University of Central Missouri

Writing Center
2015-2016 Annual Report: Instructor's Edition

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Since 1969, the Writing Center has offered one-on-one writing instruction to University of Central Missouri students. Though the Writing Center has taken many forms and names over the decades, it remains committed to creating a learning environment that empowers student writers and welcomes them into the academic discourse community. Toward that end, the Writing Center acknowledges writing as a recursive, personalized process. Our goal, then, is not to improve students' papers, but rather to support students as they explore various writing strategies, contexts, and topics. We hope that our first annual report will offer our colleagues a glimpse into the Writing Center's services, staff, and practices that support an average of 1,000 student writers each semester.

Together, we will build a community of writers.

Compiled and written by Heather Hughes

This document offers a quick glimpse at our 2015-2016 Writing Center Annual Report. You may find the document in its entirety at

http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/uploads/5/9/1/2/59121359/annualreport__1_.pdf

Mission Statement

The primary purpose of the Writing Center is to guide students to become better writers in the university setting. Writing Center consultants are interested in helping students develop skills and acquire knowledge to foster their independence as writers capable of editing their own texts. Whether instruction takes place on the premises of the Center or through its online service, the emphasis is on teaching students rather than proofreading or "fixing" papers. To this end, Writing Center consultants make every effort to ensure that tutorial sessions are directed at least as much by the student's questions and input as by the instructor's suggestions, and that writers are invested with ultimate ownership of and responsibility for their own texts, as well as confidence in their ability to meet the standards of the academic discourse community.

Consultants in the Writing Center will help students achieve the following outcomes:

- Identify and analyze the rhetorical context to articulate a clear purpose for writing.
- Strengthen their writing skills.
- Strategically apply particular writing processes and techniques to enhance their personal style.
- Appropriately document any sources they have used.

A Note on Grammar

After comparing teacher-marked errors in contemporary student writing with similar records from 1917, 1930, and 1986, Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) found that "the rate of error per 100 words (i.e., 2.299) remains almost exactly the same as it has been during the last century" (p. 800). While the rate of formal errors remains stable, the length and type of writing assigned to students has shifted dramatically. Today's students write longer, more complex papers that emphasize argumentation, research, and critical thinking (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008). With these contexts in mind, the Writing Center prioritizes content over commas and global concerns over local, sentence-level errors. The Writing Center affirms that errors are a natural part of the writing process. In other words, writing centers exist not because students "cannot write," but because they do.

Information for Instructors

The Writing Center deeply appreciates all the time, effort, and insight faculty contribute to the ongoing cultivation of a community of writers on the UCM campus. With that shared goal in mind, we offer the following suggestions for effective Writing Center and classroom collaboration.
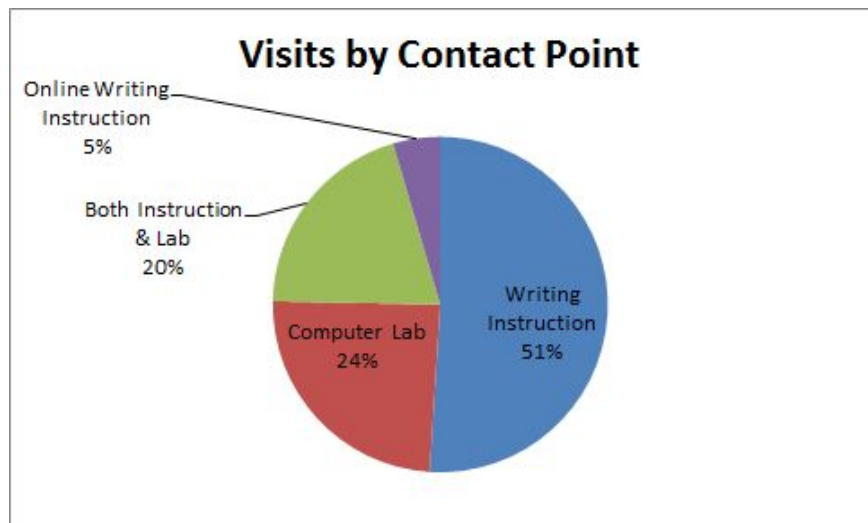
- Schedule an **informational presentation** to introduce students to the Writing Center. A member of the Writing Center staff can visit your classroom and give a short presentation on our services. You may schedule a presentation on our blog http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/classroom-presentations.html
- **Incentivize** rather than require Writing Center visits. While required visits have the advantage of introducing students to our services, they also place tremendous pressure on our small staff. A number of instructors across campus have found creative ways to motivate students to use the Writing Center. Some offer extra credit while others give students full points in the "mechanics/grammar" section of their rubric. Extended due dates or additional rewrite opportunities may also motivate students to submit Writing Center reviewed drafts. If you require your classes to visit the Writing Center, please consider staggering the due dates if you teach multiple sections of a course.
- **Emphasize** to students that the Writing Center is a collaborative workspace rather than an editing service. If you refer students to the Writing Center, help them develop 2-3 guiding questions, writing goals, or areas of concern. This allows students to maintain ownership of their work while seeking feedback and allows the writing consultant to focus the session on the student's particular needs.
- **Let us know how we can help**. The Writing Center strives to support and celebrate writing across the curriculum. We welcome opportunities to collaborate and learn.
- **Update syllabi** to direct students to the Writing Center's new location on the third floor of the JCK Library in the Learning Commons, Room 3160.

