UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA
CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE
SPRING 2008 REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Writing Excellence (CWE) enjoyed a very successful first year of formal operations. This year, the Center for Writing Excellence adopted an expanded mission and started new activities to meet a wider range of writing needs, while meeting the challenges it faces as part of a growing and changing campus.

As a reconceptualization and expansion of the University Writing Center idea, the Center for Writing Excellence has at its core a mission emergent from the *UNA Strategic Plan*. That mission is to provide high quality support for students, both on and off campus; to provide professional development opportunities for faculty as they develop high quality programs, and to build town-gown relations through the common literacy link. The CWE has three components: the University Writing Center, the Writing Across the Curriculum & Writing in the Disciplines Professional Development Series, and Community Outreach. Each component fulfills one part of the mission.

The first component, the University Writing Center (UWC), has enjoyed consistent success, although growth is still hampered by the lack of an adequate dedicated space. In Fall 2007, approximately 595 different students (8.13% of the 7323 total UNA student population) contacted the University Writing Center 1,603 times. In Spring 2008, a smaller number of students (553, or 7.55%) contacted the University Writing Center a greater number of times (1696 visits). These numbers suggest that the UWC may be in a holding pattern, most likely caused by schedule and space limitations. However, with regards to specific writing tutorial assistance, the UWC has grown. During Fall 2007, tutors conducted 428 tutoring sessions for 201 students. In Spring 2008, these numbers both increased: tutors conducted 625 tutorials for 273 students. These numbers show that the University Writing Center is successfully establishing itself as a valuable writing and learning resource for students. In addition to the growth in number of tutorials, the UWC also successfully piloted an online writing center in conjunction with the College of Nursing. This program will be expanded to all university online courses in Fall 2008.

Although the UWC has grown in its tutorial offerings, not all of its growth and retention goals were met this year. An increase in the number of classroom workshops was expected, but two fewer were requested. Retention goals were met for only one of three demographics: EN 099 and Project OPEN tutorial expectations fell short, the first achieving 83% and the second 67% of goal. Fortunately, the international community received over twice as many tutorials as anticipated, so retention goals for that demographic may be increased.

The other two components of the Center for Writing Excellence also commenced operations this semester. The WAC/WID Professional Development Series offered two workshops this term: a two-day opening discussion to determine university WAC/WID needs and a workshop on writing assessment rubrics. At the same time, the Community Outreach Program made a commitment to participate in Florence-Lauderdale Public Library's inaugural One Book Program by offering a six-meeting creative non-fiction and memoir writing workshop for adults. In addition, work has begun on the creation of the Florence High School Writing Center, which will begin offering writing tutorial service in Fall 2008. That effort is in conjunction with the Florence High School English Department; the CWE will provide training and documentation support.

Because of the successes and despite the failures of the past year, there is much reason for optimism. The 2007-2008 Academic Year was one of new beginnings in the Center for Writing Excellence; the future remains bright.

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Writing Excellence (CWE) maintained its Fall 2007 standards during the Spring 2008 semester. It grew in some ways, but also suffered because of its spatial limitations. In the University Writing Center (UWC), an increase in the staffing and supply budget allowed for more and consistent staffing with more experienced, paid tutors. Increases occurred in the overall number of student contacts, the number of students who participated in tutorials, and the number of tutorial sessions. Workshop and tutorial evaluation scores remained high. Furthermore, an online tutorial program was successfully piloted with two courses in the College of Nursing. Clearly there were many successes.

However, challenges in the University Writing Center remain. The scheduling conflicts created by a lack of dedicated space have not been resolved. The number of different students who used the lab space and the number of faculty requesting workshops and orientations decreased slightly. While the Writing Center met and greatly exceeded its retention goal for International student tutorials, it failed to reach the goals for EN 099: Basic Writing and Project OPEN nursing student tutorials.

Progress has also been made in the other components of the Center for Writing Excellence. The WAC/WID Professional Development Series offered its first workshops, and the first community outreach activities have begun development. These activities include a workshop contribution to the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library One Book Program and the creation of a writing center at Florence High School. There is still plenty of room for the Center for Writing Excellence to grow and improve, but the university can be proud of the Center's overall success this academic year.

CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW

The UNA Center for Writing Excellence is a new support service at the University of North Alabama. Its mission is to enhance university and community writing and literacy skills through work with UNA students, faculty, and Shoals Region community institutions and organizations. To achieve this mission, the Center has three programs: the University Writing Center, the Writing Across the Curriculum & Writing in the Disciplines Professional Development Series, and Community Outreach.

1. The *University Writing Center* offers:
    • Face-to-face and online tutoring in writing and reading
    • Campus-wide and course specific workshops on writing issues, including Higher and Lower Order Concerns, research and writing processes, and style instruction
    • Professional development opportunities for tutors.

2. The *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) & Writing in the Disciplines (WID) Professional Development Series* offers:
    • Campus –wide professional development workshops on the design, pedagogy, and assessment of writing assignments
    • Individual consultation on WAC/WID-related issues

3. The *Community Outreach Program* includes:
    • Regular participation in major Florence-Lauderdale Public Library literacy events (We are scheduled to offer a 6 week writing workshop as part of their Fall 2008 Community Reading Program)
    • A Shoals Region High School Writing Center Initiative (a proposed plan to help develop writing centers in interested high schools across the region. Work has begun with Florence High School; their writing center will begin operations in Fall 2008)
    • Reading Academic Discourse (a plan to develop, implement, and research a summer bridge reading program working with students in their junior year of high school through their sophomore year of college. Work is in the grant proposal stage)
    • Possible application for the creation of the Shoals Region National Writing Project site, possibly as soon as 2010 or 2011

- Possible creation of volunteer community writing centers
- Other programs as proposed by the community and permitted by funding.

This mission is consistent with multiple components of the University of North Alabama *Strategic Plan*. The University Writing Center and the WAC/WID Professional Development Series strengthen the university community as "initiatives that enhance basic competencies/skills: (a) math; (b) writing; (c) reading; (d) time management; (e) study; and (f) life and career planning (p. 10), either by working directly with students or by enhancing how faculty work with student writing. Community Outreach recognizes that "UNA serves the surrounding community as an intellectual nucleus and strives to maintain a sense of cohesiveness with that community by working collaboratively, disseminating information, providing intellectual, social, civic, and cultural experiences, and offering assistance to businesses and schools" (p.7). The program seeks to improve the literacy skills of regional students, especially those who may enter UNA, while helping combat the local dropout rate.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Location

During the 2007-2008 Academic Year, the UWC operated on an 11 by 15 foot stage at the back of the Stone Lodge 2 classroom. In Spring 2008, this classroom served as instructional space for the following courses:

- EN 112: College Composition II (Hybrid Course)   MWF, 12:00-1:00
- EN 455: New Media Writing   TR 9:30-10:45
- PS 301: Political Science Scope and Methods   TR 11:00-12:15
- SO 311: Computer Applications in Social Sciences   TR 12:30-1:45

This classroom also served as testing space for:

- ES 121: Earth Science   10 Meetings
- BI 141: Human Anatomy & Physiology I   4 Meetings
- English Department MFT Exit Exam   T 4/22 & W 4/23, 2:00-4:00

In the case of ES 121 and BI 141, UWC use was limited because students were reluctant to enter during a test. In the English Exam situation, the UWC was closed.

