Moving on... A Farewell

From Jean DeTullio, Director

Jean Szumera joined the Writing Center in October 2004 when the Writing Center was housed in the “chicken coop,” a small stucco building that has since been demolished to make way for the MAC. In the ensuing seven years, she helped build the Writing Center into the essential, multidisciplinary, and multifaceted resource that it currently is. Jean’s organizational, interpersonal, and writing skills were instrumental in portraying a consistent level of excellence here, and her sense of humor kept the stress level in the Center in check.

We will miss her tremendously. I have no doubt that Jean will prosper in the Telecommunications Department and that the personnel there will enjoy her as we have. Please wish Jean the best of luck in her new position; we will give her a fond farewell on February 17, 2012.

A Writing Center Alumna’s Look Back: From Megan Jeffers

Working for the Writing Center at Monmouth University was one of my top experiences while being a student there. It gave me so much satisfaction to be able to work with other students and help them improve their papers, projects, and writing skills because I was able to witness firsthand the progress students made and the joy that they got out of bettering their selves and their work. Working at The Writing Center for three years also allowed me to develop relationships not just with those I worked alongside but also with specific students who came back time and again in order to improve their papers as well as their writing skills in general.

Any advice I could give to new WAs starting this year would have to be to take your time with students and really listen to what they’re saying, especially when they seem to be struggling with one or two skills in particular. Take a step back from the entirety of the assignment and make sure that they gain the understanding of the skill that is giving them trouble. For example, when it was a skill with sentence structure, I would come up with an example of writing a sentence two or three different ways; that way the student could learn the versatility of how to structure sentences.

Since graduating and being in the "real world" now, it is definitely not my favorite thing. I miss Monmouth and wish I could still be at the Writing Center working with everyone. However, I am in the process of applying to graduate schools’ psychology programs and taking the time to figure out the next steps in my life. I am very excited, but I will definitely never forget my time at Monmouth, especially the Writing Center.
Meet our newest Additions!

We welcomed eight new Writing Assistants this semester: Professor Swanson, Ashley Kristoffersen, Professor Schmidt, Emily Scarano, Frank D’Amore, Professor Merry, Sara Berman and Professor Sampson. Get to know them by reading a bit about each of our newest colleagues, and please make sure you make them feel welcomed!

Emily Scarano

Emily is from Ocean Township and graduated from Ocean Township High School in the top 10%! She is a 19 year old sophomore at Monmouth University majoring in English and Secondary Education and plays the flute in the Pep Band. She’s always loved English and has been helping her friends with their writing skills, as well as offering them help with understanding literature for a long time and is excited to be working at the Writing Center!

Professor Swanson

Professor BethSara Swanson has been teaching at Monmouth University since the spring of 2005. She has a BA in English, an MA in English, and an MAT in Secondary Education/English, all from Monmouth U. She currently teaches EN 101, 102, 201, and 202. Her research interests include Shakespeare and Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, gothic literature, and literature of the supernatural. When she isn’t teaching or daydreaming about Hamlet, Prof. Swanson also enjoys writing, traveling, summers at the shore, and watching really bad horror movies.

Sara Berman

Sara is a junior and an English and Secondary Education double major. In her spare time she loves reading, listening to music, and hanging out with friends. This is her first semester working at the Writing Center; she is very excited!

Professor Sampson

Professor Sampson has a BA in Speech Communication and an MA in Corporate and Public Communication, both from Monmouth University. She has been teaching here in Monmouth’s Department of Communication for 10 years and at Kean University for three years, also in the communication discipline. Professor Sampson has taught Business and Professional Communication, Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, Persuasion, and several other related courses. Tutoring in the Writing Center has been one of Professor Sampson’s most rewarding experiences to date.
Meet our newest Additions ...Continued

Professor Schmidt

Before coming to Monmouth University, Lauren taught high school for eight years in New Jersey and Oregon. She has also worked at Jersey City University and Brookdale Community College, where she was a Learning Assistant at the Writing Center. Lauren completed her MFA in Creative Writing (Poetry) from Antioch University Los Angeles in 2010 and is both a student and adjunct in the English Department at Monmouth as well.

