annual survey that seeks more general input from our clientele to help us understand their needs and preferences. This data influences scheduling, staffing, strategic planning, and professional development. This year, we received 166 responses to the survey. Although there was nothing completely surprising, the following pieces of data will be useful in planning.

- Nearly 70% of clients surveyed said that their perceptions of the writing center changed after visiting. In the follow-up question, most clients reported that the session was more helpful than they expected.
- ~72% of clients surveyed said they felt very comfortable at the UWC; another 25% said they felt somewhat comfortable. **These numbers are good, but, despite many variables outside of our control, we would like them to be higher.**
- Clients continue to cite grammar and punctuation knowledge as the most important area of expertise for consultants (34%), followed by structure/organization (29%), and understand the prompt/professor expectations (23%). These trends were reflected in the last mass survey, and we have taken measures in professional development and in the tutor education course to build this expertise among consultants.
- Nearly 90% of clients surveyed felt that consultants should have specialized knowledge of the writing expectations of their course or major. Now that we can closely track the subject areas and specific writing tasks coming in to the UWC over time, we can take measures to prepare students for the genres they are likely to see in sessions.
- 83% of English Language Learners surveyed felt that the UWC was doing very well or well at meeting their needs
- 16% of those surveyed would prefer to have online or a mix of online and face-to-face appointments, as opposed to strictly face-to-face appointments
- Most students prefer to have tutoring sessions between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Our current scheduling reflects this preference.

- Over 80% of students surveyed said they would use a quiet space for writing if the UWC provided one. This is something we can consider in discussion with the admin team.
- ~86% of students said they would like to have a course-embedded writing consultant in their classes. To significantly increase the number of course-embedded tutors, we need a dedicated budget and staff person to coordinate a larger program.
- ~76% of student surveyed said they were likely or very likely to use online writing resources provided by the UWC. Our strategic plan includes specific goals for developing our own resources.
- Over 50% said they were interested in using online consultations

Learning Outcomes

Session Observations

Every UWC peer tutor and grad is 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. We are continuing to use the revised observation form developed last year, which parallels the session report form that consultants complete after each session with a student. These observations of consultants 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.

Tutoring Writing Course

There were no major changes to the tutoring writing course this year. Because we made significant changes last year, we wanted to have a few semesters of implementation in order to see the effect of the changes and whether further revisions are needed.

One significant change in the course has been the student demographics. This year, we have seen more diversity in the course, including a variety of majors and multilingual writers. The class included majors such as business, dance, economics, intelligence analysis, history, and music. This diversity has been increasing over the years, but this year's courses show an even more pronounced shift away from writing and English majors. We see this as a positive shift because the UWC serves the entire JMU community, a community that contains a wide range of writing tasks and expectations.

Professional Development

The UWC is working on ways to assess the instruction and activities offered during professional development. In the weeks following the professional development session on scaffolding in writing center work, the use of scaffolding techniques during UWC sessions went from 38% to 56%, as measured in the session report forms. This tracking offers a potential model for ways to track the results of professional development interventions in the future.

New Programs and Changes

International Satellite Locations

This academic year, the UWC established satellite locations in Salamanca and London, enabling consultant who study abroad to continue tutoring from a study abroad location. Jemma Stratton offered on-ground consultations in Spain during the fall semester, and Nico Penaranda gave consultations from his London study abroad location during the Spring 2018 semester. In the previous year, we piloted the study abroad model with Jorden Gunessever, who was tutoring from her London location. In her case, she offered both on-ground and online consultations (which included consultations with stateside JMU students). However, we found that she had enough business helping face-to-face on-ground students in London, so this year's abroad consultants focused on helping JMU students from their study abroad programs in face-to-face sessions. For these locations, we set up separate schedules in our WC Online scheduling system, so that we could track and isolate data from those locations.

UWC Website Redesign

In Fall 2017, the UWC collaborated with JMU's University Communications & Marketing office to redesign its existing website for JMU's Responsive Cascade system. With input from faculty and peer consultants, the new site eliminates several placeholder index pages, retitles and revises a number of pages and the site navigation, and privileges accessibility for all users. New pages include a "Strategic Plan and Annual Reports" page; the UWC continues to add to its suite of online resources for UWC consultants.