The resulting scheduling conflicts continue to reduce the University Writing Center's effectiveness. Tuesday and Thursday hours, the most popular in Fall 2007, were nearly eliminated in Spring 2008. A dedicated classroom space is essential for further growth; this space must be configured for writing support services and must include an attached office for the CWE director.

Budget

The budget for the Center for Writing Excellence improved substantially during the Spring 2008 Academic term. The Vice President of Business created a new cost center for the CWE. In addition to the $6,000 staffing allocation currently held by the English Department, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs allocated an additional $17,500. This money will be used to pay for Summer Session I and II tutoring, the CWE director's salary for one summer session, and Fall 2008 daytime and online tutoring through the end of the fiscal year. The small remaining portion will be used for supplies, books, training, and web-based management software necessary to expand, improve, and streamline UWC operations. A budget for the 2008-2009 Academic year, including the 2009 Summer sessions, has been submitted to the Vice President for Research.

Personnel

The University Writing Center was opened for 47 hours per week in the Fall term; this number increased to 52 hours per week during Spring. Figure 1 shows the number of paid and volunteer staff for each term.
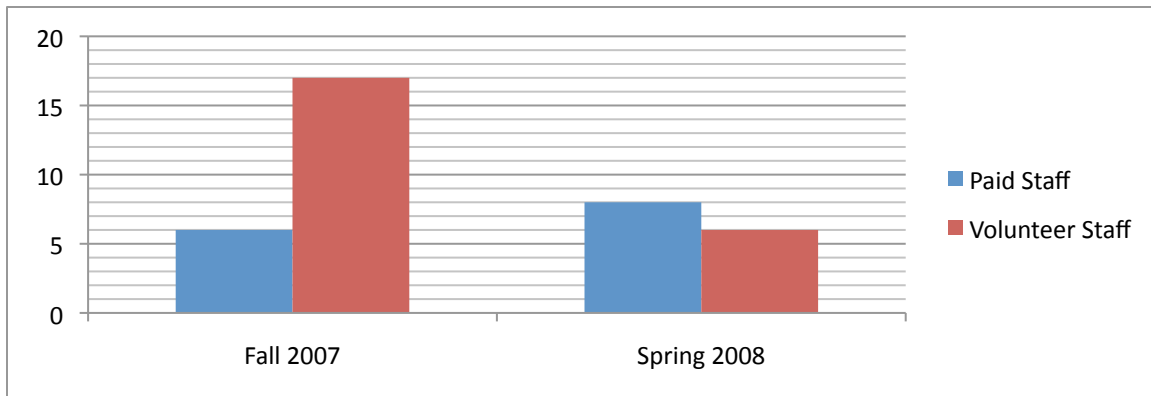
Figure 1. University Writing Center staff, 2007-2008

Although paid staff reflects a two person increase, early semester turnover tied to academic and personal issues led to two resignations. Therefore, only six paid tutors completed the Spring 2008 term. In addition, fewer volunteers offered their time in Spring term. Many students who tutored in the Fall found employment elsewhere, or simply chose to prioritize academics or personal activities.

In Fall 2007, tutors staffed the UWC for 643.68 total hours; in Spring 2008, they staffed it for 805.75 total hours. Figure 2 compares the total hours of service contribution of each group.
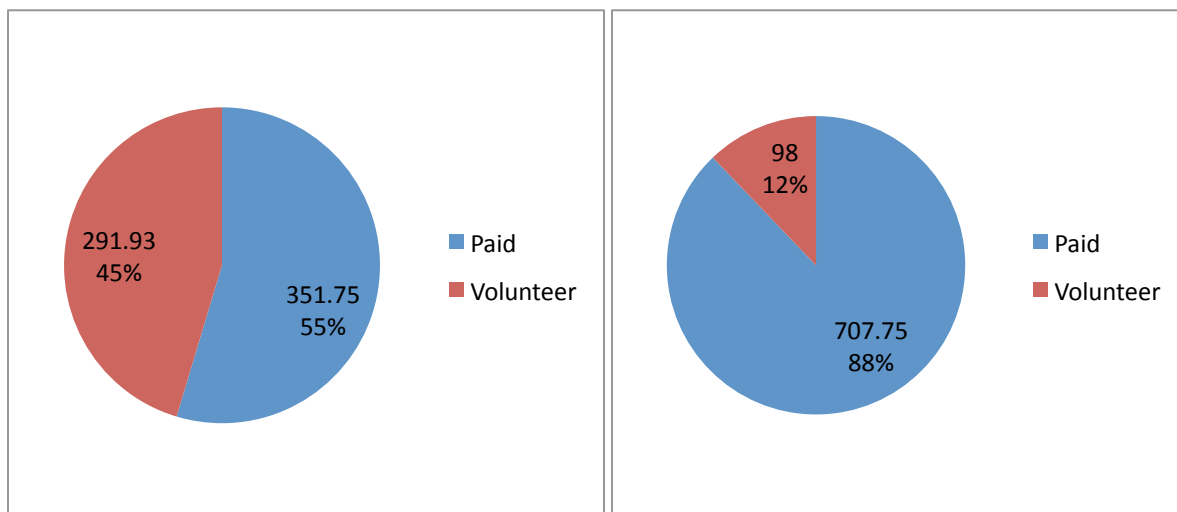

Figure 2. University Writing Center service hours, 2007-2008

By increasing the hours for paid staff and reducing the numbers and hours for volunteer staff, the UWC could provide better, more specific one-to-one training, which led to better, more consistent quality tutoring for students. Volunteer numbers and hours will continue to be reduced each term. With the implementation of a tutor training course and a full staffing budget, it is expected that few to no volunteer positions in the UWC will remain.

Computer Lab Use

In this report, UWC computer lab use is discussed in terms of both students and contacts. A contact is a visit to the University Writing Center, whether made by the same individual or by different individuals. One useful way to consider a contact is to think of it as an opportunity for teaching and learning, as opposed to a label attached to each student in a one-to-one ratio. It is therefore not only possible, but also often the case that one student provides multiple contacts.

Data Collection Method & Limitations

In order to record contacts, students who visit the University Writing Center are asked to sign a log book, providing their name, professor and course for their work (where applicable), their arrival time, and their departure time (recorded when they leave). Students are also asked to identify their purpose for visiting the UWC by checking the appropriate choices from one of these three options: Tutoring, Work/Study Time, and Break/E-mail. This is an imprecise means of collecting quantifiable data beyond a record of overall use for three major reasons. First, students do not always list professors and courses, and sometimes neglect to include arrival and departure times. Second, the purpose for the visit can change, as work on an assignment can lead to a tutoring session, and the student may also elect to check e-mail before leaving. Third, a small percentage of students do not sign their names completely, clearly, or, on a few occasions, truthfully, leading to discrepancies that can only be resolved by cross-examining the handwriting in the original log books and by checking names against the UNA Portal System address book. Because of these limitations, only conservative estimates of Writing Center use can be made.

