



The Writing Center Annual Report 2014-2015



A Letter from the Director

At the Writing Center, we take seriously UM's Strategic Issues, especially as they relate to student retention. Our programming promotes achievement of key Partnering for Student Success objectives, allowing us to engage in tremendously satisfying work with students. In short, we support student retention by directly strengthening students' ability to read, think, and write and by enhancing faculty members' ability to support student writers. We are privileged to work with students, faculty, and staff who recognize the Writing Center as a valued partner in their learning, teaching, and work.



UM has reason to celebrate a robust campus writing culture. The growing number of student sessions with Writing Center tutors—5,087 this academic year alone—and the increase in faculty requests for writing workshops indicate a deep engagement in critical writing practices at UM. This engagement is further evidenced by the following:

- Faculty across the curriculum regularly partner with the Writing Center to assign and teach writing as a tool for both communicating and learning.
- Students and faculty increasingly turn to the Writing Center to address a fundamental educational need: sustained writing instruction across the disciplines.
- Students at all levels—from first-time freshmen to seasoned graduate students—recognize the Writing Center as a resource for *all* writers to develop effective writing practices.

This report highlights the Writing Center's efforts to provide high-impact support centered squarely upon strengthening students' ability to communicate well. This report also highlights the scope of the Writing Center's work, demonstrating that our reach extends far beyond one-to-one tutoring to cultivate a community of skilled UM writers.

In Support of UM Writers,

Kelly Webster

"[The tutors] encouraged my thoughts, helped me to succeed, and worked with me to improve my writing. I would encourage any student...to set up an appointment with the Writing Center. I will continue to use the Writing Center because I believe it has played a vital role in my college writing success."

-Shane Red Crow, Student



The Writing Center Mission

As a University hub for campus conversations about writing, the Writing Center administers programs to help undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines become more versatile and effective writers, readers, and thinkers. In one-to-one and small-group tutoring sessions and in whole-class workshops, tutors help students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses as communicators and to practice strategies appropriate to various writing contexts. In addition, the Writing Center collaborates with faculty to provide instruction that positively impacts student performance.



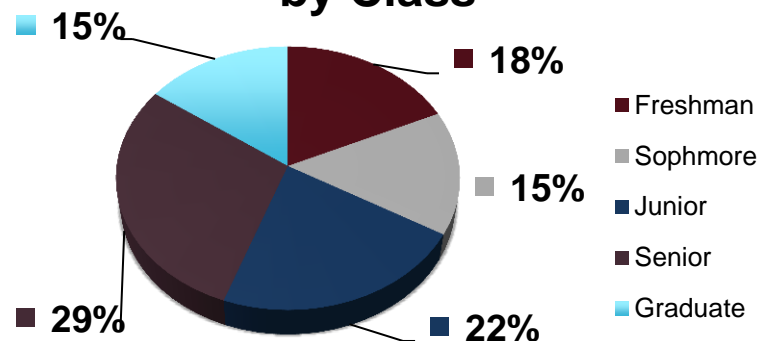
Tutoring: Supporting student writers

One-to-one and small-group writing tutoring addresses a critical need at UM by providing students with on-going writing instruction throughout their academic tenures. Tutors challenge students to think more critically, to consider the rhetorical variables of a writing task—e.g., purpose and audience—and to rehearse strategies to generate ideas, perform research, organize content, synthesize concepts, and polish a finished product.

The multidisciplinary nature of tutoring sessions uniquely positions the Writing Center to improve student writing practices across the curriculum. Tutors generally help students as they compose course papers, theses, and dissertations, but also help students learn to produce other types of written work such as admissions essays, internship applications, scholarship essays, and conference proposals and abstracts.



