

Beyond Campus Bounds

The faculty of the University Writing Center is actively working to serve not just those at JMU, but to engage with communities beyond the bounds of the campus as well.

Jared Featherstone, Kurt Schick, and Laura Schubert are just a few of several tutors who presented at the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) bi-annual conference last year. IWCA focuses on the development of writing center directors, tutors, and staff by sponsoring meetings, publications, and other professional activities.

At the conference, UWC faculty presented "A Center for Pedagogical Innovation," which explored the ways in which the daily work and research of the center can be used to enhance classroom teaching of writing.

Having experience as both a writing center director and a classroom instructor, Schick observes that "students' learning while writing is usually invisible...professors will assign papers, and with the exception of only a few students, the only part of this process that is seen by them is the final product."



Jared Featherstone, Kurt Schick, and Laura Schubert at the 2010 International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference in Bloomington, Indiana. Photo by Christina Wulf

The Writing Center sheds light on this process by allowing faculty to observe students composing their essays. Schick describes the JMU center as a "research lab" that allows effective feedback to be given to

professors across the university about their assignments, insider information about exactly how students' struggle with writing, and how these dynamics play out during tutoring sessions.

presentations, the results from this field research are not only shared with JMU professors, but also published as an aid to professors at other universities. By providing professors with insight into the opaque side of students' writing processes and their influence upon it, professors here and beyond the campus can take part in devising and implementing methods to help improve assignments. Schubert says that her teaching style has been influenced by what she has seen in

The magic numbers

Wilson Hall consultations: 316
Carrier Library: 74
East Campus Library: 56
Total: 446

Workshops conducted: 7
Students and faculty attending: 202
Overall web site hits: 5,294
Resource downloads: 48

Total # of writers helped in Nov.: 696



the center and hopes to have the same effect on others.

"I want to influence and improve the teaching of writing outside of the writing center," Schubert says.

Peer tutors are making their mark as well. Graduate student Olivia Mankowski has contributed to Writing Center scholarship by co-writing an article, "The Idea of a Writing Center Course," with Schick and others that was published in 2010 in the Writing Lab Newsletter, a widely-read and cited publication among writing centers. The article focuses on the reasoning and success of developing a Tutoring Writing course that serves to

establish the culture and best practices of JMU's writing center. Mankowski was able to provide a student's perspective of the course's effectiveness.

Peer tutor Paul Loman, along with other peer tutors, contributed to an article published on the IWCA website's Featured Reading section and hosted a live discussion about our work with writing center professionals from around the country.

In addition, a video series produced by the UWC, starring peer tutors and faculty, was used at Brigham Young and other universities for tutor training and

faculty development.

It is clear that the possibilities and benefits the Writing Center offers are not limited to just JMU students, but go far beyond to improving writing and the teaching of writing across the country. Through the research, innovation, and daily tutoring practice, we hope to improve writers, professional relationships, and communication between students and professors at JMU and elsewhere.

~ Alexa Livezey, Junior/Peer Tutor

Marketing and Outreach Internships at the UWC

The University Writing Center has room for any student with passion and motivation to offer. Marketing and Outreach internships provide students with the opportunity to contribute their unique talents to help the UWC progress. This semester, I was fortunate enough to be a part of the UWC team, where I was able to witness the program's significant growth and share in the excitement of its many achievements.

In August 2008, I was enrolled in my first college writing course, GWRTC103. It did not take long for me to realize that I was going to need a little assistance from Harrison Hall's friendly neighbor, the University Writing Center. Since then, I have used the UWC as a useful tool to help me succeed in my writing courses. This eventually led me to declare Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication as one of my majors during my junior year.

This semester, I was ready to return the favor to my helpful tutors and serve as a marketing intern

to support UWC's mission to help improve writers across campus.