Student Contact Visits

In Fall 2007, approximately 595 different students (8.13% of the 7323 total UNA student population) contacted the University Writing Center 1,603 times. In Spring 2008, a smaller number of students (553, or 7.55%) contacted the University Writing Center a greater number of times (1696 visits). Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of different students by the number of visits.
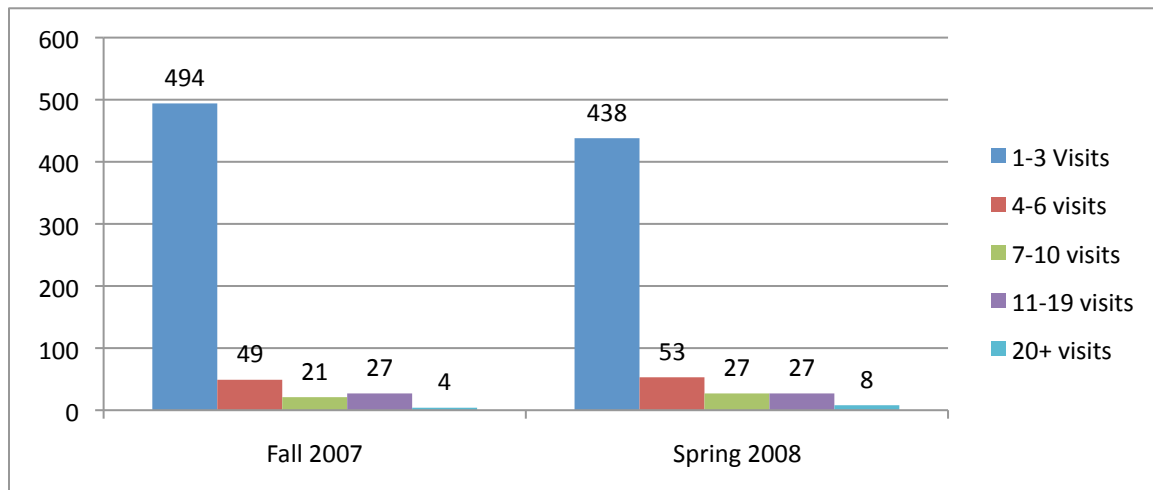

Figure 3. Contact visits by student, 2007-2008

Where the highest number of visits by any one student in Fall 2007 was 37, the highest in Spring 2008 was 47, in both cases by an international student. While the goal of reaching a greater number of students was not met, the increase in multiple visits in three of the four other categories indicates that the UWC may be developing its role as a repeat destination point for more students during the course of their semester. In the near future, the UWC must develop a strategy to take advantage of this repetition.

Use Rates

The monthly use rate of the UWC computer lab is determined using the following procedure:
- Divide the number of contacts per month (daily log book estimate) by the total hours of use per month (daily log book estimate) to determine an average monthly use time.
- Divide the total hours of use per month (daily log book estimate) by the operational weeks per month (valued to the nearest quarter) to determine the average use hours per week.
- Divide the average use hours per week by the operating hours per week (52 for the Spring 2008 term) to determine the monthly use rate.

Remember that the use rate measures the occupation of the computer lab by a single student at any given time, so that if one student stays in the lab for an hour, then the lab will have 100% use rate for that hour. As a result, use rates routinely stay above 100%, sometimes reaching 200% or even 300%, indicating that an average of 1-3 students used the computer lab for every hour that it was open during a given month. Figure 4 shows the use rates for the 2007-2008 Academic Year, expressed in percentages.
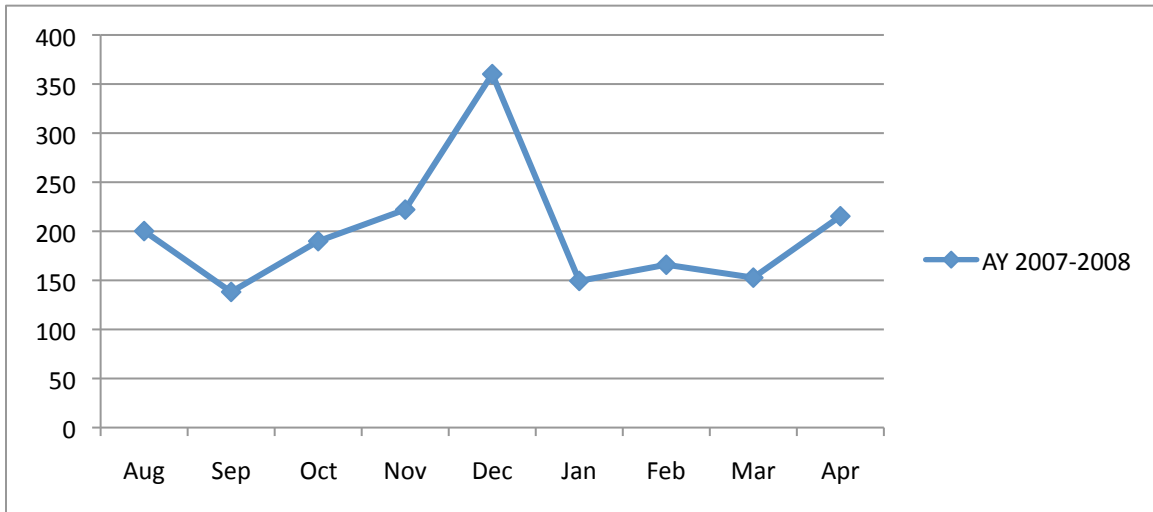
Figure 4. Computer lab monthly average use rate (%), 2007-2008

In December 2007, monthly average use rates crossed 350%, meaning that at least three students were present in the Writing Center during its hours of operation. By comparison, average monthly use rate in April just passed 200%, meaning an average of at least two students were present in the Writing Center during its hours of operation. Figure 5 demonstrates a similar trend, showing that the December average use time, measured in minutes, exceeded the April average use time by nearly 10 minutes.

Figure 5. Computer lab monthly average use time (minutes), 2007-2008

Data collected over the next two academic years should reveal whether or not these are normal patterns for monthly average use rate and monthly average use time.

