



WOFFORD WRITING CENTER

SEMESTER REPORT

FALL 2023

PREPARED BY
ALLISON DOUGLASS

WHO, WHAT, WHEN

The Writing Center is a service for writers provided by their peers. The consultants who work in the center are involved in everything the center does, big and small.

THE TEAM: Dr. Allison Douglass (Director); Samantha Carter, Alexis Walker, Katie Stewart, Mary Jackson Kirk, Lindsey Vane, Breelyn Grooms, Jordyn Ford, Jack Tope, Josie Thillet, Sophie Thrasher, and Avery Goodale (6 returning consultants, 5 new consultants)

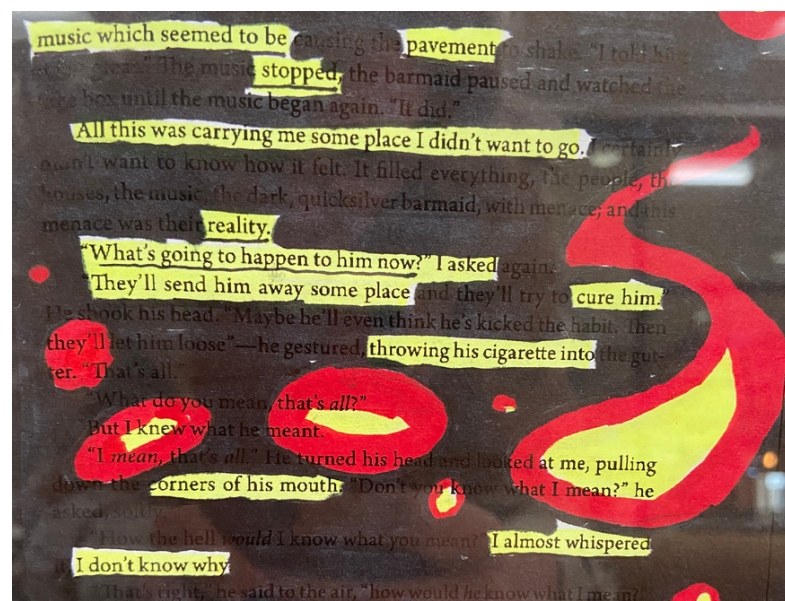
HOURS OF OPERATION: M 10-5 & 7-10; T 10-5 & 7-10; W 10-5 & 7-10; R 1-5 & 7-10; F 10-5

ABOUT US

The Wofford College Writing Center provides individual peer writing consultations to the Wofford community, working with any writer on any kind of writing at any stage of the process. Our staff collaborates with writers, prioritizing writing as a learning process above the success of any single piece of writing. Consultants and writers work together to develop their ideas, better understand the needs of their audiences, and build on their communicative strategies. In order to facilitate this collaborative process, the Writing Center seeks to create a safe, inclusive space inside the center where writers are supported through the vulnerable process of sharing their work. Outside our physical space, the Writing Center works to foster a sense of community and shared culture among writers on campus.

CORE VALUES

1. WRITER OWNERSHIP
2. EQUITY-INFORMED CONSULTING
3. INSTILLING CONFIDENCE
4. NON-EVALUATIVE FEEDBACK
5. SERVING WRITERS, NOT WRITING



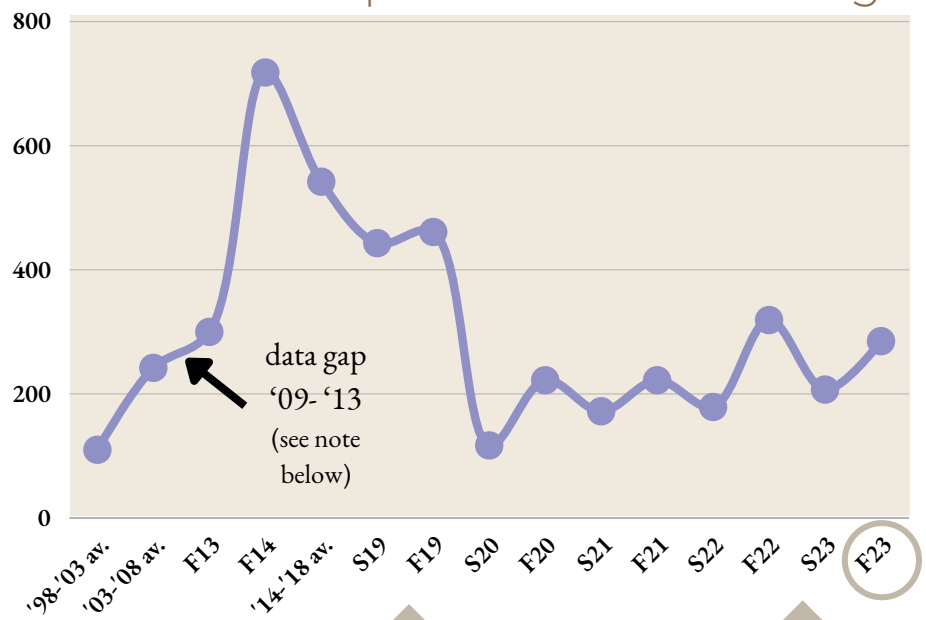
SESSION DATA

In Fall 2023 we had the second highest number of visits of any semester since 2019, and the highest number of repeating users in the same period of time. We are seeing a slow growth in overall usage of the center, but a significant increase in repeating users, with more than half the students who come in visiting more than once.

