

Write Here, Write Now

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The Writing Center's New Web Presence

Katie Becofsky

When members of the UNCG community visit the Writing Center's new website, they are greeted just as they would be if they walked in the door: with a smile! The welcoming faces of the staff are highlighted on the homepage, along with clear, concise information about face-to-face and online sessions. Alan Benson, the WC's technology coordinator, designed the site to be an efficient, easy-to-use resource for students and faculty curious about what to expect from a visit to the Writing Center.



have made the new site incredibly user-friendly, allowing visitors to navigate the page and locate any information they are seeking in a timely manner.

But wait! It gets better. Will Dodson, former Graduate Assistant Director, compiled footage from live writing center consultations to help students get an even clearer sense of what to expect from a trip to the WC or an online session. When asked what he was hoping to accomplish in creating the videos, Will responded, "I hope

"The new site was designed to be flatter, with fewer subpages and more information available immediately" said Benson. "This helps new visitors because they don't have to search for information, but it also helps repeat visitors because they can quickly go to the info they want. It also reduces the separation between the on- and offline Writing Center, since there's an embedded chat widget that lets Web users talk live with consultants." These features

that something of our philosophy comes through in these images: the respect we have for students and their work, the positive atmosphere of the writing center, and the diversity of our student body and services we provide." Check out the new features at www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter and learn how the University Writing Center can assist you with your next paper.

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Creative Writing: In the Center

Michael Zinkowski

Something scary happened the other day. I went to the WC not as a consultant ready for an afternoon shift but as a creative writer in need of a fresh perspective on a poem. However, this changeover in roles from consultant to writer wasn't the scary part. Plenty of consultants do this all the time. They realize that neither person in a session is the supreme authority on academic writing and that so much can be learned by hearing a paper read aloud by someone else's voice. We all truly struggle to appease the gods of grammar, citation formats, and thesis statements, and during a WC session we gain an ally equipped with eager ears.

So, what could possibly be seen as scary about this circumstance? Poetry. Poetry is scary, or some people think it is. It's scary to sit down and write it. It's scary to sit down and try to critique it, or, as a poet, to be critiqued. These are the theories. During training at the beginning of the semester, most soon-to-be consultants expressed major hesitations about their ability to help someone with a poem. Poets and all other creative writers must also have a misguided perception, since not many students or faculty come to the WC with poems in hand.

Of course, I use the word 'misguided' since none of these hesitations or expectations is true. Ignore them. Instead, consider the following selling points. The hesitation expressed in training quickly faded after working on an example poem. In groups of three we sat for a couple minutes of silence before someone was brave enough to take a stab at it. Quickly we moved beyond the fear that poetry is either untouchably good or unsalvageable. Consultants are all smart and thoughtful readers and writers who have certainly read and studied poetry at some point during their varying academic pursuits. In training, consultants realized that they didn't need to worry that their opinions aren't valid because we all have valid emotional and intellectual responses to what we read. Also, whoever said that academic writing isn't creative, too? Consultants learned that if they didn't sell themselves short, then neither would

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A Wisp of Webb

Audrey Hardwick

Cindy Webb currently works in the Writing Center this fall as our Graduate Assistant Director. She is a third-year PhD student pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in 20th century American literature. Webb got her BA in English from Lynchburg College in 1998. There she focused on rhetoric and creative writing and worked in the Alton L. Wilmer's Writing Center as a consultant. After six years of working in business and human resources, Webb decided it was time to go back to school. "I would much rather be a student all day long," she comments. She received her MA from Kent State University in 2006.



Cindy Webb

Webb began working at UNCG's Writing Center in 2007. Her program gave her the opportunity to work her first semester as a Writing Center consultant. She says that in the Writing Center she became "very cognizant of what I do in the classroom." As an English teacher at UNCG, her time spent consulting allowed her to see the other side of her classroom. Webb says she was able to discuss a wide variety of assignments with different writers. She saw what worked and what didn't, enabling her to revise her own assignments. Needless to say, her first semester at UNCG was a great learning experience.

As a Graduate Assistant Director, Webb takes on roles beyond consulting. Alongside Sara Littlejohn and Jennifer Whitaker, Webb keeps the Writing Center up and running. As employees of the university, it's critical to prove that we're doing something worthwhile. Keeping track of the overwhelmingly diverse writers that come through the Writing Center "proves the need and desire" for the Center's support for all writers, from first-semester freshmen to faculty members.