Writing Center Tutorial Use

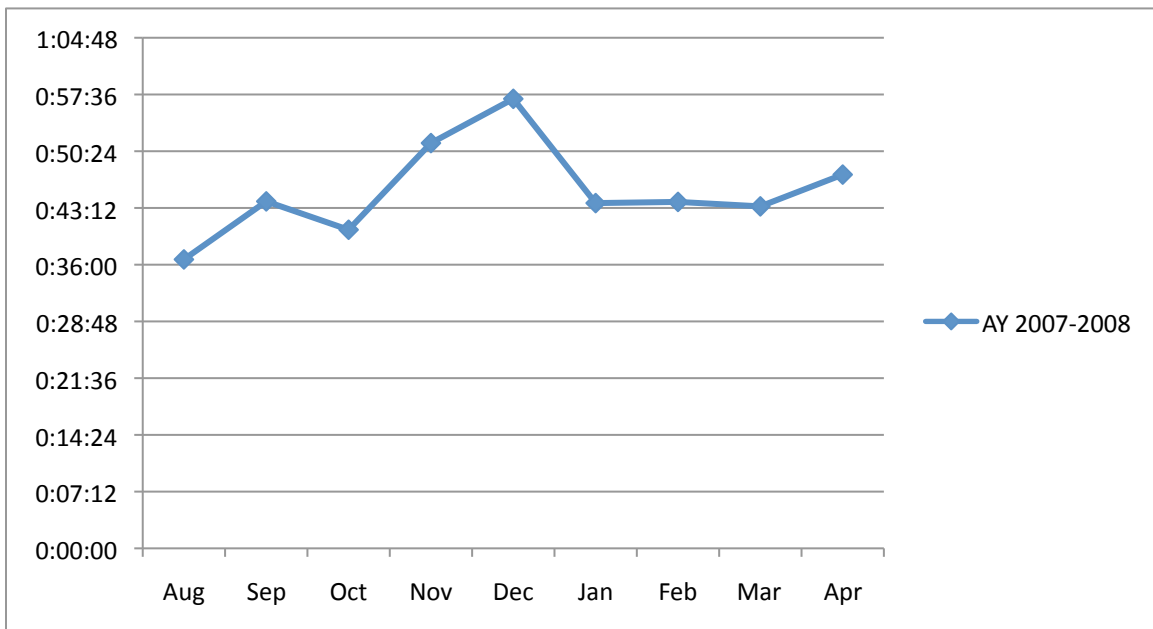The primary activity by which the UWC works toward its mission is the individualized supplemental writing tutorial. These tutorials are held at the back of Stone Lodge 2, and are conducted by either the Director or one of the paid or volunteer peer tutors. As with overall computer lab operations, tutorials are measured in both students and contacts, using the same contact definition provided at the outset of the Computer Lab Use section of this report.

Data Collection Method

As with overall computer lab use, data was collected for the number of contacts who engaged specifically in writing tutorial sessions. Tutors would complete Tutor Session Notes for each tutorial, providing one copy of the form to the student and sending the duplicate to the Director. After entering the data into the database, the duplicate would then be forwarded to the professor of record, so that he or she would have an account of students' work as well. This process resulted in data that was almost always accurate, with discrepancies caused only by the occasional failure to insert a departure time. That information however, could be at least closely estimated from a review of the log book and discussion with the tutor.

Student Visits

During Fall 2007, UWC tutors conducted 428 tutoring sessions for 201 students. In Spring 2008, these numbers both increased: tutors conducted 625 tutorials for 273 students. These numbers suggest that the UWC is successfully establishing itself as a valuable writing and learning resource for students.

Another measure of success can be determined by the number students who visit multiple times, and by how often students return. It is preferable to have a greater number of students with multiple visits, based on the premise that a student who visits only once or twice is attempting to fix an assignment, whereas a student who visits regularly may be learning more about how to write in any or multiple contexts, as opposed to one specific context.
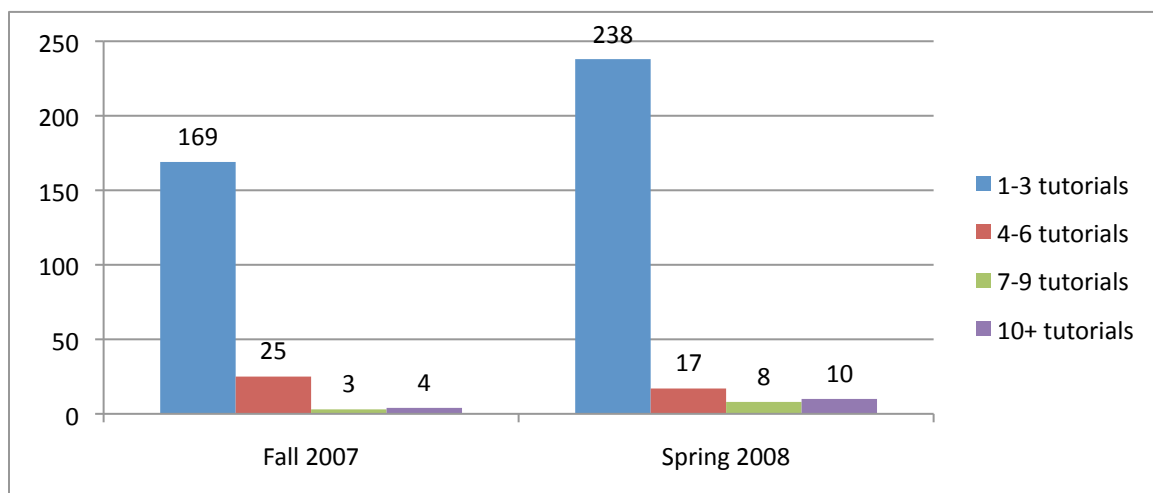
Figure 6. Tutorial visits by student, 2007-2008

In Spring 2008, eight of the ten students who visited 10 or more times were international students. One of these eight visited the Writing Center for 28 tutorial sessions. The high number of students with 1-3 visits or tutoring sessions can be directly attributed to a NU 406: Research in Nursing requirement that had all students visit the Writing Center with their research projects and papers.

This data suggests that the Writing Center is serving primarily as a resource for students with one-time or assignment-based needs. There is, however, a small and established clientele of about 35 students who use the Writing Center as a regular resource for their writing needs; many of these students are different from those 32 students who were regular attendees in Fall 2007. The data clearly shows that although there has been growth, more work is needed to increase the number of students who receive multiple tutorials. In addition, a combined quantitative and qualitative study of the established clientele from the 2007-2008 Academic Year is needed to learn more about this demographic.

<u>Writing Tutorial Use Rates</u>

Writing tutorial use rates are determined using a similar procedure to that outlined in the section on computer lab use rates. Although the mathematical formulas are identical, the difference between the two is that estimated data is determined from tutorial session forms prepared by each tutor instead of the daily log book. As shown in Figure 7, use rates generally have averaged between 30-50%, meaning the tutor is engaged in tutorials during that percentage of the time that the UWC is open.
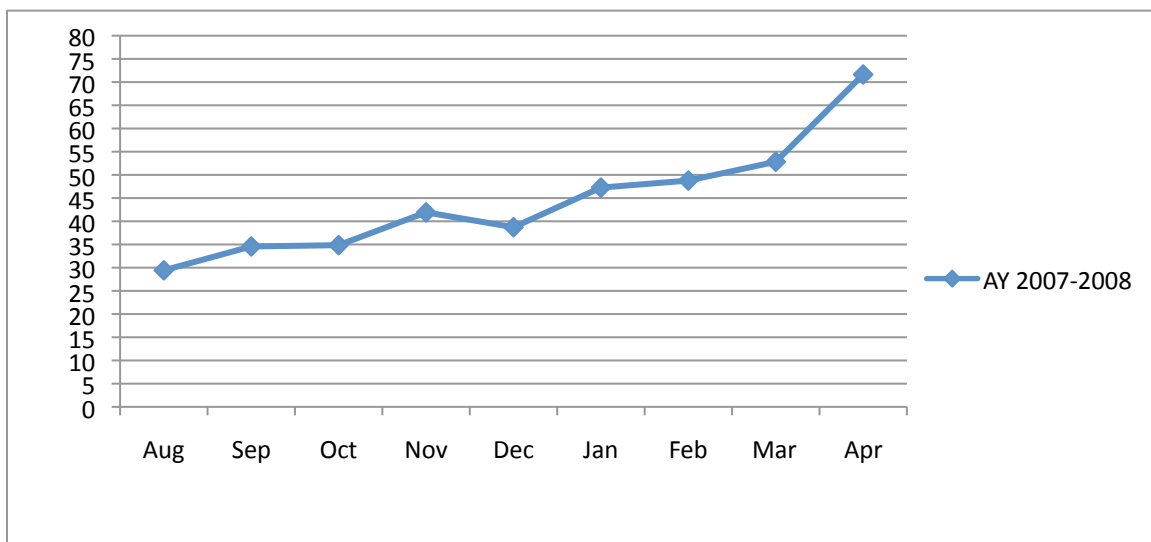
Figure 7. Writing tutorial monthly average use rate (%), 2007-2008

