

UWC

Spring 2017

Email Archive

- [Monday, April 17, 2017 2:00 PM: Announcements from Friday's Meeting](#)
- [Thursday, April 6, 2017 12:30 PM: Fall Hours and Rehire Paperwork](#)
- [Monday, March 20, 2017 4:22 PM: TEDx and Mayterm](#)
- [Wednesday, March 15, 2017 10:52 AM: Green Slips for Finance Students](#)
- [Monday, March 13, 2017 2:26 PM: UWC Weather Policy and Our New Video](#)
- [Tuesday, February 21, 2017 3:33 PM: BRCC Sessions](#)
- [Tuesday, February 21, 2017 3:24 PM: Finance Case Write-up](#)
- [Thursday, January 26, 2017 2:08 PM: Dear UWC](#)
- [Wednesday, January 25, 2017 10:43 AM: Tutoring Students in Turkey](#)
- [Tuesday, January 17, 2017 4:23 PM: Dear UWC](#)
- [Monday, January 9, 2017 3:22 PM: Meeting this Friday and Presentation Opportunities](#)
- [Monday, December 5, 2016 3:38 PM: Dear UWC](#)

Spring 2017 Email Archive

Monday, April 17, 2017 2:00 PM: Announcements from Friday's Meeting

Thanks for a great meeting, Friday! It was great to see the work you've done on the simulator projects. I was very impressed, and I think all of the projects contain useful teaching points. I plan to demo them on the tutoring writing students next week.

Please make every effort to maintain the same high quality of consultations through the last week of classes and finals week. As you can see from today's schedule, we are likely to see a steady flow of clients. They will be stressed out. They are in need of your expertise and your empathy. Ask clients how they are doing at this point in the semester.

Ask if they've gotten feedback on their writing. By this point, most students have already gotten some feedback from their professor. This feedback, even from a previous assignment, can be useful.

Be sure to greet anyone who enters the UWC. Please do not get so lost in your technology that you don't notice the stressed-out humans entering our space.

I mentioned two upcoming opportunities for you, the library focus group and the mindful retreat day. Here's the full information on them:

1. library focus group opportunity

You're invited to participate in one of 2 focus groups about Libraries and Educational Technologies this spring. To fit your busy schedule, the focus groups will be during dinner time during the week of April 17, and we'll feed you dinner.

For more information and to RSVP: http://jmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_88kihT2hwmPHACF

By sharing your feedback, you'll be helping us plan for the future of the JMU libraries - which will benefit yourself as well as future students! We want your thoughts, whether or not you've ever used library spaces or services. The sessions will last about an hour. A moderator will get the conversation going and we hope to hear your honest thoughts. We're seeking 15 students for each group and you may be placed on a wait list if we already have 15 by the time you RSVP.

2. mindful experience retreat day

This year, it is my pleasure to announce that two esteemed faculty members have agreed to host and present. This is the collaboration I've been hoping for. The event will open with Dr. Liam Buckley who will manage the opening circle and meditation. Dr. Karin Tollefson-Hall will present a session for exploring mindfulness and creativity. This will be very experience based as participants will be offered a variety of mediums for creative/mindful exploration. Finally, we welcome Chakra Kahn back to campus for a Tibetan Singing Bowl meditation and Kirtan. All are welcome.

When – Sunday, April 23rd, 2017

Where – Festival Highlands Room

Time – 1pm – 5pm and we will start on time.

Mats and cushions will be provided. There will also be a refreshment station or green room for tea and light snack fare to fuel the afternoon. We are using an on-line sign-up process this year and there are 50 spots open. I encourage you all to sign up and share this link with others who may be interested. Please feel free to announce to your classes as well. I thank-you in advance for supporting these mindful programming options! Here's the sign-up link: <http://info.jmu.edu/studentactivities/mindful-experience/>

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Thursday, April 6, 2017 12:30 PM: Fall Hours and Rehire Paperwork

Peer tutors, I need to know the number of tutoring hours you intend to work in the fall. The deadline to tell me the number of hours you want to work is this Monday, 4/10. Please go to the [Google form](#) and fill out the requested information.

At next Friday's all-staff meeting (4/14), the last of the semester, you will sign your rehire paperwork. That paperwork will show your fall tutoring hours and your professional development hours.

Also, at that 4/14 meeting, we'll have PIZZA for you, and we'll be toasting/roasting our outgoing senior tutors and showcasing your simulator projects!