After weeks of research and planning, I devised a marketing campaign to create awareness throughout campus about the benefits of the UWC. With the help of another outreach intern, Senior Kelsey Feurer, I focused on each aspect of the JMU community in a strategic manner, and continued to brainstorm new ideas to help assist the growth of the UWC. I focused on the development of social media, print and digital advertisements, and presentations around campus. Each week, I anxiously checked the number of consultations and as I witnessed the growth, I was filled with enthusiasm.

The semester is quickly reaching its end, but the future ahead is promising. Next semester, the UWC will be welcoming Stephanie Mappin, Erin Kraft, and Siobhan Doheny to the team of outreach interns to contribute their individual talents in public relations,



Free tutoring!

university writing center
communication center
english language learner services

media arts and design, and presentational speaking.

~ Faizah Butt, Senior/Marketing and Outreach Intern

UWC Monthly
Editorial Director: Jared Featherstone
Managing Editor: Michael Critzer
Acquisitions Editor: Kelsey Feurer
Copy Editor: Brooke Covington
Photo Editor: Evan McGrew

Challenge of the Super Tutors

Last year the University Writing Center debuted our first creative, and since highly acclaimed, video, “We Think You’re Gonna Like it Here,” on the homepage of our website. While it was not the first such artistic or comedic representation of the kind of help that writing centers can offer students, it was unique to the UWC and the interests of our tutors. The video made waves in the writing center community, and Center coordinator, Jared Featherstone, along with peer tutors Paul Loman, Andrea Smith, and Martin Steger, who were all involved in the production, co-wrote an article about it for the IWCA website. Other centers were inspired by the project and university faculty found it to be a handy way to show students what kind of help they can expect from the UWC and how to make the most of it.

As the novelty of the video slowly waned, the sparse UWC staff of last May-mester thought it was time to produce another one. Something about the handouts and how-to resources we were developing reminded me, in an over the top, cheesy way, of the small public service announcements that used to come

between story lines of Super Friends: Aqua Man warning children to look both ways before crossing the street, or Wonder Woman instructing kids on what to do when they encounter a strange dog in their neighborhoods.

I wrote the script, casting UWC tutors as superheroes, and used photoshop to edit the still images I had taken of my colleagues in costume. Martin Steger, a SMAD/WRTC double-major, worked his editing magic, and by the beginning of the fall semester, the UWC had a funny, informative, and outrageous motion comic on the home page of its website.

UWC presenters have found it useful as they take the writing center message into classrooms, and reports have shown that professors have shown it to their classes on their own initiative.



Writing Center community stalwart Muriel Harris praised it online and other centers once again took notice. Whether or not it will end up inspiring an article or spinoffs remains to be seen, but it has already served its purpose by informing students and bringing many into the writing center who had never thought of coming before. And it is not the end of the UWC’s video career. Paul Loman is at it again, working on a script with his peers for another parody video, this one on the challenges of writing synthesis assignments.

~ Michael Critzer, Graduate Assistant

Networking the UWC

This semester, marketing interns Faizah Butt and Kelsey Feurer have increased the UWC’s online presence in the popular social media outlets through Facebook and Twitter. Social networking is an efficient way for the UWC to build a strong interactive community with JMU students and organizations. It benefits the UWC by creating an ongoing conversation with clients while spreading news and updates about the Center to a variety

of individuals in the community.

To keep followers interested, Faizah posts writing tips, words of the day, and interesting articles related to writing. She tries to get members of the JMU community involved by asking followers to tweet about their favorite words or what they like most about writing. In order to assess what posts gain the most popularity, Faizah does social media monitoring to see what people like and don’t like

about posts. Additionally, she posts other events going on at JMU to show support for various organizations and strengthen the UWC’s tie to the JMU community.

Both Faizah and Kelsey have worked diligently throughout the semester to market the UWC, and the increasing number of sessions each month attests to their success.

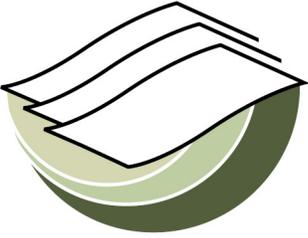
~ Beth Burghardt, Junior/Peer Tutor

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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