

SPRING 2024

WOFFORD
WRITING CENTER

SEMESTER
REPORT

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, Elz Young, Katie Stewart, Mary Jackson Kirk, Breelyn Grooms, Jordyn Ford, Jack Tope, Josie Thillet, Sophie Thrasher, Avery Goodale, Emma Estridge, Lena Strauss (10 returning consultants, 2 new consultants - 4 working reduced hours)

HOURS OF OPERATION: M 11:30-5 & 7-10; T 10:30-5 & 7-10; W 11-5 & 7-10; R 1-5 & 7-10; F 11:30-5

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.

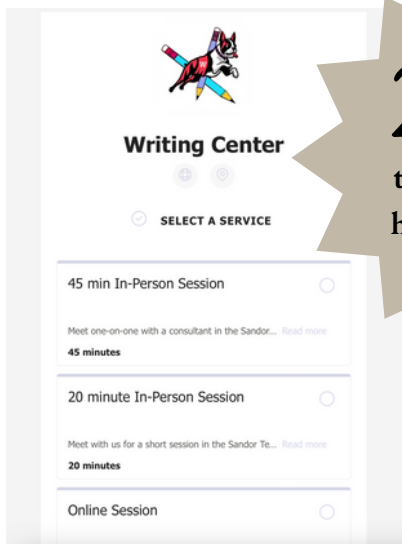
CORE VALUES

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



SESSIONS AND BOOKING SYSTEM

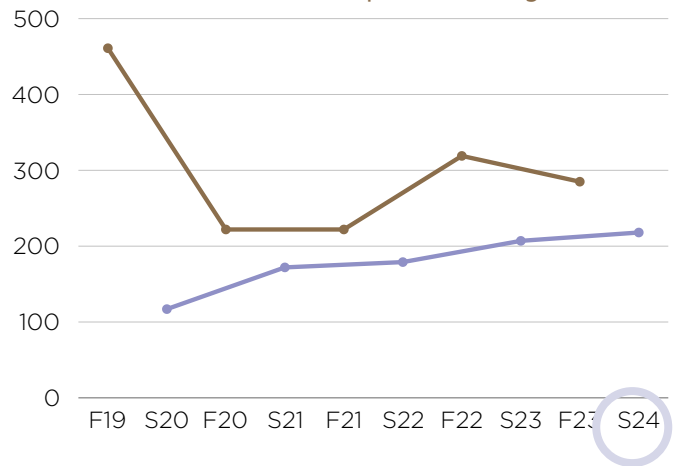
This spring, we began using a scheduling system for the first time at the Writing Center, and everything went smoothly. We worked with more students this Spring than we have in recent Spring semesters, in part because of our Fellows pilot program.



218
total contact hours Spring 2024

33%
scheduled through Bookings

total # visits compared to past 5 years



Top courses served :

1. ENGL 102
2. HIST 190
3. BIO 216

individual writers served:

108

Gold = Fall
Purple = Spring

What we worked on most:

1. Focus
2. "Other"*
3. Introductions

repeat users:

71

*Some things marked "other": "foot & meter," "plot/climax," "flow," "clear & concise"

departments served:

15

Our contact hours for recent Spring semesters show a slow but steady increase since 2020. Our highest impact outreach efforts are always with new students in the Fall semester LIBA courses, but this continuing Spring increase shows a long-term retention of engagement with students as they move into upper-level courses.

Our new booking system has been user-friendly and frequently utilized, and has helped us in the ways we imagined by creating more predictability, equity, and flexibility for our staff and visitors. We are pleased that students are also coming to speak with us about higher-order concerns in their essays than they did in the past.

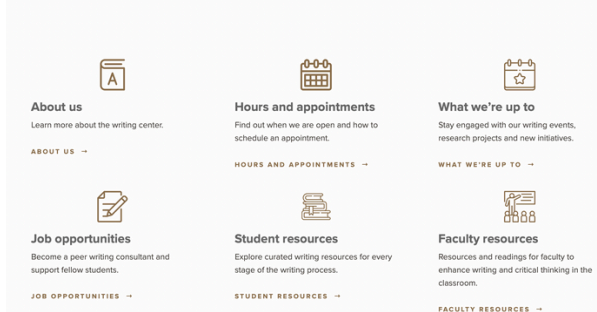
OUTREACH & EDUCATION

The Center is currently focused on improving the ways we interact with the campus community digitally. We made major steps toward improving our web presence this semester.