contact hours
Fall '23

285

compared to historic usage



individual writers served:

139

repeat users:

71

departments served:

16

Top courses served :

1. LIBA
2. GOV 202
3. SOC 101

What we worked on most:

1. Introductions
2. Focus
3. Grammar

We intend to do some historical investigation into the 10-year period from 2009-2019. We have a 5-year gap in session data 2009-2013, but AY 2013-14 had similar numbers to AY 2008-09. Then, after Deno Trakas returned to leadership of the Writing Center in the fall of 2014, the center very suddenly more than doubled its numbers and stayed high for the next 5 years. Sessions dropped off during the pandemic, and we have now returned to a usage level that looks much like it did before 2014. We may not be able to understand the 5-year data gap in full, but the 5-year period of extreme increase may have an explanation or a lesson for us - e.g., it could be explained by a period when the WC gave feedback over email - but we need to interview Dr. Trakas to understand the numbers and decide what they might indicate for our current operations. We hypothesize that our modest session numbers may be connected to our walk-in only model, which very few of our peers share, and which we are changing in S24 (see "Appointments" in this report).

OUTREACH

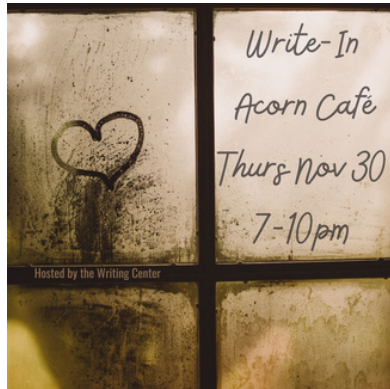
We focused on both our most utilized and underdeveloped avenues of outreach this semester: respectively, reaching entering first-semester students and developing our web presence.

WEBSITE

This semester we began thinking about an update to our digital presence, and continuing that project will be our main focus in the Spring. We started with overhauling the Writing Center's page on Wofford's website, and we have submitted revisions to OMC. The new site will be easier to find, and will provide a much wider range of digital resources than the Writing Center ever has before.

LIBA 101 VISITS

Realizing that the primary course the Writing Center serves each year is LIBA 101, we focused our outreach efforts there this semester by developing a partnership with the Sandor Tetzler Library. We dropped in on every LIBA library session this semester to tell first-years about the Writing Center and how they can use us best. This new program ended up being a very efficient way to reach as many new students as possible.



EVENTS

We put on a number of events for the Wofford community this semester, and we worked on a new model of support for creative writing by partnering with the student group Wofford Writers.

- **Student Interest Fair:** This year we visited the Student Interest Fair as a way to promote awareness as early as possible for new students on campus.
- **Wofford Writers:** The student group Wofford Writers stopped running this year due to a lack of leadership, so the Writing Center stepped into provide organizational support for student writers on campus to meet biweekly.
- **Scary Story Night:** Before Halloween, we hosted an event where people could gather and share seasonal writing of their own or read scary stories to one another campfire-style.
- **Write-in:** We are continuing to hold our semesterly Write-In, where students can come make progress on their final essays in community, with free coffee and support from writing consultants. This continues to be our most popular event.

ONGOING PROJECTS

We made progress toward three major long-term goals this semester, which are certifying our training program, providing opportunities for student research and leadership, and finding a good model for better supporting writing in the disciplines.

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

- We had a large staff turnover this year, and so we trained and integrated five new staff members into our team of eleven. As always, new hires went through an extensive orientation process, and the whole team met for weekly ongoing training and development work.
- We developed a training partnership with our newly appointed librarian, April Grey, who worked with our staff on better utilizing library resources.
- Trainings this semester were designed to fit within the requirements of the College Reading and Learning Association's parameters for tutor training program certification, which we will seek in the Spring.

STUDENT-LED RESEARCH

A team of consultant researchers, Samantha Carter and Jack Tope, began working on developing self-research into the work of the Writing Center. They conceived a project investigating student attitudes toward writing at Wofford, asking why so many writers we work with express anxiety and a lack of self-confidence in their abilities. They intend to explore how those attitudes might shift through working with the Writing Center. Currently, they are seeking IRB approval, and we will apply for summer research funding over Interim.

WRITING FELLOWS PILOT

The Writing Center was approached by Wofford's Office of Philanthropy and Engagement about potential funding for a project. Because of this, we've moved ahead with setting up a pilot of a program we'd like to pursue in the future to strengthen our support of writing in the disciplines. In Spring 2024, one of our consultants will act as a Writing Fellow [in the style of this pioneering program from Brown University](#) for Christine Dinkins' upper-level course in Phenomenology. The Fellow will work closely with Dr. Dinkins to richly understand the nature and needs of the discipline-specific writing in the course, and will give enrolled students one-on-one support as they develop their essays. After we gather data on the efficacy of this pilot, we will discuss possibilities for expansion in the future.