Frank D’Amore

Frank is a second semester junior majoring in political science and minoring in philosophy and criminal justice. His ultimate goal is law school; specifically, his sights are set on Boston University. Frank is perfectly content to sit down and read a novel (preferably something written by Cormac McCarthy or Kurt Vonnegut). Additionally, you’ll be hard pressed to find Frank without his iPod.

Ashley Kristoffersen

Ashley is originally from New York and moved to New Jersey after obtaining her bachelor’s degree in Philadelphia. She is in her third semester of the MBA program. International business, economics, and management are her main interests in the field. In Ashley’s spare time, she enjoys reading on topics of interest and current events, graphic and interior design, photography, traveling, and social events. After graduating and starting a career in business management, Ashley would like to launch a business of her own.

Professor Merry

Brian Merry is a Jersey Shore kid who spent his childhood in Wall Township playing sports and going to the beach. A lover of history since his youth, Merry majored in the subject at Loyola College in Maryland and minored in political science. After graduating from Loyola, he briefly flirted with a career in the law before entering Monmouth University’s graduate program in history. As a graduate student at Monmouth, Merry specialized in European history and unexpectedly grew passionate for the works of Shakespeare after taking an elective course covering his plays. Merry’s newfound interest in English literature prompted him to enroll in Drew University’s Modern History and Literature Ph.D. program after completing his M.A. at Monmouth. In conjunction with the interdisciplinary nature of his graduate program, Merry specialized in English Renaissance literature and history at Drew. Since 2006, Merry has taught at Monmouth University, mainly in the History Department but also in the English Department and Honors School. In January 2012, Merry successfully defended his doctoral dissertation and began working as a Writing Assistant in the Monmouth University Writing Center. Merry currently lives in Manasquan, where he is still spending time at the beach and keeping active, especially on the ski slopes.
High-Tech or Old School: Should Students Bring a Computer or a Printed Paper?
By Victoria Avon

When students come to the Writing Center, they often question whether they should bring their laptops with saved copies of their papers or bring printed copies. Writing Assistants (WAs) are willing to work with the paper in either format; however, there are advantages and disadvantages in both scenarios. The following is a brief pros and cons list from the perspective of a WA.

<table>
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<th>Computer</th>
<th>Print</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on formatting easily</td>
<td>Focus strictly on higher order concerns (the need to make the paper “perfect” immediately)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make changes to the paper immediately</td>
<td>Read as quickly/easily (screen glare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move information easily</td>
<td>Save/ access information later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Cons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make immediate changes in formatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rearrange/reorganize information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrate multiple versions of paper</td>
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This list is very brief, and many other factors may need to be considered in order to make the most effective use of the time at the Writing Center. If both students and WAs examine this list and make an effort to evaluate the goals of each specific session, they will be able to address as many issues as possible and make the experience at the Writing Center a positive one!

Benefitting from Time Management... *by Caroline Babula*

We’ve been told to manage our time wisely as long as we can remember, but rarely do we actually heed this advice. Why? From one recovering procrastinator to the next, it is definitely possible to improve one’s life with good time management.

Here are some personal benefits I’ve found by breaking the workload into small, manageable pieces rather than leaving the assignment until it’s due:

*Less stress (seriously!)*

*Reduced overwhelmed feelings*

*More free time (especially on weekends)*

*Accomplishing assignments before due date*
As an English major, I enjoy reading and writing papers on different literary works. But I also understand that English is not everyone’s favorite subject, and I try to take this into consideration when working with students who are simply trying to fulfill their literature requirement.

Last semester, I worked with a student who was taking a class on American Modernism and had to write a paper on Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives*. Interpreting literature can be hard enough, without attempting to interpret a passage from a work where the author is writing in stream of consciousness. Even though the student was ready to give up, I was not. The first thing I did when sitting down with the student was to have her tell me what she could understand and remember from reading the chapter. I have come to find that when working with students who think they do not understand literature, it is best to let them play the teaching role and explain the work as best they can. With this student, she surprised herself when she started to verbally break the story down for me.

Together, we chose a more simplistic passage, and reading it line by line, we broke down one interpretation of what Stein was trying to write about. At the end of the session, I was not able to convert her into an English major or a lover of Stein, but I was able to show her that interpreting and writing about literature is not as painful as some students think. In these situations, it is important to let the students take control and relate back the information they have learned, instead of us, as Writing Assistants, simply telling them how to interpret the work.