In addition to consulting and handling some of the administrative work of the Writing Center, Webb is working on a new project. She is spreading the word to doctoral students about the newly developed support program for dissertation writers. This doctoral

support consists of weekly or biweekly meetings with the same consultant. "What's important," Webb says, "is for writers to build a continuous relationship with the consultant." With the somewhat frantic lives they may lead, graduate students need a routine in order to finish their work on time. Webb adds that this dissertation support provides stability to these writers. Moreover, with so many committee members invested in the content of the dissertation, it can be a relief just to focus on the writing. "When you work on a dissertation in the Writing Center, you're sitting there with someone who has no ulterior motives," Webb explains.

Webb most enjoys the collaborative aspect of the Writing Center. "We focus so much on the conversation. Once the writers get talking, the more they realize they have a lot to say about the topic at hand," she comments. As a student, teacher, and consultant, Webb definitely recognizes that one of the most important pieces of the Writing Center's philosophy is about ownership. Not only do writers "leave the center more prepared for the next project," Webb says, but they feel in control of their work.

However, Webb does see room for growth in the beliefs about the Writing Center. She feels that writers should know what each consultant has to bring to the table. She wants to dispel the myth that we are all English majors. She adds that it is also useful for writers to find a consultant that is a good fit for their style and discourse.

When she's not teaching, working, or preparing for her doctoral exams, Webb enjoys spending time with her family. She loves to hike with her dog Jake and her husband Daniel. They frequently hike through Greensboro's trails as well as travel to the mountains in Western North Carolina. She also enjoys baking. Webb is currently perfecting her white chocolate and cheesecake brownies. If you'd like to drop by the center to work on a paper, use our print station, or just say hello, keep an eye out for Cindy Webb. If enough people ask, she just might bake us some of those brownies.

New Allan Communications Fellow: Erin Andrews

The first thing you're likely to notice when talking with Erin Andrews is her enthusiasm for all things writing. As a triple major in English, Women's and Gender Studies, and History—"the humanities cocktail," she jokes—Erin has written countless papers through her college career, and in addition to her considerable experience as a writer, she is in her second year of working in the University Writing Center. As the Allan Communications Fellow from the University Writing Center for the 2009-2010 academic year, Erin will take on a number of leadership roles in the Center, in addition to continuing to consult with writers. We sat down with her to talk about the path that has led her here as well as her plans for the future.

Write Here, Write Now: So Erin, tell us how you got involved working in the Writing Center.

Erin: Writing is something I've always liked thinking and talking about, so when a mentor recommended me for the writing center training class, it seemed like a natural fit. I'm not outspoken, so writing is my way of establishing myself. In training, we learned about how to talk with other writers about writing, and I found that I was just enchanted by the Writing Center! And since then I've really become an ambassador for it.

WH, WN: How does your work in the Center help you as a writer?

Erin: Like many writers, at first I was afraid that my writing would be judged, but after working here and bringing my own papers in here, I'm a total convert! I really love the experience in the session of working through something that is bogging the writer down. I've learned a lot from seeing what other writers are working on, and now I think about writing more consciously. Before working in the Center, I worked a lot on intuition with grammar and syntax, and now I have more of a language to talk about writing.

WH, WN: You're graduating this year, right? What are your plans for the future?

Erin: I'm planning to go to graduate school for literature or American studies. I'm really interested in cultural studies and have a literature background, so I find particularly interesting the politics of what is part of the canon and what isn't. What is or isn't included in the literary canon gives lots of insight into how our culture works, and I find that really compelling.

WH, WN: Is there anything you wish you'd known earlier in your college career?

Erin: I wish I'd had a better sense of the resources on campus! There's so much going on here, and there are a lot of ways to explore all kinds of interests. I wish I'd known about resources like the Writing Center earlier!

WH, WN: What are your plans during your tenure as an Allan Fellow?

Erin: Well, I'm so excited to have this position, because I'm such a fan of the Writing Center! Being able to do orientations to classes is something I've found that I really love to do. I can speak from a place of both writer and consultant, and I find that I embrace what we do in the Writing Center both when I'm in and out of the Center. So I look forward to getting to speak with more faculty and students about what we do here and how we can support them as writers.



Creative Writing: In the Center *cont'd*

Michael Zinkowski

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the writers who may think twice about visiting with creative work.

In fact, my session was both fun and productive, even if I stumbled a little while signing in at the desk for the first time. My consultant read the poem aloud for me, allowing me to hear her interpretation of my poem's line breaks, grammatical choices, shifting tonal quality, and rhythms. I addressed the issues I already knew existed, and she clearly articulated her re-

sponses to these problem areas as well as others. Additionally we talked about which parts we thought were working and why. She even made a great suggestion to fix the poem's ending, which I've pursued in my revisions.