In Spring 2018, the UWC collaborated with WRTC's Dr. Elizabeth Pass to commission a usability test of the new UWC website. WRTC student—and UWC consultant—Alexandra Bowen recruited representative JMU students and consulted with the UWC to create five client scenarios for a think-aloud protocol. The final report submitted in early May notes that the UWC site is “usable in terms of its overall navigation and accessibility” as it offers specific recommendations regarding the site and the UWC's WCOonline scheduler. The UWC will develop initiatives to address these recommendations going forward.

Finally, again referencing the methods identified in its Strategic Plan, the UWC in Spring 2018 requested site analytics for the past two years from the University Communications & Marketing office. The UWC will use these reports as it continues to improve its existing online resources and identifies need for additional resources.

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

Fall 2017

1. Opening Meeting: review of session prioritizing and management
2. Genre Awareness and a rhetorical approach to tutoring

3. Scaffolding in writing center work; Presentation by Kurt Davies from Prestigious Scholarships (tutors reported using insights from him during application letter sessions)
4. Grammar, Punctuation, and Style
5. Distressed Students and Referrals

Spring 2018

1. Opening Meeting: review of session priorities and management
2. ELL Sessions and cultural awareness
3. Mindfulness in Writing Center work (Jared Featherstone's 2018 SCWCA Keynote talk was given; consultants offered feedback in preparation for the upcoming conference in Arkansas)
4. Marketing the UWC Skillset: post UWC careers
5. Responding to Excellent Papers, or responding to papers featuring technical language

Small Group Work

We had five small, faculty-led professional development groups during the fall semester, though budget did not permit the groups to continue in the spring. Each fall group met five times over the course of the semester, allowing some time to debrief about sessions but focusing efforts on a particular aspect of writing center work. The following topics were explored by the small groups.

Literature Reviews (Lucy)

In Fall 2017, Lucy Malenke led a professional development group to help tutors develop expertise in the genre of literature reviews. Over the course of their three meetings, they did the following:

- learned about the genre of literature reviews;
- read several literature reviews from different disciplines and contexts and discussed the different forms, features, and functions that they can have;
- practiced a handful of tutoring scenarios that highlighted common struggles that students have with literature reviews;
- discussed appropriate tutoring techniques to use when working with literature reviews;
- and practiced commenting on a literature review written by a JMU student.

This professional development initiative was also part of a study that Learning Centers faculty Paul Mabrey, Lucy Malenke, Jared Featherstone, and Laura Schubert are conducting to explore the differences in literature reviews produced by students who work with specialist vs. generalist tutors.

ELL Specialization Training (Laura)

In response to our awareness that UWC consultants need to improve their interactions with multilingual writers, Laura trained five consultants to develop specialization in tutoring English Language Learners (ELL). She met with this group

five times throughout the Fall semester, and she created activities and facilitated discussions during these meetings. She drew from her Ph.D. work in TESOL to develop consultants' knowledge about language acquisition and to teach them strategies for assisting multilingual writers. She also sought to develop consultants' grammatical proficiency to increase their self-efficacy during sessions with ELLs. In the semi-annual assessment surveys, UWC consultants reported a positive response to this training and mentorship:

- "I have learned more about how to confront certain grammar issues with ELL students."
- "In our professional development group, Laura provides relevant materials and always has a plan to further our education."
- "Laura is very smart and I can ask her anything regarding ELLs."
- "Her kindness and her open discussion with students as well as her knowledge of students with language as a second language."
- "She's pleasant and engaged during meetings, easy to talk to, clearly prepared and knowledgeable."
- "Laura provided me some very helpful feedback for how to improve my tutoring. She's very knowledgeable and approachable."
- "My time with Laura has made me more confident and more well prepared."

