

UWC Monthly

A publication of the James Madison University Writing Center

March
2011

Writing Fellows in Action

This semester, our Writing Fellows Program is taking expansive steps to support more students and faculty across campus. After a successful pilot last year, tutors are now paired with two courses in the School of Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication (WRTC), and one class in the History department. This exciting growth more than doubles the program's services, indicating that the Writing Fellows Program is becoming an active and versatile extension of the University Writing Center.

The Writing Fellows Program places seasoned undergraduate tutors in courses in a variety of disciplines to offer dynamic writing and reading support. In these classes, writing fellows collaborate with course instructors to deliver mini-lessons, to work individually with students, and to enhance writing instruction.

In the history department, senior history major Olivia Mankowski is collaborating with Dr. Shah Mahmoud Hanifi to support students in his GHUM 200 course: Capitalism. Mankowski, a veteran UWC tutor, delivers



Laura Schubert, Martin Steger, and Olivia Mankowski Photo by Evan McGrew

mini-lessons in class on reading strategies, note-taking skills, and writing issues. She also consults with students individually on their writing assignments to help them improve as writers overall: "I have found that giving advice about how I would handle situations has been really effective. What is most valuable is letting students see the process I go through to figure out puzzling assignments." The students aren't the only ones who benefit, though. Since

Mankowski works closely with Dr. Hanifi, she is mentored in teaching strategies, classroom management, and course design.

In WRTC classes, writing fellows are

sharing their own writing strategies, and providing individualized instruction. For example, Martin Steger, a senior SMAD major who is assigned to Service Learning Writing (WRTC 322), finds it helpful to "share mistakes [he] made on past writing assignments" so that students can avoid similar pitfalls. Junior WRTC major Paul Loman is serving as a writing fellow in GWRTC 103: Critical Reading & Writing, where his expertise and creativity inspire more engaging classroom activities.

The expansion of the Program from one writing fellow per semester to three fellows marks a trend that the UWC intends to replicate next semester by partnering with University Studies. Next fall, the program is prepared to place writing fellows in several general education

The magic numbers

Wilson Hall consultations: 311
Carrier Library consultations: 37
East Campus Library: 13
Online consultations: 2
Total: 363

Workshops conducted: 3
Students and faculty attending: 44
Overall web site hits: 6,332
Resource downloads: 42

Total # of writers helped in January: 449



University Writing Center

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

courses, and the UWC welcomes additional faculty participants.

Faculty who are interested in collaborating with a writing fellow to offer additional writing and reading support in their classes can contact Writing Fellows Coordinator Laura Schubert at schubelk@jmu.edu.

-Laura Schubert, UWC Faculty



Now in two convenient library locations!

WRITE NIGHTS

FREE TUTORING

At East Campus and Carrier Libraries!

East Campus Library
Mon, Wed, Sun:
7pm - 10pm

Carrier Library
Tues, Wed, Thurs:
7pm - 11pm

WWW.JMU.EDU/UWC

UWC Professed



Photo by Evan McGrew

There are professors across many disciplines who refer their students to the University Writing Center. While their reasons vary from concepts like clarity of ideas to concepts like grammar, professors believe the UWC can greatly help students at all points in the writing process.

“Wherever the students are, tutors can adapt,” says Daisy Breneman, an instructor in the school of Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication. “I send students to the Writing Center who have no ideas or need to develop ideas or even have grammar issues.”

Professors like Breneman believe a student is more likely to be internally motivated and to struggle through issues like addressing

audience if they are invested in their topic. The interest in these topics can also carry over into the fields that students will enter into professionally.

Suzanne Baker, professor and one of two assistant heads of the Psychology department, claims, “Many students think they’ll graduate and never write again, but many jobs require writing.”

The kind of professions college students aspire to demand written work, and the stakes will be greater than maintaining a grade in a class. The UWC can help students develop skills that they can use in the future. This is one of the many reasons professors feel the UWC

can be so helpful to students.

“I wish more students would take advantage of the Writing Center,” says Baker. “We have great resources that you can’t access after graduation. I know that writing is hard and a lot of students would rather not do it, but the more you do it, the more you improve. You can always improve your writing.”

At the UWC, students can also gain writing tools to use in their future. According to Breneman, “there is a broad (long-term) range of skills and strategies students can learn.” The students are able to develop a better “toolkit” for their writing. Breneman explains that students can gain an understanding of concepts like thesis strategies, and tutors are able to explain rules like why a student should fix a comma, and not just say, “You need to fix this comma.”

Professors encourage students to make writing center appointments in a variety of ways. William Garriott, an assistant professor for

UWC Monthly
Editorial Director: Jared Featherstone
Managing Editor: Michael Critzer
Acquisitions Editor: Brittany Hinton
Copy Editor: Martin Steger
Photo Editor: Evan McGrew
Guest Editor: Karen McDonnell

the Justice Studies department, includes information on his syllabi and mentions the writing center on the first day of class. In addition, he has tutors from the center speak in his classes. Other professors like Baker and Breneman also utilize e-mail and Blackboard to inform students about the Writing Center.

When the students receive the information and decide to take their professor's advice to go to the UWC, the feedback is positive. "Students

realize how empowering it is," says Breneman. "They get encouragement from tutors who bolster and benefit their confidence. In the long term, they get foundational skills they can apply to writing assignments in the future."

