

# UWC MONTHLY

A Publication of the James Madison University Writing Center

March/April 2014

## Looking to the Future: Life After the UWC

As an undergraduate student, it's easy to put off the realization that college will eventually come to an end. Students often find themselves reveling in a false sense of comfort, which lasts until senior year rolls around. Conversations then become dominated by the topics of "after-graduation plans," résumés, recommendation letters, and salary statistics.

When searching for a job, students have to consider not only their academic prowess and extra-curricular activities, but their undergraduate work experience as well. It's no different for UWC tutors, who must also consider how to market their tutoring skills to future employers in the competitive job market.

In light of this, the Writing Center

hosted a Post-UWC Career Workshop for its staff on Tuesday, March 25th, to help combat the shell shock that graduation and its aftermath can bring. The workshop was the first of its kind for the UWC, and was hosted by Learning Centers Director Kurt Schick.

UWC Coordinator Jared Featherstone states that the workshop was mainly for peer tutors to "gain some insight on what jobs might be available to them after graduation and how they might articulate their UWC experience for maximum impact" in the job market.

Drew Watt, a peer tutor who will be graduating in May, thought that the most beneficial take-away from the workshop was learning to talk about

*(continued on next page)*

## What's Inside

### Looking to the Future: Life After the UWC

by Allison Michelli

Pages 1-2

### Writing Panel Introduces Tutors to Engineering Conventions

by Rudy Barrett

Pages 2-3

### UWC Researchers in Windy Indy

by Brian Caperton

Page 3

### Francis, People Whisperer

by Daniel Zimmerman

Pages 3-4

### A Different Side of the UWC: The Marketing and Outreach Internship

by Morgan Touey

Page 4

### Don't Panic: A Surprising Future for One UWC Alumna

by Adrian Jarvis

Page 5

### The First Official Farewell

by Maya Chandler

Page 6

## UWC Monthly

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## The Magic Numbers

March/April

Wilson Hall consultations: 255/430  
Carrier Library consultations: 34/57  
Rose Library consultations: 31/35  
APC consultations: 3/10  
Total: 323/532



UWC tutors discuss résumé tips with Kurt Schick

Photo credit: Allison Michelli

tutoring skills in a way that employers will understand: “I thought it was valuable to distinguish between how we talk about our skills to each other and how we should talk about them to people unfamiliar with this kind of work.”

Featherstone was inspired to have the workshop based on informal discussions with tutors over the years, the UWC alumni survey, the alumni profiles featured in the *UWC Monthly*, and the work of various professional

development groups. Staff and tutors alike hope that the workshop will become an annual event to prepare tutors for their rapidly approaching departures.

*-Allison Michelli, Peer Tutor*

## Writing Panel Introduces Tutors to Engineering Conventions

On Tuesday, March 31st, the University Writing Center held its third annual interdisciplinary writing panel to help tutors understand writing tasks from unfamiliar fields on the JMU campus. These panels, moderated by UWC Peer Education Coordinator Laura Schubert, use a question-and-answer session with faculty from a different discipline each year to enlighten current tutors about their varying writing conventions.

The first of these panels, conducted two years ago, involved faculty members from fields as varied as history and communications. However, the diversity of faculty members led to numerous contradictions between styles and rules. To remedy this dissonance, the most recent panels have focused on a specific field to give a more unified picture of what tutors should expect when working with students from these disciplines. Last year, the panel featured three professors from JMU’s Integrated Science and Technology Department, and this most recent panel focused on writing in the Engineering major.

Dr. Elise Barrella and Dr. Heather Watson, associate professors in JMU’s Engineering Department with specializations in civil and mechanical engineering respectively, were invited to discuss the aspects of writing as an engineer. Schubert asked questions pertinent to tutoring writing about common writing assignments and the stylistic conventions for their field. Their answers helped give tutors a broader and more personal understanding of the audiences and purposes



*Dr. Elise Barrella and Dr. Heather Watson of the Engineering Department*

Dr. Barrella and Dr. Watson’s responses covered the main genres (formal technical reports, proposals, lab reports, and technical memos) and the core values (concision, impersonality, and technical accuracy) of engineering writing. Topics ranged from their writing pet peeves, the misconceptions about writing in their discipline, the pitfalls student writers face when writing technically—even offering several tutoring and classroom strategies. Dr. Barrella and Dr. Watson provided helpful handouts on writing that they’ve used in their own classrooms and even suggested textbooks and online resources to help tutors understand the generic conventions of their discipline.

