

# UWC Monthly

A publication of the James Madison University Writing Center

January  
2012

## JMU Writing Center stands out among Virginia peers

Most writing centers offer certain core services: undergraduate tutors, online resources and in-class presentations. In order to better help our students, the UWC has tried to go beyond these basic services. In comparison to other writing centers in Virginia (see chart), the UWC stands out.

One of the things that sets the JMU Writing Center apart is the diversity of our tutors. In addition to undergraduate tutors, the UWC provides graduate and faculty tutors. This practice creates more options for our tutees. Students who are nervous about having their writing evaluated by an expert (that is, a faculty member) can choose to work with undergraduate peer tutors. Those who are cautious about trusting a peer with an important assignment can choose to work with faculty.

### The magic numbers

Wilson Hall consultations: 191  
Carrier Library consultations: 24  
East Campus Library: 7  
Online consultations: 5  
Total: 227

Workshops conducted: 12  
Students and faculty attending: 380  
Overall web site hits: 5,016  
Resource downloads: 99

Total # of writers helped in January: 706



Virginia State University Writing Center Comparisons											
	JMU	VT	GMU	VCU	CNU	LONG-WOOD	UVA	RU	WM	UMW	ODU
Student Peer Tutors											
In-Class Workshops											
Online Resources											
Appointment Based Tutoring											
Walk-in Tutoring											
Satellite Locations											
"Writing Fellows" Program											
Online Tutoring											
Graduate Student Tutors											
Faculty Tutors											
Newsletter											

Our graduate students provide a happy medium between the two. By giving students more options, we hope that we can encourage a wider range of students to use our writing center.

Most of the writing centers in Virginia choose to offer either walk-in tutoring or tutoring by appointment. The UWC provides the best of both worlds. Our appointment-based system in Wilson Hall gives students the opportunity to reserve 45 minutes of one-on-one time with a tutor, ensuring that they will have plenty of time to improve their writing. However, appointment-based tutoring can be

problematic for students with busy and/or unpredictable schedules. Our walk-in hours allow students to get help as soon as they need it without having to worry about finding an appointment time that fits their schedule.

Our walk-in hours are also somewhat unique in that most of them take place in either Carrier or ECL. Of the other writing centers we've examined, only three have satellite locations. For most students, the library is a place to write and work. By working in Carrier and ECL, we can help students at a convenient location for them. As a bonus, our satellite hours (7:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.) take place after most classes are done, which is prime time for

The University Writing Center  
4th floor Wilson Hall, 1st floor Carrier and ECL  
[www.jmu.edu/uwc](http://www.jmu.edu/uwc)

completing class work.

In addition to providing flexible times and locations, the UWC has also distinguished itself by starting a writing fellows program in the Spring of 2009. This program allows tutors to work with one class throughout the semester, letting tutors have a greater impact

on a class than a “one and done” presentation would. Fellows give multiple writing-related presentations throughout the year and work closely with professors and students to have the greatest possible impact on student writing.

Overall, the UWC is doing its best to empower writers and

teachers of writing across campus. In providing a variety of programming, the center has also managed to distinguish itself among our peer institutions in Virginia.

*-Justin Thurston, Peer Tutor*

## UWC staff comes together in downtown Harrisonburg

To kick off the spring semester, the University Writing Center staff held its first informal get-together at the newly opened Capital Alehouse. In attendance were peer tutors, graduate assistants, UWC faculty, and friends of the UWC. Those of legal drinking age sampled some of the 100 beers on tap, while the underaged folks snacked on pretzels and french fries. With the expansion of the

Writing Center to three locations, events such as this hope to encourage camaraderie and community within the growing UWC staff.

“When we had a smaller group of peer tutors and a smaller faculty, we would have one meeting where everybody would come together,” said Jared Featherstone, University Writing Center Coordinator. “Now, there are some people that I just don’t see any-

more.”

The soiree was organized by Featherstone as an informal social event where “colleagues and friends with similar interests could get together.” The UWC can expect to see more of these gatherings in the future as the staff continues to grow.

*-Sam Nowak, Peer Tutor*

## Faculty Fellow Kevin Jefferson arrives for spring 2012

The University Writing Center welcomes new Faculty Fellow Kevin Jefferson this spring semester. A Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication professor who is no stranger to working with students on their writing, Jefferson is looking forward to being back in a writing center environment.

