



WOFFORD
WRITING CENTER

SEMESTER
REPORT

FALL 2024

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); Mary Jackson Kirk, Lindsey Vane, Breelyn Grooms, Jordyn Ford, Katie Stewart, Jack Tope, Josie Thillet, Sophie Thrasher, Avery Goodale, and Emma Estridge (10 returning consultants)

HOURS OF OPERATION: M 10-5; T 11-5 & 7-10; W 10-5 & 7-10; R 1-5; 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.

SPRING 25 TEAM HOURS

Increasingly the Writing Center staff is thinking about the appropriate balance between their work and their studies, and more staff members are taking on fewer hours. So, in Spring 2025, we will have about half of the staff working fewer hours per week, and we will employ 12 people instead of 10, equaling the same number of weekly paid hours.

CORE VALUES

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

SESSION DATA

This semester we collected incomplete data because of a bug in our data collection system. It was resolved by IT mid-semester, but we do not know how many sessions were not recorded. We believe our session numbers were slightly lower this semester due to the disruption of Hurricane Helene, but not significantly. The usage of our year-old appointment system has stayed steady and significantly increased during our busiest weeks.

recorded contact hours Fall '24



***This number is incomplete, as our data collection system had a bug that was fixed mid-semester. We believe we may have lost somewhere around 30-50 sessions. If that estimate is correct, our numbers would be in line with the last two Fall semesters, when we had 319 and 285 contact hours (F22 and F23, respectively).**

considering change to data collection system

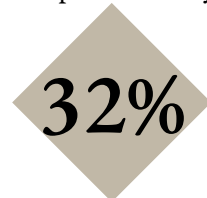
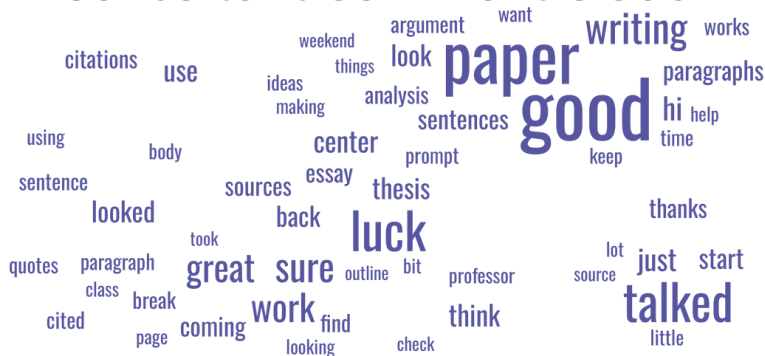
We may consider changing our system for data collection in the near future. This is in part because of the system error we went through this fall, but it is also because of the disconnect between our booking system and our session data. Currently, we have no way of connecting our booking system with our data collection system because one runs through Microsoft and the other runs through MyWofford. Since our data collection is also experiencing a bug, this might be the right time for us to look at ways to switch our visit form over to Microsoft so that it can be integrated into Bookings, our appointment management system.



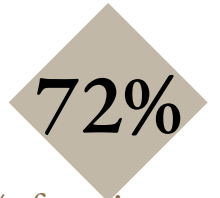
usage of Bookings appointment system

The usage of our year-old appointment system stayed similar to Spring '24 through most of the semester, but it was highly utilized during the final week of classes, showing that it is providing the benefit we hoped of organizing our work during the busiest parts of the year.

Fall '24 session report consultant comment cloud



% of appointments
pre-booked F24



% of appointments
pre-booked
December 2-6

CONNECTIONS TO SOUTHEAST WRITING ORGANIZATIONS

We are connecting with our regional community in important ways, through the certification of our writing center with the Southeastern Writing Center Association and by taking a key speaking position at the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators Conference.

CENTER CERTIFICATION

A major goal of the Writing Center, recommended by the most recent external review of the English Department, has been to have our center certified by one of the major professional organizations in the field of writing center studies, which we achieved this semester by earning a Center Acknowledgement and Recognition of Excellence (CARE) certification through the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA).

What does certification mean?

Certification indicates that leaders at our peer institutions have thoroughly reviewed the training programs, philosophies, and practices of our writing center through an extensive process involving multiple departments at Wofford.

What are the benefits of certification?

- It communicates the seriousness of our training and work to student staff members' future employers
- It demonstrates the quality of our service to Wofford faculty and outside stakeholders
- It connects us with our peer institutions in the Southeast
- It provides us with periodic opportunities for ongoing review
- We can display the CARE badge in all of our digital materials and we will be presented with a plaque at the 2025 SWCA conference.



CAR-WPA KEYNOTE

The Director of the Wofford Writing Center, Al Douglass, has been invited by the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators Association to serve as the keynote speaker at their Spring 2025 conference at Furman University, providing another important opportunity for our center to become more visible and connected to our peers. The title of the keynote address is:

“Play and the Conditions of Invention.”