Writing Center Services

On the UCM campus, the Writing Center offers **one-on-one writing instruction** with undergraduate peer tutors. Sessions typically last 20 minutes to an hour depending on the length and nature of the assignment. Our main location (located in Humphreys 114 & 116 during the 2015-2016 academic year) also houses a **computer lab** where students can write, research, and print. About a quarter of students make use of both services in a single visit. Some seek input on their writing or guidance with formatting while working at the computer. Others begin a session with a consultant after completing their draft and then return to the computer to incorporate feedback.

Visits by Contact Point

- Online Writing Instruction 5%
- Both Instruction & Lab 20%
- Computer Lab 24%
- Writing Instruction 51%

Students may also access the Writing Center through the **Online Writing Lab (OWL)**. These sessions take place asynchronously through e-mail. Students are asked to include a description of the assignment and three guiding questions along with their paper. Papers are reviewed during standard business hours with a response time of 2-4 days.

Students from the Lee's Summit campus may connect with the Writing Center through **Adobe Connect.** This platform provides synchronous tutoring that enables student and tutor to communicate through both audio and video while interacting with a shared digital document.

The Writing Center has developed **workshops** on citation styles, research, writing processes, personal statements, thesis statements, grammar, and other topics. These presentations will be hosted in the Learning Commons throughout the 2016-2017 academic year.

Moving Forward: Goals

As the Writing Center settles into its new location, we look forward to fall 2016 as an opportunity to expand and refine our services. In the upcoming academic year, we hope to accomplish the following:

- Partner with the Learning Commons staff to build an effective network of services.
- Provide additional professional development and training opportunities for Writing Center consultants.
- Expand the Writing Center's digital presence to better serve online learners.
- Design interactive workshops, talks, and events such as
  - Grammar Happy Hour
  - Conversation Corner
  - Thesis Bootcamp
- Collaborate with instructors, advisors, administrators, staff, and other campus members to build a community of writers.

A Compendium of Writing Center Resources

Official Website: https://www.ucmo.edu/ae/writing/

Find updates, resources, and articles on our blog**:** http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/

Book an **appointment** at http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/appointments.htm

View resources for **instructors** at http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/for-instructors.html

Schedule an **informational presentation** for your classroom:

      http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/classroom-presentations.html

View resources for **students** at http://ucmwriting.weebly.com/for-students.html

Read a detailed guide to **OWL submissions**: www.ucmo.edu/ae/writing/owl.cfm

View a powerpoint on **OWL submissions**--or upload it to your Blackboard classroom at:

      http://tinyurl.com/guqrfwh

Email writingcenter@ucmo.edu to submit papers to the OWL or ask a question

Connect with /UcmWritingCenter on **Facebook**

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