If it weren't for working one-on-one with a professor during my undergrad, I probably would've never pursued an MFA in Creative Writing. Any creative writer, regardless of one's level of supposed expertise or achieve-

ment, should feel excited, not scared or hesitant, about the opportunity to bring his/her work to the WC. The WC offers an individualized workshop experience whenever you have the free time to visit. With so many different consultants, a writer could potentially get a fresh perspective and new voice each and every visit to the WC. Whether or not the creative writing piece is for a class or for personal pleasure, all creative writers can take advantage of this great opportunity by visiting the WC anytime.

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Writerscopes

Steph Rahl, the Writing Center Astrologist

Aries (March 21-April 20)

Your independence is admirable, Aries, as is your will to succeed. Don't beat yourself up over your "imperfect" first-draft efforts; you should see mine. Pick back up and write that second draft. Beware the lure of multiple exclamation points (!!!). Let your words carry your natural vibrancy and excitement; don't force your punctuation to carry all the exultation of your sentences.

Taurus (April 21-May 21)

Second drafts can be your friend, but your fear of change may result in reluctance to work on your writing after its initial completion. Allow your persistent nature full reign! Apprehension of others' criticism of your work has led you, sensitive Taurus, to hide your poems from the public eye. Remember that criticism, while potentially hurtful, is also an opportunity for improvement. Why not submit a few pieces to a local literary magazine for publication?

Gemini (May 22-July 21)

Your energetic personality and cleverness with words lends itself to a playful academic writing style, but don't forget to retain a bit of appropriate formality in your tone. You tend to leave unfinished personal writing projects in your wake. Try writing a series of 100-word "drabbles," and work yourself up to short fiction and longer projects from there.

Cancer (June 22-July 22)

Your strong intuition, sensitivity, and remarkable powers of observation lend themselves to coherent and weighty creative writing capabilities, but your nature as a Cancer prompts you to close yourself off from the world both mentally and emotionally. Short prose fiction or poetry could form an excellent conduit for you to release pent-up emotional and creative energy.

Leo (July 23-August 21)

Your need for personal excitement presses you to use more interesting punctuation marks than the traditional commas and periods. While colons, semi-colons, and m-dashes are wonderful and useful tools where appropriate, take heed of sprinkling your papers too liberally. Use particular discretion with your beloved exclamation-question mark combo in emails; your audience will vacillate between thinking you excited or curious, and finally settle on "spastic."

Virgo (August 22-September 23)

You write exemplary analytical arguments, and your need for precise language lends itself to well-crafted academic papers and a careful prose style. However, those same demands for analysis and precision can be detrimental when you sit down to write creatively and end up spending an hour on the same three sentences. Try twenty-minute non-stop writing binges, never allowing your pen to leave paper: they can help you get ideas out of your brain and onto the page.

Libra (September 24-October 23)

Your ability to judge a situation by another's point of view is helpful in your character sketches and first-person fiction work. Why not try writing in third person for a while and see if you can convey the same well-crafted feelings and rationales through word choice and the scene's relevant details? Beware of using other critics' arguments to carry (rather than bolster) your own in academic work.

Scorpio (October 24-November 22)

As a power-focused sign, your command of rhetoric is substantial. Fiction writing allows you control over the world of your story, which you enjoy immensely, but your fierce independence makes you reluctant to place value on anyone else's criticism of your work. Remember that criticism can aid your abilities as a writer, and can increase your longed-for command of both the language and the story.

Sagittarius (November 23-December 22)

Straightforwardness is a hallmark of the Sagittarian. Your writing style has been compared to Hemingway's in its simplicity; don't forget that even the plainest sentences can reveal the mysteries of the mundane. A career in journalism or a personal blog would be an excellent outlet for your considerable storytelling talents. Don't fear the dependent clause, though it threatens your simple sentences with its syntactical complexity.

Capricorn (December 23-January 20)

Responsible, disciplined Capricorn, you precede each academic paper with extensive notes and a detailed outline, and for that I shake your hand. Your dedication to process is a wonder to behold. Be wary, though, of papers that come off too formulaic or stodgy. Even in academic work, allow yourself to play with the language and with your ideas. Your paper will be more fun to write, and certainly a more enjoyable read.

Aquarius (January 21-February 19)

You're inventive and independent, and your written wit is worthy of McSweeney's. Remember, though, that certain conventions apply to Western academic papers. While it's certainly permissible to bend the confines of those conventions, don't do away with them altogether. Your audience is used to a clearly delineated argument. You can try less direct styles of argument when you have your PhD, or if you ever opt to write criticism in Japanese.

Pisces (February 20-March 20)

Though your sensitivity is a boon in your creative written work, your lack of self-discipline often leaves you scrambling to write academic papers the night before they're due. Pisces can benefit from strong role models. Why not ask a Capricorn friend to work with you on your process, or utilize campus writing resources such as the UWC? Making yourself accountable to another person could prevent a last-minute paper situation.