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I Promise Not to Proofread by Joselyn McClatchey

Working at the Writing Center, we experience a plethora of students, all with different concerns about writing. In our ongoing mission to help writers, sometimes we come across the infamous line “can you just proofread my paper and see if it makes sense?”. This challenge is shared in the Writing Center community. We all want to help, and it can come as a struggle to have to say no. So here’s my alternative: educate the student. Our mission is to create better, stronger writers and sometimes students may not be aware of that. Tell your student “Here at the Writing Center we want to help you write, not write for you. Why don’t we go over the paper together and we can work on the problem areas of your paper?”. Always reinforce that you are here to help!

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Grammar Gab by Samantha Wilson

When only one letter makes the difference between two words, it can be easy to confuse them. For example, let’s look at *loose* vs. *lose*.

**Loose** is an adjective and means to be free from being restrained or the opposite of tight.

My jeans are loose because I lost weight.
Be careful that the boat doesn’t float away because the rope is loose.
There’s a bear loose in my neighborhood.

**Lose** is a verb and means to suffer the loss of.
You’ll lose the game if you don’t score a touchdown.
I’ll lose my money if I don’t zipper my purse.
I never lose when I play board games with my sister.

A quick way to remember the difference is to think of the phrase: Lose has lost an “o.”
The Benefits of Leading a Writing Center Workshop

By Samantha Wilson

As I’ve been making and working on my upcoming presentation for my workshop, “Confused by Commas?” I’ve realized the advantages of leading a workshop.

As I sit in front of my computer and practice, I think about how it will be a great public speaking experience. I have never been afraid of public speaking, but each opportunity is an opportunity to get better. Speaking to a group for 30 minutes not only helps with conquering public speaking, but it also provides for a situation to make conversation.

Students do not want to listen to a boring and monotonous presentation on punctuation. The workshop is an opportunity to talk with the students as opposed to talking at them. Being a student myself, I hope to be able to relate to them and the problems they have with writing. It was not too long ago that I was sitting in a classroom while trying to grasp the many comma usages. I hope I can now help other students who are struggling with that pesky punctuation mark.

Upcoming Writing Center Workshops

“APA Format Made Simple” presented by Todd Lesser, Professional Writing Assistant
- Monday, Feb. 27, 2012, 5:00 pm-6:00 pm (WC 6)
- Friday, Mar. 2, 2012, 1:00 pm-2:00 pm (WC 6)
- Monday, Apr. 2, 2012, 5:00 pm-6:00 pm (WC 6)
- Friday, Apr. 6, 2012, 1:00 pm-2:00 pm (WC 6)

“Making it Flow: Enhancing the Readability of Papers” presented by Professor Belinski of the English Department
- Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2012, 2:30 pm-3:30 pm (WC 6)
- Monday, Feb. 20, 2012, 3:00 pm-4:00 pm (202 B second floor, Student Center)

“Confused by Commas?” presented by Samantha Wilson
- Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2012, 2:30 pm-3:00 pm (202 B second floor, Student Center)
- Thursday, Mar. 1, 2012, 4:00 pm-4:30pm (202A second floor, Student Center)

“How to Craft Thesis Statements” presented by Professor Swanson of the English Department
- Tuesday, Mar. 20, 2012, 1:00 pm-2:00 pm (202 A second floor, Student Center)
- Thursday, Mar. 22, 2012, 3:15 pm-4:15 pm (202 A second floor, Student Center)
Not to take a necessarily Marxist view of the writing session, but inside the 30 minute session, tutor-student “talk” becomes a precious commodity. The choices you and your student make will directly impact the session, so learning to prioritize writing issues becomes one of the writing tutor’s main strategies. Although concerns overlap at times, a pressing but overlooked issue in student papers is the way source material is handled. Before you can assess the source integration situation with your student, you have to understand how, for MLA documentation, handling sources is more than a mechanical problem. Ask: are sources being used to their best advantage and moving forward the student’s argument? Or are quotations and paraphrases adding unnecessary bulk (and all essays are, in a sense, “slender” arguments, aren’t they)? The right signal phrase can make or break an argument and LB Brief 4th edition provides a dazzling list to choose from on p. 421. After all, if Smith “suggests” or “insists” on a point, the claim will carry more weight than if Smith simply “says” it will. The way the quotation is integrated into the text, then, becomes another part of the on-going conversation inside the session.