The CFP and keynote abstract can be found at this link.

GENRE TRAINING

The Writing Center focused training this semester on developing our ability to work more effectively with students writing upper-level papers in disciplines the consultant is less familiar with by focusing on genre theory and its application to writing center work.

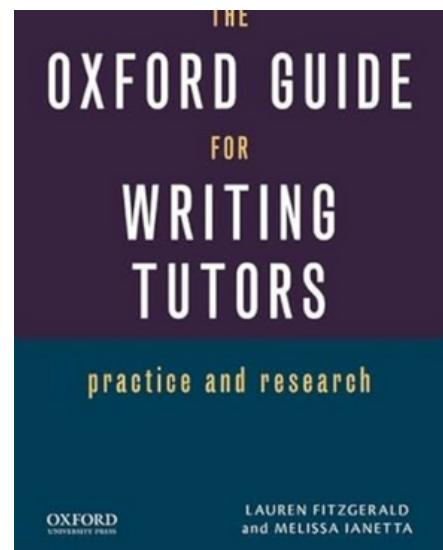
WHY GENRE?

Many consultants feel hesitant about giving feedback to writers in disciplines they are less familiar with. However, writing center consultants are never “experts” in the subjects our visitors write about in the way that their professors are, and they should not pretend to be. Good consultants prompt writers to ask smart questions about the specific features of the type of writing they are attempting.

KEY IDEAS ABOUT GENRE

We studied the advice on genre from our major writing center text, the *Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors* by Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta. The authors emphasize that understanding genres is not as simple as learning the rules of a particular type of writing for two reasons: 1) because genres change over time, and 2) there are infinite variations within each one. However, the authors emphasize that knowing *about* genres and asking the right questions is still incredibly useful for understanding disciplinary expectations. They prompt the consultant to question:

- What purpose does this genre serve?
- What are the features of this genre?
- How do its particular features serve its particular purpose?
- Whose interests does this genre serve?
- How is this genre similar to and different from other genres?
- What creative variations on this genre are likely to enhance its effectiveness?
- Which ones will be inappropriate and therefore ineffective?



STARTING GENRES

After learning key ideas about genre, we began applying them to some specific examples. First, we worked with our new **Phenomenology** knowledge from our Writing Fellows pilot, then we began learning about **lab reports**.

OUTREACH

We had a very successful semester in terms of outreach. We held several very-well attended events including a new partnership with Creative Writing, and we also created a new Meet the Consultants section on our website.

Meet the Consultants

This semester we posted new videos on our website, created by Avery Goodale as part of a Film and Digital Media internship, introducing students to the consultants they can book with. We hope this feature will decrease students' feelings of intimidation when booking and will help them to understand the kinds of writing experience our consultants offer.



Events

This semester we had very well attended events including a repeat of our most popular past events, a new partnership with Creative Writing, and a new yearly tradition!

- **Student Interest Fair**
- **Time Capsule:** Each year we now plan to invite students to write letters to themselves during their first weeks at Wofford that we will return to them when they graduate.
- **Scavenger Hunt:** At Halloween, we ran a really fun scavenger hunt with riddles written by our staff that led students all over campus.
- **Lazy Book Club for Lauren Yero:** This semester we teamed up with Creative Writing to host an event connected to an author reading on campus. Students came fresh, read some of Yero's work, wrote about it and then met the author!
- **Write-in:** Our semesterly write-in continues to be an anticipated tradition on campus.

LIBA 101 visits

For the second year, we partnered with the library to introduce ourselves in person to every LIBA class that scheduled a visit with Emily Witsell.



WRITING FELLOWS FEEDBACK

We are now able to provide more feedback from our Spring '24 pilot for a possible future Writing Fellows program, which would be designed to support upper-level courses.

Summary of pilot program

In Spring 2024, the Writing Center piloted a potential future program for supporting upper-level courses. The design of the plan was detailed in last semester's report, but we had not yet collected all of our feedback at that time. Here is a summary of what we did:

- **Purpose:** develop a model for supporting upper-level writing-intensive courses in multiple disciplines
- **Method:** pair a peer consultant with a single course so that the consultant can learn more about the needs of the specific class and assignments and give writing feedback to all enrolled students twice during the semester
- **Pilot course:** we worked with Christine Dinkins' Phenomenology course, giving feedback on two major assignments, the Phenomenological Observation Journal and the Applied Phenomenology Project, pairing the course with a senior consultant, Sam Carter, who had previously done phenomenological research with Dr. Dinkins
- **Future implementation:** we propose that we could support 8 courses in this way per year, serving up to 160 students on 320 projects annually if we were able to hire two more consultants at a time

Student feedback

- % of students who reported using written and oral feedback from the fellow in their revisions: **100%**
- Average rating of the benefits of peer support from the fellow by students: **4 out of 5**
- Excerpts from written feedback:
 - "Sam was really well versed with what we were trying to accomplish, and her feedback was tailored specifically to that rather than just critiquing."
 - "The accessibility aspect was nice. The fact that she knew exactly what the assignment was and what the professor expected was also very helpful in making sure I fully answered the prompt."