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Monday, March 20, 2017 4:22 PM: TEDx and Mayterm

Peer tutors, I need to know if any of you would be interested in the following opportunities.

TEDx event: I need two tutors to represent the UWC at JMU's TEDx event 4/3. In exchange for running the UWC's booth before then event and at intermission, you will be able to attend the talks. This is an exciting opportunity for the UWC. Please let me know ASAP if you are interested. Here's some additional info.

- Date: Monday, April 3, 2017
- Time: 5PM to 7:30 PM
- Location: Madison Union Ballroom (located on the 5th floor across from Madison Grill)
- Speakers: This year we (*editor's note: "we" and "I" in what follows do not refer to the UWC and Jared*) are featuring 2 student speakers who were chosen by popular vote on campus. We had over 2,800 votes and are thrilled to have JMU students Raine Wilson and Jonathan Stein speaking at the event. In addition, we will be hosting JMU professor Dr. Nash and two alumni speakers, Alex Paullin and Zephan Blaxberg. Feel free to check our website soon for speaker bios.
- Booth Set-up: You will be able to come to the Madison Union Ballroom beginning at 4PM to set up your booth. I will be there to assist you in any way possible and show you to your table. The size of each table is 8 feet long by 18 inches wide/deep. If you need any additional volunteers to help set up beforehand, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.
- Booth Activity: You will have the opportunity to showcase your booth to attendees from 5PM to 5:30PM prior to the start of the event. You can also make use of your booth (optional) during our intermission from approximately 6:30 to 6:45 PM. Please let me know if you plan on using this optional time.

May term tutoring: The UWC is usually open during the first May term. If you are interested in having tutoring hours between May 15 and June 9, please let me know. If you are graduating in May, you are not eligible (sorry).

Btw, we have a mandatory all-staff meeting this Friday at 2 p.m. in the UWC. See you there!

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Wednesday, March 15, 2017 10:52 AM: Green slips for Finance students

Colleagues, we are seeing a lot of students from Professor Schumann's Finance 365 course. They are required to visit the UWC, and they will be asking for the green proof-of-visit slips. In at least two sessions, the students were resistant to the tutor's efforts to take an in-depth look at the paper. They stated that they only wanted help with "formatting." Please do not feel pressure to give a student a green slip for a short session with an uninvolved or resistant student. While it is possible to have an effective 15-minute session, it is rare.

Before this professor required her students to come, she contacted me. I gave her some text to send to the students, so that they would know what to expect in a productive UWC session. Despite this, some students are trying to go through the motions and get the slip without working. We do not support this. You can feel comfortable stating that you are not authorized to provide a slip for a session in which the client is not fully invested. If any client is irritated by this, you can refer them to me.

If you are wondering how to respond to a student who seems to be focusing on the green slip and resistant to learning, here are some options:

- a. Remind them of the UWC's [mission and values](#). You can even open the page for them.
- b. If they insist on focusing on surface issues like punctuation or formatting, that is their right. However, you can say that you still need to understand the purpose, audience, and context for this piece of writing if you are going to give them effective advice.
- c. Suggest using the prompt as a way to gauge the paper's content, organization, and other choices. If nothing else, students want to please the professor and get a good grade. Prompts and rubrics can allow you to address the most pressing issues of the paper.

I have contacted the professor to let her know that some of these sessions have been unproductive. However, because I see that we have more of these sessions booked today, I wanted to remind you of our green slip policy. Let me know if you have any questions.

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Monday, March 13, 2017 2:26 PM

Good afternoon, colleagues. I just wanted to make sure everyone is familiar with our weather policy. Just two things to remember.

- a. If JMU is closed or delayed, the writing center is also closed or delayed.
- b. If JMU is not closed but bad weather is creating unsafe conditions for you to get to your shift, we can cancel your hours. Just message Adrienne and Cc Jared as early as possible. You might also text Jared at 540-416-3357.
- c. If you are working a UWC shift, bad weather is upon us, and you feel that you need to leave before the end of your shift in order to get home safely, you may do so. Please just text Jared 540-416-3357, so that we can block off the schedule and/or inform clients. This hasn't happened often, but, occasionally, JMU takes a while to make up its mind about closing.

On a lighter note, the new UWC video is finished and up on our Youtube Channel! I added my soundtrack to Lucy's excellent narration and the animation by Innovation Services, and I think you'll be happy with the results. Thanks again to Lucy for the scripting, narration, and project management.