A New Hire...  by Frank D’Amore

There are many reasons why walking into The Writing Center for the first time could be scary: the cubicles, the academic atmosphere, Jane. If you feel this way, I can assure you that any apprehensions are unwarranted. I’m speaking in all honesty when I say that I’ve never found a more supportive atmosphere. Jane and the senior Writing Assistants ensured that my early days as a tutor went smoothly. I was brought up to speed on citation styles; I was able to attend seminars that taught tutoring techniques; I was even allowed to practice my skills while being guided by a senior assistant. I’m grateful for each of these opportunities; they provided me with skills I’m sure to use in my time at The Writing Center. I’m still new to the whole writing assistant thing, but judging from what I’ve experienced, I believe I’ll stick around.

Words of Praise from Students about Writing Center Sessions....

“Best help I received at The Writing Center! Super helpful, patient and very resourceful!”

“Feedback and hints were excellent and very helpful” (online submission)

“Laura was very friendly and wanted to help!!!”

“Ryan was very helpful and knowledgeable!”

“Truly helped me with difficult problems regarding Chicago citation.”
Talking in Body Language by Courtney Luk

A slouched back and a yawn mean that you’re tired. A high five means “you’re awesome.” Body language can display a person’s mood at any given time. This becomes important in the realm of the Writing Center for both the Writing Assistant and the student. For instance, WAs can know when a student is confused by their responses and their posture. The student may furrow his/her eyebrows or nod uncertainly. Then the WA will respond to his/her sense of confusion. On the other hand, a WA can also seem pleased by a student’s progress, in which case s/he will have a smile and use more hand motions that indicate enthusiasm. Body language as a form of silent communication is extremely beneficial, especially in a learning atmosphere. As Ursula from The Little Mermaid said, “Don’t underestimate the importance of body language.” You don’t want to upset her now, do you?

Writing Center Alumni Updates...

- Theresa Clarke is teaching English at the Academy of Allied Health and Science, one of the Monmouth County career academies. She teaches Sophomore and Senior Honors English; this is her fifth year.

- Megan Jeffers was selected by Hofstra University to come in for an interview for their clinical psychology PhD program. She is currently working as an assistant to a clinical psychologist.

- Lindsey Melody, who is currently in law school at Catholic University Law, will be working for the US Attorney’s Office in Washington DC this summer.

- Greg Montagnino is engaged in a Master’s program in Liberal Studies at the New School in New York City. His interest is in Modernism.

- Matt Stoessel is working part-time at LearningRx as a tutor and is also volunteering as an assistant coach on a boy’s recreational basketball team in Ocean Township.

- Erinn Deignan had her second child, John-David Augustin Rhoad, last November. This is her second son.

- Lance Eastwood and his wife Michelle just had a baby girl named McKenna.
These are interesting times in academia. Most students and parents want post-secondary coursework to lead to a job upon graduation. Although faculty members wish this as well, we also want to impart critical literacies in reading, thinking, information retrieval, and writing. These skills will assist students in any fields they may enter and allow them to excel among their peers. So often, the field that is obtained upon graduation is not the field he or she is engaged in ten or fifteen years later. So, we consider carefully what we are imparting to the students, both in the short and long term.

With these goals in mind, the Writing Center, along with other entities at Monmouth, strives to help students achieve the above literacies. The benefits of this collaborative mission are many. Students will experience greater success in their academic work. Our assessment figures underscore this point. The University can take pride in the informed citizens who will emerge from this institution. An informed citizenry generally makes wiser decisions: personally, professionally, and politically. Lastly, students will find job placements more readily. Just ask Will Hill, Assistant Dean of Career Services. So, we continue to serve the Monmouth University community, hoping that students will understand how strong writing skills will help them in the short term as well as the long haul, in the first job and all subsequent career moves. Writing skills will never go to waste.