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WOFFORD  
WRITING CENTER

SEMESTER  
REPORT

SPRING 2023

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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); Emily Arnold, Elz Young, Yasmin Lee, Alexis Walker, Alex Malvern, Katie Stewart, Mary Jackson Kirk, Abby Landfried, Lindsey Vane, and Breelyn Grooms (9 returning consultants, 1 new consultant)

**HOURS OF OPERATION:** M 10-5 & 7-10; T 10-5 & 8-10; W 10-5 & 7-10; R 10-5 & 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





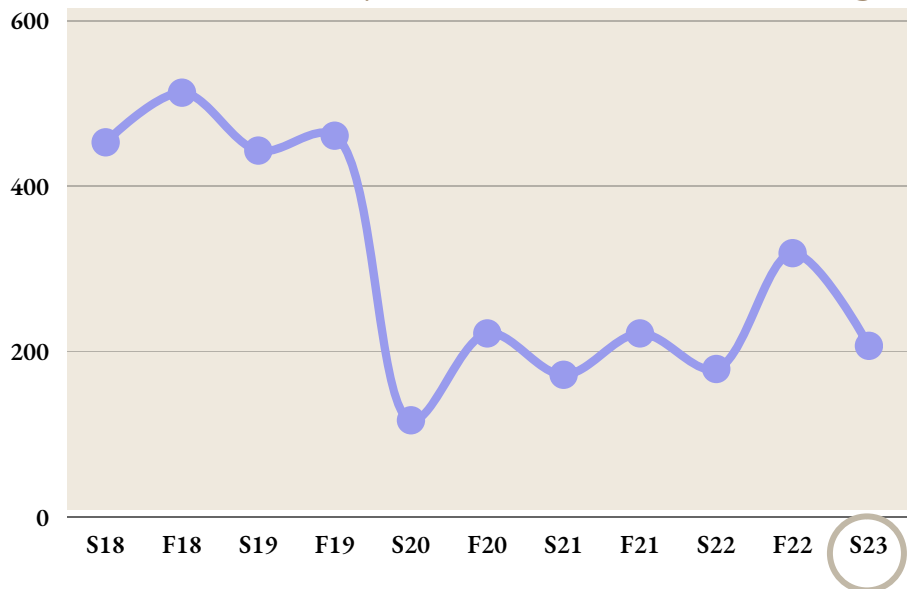
# SESSION DATA

*This semester we matched last year's spring numbers but did not see them rise as fall numbers did between Fall '21 and Fall '22. However, we are still seeing just as broad a range of disciplines using the Writing Center, and we are seeing even more returning users.*

# contact hours  
Spring '23

**207**

compared to historic usage



# individual  
writers served:

**107**

# repeat users:

**65**

# departments  
served:

**16**

The fact that our increase in usage last semester did not translate to this semester tells us that there is a disconnect between our engagement with students at the beginning and end of the year - supported by the consistent historic drops in spring numbers. Our current hypothesis is that we are doing better at reaching first-year students as they enter than we are at promoting engagement with writers who are further along in their education. This is a guess we will investigate during AY 2023-2024. Our current thinking is that we need to develop more robust discipline-specific support, and possibly targeted capstone support. We have an enormous percentage of repeat users this semester, indicating that students who come to us find the work beneficial.

Top course supported:

**ENGL 102**

What we worked on most:

1. Introductions
2. Grammar
3. Analysis

# OUTREACH

*This Spring, the Writing Center put a lot of energy into increasing our presence on campus outside of our physical space.*

## EVENTS

This semester we increased the number of events we hosted on campus significantly. Last semester, we only put on one trial event, and this spring we hosted:

- **Pups and Pops:** as a promotional event, alongside the Sandor-Teszler Library's therapy dogs day during midterms week, the Writing Center gave out free popsicles, goody bags, and WC info
- **Poetry Slam:** alongside National Poetry Month, we invited members of the campus community to come out and share their own poetry or favorite poems
- **Style Guide Workshop:** we provided guidance on writing papers in MLA, APA, and Chicago styles
- **Write-in:** after a successful write-in in the fall, we re-ran the event, where students were invited to come together before finals week to write in community with free coffee and support from consultants



## POP-UP HOURS

This semester we started hosting "Nice Thursdays" - on Thursdays with nice weather, we hosted our afternoon hours behind Old Main, attempting to meet new people who don't usually study or write in the library.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

We continued to develop our social media presence this semester, which did not exist before this academic year. Follow us on Instagram [@wocowritingcenter](https://www.instagram.com/wocowritingcenter)!