During his undergraduate years at The College of William & Mary, he worked as a peer tutor for three years. Even then, Jefferson “loved talking with students about their work and hopefully helping them become better writers.” Now he will be able to experience that one-to-one connection again.

Jefferson started working with JMU’s writing program in 2003 (which has since evolved into



the WRTC major), where he has taught numerous classes. Additionally, as co-advisor for the online journal, e-Vision, Jefferson coordinates the efforts of the journal’s student editorial board as they select essays by first-year students

in GWRTC courses for publication. Although he is taking on the role of Faculty Fellow, Jefferson will continue to teach a WRTC course and assist with the e-Vision publication, while also sitting in on the Tutoring Writing class for prospective tutors.

In his years as both tutor and professor, Jefferson has learned that the interaction with students on each level is very different. He looks forward to “removing that student-teacher

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relationship and moving it toward ‘we’re in this together as writers,’” said Jefferson. This will “both broaden my sense of what writing is and can be, and I hope make me a better teacher.”

In the first week of sessions, the UWC has had an impressive influx

of students. Jefferson had nearly a dozen consultations, quickly getting him back into the tutoring groove.

Not only is the new Faculty Fellow looking forward to working with students of other disciplines, but also watching the passions of

students and tutors in the UWC thrive: “that kind of passion sometimes gets lost when you’ve got your head down and go through the day-to-day. It’s fun to see.”

-Courtney Wood, Peer Tutor

## Peer tutor alumna becomes journal editor

When alumna and former University Writing Center tutor Alicia Wendt was job hunting, she came across an unlikely and interesting career opportunity. With confusion in one hand and zero preconceptions about how to fulfill the job’s requirements in the other, she took on the task, all thanks to her tutoring experience at the UWC.

As an undergraduate at James Madison University from 2006 to 2009, Wendt majored in English and minored in Writing & Rhetoric, Music, and Medieval & Renaissance Studies. Even with these four areas of study under her belt, the job Wendt landed in September 2010 was foreign to her—she became an Editorial Assistant for a peer-reviewed dermatology journal at Quadrant HealthCom Inc. in New Jersey.

“I pretty much had zero medical writing experience and no scientific background when I came into this job, so I definitely wondered how difficult it would be for me to adapt to a completely different writing style,” said Wendt.

However, as a UWC tutor from spring 2008 to spring 2009, Wendt was used to adapting to different writing styles and confident in her ability to learn quickly.

“As a writing tutor, I became comfortable working with students from a bunch of different disciplines, so I wasn’t too worried



Former Peer Tutor Alicia Wendt makes use of her UWC skills as an Assistant Managing editor for a peer-reviewed dermatology journal.

about being thrown into a field that was unfamiliar,” said Wendt. “I ended up catching on pretty fast and had no problem picking up a more scientific, technical writing style.”

She’s adapted so well that her boss recently asked her to write a column for the journal that’s normally written by physicians.

“When I finished writing it, I gave it to her to review, and she thought I had gotten a doctor to write it for me because I was able to match the style so well,” said Wendt.

“When I told her I wrote it myself, she was surprised and impressed.”

Since May 2011, Wendt has been working as the Assistant Managing

Editor. She credits having the UWC experience on her resume as one of the main reasons she stood out from the rest of the applicants in the first place.

“Having experience working one-on-one with academic writers in the UWC helped prepare me for these kinds of scenarios and to handle them in both a confident and productive manner,” said Wendt. “I never learned any of that in a classroom—it was all from the University Writing Center.”

-Cat Elsby, Peer Tutor

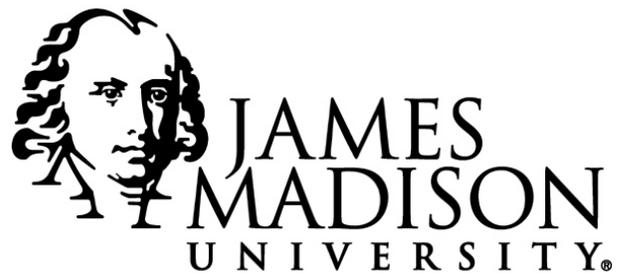
**University Writing Center**  
www.jmu.edu/uwc

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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