**Students Tutored,
by Class**

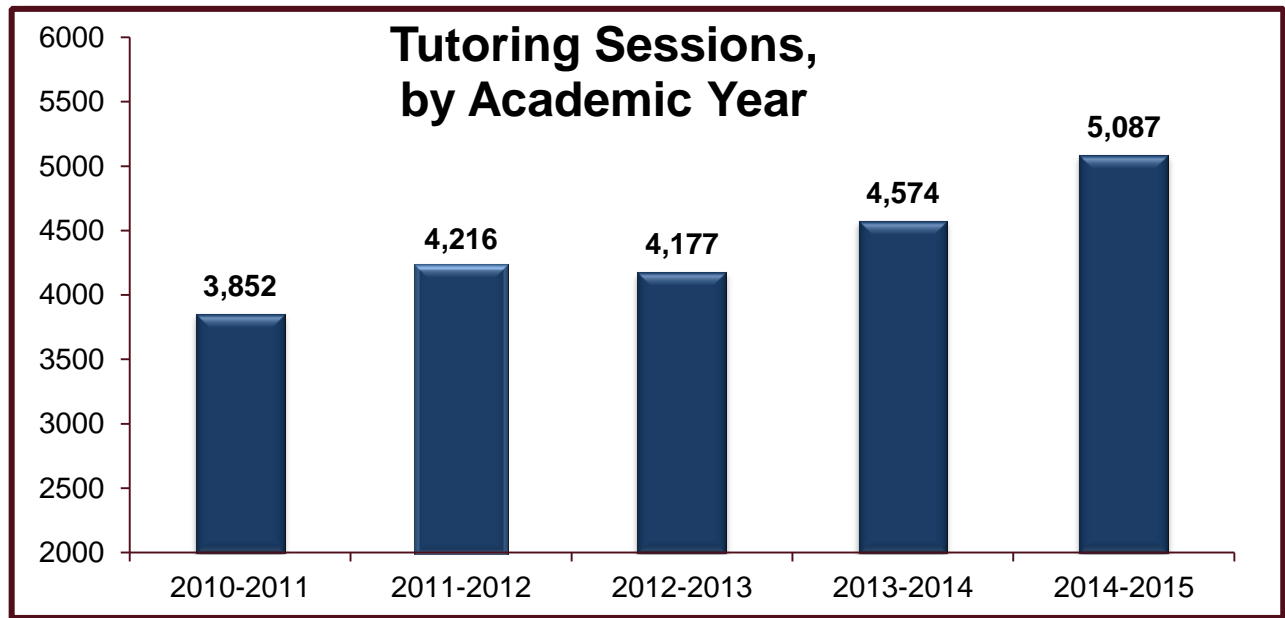


“The encouragement that the Writing Center tutors gave me affected my work ethic as well as my attitude. I don’t think I could have stayed focused without you.”

-James Hansen, Missoula College West Student

**Tutoring Sessions,
by College**

College of Humanities and Sciences	2,163
Undesignated	871
College of Education and Human Sciences	524
School of Business Administration	395
Missoula College	314
College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences	310
College of Forestry and Conservation	220
College of Visual and Performing Arts	202
Interdisciplinary Studies/GS	34
School of Journalism	31
School of Law	21
Continuing Education	2



94% of sessions
spent time addressing
major revisions:

- idea development
- thesis crafting
- support

Writing Center tutors have been really good about telling me what I need to do better... *I'm a lot more confident in asking for help.*

—Anonymous, Writing Center Focus Group Student

The Writing Center

8,779

student
instructional
contacts

140

in-class and
stand-alone student
workshops

173

faculty
participants in
workshops &
consultations

37

graduate student Jump
Start participants

2014-2015 Numbers

1,463

international
student visits

135

probation and
provisionally
accepted student
visits

701

graduate
student
visits

5,087

tutoring
sessions

515

TRiO
student
visits

182

veteran
benefits
student
visits

345

honors
student
visits

Sidecar Project: Influencing students, faculty, and tutors

The Sidecar Project is a course-embedded tutoring model that aims to produce a trifecta of positive influence: improved student writing practices, changed faculty teaching practices, and expanded tutor knowledge. Writing Center employee Jake Hansen designed the Sidecar Project, which has been embedded into disciplines such as biology, economics, history, management, pharmacy, and social work.

“One of the great joys of this Sidecar process is learning from you and the rest of the Sidecar team. I deeply appreciate the thoughtful and reflective attention you bring not only to the individual students but also to the process of forming them as writers. If only all our students could get this kind of focused attention.”

-Professor Tobin Miller Shearer,
African American Studies

Of Sidecar students surveyed:

- **75%** claim their writing improved more in Sidecar courses than in other courses that require writing
- **100%** report receiving more feedback on their writing than in other courses that require writing



Jump Start Thesis/Dissertation Boot Camp: Supporting graduate students

Recognizing the need for more robust graduate student writing support, the Writing Center offered the inaugural Jump Start Thesis/Dissertation Writing Boot Camp during the 2015 Winter Session.