Please share our new video on Facebook, Twitter, etc.: <https://youtu.be/5602M7B67dQ>

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Tuesday, February 21, 2017 3:33 PM: BRCC Sessions

Colleagues, in case you didn't see this, we have a separate schedule for the BRCC students. If you have volunteer hours for the BRCC students, you'll see your hours in the BRCC schedule (after logging in to WC Online, use the pull-down menu under the UWC logo to select the BRCC Students Schedule). Both your online and f2f sessions will be logged there. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks.

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Tuesday, February 21, 2017 3:24 PM: Finance Case Write-up

Colleagues, I've received word that a Finance professor is requiring students to come to the UWC. I wanted to let you know, so that you are not perplexed by these sessions. Jemma worked with one of these students yesterday and had this to say:

"Today, I worked with a tutee who was required to come to the writing center with his "finance case write up" assignment. The professor provided no assignment sheet or rubric, and had only vaguely discussed the format in class. From his descriptions, it seemed that the professor wants them to develop the format on their own and then work on it with a tutor. Since there were limited resources online, I personally concentrated on incorporating APA headings and making revisions based on audience perspective (the client)."

So, instead of giving them clear direction up front, the professor wants the students to figure out how to write a "finance case write-up" document. They are being given credit for coming to the UWC, so we are in the difficult position of trying to help them with a paper for which they haven't been given many specific directions.

Here are some potential ways to respond in these sessions:

1. State clearly that you are not familiar with this genre, and that we were not able to find quality resources. However, we are happy to work with them on the clarity of their ideas. As Jemma mentioned, a reader-response and audience-awareness approach is appropriate.
2. Generate a list of questions that the tutee can ask the professor. What would they need to know in order to write this document effectively?
3. You might start from the potentially similar format of a business case study (note the word POTENTIALLY): <http://wdi-publishing.com/DocFiles/PDF/cases/preview/WDI-1429140P.pdf>

I will likely check in with this professor to find out more about their intentions. In the meantime, please keep me informed about how these sessions are going.

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Thursday, January 26, 2017 2:08 PM: Dear UWC

Thank you for your continued dedication to enhancing writing at JMU. You've conducted over 205 sessions so far this semester, which is an increase of at least 70 from the same time period last spring.

Although I'm excited about the quantity of appointments, I'm even more excited about the quality. You've had great reviews so far!

- o **Alex** is a great, caring, intelligent, and helpful employee!
- o Awesome brainstorming session.
- o Awesome session and extremely helpful applicable tips.
- o I came into the writing center to have someone help me look over a speech that I plan on presenting. I sat down with **Jo Trombadore** and she was excellent. She allowed me to kind of explain things as we talked about them, and she gave me great feedback and suggestions on how to finalize my speech. She was very friendly and easy to talk to which definitely helped with me feeling comfortable about speaking on the subject. I plan on coming back later on in the process to have her look it over again. Thanks Jo!
- o I thought she was really helpful
- o **Jemma** was extremely helpful during our brainstorming session and I left feeling confident in the direction I am going with my paper. I will definitely be back in the future!
- o **Jenna** did a great job of walking me through the writing process! She was very friendly and helpful.
- o **Maria** was very helpful and I greatly appreciated her tips and advice!
- o super helpful and saw me even though I had no idea that you had to make an appointment. super grateful!
- o Thank you! I always learn something new. It's great to have this incredible recourse.
- o **Vanessa** is extremely encouraging and helpful. She is a great mentor and member of the writing center. I always look forward to meeting with her.

With our new intake and client report forms, we can look at some interesting data. Here's a few stats.

Most popular courses our clients are coming from= English, WRTC, SMAD, and personal statements/application letters

Most popular professors our clients are coming from= Soenksen (SMAD), Copeland (WRTC), Sorge Way (Computer Science)

Our most popular tutoring technique is...drumroll...asking questions! We might try to be conscious of the types of questions we are asking, which ones seem to yield productive results and which ones don't. Ideally, your questions will be authentic questions. Let's look at two examples.

As a reader, I get confused here. What is your reason for including this data in this paragraph? (authentic)

Do you really think this fact needs to be here? (inauthentic)

The second one is inauthentic because you KNOW the answer. The question is heavy-handed in leading them to the conclusion you've already made. Leading questions are sometimes useful, but, whenever possible, we want to encourage independent thought in our clients. We want to start from their ideas.