The sharp climb in April tutorial use rates is again directly attributed to the involvement of students in NU 406: research in Nursing. Although students from the course visited the UWC with group projects, and were tutored in groups, they were listed individually in tutorial session records. Still, April was the busiest month of the year for tutors, as shown in Figure 8:
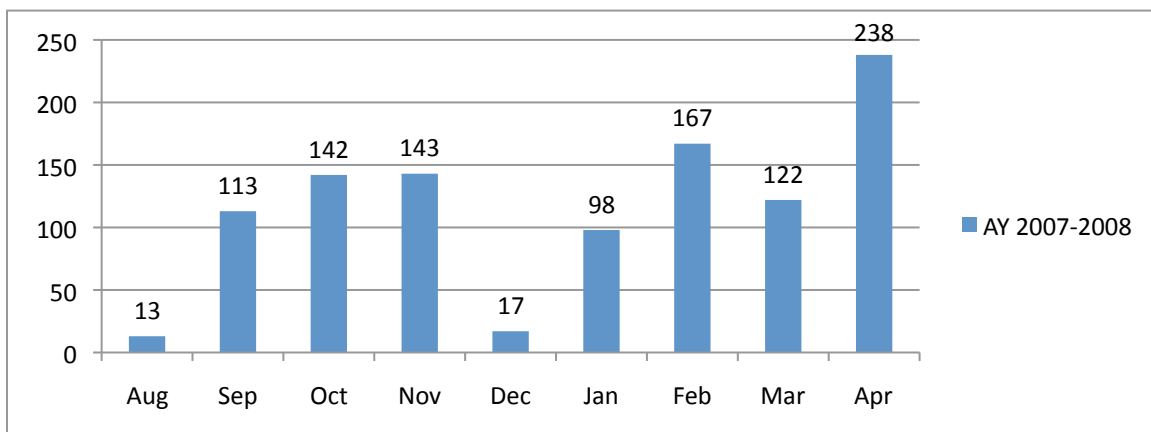
Figure 8. Tutorial sessions by month, 2007-2008

Average use time remained between 30-40 minutes per tutorial for most of the year, although tutorials began to run longer toward the end of the Spring 2008 term. In Composition and Writing Center research, 30 minutes is generally regarded as the most time a tutor should spend working with a student in any one session: beyond this point, the writer begins to feel overwhelmed by the quantity of feedback.
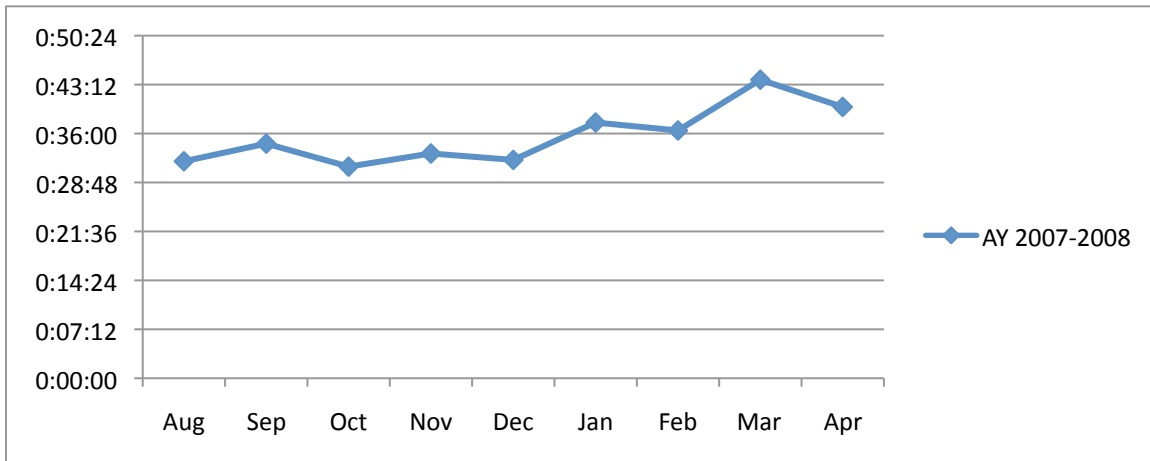
Figure 9. Writing tutorial monthly average time (minutes), 2007-2008

One cause for the upward turn in average tutorial length may be a strategy tutors have permission to employ if there are an overwhelming number of students in the UWC. More skilled tutors may start a student working on a writing issue, then assign that student some task related to solving the issue, then start a second student on his or her issues, and then return to check on the first student. The result of this practice is that tutorial sessions often take longer, but more students receive some assistance. Though not optimal, this practice alleviates the pressure of having a half dozen students arrive for help all at once, as has happened on several occasions.

Departmental Representation

The charge to develop a *University* Writing Center has clearly been met once again from the perspective of courses represented in writing tutorials. Figure 10 shows those departments with 10 or more tutorials in both Fall 2007 and Spring 2008.

Figure 10. Departments, colleges, and courses with at least 10+ tutorials, 2007-2008

Liberal Arts Writing Courses (EN 111 and EN 112) still outnumber tutorials for students in most other departments and colleges, but a strong presence has been established from all four Colleges and from multiple departments within the College of Arts and Sciences. Tutorials offered to College of Business stu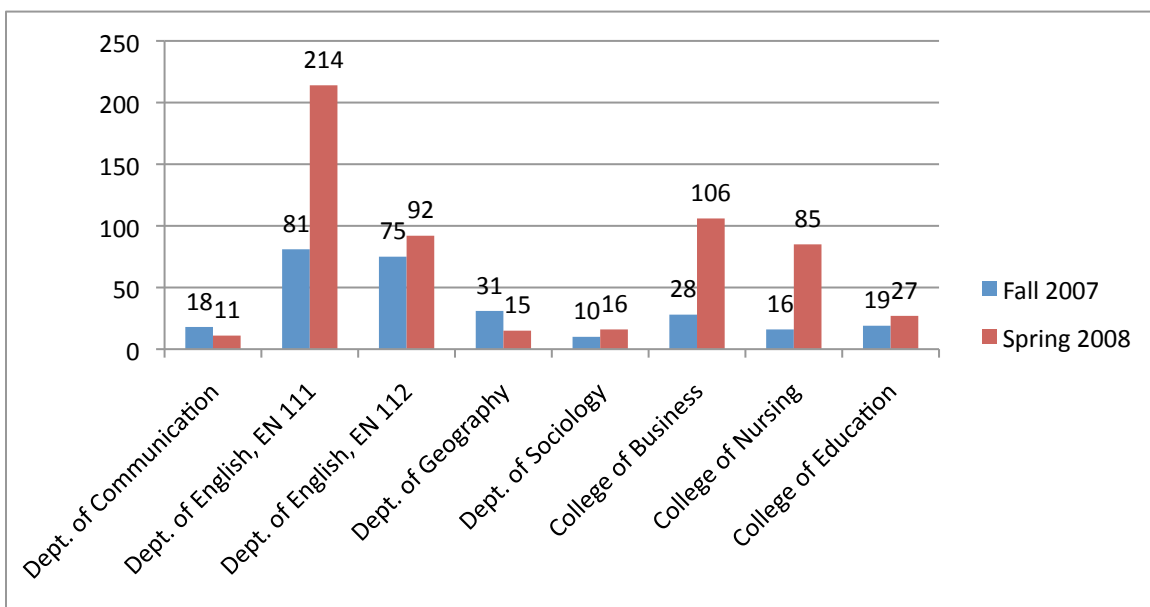dents were mostly requested by graduate students in CIS and Economics courses, as well as the MBA program, but several were also requested by undergraduate Management and Marketing students. In the College of Nursing, 17 tutorials were from an online writing center pilot program tied to NU 418: Nursing Concepts, Issues, and Theories and NU 501: Advanced Nursing Research.