Online Resources (Kevin)

In Fall 2017, UWC consultants began identifying opportunities to revise and develop its suite of online "Writing Guides and Handouts" resources. A dedicated Professional Development team identified and fixed broken and outdated links, created consistent, inviting language to introduce pages and describe individual resources, and developed instruments for identifying new resource needs. A survey distributed to UWC consultants and a second survey (slated for distribution in Fall 2018), helped the team in this effort. The new site analytics reports coupled with a "Writing Guides and Handouts" usability test (tentatively scheduled for 2018-2019) will inform the initiative.

New resources include an "Evaluating Online Sources" page, developed by JMU Librarian/UWC Faculty Associate Brian Flota, and a four-part "Group Writing" video series created by UWC Assistant Professor of Writing and CHBS Liaison Lucy Malenke. UWC consultants also created a new document template and style guide for use in developing additional resources in the years to come.

Grammar and Style (Jared)

Jared's fall group focused on gaining a deeper understanding of style and grammar issues that we face and writing center consultants. We began by discussing the controversy surrounding The University of Washington writing center's social justice statement, one that asserted "there is no inherent 'standard' of English." We discussed the reasons for this writing center's statement and the reactions from conservative media. The concept of grammar instruction being political and having racial implications was relatively new to most consultants in the group. We moved

from there to a discussion of the idea of error and how it differs across contexts. For that discussion, our Graduate Assistant, Blake Lubinski, led a discussion of Williams' (1981) "The Phenomenology of Error." After spending some sessions focusing on theoretical ideas, we moved into specific style issues, such as nominalizations of verbs and other sentence-level issues.

Tutor Awards Ceremony

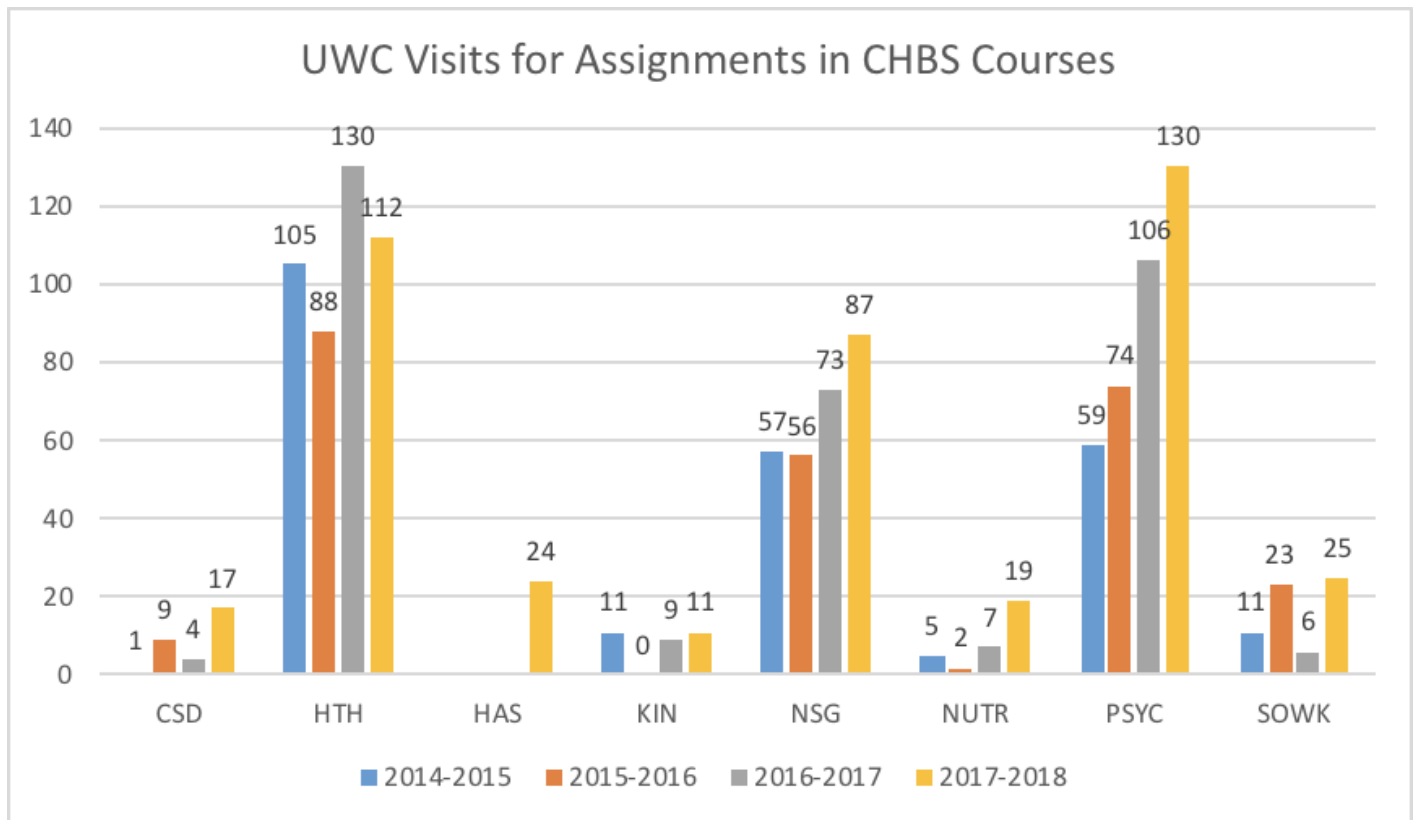
The UWC participated in the Learning Centers Tutor Awards Ceremony, honoring Aubrey Sharman, Annie Kelley, and Catherine Evans for semesters of outstanding contributions to the center.