WC WEBSITE

Our [new website](#) went live this semester, and it is a massive improvement in a number of ways.

1. This is the first time the WC has had a developed site at a wofford.edu address, so we are much more discoverable.
2. We've been able to integrate our new appointment system into a live feature on the site, making it very easy to find and user-friendly.
3. We have collected student and faculty writing resources in a digital space for the first time, expanding the ways that writers can engage with us.



WRITING @ WOFFORD

The next phase of our work expanding our digital presence is to create a second website, tentatively titled Writing @ Wofford, where we will author our own set of digital writing resources tailored to Wofford's needs, so that members of the campus community can think about their writing asynchronously and so we can build our institutional knowledge of how to support the campus. This semester, we have begun by creating a set of guides for students in LIBA 101, focused on writing process, which will go live before Fall 2024. We combined our work creating the new site with deeper training into the elements of the writing process we wrote about.

In the future, we will expand by creating guides for writing in the different disciplines, which we hope to work on with faculty members across the college. This site will approach instruction multimodally and will include video and visual content as well as written guides.

EVENTS

This semester, we reduced our number of events and put more resources into each one. We offered two of our most popular events from last year again :

- **Open Mic Poetry Reading:** At this event, poets can come and read original work, or anyone can come and recite poetry from other authors.
- **Write-in:** We will hold our biannual Write-In again this Spring during the last week of class, promoting writing camaraderie and mutual support.

WRITING FELLOWS PILOT

We ran a pilot program this semester for a potential future direction the Writing Center could take in supporting upper-level courses in disciplines across the college.

What is a Writing Fellows program?

This kind of program is a common way that small liberal arts colleges support writing intensive courses across the curriculum. The purpose is to pair a peer mentor with single course, who will learn more about the writing needs of a particular class than they ever could for a walk-in Writing Center session and give writing feedback to all enrolled students at a formative stage. This support does not replace feedback from the instructor, but rather encourages students to focus on improving their disciplinary writing skills before they submit final work.

Structure of the pilot

For our initial exploratory pilot, the Writing Center paired one Fellow, senior Samantha Carter, with one upper-level course in the Philosophy Department on Phenomenology taught by Dr. Christine Dinkins. Our model of support follows the common structure of Writing Fellow programs, along the lines of the model program at [Brown University](#).

- The fellow, the Director of the Writing Center, and the professor meet to discuss the writing goals for the course and individual assignments.
- The fellow attends several class meetings to immerse themselves in ideas that will be important for students' writing
- Twice during the semester, students turn in drafts of written work two weeks before the final deadline.
- In the first intervening week, the fellow gives each student written feedback on their writing.
- In the second intervening week, the fellow meets with students to discuss their revision process.

Phenomenology

Dr. Dinkins chose two very different writing assignments for feedback from the fellow.

1. **Phenomenological Observation Journal:** Short writings in this journal had to follow very specific and unfamiliar disciplinary rules that students had to adjust to.
2. **Applied Phenomenology Project:** This creative, open-ended, multimodal project has fewer boundaries, but requires much more deep, unstructured critical thinking that greatly benefits from informed feedback.

We will collect evaluations of the pilot at the end of the semester from the fellow, students, and professor. We also intend to use what we learned with this fellow pairing to author a digital guide on Writing in Philosophy.

Future implementation

Costs to the college: Fellows need to be trained Writing Center staff, and working with a course represents about 1/2 of a student's semester workload. So, for every 1 additional consultant hired, we can serve 2 Fellow courses/semester. Increasing our staff from 10 to 12 would mean that we could serve 8 Fellow courses/year, and could serve every department on campus once every 2 years, greatly increasing our institutional knowledge of the writing happening on campus.