<u>Online Writing Center Pilot Program</u>

In Spring 2008, the UWC joined with faculty from the College of Nursing to implement a pilot online writing center support program. The Nursing faculty, specifically Dr. Teresa Leonard, Dr. Lynn Aquadro, Dr. Wanda Bradford, and Prof. Linda Austin, recognized a need for writing support. This need also coincided with a call for increased Distance Learning support in the *UNA Strategic Plan* (2007, p.9).

The Nursing faculty selected NU 418: Nursing Concepts, Issues, and Theories and NU 501: Advanced Nursing Research to be their pilot courses. The means of support would happen through the discussion board and dropbox features in the eCollege distance learning platform. These asynchronous tools were chosen because of a lack of available tutoring time on the part of Dr. Robert Koch, the tutor for this program. Asynchronous technologies would allow delayed feedback, providing opportunities to review documents in the evenings or on weekends.

In NU 501, no students used the dropbox for essay responses. However, 9 students in NU 418 used the dropbox feature to solicit responses for 17 drafts:
  • 6 students submitted 1 draft each
  • 1 student submitted 2 drafts
  • 1 student submitted 3 drafts
  • 1 student submitted 6 drafts

Both NU 501 and NU 418 used the discussion board feature to address their writing needs. In NU 501, 8 students contributed 16 posts:
  • 3 students posted 1 time
  • 3 students posted 2 times
  • 1 student posted 3 times
  • 1 student posted 4 times
In NU 418, 13 students posted 22 times:
  • 6 students posted 1 time
  • 4 students posted 2 times
  • 1 student posted 3 times
  • 1 student posted 5 times

As mentioned in the budget section of this report, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs has increased the CWE budget for the rest of the fiscal year. A portion of this budget will be used to employ an online tutor who will spend 8 hours per week in online tutoring, using the discussion board and drop box features in both eCollege and Blackboard. Tutorial services will be offered to any student enrolled in an online course whose university address of record is *not* in Florence. Students who live in Florence are expected to visit the UWC itself. Finally, an evaluation form will be implemented, likely an online version of the print document currently used for tutorial evaluations.

<u>Evaluations</u>

As part of the University initiative to "assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the current facilities, materials, and services" (Office of the President, 2007, p.8), an evaluation system was implemented for students to provide assessment and feedback on their writing tutorial experience. At the completion of each tutorial, students were presented with a brief survey, which they were given the option of completing. Once a student completed the survey, it was folded, stapled (if the student chose to follow

the complete instructions provided on the survey itself), and placed in a business envelope in the mail slot where completed tutor session forms were kept. The Director would check this slot daily to collect both session forms and evaluations, which would then be entered into an excel spreadsheet. Evaluations were then stored in a cabinet in the Center.

In the Writing Tutorial evaluations, students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with 8 statements, recording their answers on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree. Not Applicable (NA) was offered as an alternative response. In Fall, 199 responses were collected; in Spring, 436 were collected. Figure 11 provides the average scores for each statement during both terms.

Writing Tutorial Evaluation Survey Results		
Statement	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
The Writing Center atmosphere is welcoming and comfortable.	4.92	4.9
The Tutor was friendly and courteous.	4.93	4.92
The tutor knew or knew where to find information that was important to me.	4.92	4.9
The Writing Center website is a valuable resource.	4.56	4.9
My experience in the Writing Center was useful to me.	4.89	4.91
I would visit the Writing Center again.	4.94	4.9
I would recommend the Writing Center to friends.	4.92	4.89
I would recommend my tutor to friends.	4.89	4.85
Average Score of all responses averages.	4.87	4.9

Figure11. Tutorial evaluation scores, 2007-2008

The University Writing Center website still has not been upgraded to make it a truly effective resource, a function of server migration and access limitations. That the score for this question has significantly increased may be more a function of students simply marking the survey quickly, without taking time to read each question. Although nearly every other score is down, they all still demonstrate a high level of satisfaction from the students who participated in tutorials. One reason for the slight decrease may be that the sample size has more than doubled.

In their handwritten responses, students continue to praise the support provided by the University Writing Center. Here are some of their comments regarding the quality of writing help:

"Learning something new every day. Has improved my grades a great deal."

"I believe this will improve my grades"

"Visiting the writing center really helped me get valuable insight on what direction to take my paper"

"Amazing. A must visit place at UNA. Improved my writing a great deal."

"This was really good experience to know how to expand the essay and make it more effective"

"A wonderful source to learn English. Thanks"

"Everything was great, helpful. Learned what to do next time. Thank you"

"Very helpful and informative. Thank you for your great work"

"Learning something new every time I visit the Writing Center"

Students also offered some specific comments about the tutors, included the following:
"The tutor easily identified my problem"

"I am continuously learning how to improve my writing. The tutors are amazing"

"I met J.T. Bullock at the writing center. He is very specific about the grammar rules. He explains the use and reason of each error and writes it clearly on the session notes. It helped me a lot. He is a friendly person. Thank you."

"Jessica was great! She helped a lot. Made me feel comfortable when I was nervous"

"I met Mr. T. Bagwell today. He helped me in rearranging the sentences. He is really friendly and dedicated. Thanks for spending time for me. He is good in grammar and very detailed."

"She was so cheerful and supportive. I was really nervous with the paper, so she made me feel less stress"

Some students recommended areas that need to be addressed as the center grows:

"wish that a TOEFL book was here"

"We need a copier in this lab"

"Increase the time of Writing Center"

Finally, these students demonstrate the most effective ways in which the UWC will grow: by encouraging other students and by visiting regularly. These students write:

"I recommend my friends to come and visit the writing center in their leisure time"

"I would always like to visit Writing Center when I am free."

Students continue to verify the University Writing Center's active and valuable role in providing supplemental writing instruction and assistance. It has received the continued approval of the students who used its tutorial services.

