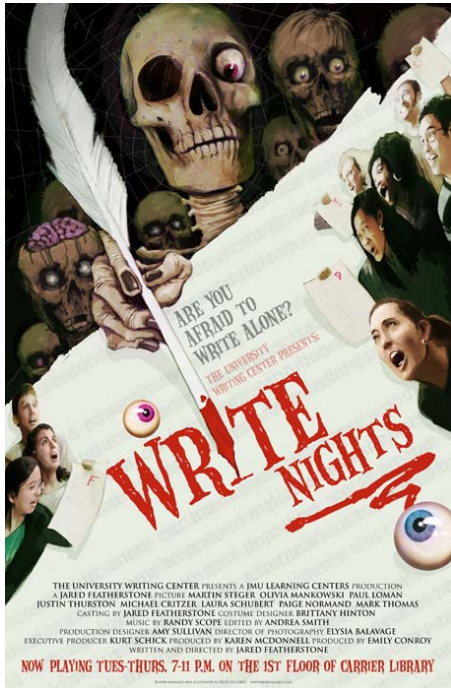


Write Nights gain momentum and make a difference



Promotional poster by Rich Hilliard

This semester, the UWC began hosting walk-in tutoring sessions, Tuesday-Thursday evenings from 7 to 11 in Carrier Library. The colorfully named "Write Nights" has enabled the UWC to expand its reach to the JMU community. Peer tutor Martin Steger writes about the experience:

So far Write Nights has been successful for me, and by that I mean I haven't made any students cry or scream in the middle of Carrier (which would surely disturb the Starbucks baristas). All of my sessions have been productive in some way, and the diversity of those has mirrored that of traditional Writing Center sessions: I've helped with everything from brainstorming to final revisions.

Many of the students I've tutored have never been to our Wilson Hall center, which means we're reaching a somewhat different audience. Conversely, I've seen several students who worked with a tutor in Wilson earlier that day or week; without the walk-in format of Write Nights, such follow-up appointments would not happen (since all of our Wilson appointment slots generally fill up a couple days in advance).

On nights when it's necessary

for tutors to work with multiple students at the same time, the Write Nights system encourages tutees to work on their own (because they won't always have a tutor around) but gives them the confidence to do so (because the tutor will be back eventually, should they need more help).

The time constraint (15-20 minutes per session on busy nights) can be challenging, and it's tough to keep track of who's walking in or out when you're tutoring away from the "command desk," but the workload's been reasonable. There hasn't been an apocalyptic flood of students rushing over our tutors like fire ants over a dying camel, but there hasn't been a drought either.

That is, we haven't been extremely busy...yet. People are noticing our signs. More "waves" of paper assignments will be upon us shortly. And the Write Nights tutors will be there, ready for the rush.

-Martin Steger, Senior/Peer Tutor

The magic numbers

Wilson Hall consultations: 353
Carrier Library consultations: 72
Online consultations: 4
Total: 429



Workshops conducted: 1
Students and faculty attending: 31
Overall web site hits: 6,904
Resource downloads: 29

Total # of writers helped in September: **489**

UWC contributes to the academic conversation

Congratulations to Jared Featherstone, Karen McDonnell, Kurt Schick, Laura Schubert, Andrea Smith, and Martin Steger who will all be presenting at the IWCA-NCPTW Conference in Baltimore. Look for coverage of the event in next month's issue.

The University Writing Center
4th floor, Wilson Hall
www.jmu.edu/uwc

When tutors become teachers

The UWC offers in-class workshops on specific or general writing topics and the services offered in the Writing Center. Peer tutor Olivia Mankowski remembers how one such presentation made an impact on a student:

There they sat: a blank sea of faces, politely listening as I explained the benefits of the writing center. I was not surprised by this reaction; even as a tutor going to represent the center I was particularly skeptical of the benefits of a class visit. I wondered why the teacher couldn't just tell them the same information. We have a website, after all. "That was rough," I

whispered to my colleague, "They just stared blankly at us the whole time." We left the classroom without much of a visible reaction from the class.

About two weeks passed, and I had almost forgotten about our class presentation until one night when a timid student approached our satellite writing center in Carrier Library. When we sat down to work on his paper, he smiled at me and said, "Do you remember me?" Embarrassed, I began racking my brain but to no avail. "You came to my class, remember? You told us to come to the writing center." With that simple interaction I suddenly understood the benefit of class

visits. This student not only listened and realized that the writing center existed, but when he showed up to be tutored, he already felt at ease, knowing who was going to be tutoring him.

While I had the impression that the class was just staring blankly at us, at least for this student, what we were presenting was more than just information from a website. Explaining the tutoring process and who we were put a face and level of comfort on the writing center, giving students that extra push to utilize the center as a resource.

-Olivia Mankowski, Senior/Peer Tutor

Tutors in training

Prospective peer tutors in the Writing Center have to complete a Tutoring Writing course which includes a mentorship and hands on experience. Caitlin Lee, a current student in that course, describes the benefits of the experience.

Before I was in the tutoring writing class, I had been tutored in the writing center many times. I always left a tutoring session amazed that my tutor could ask me the perfect questions about the mess of ideas in my draft and somehow pull an answer out of me. After going to many of these sessions, my writing had improved, but I was concerned when I signed up for the class that I would not be able to learn in just one semester how to tutor others who were struggling with some of the same issues I

still was. Now, only a little over halfway through the semester, I am astounded how training to be a tutor has improved my writing and assuaged my anxiety.

In class I have learned the questions to ask students which guide them towards finding their own way to improve their papers. Asking these questions requires looking at a paper objectively, which is easier for a tutor than the writer. Viewing a paper objectively has enabled me to assess my own writing as it would be read by someone else.

One of the most important things we have learned in class is that the goal of the writing center is to make better writers, not just better papers. Maybe when I am



Phillip Smith and Courtney Simon wait for class to begin

a tutor I can inspire students to also become tutors; then they will also see how reversing their perspective can make them better writers.

-Caitlin Lee, Senior/Tutor in Training