According to Garriott, "students appreciate getting candid, detailed personalized feedback from someone trained to offer instruction in writing. It also helps that tutors are a neutral source who will not be grading the

paper because it allows the focus to stay on the writing rather than the grade."

This freedom from the grade allows the UWC to better help students to develop into more proficient writers – the center's goal for all of the students who come in for consultations.

-Brittany Hinton, Senior/Peer Tutor

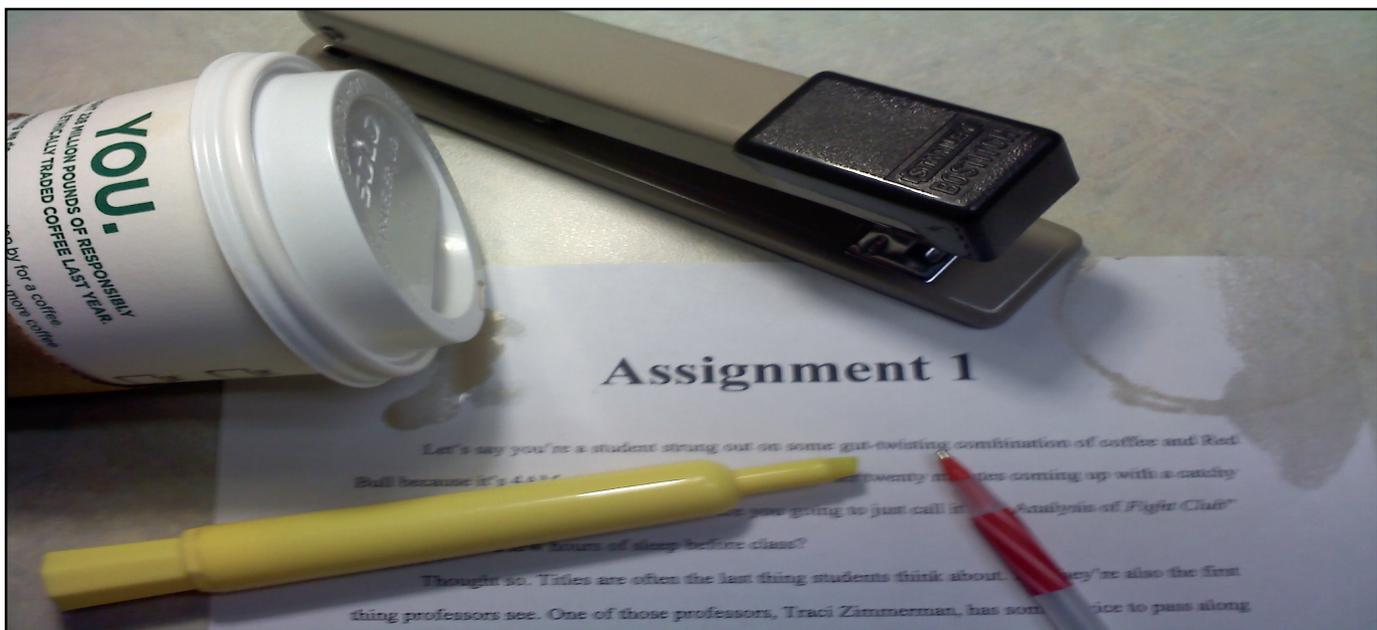


Photo by Evan McGrew

[title]

Let's say you're a student strung out on some gut-twisting combination of coffee and Red Bull because it's 4 a.m.. Are you going to spend another twenty minutes coming up with a catchy title for your analysis of *Fight Club*, or are you going to just call it "An Analysis of *Fight Club*" and try to grab a few hours of sleep before class?

Thought so. Titles are often the last thing students think about. But they're also the first thing professors see. One of those professors, Traci Zimmerman, has some advice to pass along to writers:

Don't be boring. "I hate

'Assignment 2' or anything that restates the assignment," she says. Soup cans need labels. Papers need attention-grabbers.

But don't go overboard. In Zimmerman's words, a title is bad if it "mocks the paper." It's possible to try too hard, in which case it's probably best to back off for a while or have someone else read the paper.

Do it last. Writing a title first can be paralyzing because it's like trying to name an animal that hasn't been discovered yet. Zimmerman says, "don't write the title until you've written the paper, and even then wait

24 hours." Which, of course, requires not waiting until 4 a.m..

Tutors at the University Writing Center can also help by encouraging writers to identify the central theme, the tone, or the most poignant part of their paper, which—hopefully—is where the title will come from. Furthermore, tutors can explain the importance of a title: we feel boredom as readers when we encounter "Response 1" but excitement when we see something as wittily titled as this column.

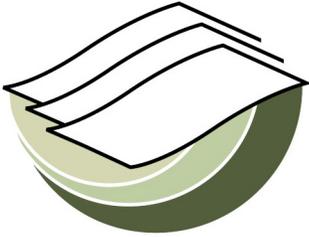
Martin Steger, Senior/Peer Tutor

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



University Writing Center



MSC 1007
951 Madison Drive
Wilson Hall, Room 417
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
540.568.6967 Phone
540.568.3450 Fax
feathej@jmu.edu
www.jmu.edu/uwc

UNIVERSITY WRITING
CENTER