How to distribute fellows: In order for Fellow courses to run smoothly, course calendars need to be designed with early drafts in mind, and fellows need to understand the assignments in advance. So, professors will need to submit course materials when requesting a fellow, by the end of the previous semester. This will limit the number of requests. If we still have more requests than capacity, we will prioritize 1) courses we have not served before, 2) disciplines we have not served recently, 3) courses above the 100-level.

OTHER INITIATIVES

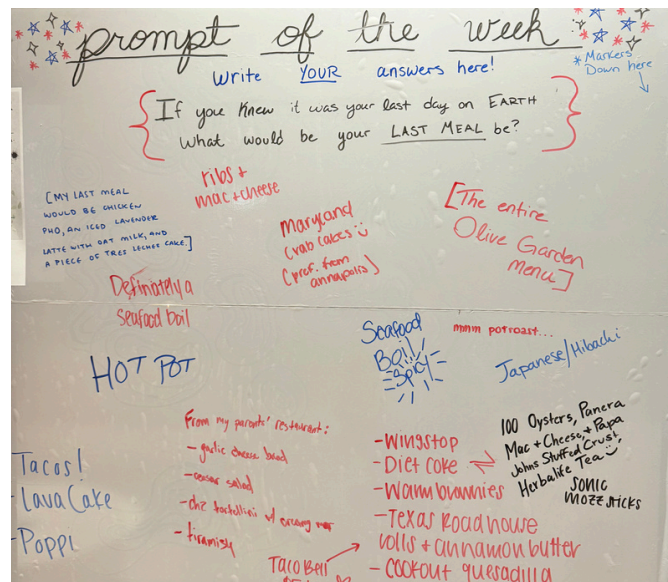
The other initiatives we are moving forward with this semester are varied, advancing our goals in terms of research, student engagement, and improvement of our training program.

STUDENT-LED RESEARCH

Our self-research goals are advancing - we have applied for and received both IRB approval and Faculty-Student summer research funding to move forward with our investigation, which seeks to explore students' feelings of self-confidence as writers and how those feelings are impacted by working with our service. By moving forward with this project, we are beginning a cyclical process of iterative self-research that reflects a key professional standard in Writing Center work. This summer, our staff researcher will be Josie Thillet.

PASSIVE PROGRAMMING

Another student-led project from Katie Stewart has been to increase low-stakes engagement with the Writing Center by creating a weekly prompt board outside our physical space. We always have lots of responders!



CARE CERTIFICATION

We are moving forward with professionalizing our center by seeking to certify our training program so that the knowledge and skills of our staff will be legible to students, faculty, and future employers, and to guarantee an ongoing standard of rigor. However, we are now interested in seeking certification from a regional organization rather than a national one, in part due to its lower financial cost, and in part because we will then be more deeply connected to our regional Writing Center organization and other centers in the area. This May, we are going to apply for a CARE (Center Acknowledgment and Recognition of Excellence) certification from the Southeastern Writing Center Association. This is the certification held by centers at many regional institutions including Clemson, William and Mary, Auburn, the College of Charleston, and the University of Alabama. If successful, we will receive certification in August 2024.

PLANS

We have made major strides in our five-year plan this semester by moving forward with a plan for upper-level disciplinary writing support, securing funding for student-led self-research, and vastly improving our digital footprint.

FALL 2024

Building on the work we've done this year, our goal in 2024 will be to find more inroads to developing relationships and avenues for support within more departments across the college. We imagine we will:

- focus on training staff to serve students who are writing within the varied academic genres of their disciplines.
- draft more disciplinary writing guides for the Writing @ Wofford site.
- partner with departments to plan events for majors in specific disciplines, perhaps doing something like a History Write-In at a time when important assignments for those students are due.

Other major goals:

- Find publication or conferencing venue to showcase student-led research produced in Summer 2024.
- Go live with the Writing @ Wofford site, and add to it by:
 - creating more multi-media resources, including video and visual content.
 - starting a staff blog, where consultants can research and explore writing topics in depth.

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
- Implement a scheduling system

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
 - Seek funding for staff expansion to enable Fellows program