# TRAINING AND PROJECTS

*All of our major work this semester built on the foundation laid by our initial trainings and projects in the fall.*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- collaborative training for our mid-year hire, including a process of peer shadowing
- ongoing training in writing pedagogy for the staff in [weekly staff meetings](#)
- targeted trainings for issues that seemed particularly relevant to the staff this semester including
  - consulting writers in the age of generative AI
  - working with writers in disciplines not your own
  - working with diverse writers
- ongoing professional development for the Director in attending the Southeast Writing Center Association conference in Memphis

## COLLABORATIVE PATH-SETTING

In the fall semester, the Writing Center staff collaboratively conceived and wrote a Mission Statement and a Statement of Core Values. This spring, we built on that work in two major ways:

1. The Director presented a talk on our collaborative process of arriving at these documents at the SWCA conference
2. During our work on our core values, the staff decided we needed to develop a separate Equity Statement for the WC. We did that work this semester\*, presented on the next page of this report.

\*At the end of our internal writing process, we worked with both the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and also members of the African/African-American Program.

## WRITING CENTER INTRODUCTION VIDEO

In order to reach more students with better information about the services we offer, we decided to develop a short introductory video that would mirror typical "class visits" that writing centers do to raise awareness. We partnered with senior Film and Digital Media Studies student Kenzie Syiem, who filmed and directed that video for us, which is now live on the Writing Center website and social media, and which we plan to send to faculty in the fall as something they can distribute to students.



# EQUITY STATEMENT

*The Writing Center produced the following Equity Statement as a guiding document to accompany our Mission Statement and Core Values. This statement was written collaboratively, and has been reviewed by the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.*

The Wofford Writing Center is committed to serving our community equitably. We reject a view of language support where our work would erase linguistic variety in the name of “correctness.” We reaffirm that [students have a right to their own language](#), as the Conference on College Composition and Communication has since 1974. This commitment does not mean withholding valuable information about academic writing. By discussing academic expectations as they are - changeable histories of language use within disciplines - not as absolute truths, we give writers more nuanced ways of navigating their work at college without denying their own voices.

Everyone’s sense of self is deeply connected to the individual ways they use language. [Historically](#), the standardization and policing of language - the idea that there is only one right way to communicate - has been a tool for maintaining power hierarchies, and in American educational institutions, Standard Written English as the norm has upheld [white language patterns](#) to the exclusion of other languages. At Wofford, which is a predominately white, private institution that was built by enslaved people and which is currently situated in a majority-minority city, we can be sure that our judgments of language are impacted by the broader history of racial inequity in the United States. Acknowledging this fact is particularly important in our current historical moment, when efforts to account for past racial injustice within our institutions [are increasingly politicized](#).

In the context of writing centers, students or their professors may expect us to make sure their work is “fixed” before they leave a session - but that idea supposes that their writing comes to us “broken.” Approaching writing from the [perspective of deficit](#) in this way negatively impacts writers and their learning. Students bring rich language resources to their work, and we do a disservice to them and to our community when the language in our classrooms - not just what we study, but also what we *write* - cannot include multilingual expression, including Black English, regional dialects, or the many other tools that students bring with them. There is such a thing as error in writing - but many of the things we are taught to consider errors are in fact rules-governed features of writers’ languages that can and should have a place in educational environments.

Beyond supporting linguistic variety, the Writing Center is committed to supporting the diverse range of ideas writers bring to us, as well as their variety of approaches to the writing process. Because we work one-on-one, each person who comes in can tell us what they need, as the authority on their own project. This listening-first approach guides our practice, but there is more to be done. As Wofford diversifies as an institution, we must ensure that the educational spaces students enter are set up to celebrate and support them. For people who identify with groups that have been underrepresented at Wofford, in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, sexuality, or economic status, we cannot assume that our space is automatically ready to offer the support that people need. So, in addition to our listening-centered philosophy, we also have more specific commitments about how an equity perspective impacts every aspect of our operations. [Our list of practical commitments is on the next page.]