Retention

As part of its goal to "Foster a Strong University Community," the university recognizes that "provision of appropriate academic and support facilities…are important parts of maintaining a strong campus community." The university strategy for success includes an effort to "…maintain administrative systems that support … student retention" (Office of the President, 2007, p.6). In support of this university goal and the strategy for success, and at the request of the Vice President of Research, the UWC has implemented a plan to measure tutorial services among three specific at-risk populations who are more likely to be retained with additional writing instruction and support: EN 099: Basic English students, ESL / International students, and Project OPEN students. Target goals were set as follows:
- EN 099: 42 students / 10% of EN 099 population
- ESL: 56 students / 10% of ESL population
- Project OPEN: 12 students / 25% of Project OPEN population

The University Writing Center did not achieve the goals for EN 099 and Project OPEN, as shown in Figure 12.
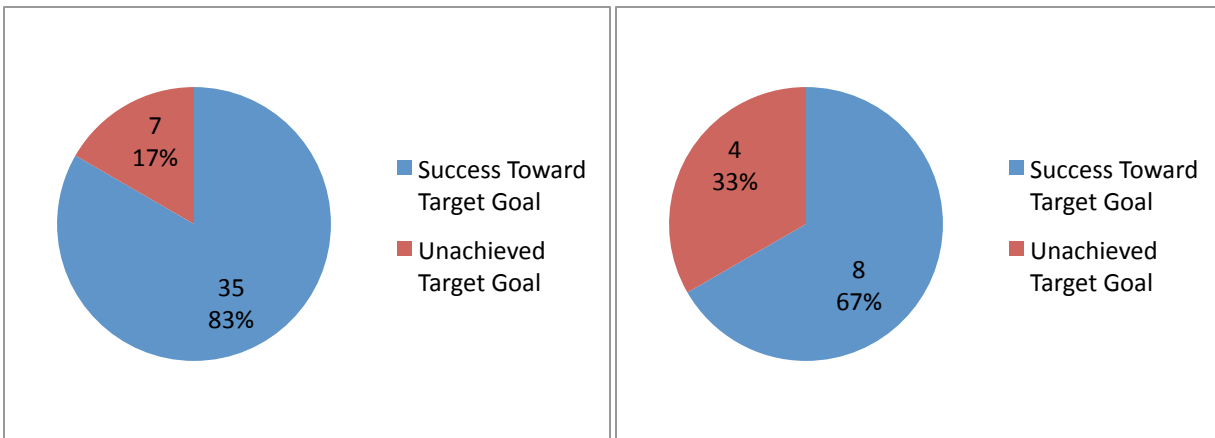
Figure 12. EN 099 and Project OPEN retention goals, 2007-2008

There is no clear explanation why the EN 099 goals could not be achieved. The UWC was advertised in all classes through the course instructors and in some cases by the CWE Director. The reason why Project OPEN goals were not achieved is more obvious: only one small section of EN 111 was offered in the Fall, followed by a small section of EN 112 in the Spring. The course did not have 12 students enrolled, so achieving the goal through typical advertising in English class was almost impossible. However, there are other Project OPEN students in other courses, so while bookmark advertising was done through the Project OPEN Office and the EN 111/EN 112 instructor was consulted, more active encouragement will be required next academic year.

Despite failing to reach the EN 099 and Project OPEN goals, the University Writing Center more than doubled its goal for reaching the ESL and International student population, as shown in Figure 13.
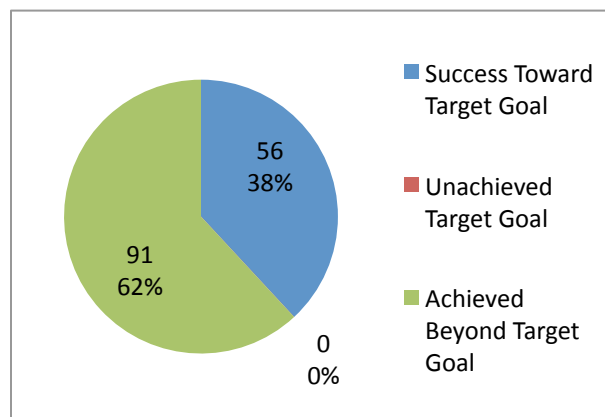
Figure 13. ESL retention goal, 2007-2008

For the 2008-2009 Academic Year, goals should therefore be set at the same levels for EN 099 and Project OPEN, but the ESL goal should be increased to 30% of the population, or roughly 126 students.

Workshops

Workshops continue to play an integral part of University Writing Center outreach. In Spring 2008, 22 workshops and orientations reached a closely estimated 456 students, as shown in Figure 14.

Writing Center Orientations and Workshops				
Date	**Topic**	**Course**	**Attendance/ Enrollment**	**Location**
01/11/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 112	25	Classroom
01/11/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 112	24	Classroom
01/14/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 099	9	Classroom
01/14/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 099	12	Classroom
01/14/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 111	25	Classroom
01/15/08	APA Style Workshop	CIS 660	20	Classroom
01/16/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 112	25	Classroom
01/16/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 112	25	Classroom
01/16/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 111	21	Classroom
01/17/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 099	10	Classroom
01/23/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 112	22	Writing Center
01/23/08	Writing Center Orientation	EN 111	21	Classroom
01/30/08	APA Style Workshop	NU 200	20	Classroom
01/30/08	APA Style Workshop	NU 200	25	Classroom
02/12/08	APA Style Workshop	NU 406	33	Classroom
02/12/08	Writing Center Orientation	SOAR Counselors	13	Writing Center
02/20/08	Writing Center Orientation	SGA Freshman Forum	23	GUC
02/26/08	APA Style Workshop	MG 482	31	Classroom
02/26/08	APA Style Workshop	MG 482	16	Classroom
02/27/08	APA Style Workshop	MG 482	25	Classroom
04/14/08	Research Outline & Thesis	EN 112	11	Writing Center
04/14/08	Research Outline & Thesis	EN 112	20	Writing Center

Figure 14. Orientations and workshops, Spring 2008

One of the challenges for the coming year is to encourage workshops on topics beyond orientations and APA Style. Although these are important areas to present, there are many other writing issues that could be addressed during class hours. Based on preliminary discussions with faculty in other departments, some workshops anticipated for next academic year include topics such as literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, primary research methods, and MLA Style.

Evaluations

As with writing tutorials, an evaluation survey was implemented for writing workshops. Students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with 6 statements, recording their answers on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree. Not Applicable (NA) was offered as an alternative response. This survey did not extend to orientations, since they were more informational than instructional. In addition, the wrong survey was administered to the CIS 660 class, so no evaluation data is available on that workshop. The results of the workshop evaluations are provided in Figure 15.