Collaborations and Partnerships

CHBS

Four 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, as well as promoted the UWC's services to students and faculty in the college. Of the 18 presentations and workshops that Lucy Malenke gave (or trained a graduate student to give) this year, 14 were in CHBS classes or groups.

As displayed in the chart below, the UWC assisted a record number of students this year with their coursework in Communication Sciences and Disorders, Health Services Administration, Nursing, Nutrition, Psychology, and Social Work.



Additionally, many of the students who came to the UWC this year to work on personal statements (n=488) and research papers (n=548), two of the most popular writing tasks students visit with, came from CHBS.

Outreach

The UWC offered 18 presentations and workshops that reached 1,301 graduate and undergraduate students across campus. Topics and audiences ranged from strategies for writing literature reviews for M.A. in Psychological Sciences students to how to engage in the writing process for Health Sciences majors.

The UWC was also involved in a handful of faculty development initiatives. UWC faculty provided writing and instructional consultations to a number of JMU faculty. Additionally, Lucy Malenke and Jared Featherstone collaborated on two faculty development events, a January Symposium workshop on “Revitalizing Revisions” and a May Symposium workshop on “Evaluating Writing: When to Comment, What to Write, and How to Use Rubrics.”

Additionally, Lucy Malenke recently created a suite of five instructional videos on group writing that will appear on our website and can be shared with faculty and students. These videos address:

- The Benefits and Challenges of Group Writing
- Approaches to Group Writing
 - Creating a Team Charter
- Creating a Task Schedule
- Revising and Editing Group Writing

Writing Fellows (Laura Schubert)

This year, the Writing Fellows program supported two classes in nursing and ISAT— Analytical Methods for Healthcare (NSG 711) and Technology and Science Society (ISAT 131)—and we initiated a new partnership with the ROTC program. In the graduate-level nursing class, the writing fellow created an online module of resources for students focused on topics like APA style, concision, and synthesis. The writing fellow also offered approximately 30 hours of consultations to students working on a literature review. In the ISAT class, the writing fellow devoted 25 hours to student consultations. She also attended three classes to teach peer review techniques and to facilitate peer review activities, in addition to acting as a liaison between students and the professor.

In the ROTC program, we embedded two tutors in their department to support department-wide writing initiatives. These writing fellows developed learning modules for students on writing-related issues, such as plain language guidelines, synthesis, concision, and active voice. They each devoted 25 hours to holding individual writing consultations with students. Finally, they consulted with faculty on writing assignments, grading rubrics, class activities, and so forth.