SPRING APPOINTMENTS

In Spring 2024, the Wofford Writing Center is moving to a combined walk-in and appointment-based model. We have been planning for the transition this semester.

What led to this decision?

This major change, which will mark a departure from the Wofford Writing Center’s history, was prompted by a call from our staff for a better way to manage what can be the chaotic pressure of serving students on a walk-in basis. Under our current system, many hours are devoted to waiting for a session on a shift where no one shows up, and conversely, particular shifts are overburdened with students lined up waiting to be seen. There are benefits to both systems, but after hearing this call from the team, we determined that the benefits of switching were worth the move.

What are the benefits?

- More **predictable working conditions** for both our staff and the writers who visit us.
- **Labor equity and flexibility for staff.** Appointments will be more evenly distributed.
- May **increase our session numbers** by encouraging fuller use of our slower shifts.
- **Will prompt writers to think ahead** about their goals and will make them more aware of the services we offer and what to expect from sessions.
- May **reduce student anxiety** about walking into a space cold for the first time.
- We will still be able to offer **walk-in appointments** as always.

What will the new system be and how does it compare to our benchmark institutions?

Only one peer institution operates on a walk-in basis as we currently do. The vast majority use a platform called WCOOnline. We may want to advocate for this in the future, but we currently plan to use Microsoft Bookings.

- **WCOOnline:** Millsaps, Southwestern, Oberlin, Sewanee, Grinnell, Kenyon, Rhodes, Swarthmore, Agnes Scott, Wellesley, Vassar
- **Other paid service** specific to scheduling: Furman, Centre, Hendrix, Hamilton
- **Bookings or equivalent:** Davidson, Brown, Washington and Lee, Carleton, Amherst
- **Walk-in only:** Willamette

Bookings v. WCO		
Cost	built into Office Suite	\$1999/yr
Integrates scheduling with other operational systems	✓	✓
Built for needs of writing centers	✗	✓
Made to track sessions to provide meaningful data for improving services over time	✗	✓
Has user-friendly tools for communicating with visitors.	✓	✓
Fits seamlessly with Wofford's current IT systems	✓	✗

NEW RESOURCES AND EQUITY PROGRESS

As we invested in new resources and services this semester, we targeted the equity goals we set in Spring 2023, more support for faculty, and better communication with students.

FOR FACULTY

Based on requests from especially new and temporary faculty for guidance on how to work with academic editors, the Writing Center has compiled a [list of professional copyeditors](#) interested in working with Wofford faculty on their research. This list is now available on our website.

Our new website will also feature a section on [writing pedagogy](#) for the first time, as the first major step we are taking toward providing support for the teaching of writing.

VISIT FORM

This semester we revisited and redesigned the visit form that we use to collect data on our sessions to better reflect the work we currently do with writers. This redesign is also improving our communication with students because it changes the session reports we send out, and it enables us to get feedback after sessions are over (see accountability progress).

EQUITY PROGRESS

We made progress toward the aspirational equity praxis that we articulated in Spring 2023 (see our Equity Statement).

- **SESSIONS:** We made virtual synchronous options for sessions more easily accessible, which is an important option for non-traditional, disabled, and commuting students.
- **RESOURCES:** Our new website will provide promised resources including tools for multilingual writers and guidance on best practices for writing about race, gender, and difference. We have also invested in a collection of books displaying linguistically diverse non-fiction writing that we keep in the Writing Center.
- **PHYSICAL AND ONLINE SPACES:** Our efforts at building our digital space have an equity focus of trying to create more equitable access to information.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We began more systematically gathering feedback from students who visit us.

PLANS

The Writing Center has made major progress on our goals for the next five years. Currently, we are focused on our web presence and the development of support for students beyond the first year.

SPRING 2024

Our overarching goal for the Spring is to improve our digital presence, making it easier to find and navigate as well as increasing its utility as a teaching tool.

- Introduce new appointment-based system using Microsoft Bookings.
- Unify all our current systems under Microsoft Teams.
- Launch and promote new version of our website.
- Work on developing new web-based and video resources authored by us.

Other major goals:

- Run pilot Writing Fellows course with Christine Dinkins
- Conduct student-led research on student beliefs about their writing

PROGRESS ON 5-YEAR PLAN

Complete:

- Expand number of outreach events we offer
- Write, publish, and promote mission and equity statements
- Develop training program and materials
- Craft atmosphere in physical space
- Create and roll out WC introduction video
- Create marketing guidelines for WC

In progress:

- Offer writing pedagogy support for faculty
- Develop student-led research
- Engage in self-assessment practices and systematically seek visitor feedback
- Seek certification of tutor training program
- Develop partnerships with constituencies across the college who can help improve training for our staff
- Develop and improve digital resources
- Implement writing across the curriculum support

By Spring 2027:

- Take consultants to regional writing center conferences
- Submit student research for publication in writing center journals
- Be able to provide demographic data on center usage
- Develop staff training in multimodal composition support
- Potential staffing, budget, and physical changes:
 - Adding small quiet space for private sessions
 - Staffing expansion for Fellows program