Writing Tutorial Evaluation Survey Results								
Statement	Average Scores							
Workshop Dates	01/30	01/30	02/12	02/26	02/26	02/27	04/14	04/14
This workshop / Presentation provided me with valuable information	4.95	4.96	5	4.61	4.75	4.56	5	4.5
This workshop / presentation provided me with useful information for other classes during my UNA career.	5	4.96	4.85	4.58	4.56	4.36	5	4.2
The presenter delivered the information clearly.	5	5	4.9	4.61	4.81	4.52	5	4.6
I would attend a Writing Center workshop / Presentation again.	4.45	4.36	4.58	3.6	4.06	3.4	4.73	4.35
I would recommend this presentation to friends.	4.75	4.72	4.76	4	4.56	3.88	4.82	4.35
I would recommend the Writing Center to friends.	5	4.88	4.73	4.34	4.62	4.12	4.82	4.45
Average Score	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.2	4.28	4.1	4.9	4.4
Evaluations Collected	20	25	33	31	16	25	11	20

Figure 15. Workshop evaluations, Spring 2008

Two concerns emerge from this data. First, students in MG 482 and one section of EN 112 gave comparatively low scores for Statement #2, suggesting that they do not easily connect knowledge from one course with knowledge from others. Strategies for interdisciplinary connection building must be developed and implemented where possible. Second, the low scores for Statement #4 illustrate a major obstacles to increased Writing Center workshop use. Given their own choice, students are less likely to attend a Writing Center workshop on their own.

Comments from these surveys were often appreciative. Here is a representative sample:

"The presentation was very helpful for our projects"

"Presenter (Robert Koch) was very energetic and kept my attention"

"very helpful as well as very informative"

"A+"

"fun, made it easier to understand"

"Well executed. Cheeky humor saves lives"

"I wrote a paper last week and I sure do wish I would have had this class before. It was very helpful!!!"

"The presentation helped me A LOT with what I needed to know and made my work easier to do"

Student comments support much of what was revealed in the surveys: that Writing Center workshops are a valuable service to the university community.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN WAC/WID

Spring 2008 saw the beginning of the CWE Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) & Writing in the Disciplines (WID) Professional Development Series. In February, an opening conversation took place on two afternoons, giving faculty a chance to discuss writing issues that most concerned them. Nine faculty participated in the conversation, and the following list of topics and issues surfaced:
  • Grammar quality

- APA/Other styles in class
- How to better structure long assignments (internal due dates)
- Journaling
- How to help students develop ideas better
- How to help International students with their writing
- Reverse outlining
- Assignments that help focus a single topic
- Source research
- Assessment Rubrics / How to Grade Objectively
- How to do effective short papers
- How to prepare for essay exams

In March, a workshop on Writing Assessment rubrics was offered, but because of poor advertising and its proximity to Spring Break, no one attended. The workshop was rescheduled for early April, at which time 6 faculty participated in the discussion.

In addition to these workshops, the CWE director has engaged individual faculty in WAC/WID discussions, addressing plagiarism and poor writing quality by assisting faculty in the College of Business as they developed assignments and presentations to combat these problems. Other colleagues who integrate writing in their upper level courses have also expressed an intent to more fully integrate UWC services, to add in-class workshops, and to more actively develop the writing component of their courses.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Two programs in the CWE Community Outreach component are in development stages: participation in the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library's inaugural One Book Program, and the creation of a writing center at Florence High School. Both provide unique opportunities to build town-gown relations.

The CWE will be participating in Florence-Lauderdale Public Library's inaugural One Book Program, which will take place from August 23rd through October 10th. Community members are encouraged to read this year's book, John Grogan's *Marley & Me,* and participate in discussions and workshops. As part of the program, the CWE director and up to three tutors will conduct a six-week memoir writing course on Saturday mornings from 10 am to 12 noon, from August 31st through October 4th. The benefits of this program include the following:
- Community writers will develop their writing skills and build a local writing community
- Tutors will gain presentation experience
- Tutors will gain valuable community volunteer experience

In addition to the One Book Program, the CWE has begun work with teachers and administrators at Florence High School to create the FHS Writing Center. Support materials and training for this program will be provided by the CWE, while the tutors will be FHS's own creative writing students and some of UNA's Language Arts Secondary Education majors. The benefits of this program include the following:
- FHS students receive help on their writing assignments.
- FHS tutors develop skills that will help them in college; if they attend UNA, they are more likely to be employed in the University Writing Center.
- FHS receives additional writing support, possibly helping with NCLB-related and dropout rate-related issues.
- UNA improves the quality of students who are likely to enroll in subsequent years.
- The CWE functions as a recruiting tool for the university.
- UNA Language Arts Secondary Education majors may earn up to 15 observation hours helping high school students develop their writing skills in a one-to-one setting.

2008-2009 GOALS

There are a number of goals for the 2008-2009 Academic Year. While many are a continuation of work begun during the 2007-2008 Academic Year, some are brand new for the coming year.

Continuing University Writing Center Goals:
- Maintain (or increase) Computer Lab use (at least 575 students / 1625 contacts). To achieve this goal, Writing Center Orientations will continue, and an expanded selection of Workshops will be offered
- Maintain (or increase) Writing Tutorial use (at least 250 students / 500 tutorials). To achieve this goal, an expanded selection of Writing Center Workshops will be offered, tutors will more actively approach students who visit the lab for general computing use, and follow-up appointments will be scheduled rather than suggested.
- Work toward Retention Assistance Plan Goals. To achieve this goal, a more active relationship will be cultivated between the Writing Center Director and Project OPEN, as well as continued Orientations that target EN 099 and ESL populations. Additional classroom workshops for these demographics may be offered.
- At least 25 Workshops and Orientations will be offered.
- Reevaluate the performance of the UWC. This goal will be achieved through the continued collection and processing of survey evaluations, both for tutorial sessions and for content-area workshops.
- Develop a stronger web presence. The effort started in Summer 2007 was delayed by the university web migration and its complications. When web access is restored, the University Writing Center website must be updated and additional writing resources must be provided.
- Develop and present a Grammar Workshop Series. As part of tutor training, tutors will select, develop, and present workshops on the critical grammatical flaws identified by the English Department and stated in Syllabi for EN 111. There should be 6-8 workshops of this type.
- Expand the Online tutorial services piloted in Spring 2008.
- Complete the CWE Director job description.

New University Writing Center Goals
- Develop a Tutor Training / Writing Center Guide. Using models available from the International Writing Centers Association and tailored by current tutors, a Tutor Training /Writing Center Guide will be developed for use in future training seminars and as part of a tutor training course.
- Develop a tutor training course (CWE 300, 1-credit hour) and get it approved by the end of the 2008-2009 Academic Year for 2009-2010 implementation.
- Conduct a qualitative study of the University Writing Center's established clientele from 2007-2008.

WAC/WID Professional Development Series Goals:
- Offer three workshops on writing issues each semester (Sept.-Nov. & Feb.-Apr.)
- Develop and implement an evaluation form for use with these workshops

Community Outreach Goals
- Develop the grant proposal for a Reading Academic Discourse transition program (junior year of high school through sophomore year of college)
- Assess the effectiveness of the FHS Writing Center and adjust processes

CONCLUSION

The Center for Writing Excellence enjoyed a very successful first year of formal operation, despite the challenges that it faced, and will continue to face, as part of a growing and changing campus. The University Writing Center maintained its prior level of student participation despite losing the majority of two days of service time. The WAC/WID Professional Development Series offered its first workshops, and the Community Outreach Program found immediate allies in the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library and Florence High School. Year one has shown a tremendous amount of promise; year two should be even better.

REFERENCES

Office of the President. (2007). *University of North Alabama Strategic Plan, 2007-2012.* Florence, AL: University of North Alabama.