

August 10, 2020

To: Glynis Ridley, Chair
Department of English

From: Bronwyn T. Williams,
Director, University Writing Center



Re: Writing Center Report AY 2019-2020

As always, the staff of the University Writing Center, were professional, creative, and adaptable throughout an academic year with significant challenges. During the pandemic, the University Writing Center staff did exemplary work, notably moving the schedule from in-person appointments to all online appointments in the space of two days in March. In addition, the consultants and staff quickly adapted to work from home and continued to provide thoughtful and individualized feedback to writers through the spring and summer. Recognition for exceptional work in exceptional times goes to Associate Director Cassandra Book, Administrative Assistant Amber Yocum, Assistant Directors Aubrie Cox, Edward English, Rachel Rodriguez, and Megen Boyett, as well as the dedicated and talented staff of consultants.

In addition to the pandemic, however, our academic year was marked by the sudden cuts to programming we had to make because of changes to the terms of our assistant director positions, changes about which we were not consulted. These changes will have longer-term negative impacts on our work. As a result of having to adjust to these significant cuts in staff hours in the middle of the fall semester, when we found out about the changes, meant we suddenly had to eliminate or greatly reduce several long-standing programs. The end-of-year report, then, reflects these reduced capabilities.

Achievements

1. Writing Center Consultations: The Writing Center had a successful year of consultations, despite a reduction in consultations starting in mid-March when our schedule went completely online. Although we had several hundred fewer appointments in late March and April, our reduction was less substantial than Writing Centers at other universities which were reporting reductions in visits as high as 80 percent. We continued to serve a significant number of writers from March through the summer. Our numbers were down in March and April, but rebounded in summer. From March 17 through the summer, we combined all appointments into one schedule.

Visits for the 2019-20 Academic Year in Brief:

Fall 2019 –	Belknap	2048 Visits
	Health Sciences	77 Visits
	Virtual	393 Visits
	Total	2518 Visits

Spring 2020 (to 3/6)	Belknap	1162 Visits
	Health Sciences	46 Visits
	Virtual	210 Visits
(after 3/17)	UWC Schedule	631 Visits
	Total	1793 Visits
Summer 2020 –	UWC Schedule	596 Visits
Total for 2019-20		4907 Visits

2. Exit Survey Results: Our exit survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the Writing Center, by both quantitative and qualitative measures. These numbers did not change substantively even after we started tutoring fully online in March 2020. Highlights of the survey are:

- In answer to the statement: “My Writing Center consultation addressed my concerns about my writing project,” more than 95% of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” (85%) or “Agree” (10%).
- In answer to the statement: “What I learned during my Writing Center consultation will help me with future writing projects,” more than 93% of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” (74%) or “Agree” (19%).
- In answer to the statement: “I plan to use the Writing Center again,” more than 94% of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” (81%) or “Agree” (15%).
- In answer to the statement: “The Writing Center staff were welcoming and helpful,” more than 97% of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” (83%) or “Agree” (14%).

The qualitative responses on the survey were overwhelmingly positive as well. A small group of suggestions requested longer consulting sessions. We feel the length of sessions is currently the most conducive to effective tutoring.

3. Presentations and Workshops: Workshops on writing issues for classes and university groups were one of the programs we had to cut starting at the end of October 2019. From August through October 2019, we did 22 workshops on writing issues. We did continue to provide brief informational presentation about Writing Center services in classes and at resource fairs and did 152 between August and mid-March.

4. Community Literacy Projects: Our Community Literacy projects also were cut back as a result of the October cuts. We had to curtail our regular tutoring at the Western Branch of the Louisville Public Library and reduce our tutoring and workshops at Family Scholar House. We did try to continue some work with these partnerships, including some limited tutoring and some one-time workshops. We hope we can find some way to continue these partnerships in the coming years, but they were projects made possible through the work of assistant directors.

5. Events: We sponsored or participated in writing-focused events including Kick Back in the Stacks, a roundtable discussion on issues of diversity and writing, a Halloween Open Mic Night, Valentine's Day Open Mic Night (co-sponsored by Miracle Monocle) and International Mother Language Day.

6. Writing Groups: We continued to facilitate the Graduate Student and Faculty Writing Group; Creative Writing Group; and LGBTQ Writing Group. These groups moved successfully online after March 2020

7. Dissertation Writing Retreat: The spring Dissertation Writing Retreat during May was held online for the first time and, once again, was a success. In the May retreat, funded by the Graduate School. Fourteen Ph.D. students representing and nine different disciplines spent a week working on their dissertations and receiving daily feedback and workshops. The exit surveys and discussions with the students indicated that the retreat was overwhelmingly successful.

8. Graduate Student Writing Workshop Series: The Writing Center, in collaboration with the graduate school, conducted a series of writing workshops for graduate students. The workshops, some of which were repeated each semester, covered issues including Writing for Publication, Structuring Large Projects, Writing Cover Letters, and Writing a Literature Review.

9. Writing Center Blog and Social Media: The Writing Center Blog, to which all members of the staff contribute posts during the year, was viewed more than 13,000 times in 2019-20. In addition, many of the posts have drawn interest from readers outside the UofL community.

10. Learning Commons: The Writing Center continued to meet with other student support organizations located in Ekstrom Library to coordinate Learning Commons' activities. The offices involved are the Digital Media Suite, Media Resources, the REACH Computer Resource Center, the Reference & Information Literacy Department, and the Writing Center.

11. Student Artists on Display: We continued with our rotating display of student art.

12. New Website Video Resources. – We created new video workshops on writing issues such as the new version of the APA manual and writing as a graduate student.

13. Outstanding Performance Award for Staff. Dr. Cassandra Book, associate director, was recognized for her innovative and exceptional work in the University Writing Center with the 2020 UofL College of Arts & Sciences Outstanding Performance Award for Staff.