During and after the formal questioning by Schubert, the peer tutors in attendance asked their own questions. This dialogue generated many constructive ways for tutors

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to help Engineering students in a consultation, and ways for the professors to bring the UWC's values back to the classroom. Due to the number of majors offered at JMU, interdisciplinary writing panels like these are invaluable

## UWC Researchers in Windy Indy

Last month, Learning Centers Director Kurt Schick, Faculty Fellows Kevin Jefferson and Laura Schubert, and Graduate Assistant Brian Caperton ventured to Indianapolis, Indiana, to represent the UWC at the International Writing Centers Association Collaborative. The theme this year was "The Idea of Openness," and it featured a number of workshops, roundtable sessions, and collaborative writing circles facilitated by presenters from around the nation. The UWC team led a round-robin discussion entitled "The Costs of Openness," which focused on tutor health and emotional well-being.

Preparation began months before the conference. Motivated by the possibilities of applying psychology to writing center practices, the presenters started by asking the question, "Do we ever feel burned out after our tutoring sessions?" They then constructed a survey posing questions about burnout, cognitive overload, and compassion fatigue, and administered it to current and former UWC tutors.

## Francis, People Whisperer

Last month, a venerable Francis made an appearance in the University Writing Center—but instead of wearing white robes, this Francis sported a blue vest. Like his papal counterpart, he assists students with their spiritual and mental well-being, even though he does so on four legs rather than two.

For readers who aren't familiar with Francis, he is a small, black-and-white therapy dog who helps students in the Counseling and Student Development Center's (CSDC)

for equipping tutors with an expanded repertoire for tutoring across a wide variety of disciplines.

*-Rudy Barrett, Peer Tutor*

After presenting the survey data at the beginning of the session, the team members rotated between tables, encouraging testimonials, impressions, and further insights into tutor well-being. Many participants were eager to share stories, and admitted that the repercussions of difficult tutoring sessions often go unnoticed, commenting on the need for stress-management resources.

Currently, a handful of UWC tutors plan to continue this research. Next year, they hope to present at several writing conferences, focusing on the union of psychology and writing center pedagogy. Research will continue to prioritize mental health strategies, while also exploring new territory. Ultimately, these students hope to promote the idea that writing centers need to take care of their tutors as much as their tutees, while striving to establish the UWC as a progressive, cross-disciplinary community.

*-Brian Caperton, Graduate Assistant*

Animal Assisted Therapy program. In addition to his clinical job, Francis has become something of a personality on campus, using his fame to raise awareness regarding mental illness and spread the word about the wide range of mental health services available to JMU students. Although it may seem odd that a therapy dog would visit the Writing Center, his work and the work that goes on in a writing center frequently overlap.

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Francis with peer tutor Kellie Waryn

Photo credit: Colleen Tennyson

The task of composition is often a daunting one, one that induces stress and anxiety in many students as they strive to meet deadlines, churn out assignments, and apply for internships and jobs. Writing Center tutors frequently play

the role of an encourager, supporting students who are under great pressure—as does Francis.

The UWC works in conjunction with CSDC to provide students with the best chance to flourish academically and personally. Brian Caperton, a graduate assistant in the UWC who is completing his M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, said he was glad to coordinate Francis's visit and was excited for the prospects of more collaboration between these two departments. We at the Writing Center recognize that the help we provide is, in so many ways, different than the work provided at the CSDC, but nonetheless we welcome Francis's presence and applaud his work.

Now if only he could explain dangling antecedents...

-Daniel Zimmerman, Graduate Assistant

## A Different Side of the UWC: The Marketing and Outreach Internship

In approximately one month, I will graduate from the School of Communication Studies at James Madison University—and although this idea terrifies me, it excites me as well. My time at JMU has allowed me to not only sharpen my skills, but also to better myself as a person.

One of my greatest achievements has been my time as a Marketing and Outreach intern at the University Writing Center. My responsibilities as an intern have allowed me to exercise the skills I have obtained in the classroom. I focus on maintaining social media outlets to promote the services of the center, editing the UWC website, and distributing various UWC advertisements



Morgan Touey

throughout campus. This internship has allowed me to interact with JMU faculty, alumni, and peers through face-to-face discussions and social media.