Library Faculty Associate

Librarian Hillary Ostermiller serves as Faculty Associate in the UWC for 2018. As the liaison to Communication Studies, Media Arts & Design, and Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication, Hillary

provides both a natural connection (WRTC) and insight from a less connected department (SMAD). Hillary sat in on the Tutoring Writing class for spring semester and began tutoring at the beginning of February. During the Tutoring Writing class, she led three library and information-literacy related class sessions: an overview of JMU library services and how they connect/are similar to the work of the UWC; an exploration of the concept of information literacy and how it manifests in goals and learning outcomes; and an introduction to Joseph Bizup's BEAM Method of teaching research-based writing. Hillary will be developing modules on these three topics that can be adapted for use in the Tutoring Writing class or as all-staff professional development.

Brian Flota served as the Librarian in Residence in the UWC in the Fall 2017 semester. In addition to regularly holding consulting shifts, he collaborated with Kevin Jefferson to create a list of library-related resources for the UWC Consultant Field Manual: <https://www.jmu.edu/uwc/tutor-resources/tutor-field-manual.shtml#LIBRARY>. The resource is intended to assist UWC consultants when clients have questions or issues in their writing related to research, such as properly using keywords for database searches, finding peer-reviewed scholarly journals, evaluating the validity of online sources, or any other basic library-related questions.

Scholarly Achievements

Conferences

- Jared Featherstone gave the keynote talk, "From Rogue to RAD: The Mindfulness Journey for Writing Centers," at the South Central Writing Centers Association Conference, given at the University of Central Arkansas in February of 2018.
- Jared Featherstone also presented, "Creating a Mindfulness-based Reflective Writing Assignment," at the Contemplative Practices for 21st Century Higher Education Conference, held at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in March of 2018.
- Lucy Malenke presented, "Befriending the Border Patrol: Sharing Writing Center Expertise with University Faculty" at the 2017 International Writing Centers Association Conference in Chicago, IL (November 2017)
- Lucy Malenke organized and participated in reading "What I Found in Florida: Essays from the Sunshine State" at 2017 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference in Tampa, FL (March 2018)

Publications

- Malenke, Lucy. "Dirty Hands" re-published in the Florida-themed anthology *In Season: Stories of Discovery, Loss, Home, and Places in Between*.
- Malenke, Lucy. "The Weight and Wonder of Everything We Do Not Know." *The Other Journal* (March 15, 2017) <https://theotherjournal.com/2018/03/15/weight-wonder-everything-we-do-not-know/>.
- Schubert, Laura. "Can We Change Their Minds? Investigating an Embedded Tutor's Influence on Students' Mindsets and Writing." *Writing Center Journal* (under review).

Awards

- Laura Schubert received Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award, an award given to only three graduates from the University’s 13 doctoral programs.
- Laura Schubert received the Ninacs Innovative Researcher in Composition Award, an award given to one graduate student in IUP’s Composition & TESOL doctoral program.

Program Challenges

The UWC continues to have a deficit in resources. Specifically, we had no Faculty Associate from the school of Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication this year and no Graduate Assistant from the English department this year. For some semesters, we have been able to compensate for the lost consulting hours by giving more hours to undergraduate peer consultants. However, this is not quite an equal exchange because of the difference in experience and cost. In the past the faculty associate and GA hours were not coming out of our student wage budget. If we have to compensate for the loss of those hours out of our wage budget, we end up having to cut professional development to stay within budget. The professional development is, in part, what makes our consulting staff excellent.

With administrative transitions and a particularly strong flu season, we experienced some difficulties in keeping track of tutor shift swaps and cancellations. We also experienced problems with aligning hours worked with hours paid. However, with the switch from stipend pay to hourly pay in the upcoming year, these issues may not be a problem.

Goals for 2018-2019

- Continuing to implement the 4-year strategic plan
- Train and integrate a new one-year hire and graduate assistant

Approval

**Learning
Centers
Director:**

Date: / /

**UWC Associate
Director:**

Date: / /