# EQUITY PRACTICES

*The following list of practical equity measures accompanies the Equity Statement on the previous page. As a center, we commit to pursuing equity in our work in the following ways.*

## SESSIONS

- Supporting multilingual writing & dialects
- Not pressuring writers to conform to any mode of expression
- Offering online consultations
- Protecting confidentiality
- Refusing to “guarantee” any outcome in student writing

## HIRING

- Posting job ads widely
- Emphasizing our translanguaging philosophy in our job ads and emphasizing multilingual skills as a sought-after qualification
- Reaching out to all departments in seeking applicants
- Reaching out to multicultural student orgs about applying
- Inviting people who visit us as writers to apply

## TRAINING

- Including anti-racist & translanguaging perspectives on writing instruction in training new consultants
- Continually keeping up to date with anti-racist ideas in writing instruction during ongoing staff trainings
- Engaging with scholars from the communities they’re writing about (scholars of color for antiracist work, disabled scholars for disability work, etc.)
- Creating a process of self-reflection for all consultants
- Giving more explicit rhetorical training to new staff as a way of leveling the playing field

## PROGRAMMING

- Developing programs that might help support students on specific applications meant for diverse community members
- Partnering with multicultural student organizations to create events that would serve them

## RESOURCES

- Obtaining & creating online & physical resources for students that would serve equity goals:
  - Tools for multilingual writers
  - Guidance on best practices for writing about race and difference
  - Information about navigating gendered language and pronouns
  - A storehouse of linguistically diverse academic writing as examples of what is possible

## PARTNERSHIPS

- Exploring the possibility of partnering with educational institutions in the larger Spartanburg community, perhaps providing support for local students in their college applications
- Partnering with offices on campus on building out trainings for our staff around equity issues

## PHYSICAL AND ONLINE SPACES

- Creating visibility for the linguistic variety of successful academic writing in our physical and online spaces
- Regularly meeting with Accessibility Services to reconsider needed changes to our physical space
- Creating more equitable access to information by building out our online space
- Making our commitment to equity principles visible in physical & online spaces
- Providing a range of tools for students with different learning needs

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Seeking input from Wofford students to hear from them directly about what is and isn’t working for them in our programming



# PLANS

*Key goals for the upcoming semester, Fall '23, are discussed below, and our full 5-year plan can be found in the Fall '22 semester report.*

## FALL 2023

- Reintroduce virtual sessions under new video conferencing model
- Begin visiting all LIBA library sessions
- Develop “canon” of key texts for training
- Start collecting student feedback systematically and self-assessing our services
- Seek ideas from colleagues about how the WC could support faculty as well as students
- Develop partnerships with one or two academic departments and create models for supporting their upper-level students in the Spring

## CRLA CERTIFICATION

An option we are interested in, depending on financial support from the college, is certifying our training program with the College Reading and Learning Association. This certification was recommended by the English Department's most recent external review. A few things to consider:

- Since 1989, over 1000 programs have been certified with the CRLA
- Key benefits include adding consistency and professional standards that heighten the reputation of our center and add prestige to the work for student consultants, who can become certified themselves when the program is certified
- Our center has taken steps to ensure we can be compliant and receive certification next year if we choose
- The application fee is \$350, which must be renewed after 2 years, then every 4 years thereafter

## STUDENT-LED RESEARCH

A major goal for our center in the coming year is to begin offering opportunities for student consultants to develop research related to the Writing Center. Writing centers offer unique opportunities for undergraduate professionalization because of the fact that the field of writing center studies has historically foregrounded contributions by undergraduates. All writing center research venues, from conferences to scholarly journals, feature student-led research alongside graduate and faculty research, meaning that the research we develop can provide many prestigious opportunities for presentation and publication for our staff. We will begin exploring these possibilities next year, and we have already begun discussing what kinds of research questions our group might be interested in pursuing.

Based on initial conversations, the current staff seems particularly interested in investigating how economic background impacts the ways that student writers perceive and interact with the center.

Depending on how our work proceeds, we may seek summer research funds in 2024.