Writing Center employee Gretchen McCaffrey designed this intense four-day writing program, which provides graduate students with an opportunity to:

- discuss effective thesis/dissertation writing strategies
- gain momentum and make tangible progress in their writing
- experience a supportive environment for intense, focused writing time
- develop effective writing habits that will sustain them throughout their careers



The Writing Center offers the Jump Start program in support of UM's Strategic Issue whose objectives explicitly focus on research and scholarship: Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World. A key component of successful research is clear communication of one's research process and findings. The Jump Start program provides a supportive forum in which graduate students can develop these effective communication strategies.

"The [Jump Start] program was an invaluable experience! I was able to make a great deal of progress during the writing time, and I particularly appreciated Gretchen McCaffrey's thoughtful instruction and fantastic advice... I'd recommend it to any graduate student here."

-Bridget Gildner, Jump Start Graduate Student

Writing Center Resources:

Providing support across the curriculum

Writing Center Workshops

Writing Center workshops help students develop as writers across their academic tenures and in every discipline. Workshops range from a brief overview of Writing Center services to multi-hour workshops that teach students how to better address the writing expectations and conventions of a specific course or discipline.

Workshops not only provide discipline-specific writing instruction but also genre-specific instruction in areas such as proposal and abstract writing, poster presentations, and scholarship and admissions essay writing.

“MANY THANKS for a great presentation in my GLI seminar! I wish I had been inviting you to my classes for the last 15 years! I'll try to make up for lost time. The students remarked how helpful your talk was. SUPERB job!”

-Professor Clary Loisel, MCLL

140 student
workshops

3,657 student
participants

Faculty Development

The Writing Center recognizes faculty as primary partners in its efforts to promote student success. We support faculty through one-to-one consultations and group workshops, emphasizing pedagogical strategies that enhance student learning and writing in any course.

57 faculty workshops
& consultations

173 faculty
participants



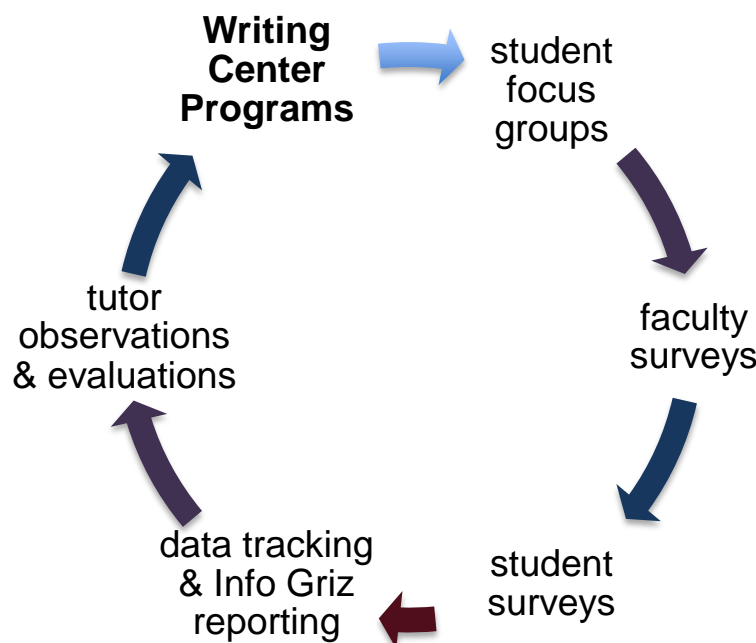
Assessment:

Taking a reflective stance

In the Writing Center, we take a reflective stance by engaging in meaningful assessment practices. For us, assessment is meaningful when embedded into our day-to-day work rather than performed as an afterthought. The Writing Center's on-going assessment cycle allows us to:

- identify specific strengths and weaknesses in Writing Center programming
- demonstrate the impact of writing tutoring on students' writing habits
- understand the relationship between writing tutoring and retention
- reveal areas for tutors' professional development
- identify populations we successfully serve and populations we underserve
- gather information that will allow us to marshal resources to support student retention

We use the following tools to gather actionable data that inform our program planning.



Looking Ahead: Turning Reflective Assessment into Thoughtful Action

The Writing Center's 2015-2016 Academic Year Goals

- ❖ Target students in high-enrollment, gateway, and capstone courses
- ❖ Develop strategies to handle demand from graduate and international students
- ❖ Offer Sidecar Project small-group tutoring collaborations to all Colleges
- ❖ Facilitate GTA workshops on providing feedback on student writing
- ❖ Develop instructional programming for international student writers
- ❖ Develop programming for faculty who work with international student writers
- ❖ Target students who are less likely to seek help (e.g., students who (mis)perceive themselves as "strong" writers)