As a senior this year, I was very eager to fulfill a position that will help me in my future as a Public Relations professional. Dedicating my time and energy to the UWC has given me the opportunity to prepare for my future. I am grateful for the experience I have been given and to the employees of the UWC that have helped me along the way.

-Morgan Touey,  
Marketing and Outreach Intern

## Don't Panic: A Surprising Future for One UWC Alumna

Carly Botero graduated from JMU in May 2013 with a bachelor's degree in WRTC and a year with the UWC under her belt—but you wouldn't know it based on her recent work.

"I technically have two jobs," says Botero, whose desire to work with video media landed her an internship in Washington, D.C. For the internship, she works as an Associate Producer for the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). The position aligns with Botero's love of film and creative projects. "My primary duty is to manage our YouTube account," she explains. "And when we make new videos, I go through and write the descriptions and any citations needed."

Botero had been interested in working with AEI before graduating, but had not foreseen becoming a substitute teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools. "I had been doing freelance video work on the side, but needed something more stable," says Botero. "I talked to my brother who had been a substitute, he told me to apply online—and the same day I applied, I became a sub."

Botero says that after a brief application process, she is free to teach most subjects to K–12 students, and has been

traversing Fairfax County teaching almost any subject the schools need. Despite this new territory, she's become comfortable with the position, thanks to skills learned during her time with the UWC.

"The younger kids are the most fun to work with," she says. "But with any class, you have to be able to build rapport with people you've just met; just like at the Writing Center." Many other aspects of tutoring inform her substitute teaching as well, beyond just interfacing with the children. Her UWC experience prepared her to be a good listener, a problem-solver, and an adept communicator as well.

Botero recalls her professional development meetings specifically, saying, "The professional world is just like that. You all have a set of common goals; you're always making sure you're giving people what they want."

To tutors about to graduate, Botero stresses the importance of taking the time to explore. "Don't panic if you're not sure what to do," she says calmly. "You need time to assess who you are and what you want to be."

*-Adrian Jarvis, Peer Tutor*



*Carly Botero*

## The First Official Farewell

On Friday, April 25th, the University Writing Center will be saying goodbye to fifteen tutors and celebrating a year of work—but for once, it’s non-tutoring work. For the first time, professional development groups will come together to talk about the projects they’ve been working on since last fall. Although there have been previous end-of-year UWC celebrations, this is the first time a professional development capstone will take place—so tutors are readying themselves to discuss their projects, discussions, and meetings.

Additionally, the gathering will be an “opportunity to send off our graduating tutors,” and “to provide some closure for the year,” says Laura Schubert, Peer Education Coordinator, who is organizing the event. Many tutors, who often work shifts with a limited number of UWC staff, are looking forward to the event as a way to come together and see the different faces of the UWC, and experience what others have been working on.

*-Maya Chandler, Peer Tutor*



Haley Cline



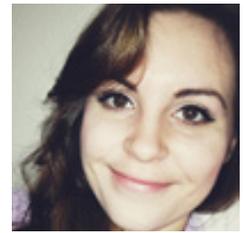
Lauren DiRuggiero



Jennifer Eyring



Kristin Gatti



Kellie Harlow



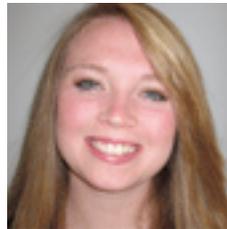
Taylor Hudson



Adrian Jarvis



Alice Koganova



Alexa Livezey



Kirstyn Nutter



Kelly Reetz



Alison Walsh



Kellie Waryn



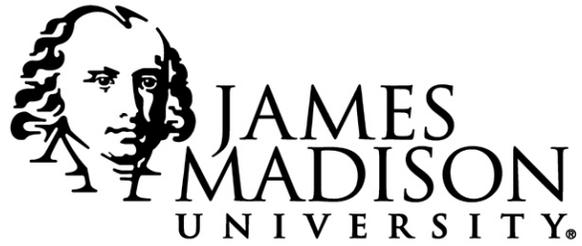
Drew Watt



Chelsea Woods

## University Writing Center

[www.jmu.edu/uwc](http://www.jmu.edu/uwc)



The University Writing Center offers:

- Free, individualized writing help for all students and faculty
- In-class workshops on a variety of writing topics
- Hundreds of writing links collected on the UWC website

### Locations and Hours

- Wilson Hall: Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.
- Carrier Library: Monday and Wednesday, 7–10 p.m.
- East Campus Library: Monday and Wednesday, 7–10 p.m.

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