Instructor feedback

"With 15 students, I usually struggle to give feedback on every journal entry while the assignment is in progress. Having Sam work with me to give that feedback was such a help to me and the students...Sam was able to help each student include the kind of philosophical content needed and check their writing for unfounded assumptions. I have assigned this journal at least 5 times when I have taught the course in the past, and the students performed significantly better this time, thanks to Sam's support. She also helped the students with the semester's final projects, which covered a wide range of approaches from poetry to papers to scripts for reels. Her versatility was impressive and a testament to how well she had been trained as a writing center tutor."

- Christine Dinkins

STUDENT-LED RESEARCH

Josie Thillet developed writing center research during Summer '24 that we are continuing to investigate this academic year. Our team hopes to send a contingent to the International Writing Center Association Conference to present this work in Fall '25.

writing center confidence project AY23-24

Last year, consultants Sam Carter and Jack Tope pursued IRB-approved research, gathering data on the question: “How does working with the Wofford Writing Center impact students’ feelings of confidence in their writing?”

summer 2024 collaborative research

Over summer 2024, consultant Josie Thillet pursued student-faculty collaborative research, presented at the '24 SURF conference, to analyze the data from the previous confidence project and develop next steps for our center in response.

freewrite project AY24-25

This year, we are implementing a session intervention and collecting a new set of data (IRB approved) based on the new question that emerged from Josie’s project: “What tools can the Writing Center borrow from Creative Writing Studies to build a safer place for risk-taking and experimentation in students’ writing processes?”

conferencing fall 2025

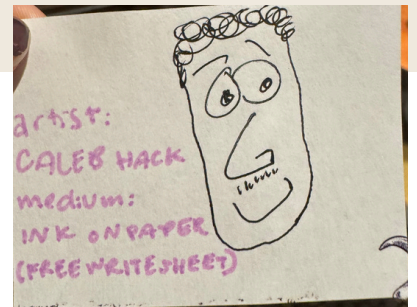
We hope to take this ongoing research with a contingent of consultants (Jack Tope, Josie Thillet, and Emma Estridge) to the International Writing Center Association conference in Fall 2025. It would be our first conference experience and would expose our staff to a wide range of new ideas about writing center work.

FROM JOSIE’S SURF POSTER:

Confidence in Chaos: Applications of Experimental Creative Writing Pedagogy in the Writing Center

“Self-efficacy is not simply the feeling that you can get good grades on a paper or in a particular discipline by yourself. It is neither so specific nor so fragile that it can be compromised by a poor evaluation. It is, in fact, being able, despite discomfort, to take a risk, such as experimenting with unconventional or personal thought, that might lead to a worse evaluation in the eyes of the established norm.”

“Self-efficacious writers recognize that writing is never perfect on the first try and recognize that as a low-stakes opportunity to have fun. They dive into the chaos of trial and error until they emerge with a more thoughtful piece of writing. Additionally, such writers are courageous by seeking out sources of feedback, which they use intentionally. They recognize that they are the thinker with the most involvement, agency, and passion in their writing, so they are ultimately the highest authority.”



PLANS

This semester we have taken several very important steps in meeting our major goals by certifying our center and moving forward with plans to bring student-led research to writing center conferences. Our next big project will be launching our new writing website and blog.

SPRING 2025

Research

- Collect and interpret data from our ongoing research project
- Propose a talk at the International Writing Center Association conference for F25
- Secure funding for 3 students to attend IWCA

Launch Writing at Wofford and blog

- Publish and advertise the new writing resources website we have been creating tailored for the needs of Wofford's students
- Begin publishing consultant writing on the blog portion of the site, reflecting peer to peer support model and developing consultants' expertise

Pursue more disciplinary training

- We will continue learning about genre and adding to our disciplinary knowledge as a team.

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 video materials including WC intro and Meet the Consultants
- Create marketing guidelines for WC
- Implement a scheduling system
- Engage in self-assessment practices and systematically seek visitor feedback
- Seek certification of tutor training program
- Develop student-led research

In progress:

- Offer writing pedagogy support for faculty
- 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
- Take consultants to regional/national writing center conferences

By Spring 2027:

- Submit student research for publication in writing center journals
- **Be able to provide demographic data on center usage (emphasized by SWCA reviewers)**
- 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