News

In case I haven't mentioned, the UWC has our first London satellite location this semester. New tutor Jordan Gunessever is studying abroad in London, and she is holding tutoring hours for students in her program. She has already conducted her first appointment. She is also doing some online tutoring for stateside JMU students, which is why you can see her in our schedule. I'm regularly checking in with Jordan, so I'll update you as to how this new service is going. If any of you plan to study or teach abroad for JMU, we should discuss possibilities for being a remote tutor for the UWC.

Announcements and Reminders

- Vanessa is still in need of volunteer hours (even just one hour per month) to help students from Blue Ridge Community College. Please contact her to set up your hours.
- Our next all-staff meeting is 2/3!
- Feeling stressed out? Interested in meditation? I'm teaching a free 4-week course at JMU starting 2/6 and meeting Mondays 4-5:15. Please pass this on to others who might be interested. Here's the info:

The Koru Mindfulness program was developed over the course of a decade by psychiatrists Holly Rogers, MD & Margaret Maytan, MD to bring the benefits of mindfulness to the college students they worked with at Duke University's student counseling center. Koru Mindfulness is an evidence-based curriculum specifically designed for teaching mindfulness, meditation, and stress management to college students and other young adults.

Register

here: <https://dashboard.korumindfulness.org/web/index.php?r=course%2Fsignup&id=214>

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Wednesday, January 25, 2017 10:43 AM: Tutoring Students in Turkey

As I mentioned in our opening faculty meeting, we are going to offer online tutoring for students at [TED University](#) in Turkey. They are trying to create a Learning Centers modeled after ours, but they need immediate help in writing. I think this is a very cool opportunity for us to connect with students in a very different cultural setting.

In addition to being a rare learning opportunity, you will be paid for your time. Side note: Because these are online sessions and not part of your normal schedule, you can do these sessions from anywhere with a reliable internet connection. If you are able to offer an hour (or more) per week for this program, please let me know asap. Thanks!

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Tuesday, January 17, 2017 4:23 PM: Dear UWC

Thanks for a great opening meeting on Friday. I'm excited to work with such a full and diverse staff! Looks like we have quite a few appointments booked for our first day of the Spring 2017 semester.

Those of you on the schedule today probably already noticed the changes to our client intake form and our client report form. I forgot to mention this at Friday's meeting, but I'll explain a bit about the rationale behind the changes and how you might approach these forms.

The **intake form** is the one that client's fill out to make an appointment. The biggest changes here are that we are now using pull-down menus for the Course, writing task, and Instructor's Last Name. We made this change so that we can easily pull information about who is coming to the UWC. If we want to see the current trends in terms of courses or professors, we can pull that information immediately. Before we made these changes, we could only pull long lists of courses and professors that were riddled with errors and often incomplete. The pull-down menus simplify our data collection.

The more radically redesigned form is the **Client Report Form**. This is the form you fill out after finishing a session. We have redesigned this form to be consistent with our session observation forms (the form we use to evaluate a tutor's performance during a tutoring session). That way, tutors will be reflecting on their sessions using the same criteria as the observation form. Pull-down menus have also streamlined the data collection here for the tutoring techniques and demonstrated learning categories. The checkboxes are self-explanatory, but please let me know if a choice is unclear to you.

- a. The report form starts out with a field that asks for "a 1-2 sentence summary (indicate the type of paper and the focus of the session)". Be as specific as possible while remaining concise. This short summary should give another tutor a very clear idea about what you covered in this session.
- b. Another new category is: "How could you have been a more effective tutor in this session?" Again, your response can be brief, but we want you to honestly reflect on your performance. This question is here for your own development as a consultant. We expect everyone to engage in reflective practice and be mindful about the choices you make as a tutor. By asking yourself this question, you are thinking carefully about what you are doing and discovering ways to be more effective. You might even come up with a question you want to ask during professional development.
- c. The last revised field states, "Please provide any information that might help other tutors work with this client." This is an optional field, but it could be very important. You might comment on things like the client's attitude (perhaps they were particularly resistant to suggestions), the learning style (perhaps, after much trial and error, you discovered what works well for this client), the client's anxiety or motivation level, etc.

At Friday's meeting, we reviewed the **resources available to tutors**: the Field Manual, the Roadmap, Online Resources and Links, handbooks and style guides (see the tall bookshelf in the UWC) and other UWC staff. Please make use of these resources before, during, and after your tutoring sessions. The first two resources listed are available in the Tutor Resources page of our website.

Now, just a few **reminders** from Friday's meeting.

*New tutors, you should see the **Title IX Training Module** appear in your Canvas Dashboard. Please complete the training as soon as possible.

*The small, **green proof-of-visit slips** are located in a folder at the check-in desk. You can sign one for clients who ask for them, but please do not provide them if the client did not fully participate in the session.

*Please **greet clients** or wanderers who walk into the UWC (including those who hover around in the entryway by the check-in desk). We need to make visitors feel welcome. Help them get where they need to go, even if they weren't looking for the UWC. Please be as warm and friendly as possible without being creepy.

*If you find that **you are sick**, please email Adrienne (and me) right away. We will get your hours blocked off, find a sub, or reschedule your clients. We really prefer that you don't come in to work when you are sick.

*If you have a future **conflict with your work schedule** and you would like to swap hours with another tutor, please contact me first (with as much notice as possible). Shift-swapping should be reserved for very important or unique situations that would be difficult to reschedule around your work hours.

*All of your important **UWC dates and deadlines** for the semester are available on the Tutor Resources page.

Additional professional development opportunities

*If you are interested in submitting a proposal to the 2017 Mid Atlantic Writing Centers Association Conference, the deadline is this Friday, 1/20 by the close of business. If you are interested in attending the conference, please contact me.

*Vanessa is looking for volunteers to provide tutoring service to students from Blue Ridge Community College. I strongly encourage you to sign up for some volunteer tutoring hours.

Wow, that was a lot. I hope your semester is off to a great start! Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I truly appreciate feedback and input from you. Your insights help us to improve our services and the UWC work environment.

-----Jared

Monday, January 9, 2017 3:22 PM: Meeting this Friday and Presentation Opportunities

Greetings, colleagues. I hope you are staying warm. Just wanted to remind you that we have a mandatory all-staff meeting this Friday at 2:30. Also, Lucy could use some help with in-class presentations. Here's a message from her:

Hello Tutors,

I'm looking for one or two of you who'd be willing to give our 15-minute UWC intro presentation in a couple of HUM 252 classes next week. Here are the dates and times:

- 1/18 at 11:15 in JA 1B
- 1/18 at 2:30 in JA 105

Please let me know if you'd be willing to help out (and if you haven't given our intro presentation before, I can train you).

Best, Lucy

I strongly encourage you to give a UWC intro presentation if this fits your schedule. This is a great way to connect with students, build your presentation skills, and help the UWC.

See you on Friday!

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA

Monday, December 5, 2016 3:38 PM: Dear UWC

Thank you for your great work this semester. I'm sorry I was unable to attend the UWC holiday party and semester wrap-up. I had a family emergency, but things are getting better. I received your notes about scheduling issues, and I will make revisions to the schedule this week. Once I've done that, I'll send out a revised Spring 2017 schedule.

Looking over the comments from our clients, I'm seeing praise for Maya, Annie, Emmie, Jackie, Jemma, Jessie, Jordan, Lydia, Olivia, Taylor, Vanessa, and Kevin. In other comments, tutors were not named, so I'm sure more of you were recognized. Please (everyone) continue to conduct thoughtful and professional sessions through these last stressful weeks of the semester. I know that many of you are probably as burned out as our clients, but we need to maintain our standards of quality.

In the client comments, I'm also seeing some misunderstanding about the UWC's mission. Some of these are likely from the HUM 252 onslaught we saw last week (I mentioned this in a previous email). Please be clear about the UWC's mission and philosophy, especially with first-time visitors and those required to visit. Also, please let me know if you encounter clients who are required to come or getting extra credit for coming. I like to keep track of this, and, in some cases, I will contact the faculty member (not to report on individual students but problematic trends). I contacted the HUM 252 professor and explained what was happening. He addressed the issue in class with his students, and we are going to meet before next semester to strategize about how his students can prepare for more productive sessions.

Post-election issues

I wanted to let you know that the International Writing Centers Association President has issued a statement in the wake of the election, and the UWC affirms this statement.

"Amidst current political acrimony in the US and across the globe, the International Writing Centers Association reaffirms its long commitment to civil discourse, inclusive language, and collaborative practice. Writing centers are inherently multicultural and multilingual sites that welcome and accommodate diversity. Writing centers inclusively serve all students, including members of underrepresented groups such as people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and people with a range of abilities, economic needs, and linguistic expression. The International Writing Centers Association values diversity among its membership and seeks to serve a diverse membership responsibly and well (IWCA Diversity Initiative, approved November 20, 2006). As such, the writing center community continues to uphold the ideals of democratic education and social justice."

Shareen Grogan

President, International Writing Centers Association

Jared Jay Featherstone, MFA