

DUTCHESS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Writing Center

A Guide for Faculty and Staff FALL 2017

What can the Writing Center do for you and your students?

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What is the Writing Center?

The Writing Center offers your students free support for their writing assignments from peer and professional tutors. Student tutors are carefully trained in the course, **ENG 218: Advanced Composition/Peer Tutoring in Writing**. In a friendly, informal atmosphere, students work on writing assignments from all courses across the disciplines, and on college application essays, resumes, and other personal writing tasks. Our aim is to support the development and self-confidence of individual writers by serving as guides—asking questions, making observations, challenging the thinking of the student, directing the focus on editing issues and documentation issues—not as editors who simply "fix" errors in papers for the student.

The full range of services and activities of the Writing Center, including the staff directory, links to writing resources, online tutoring, and faculty programs, are detailed on our web pages at www.sunydutchess.edu/writingcenter

What are Writing Center services for faculty and staff?

- **Orientations for your students to the Writing Center:**

The staff of the Writing Center can give your students a 10-15 minute orientation to its tutoring services, either in the Center itself (Hudson 503) or in your classroom. Call us at x8095 to arrange an orientation. We recommend orientations to be scheduled early in the semester, but they can be requested anytime. Additionally, an eight minute video orientation is available on our webpage under the sidebar section **FACULTY AND STAFF RESOURCES**.

- **Workshops for your students:**

Workshops led by our professional tutors can be requested year-round. Topics range from: resume and cover letter writing, college applications, modes of writing, MLA/APA style and formatting, research practices and documentation, plagiarism, grammar and mechanics, and scholarship essays. For more information and to begin your workshop request, please refer to our electronic request form, available on our webpage under the sidebar section **FACULTY AND STAFF RESOURCES**.

- **Professional assistance for you and your students in the Writing Center computer lab:**

Our computer lab support staff is directed by our teaching lab assistant, Edwina Gray. She can help your students with basic questions about word processing, navigation of the internet, and use of specific course-related software, such as PowerPoint and Excel. She can often save students from disaster by recovering lost files. Also, she can help YOU if you are meeting your classes in adjacent computer classrooms, Hudson 501, 504, and 506. Network crashes? Misbehaving software programs? Confused Blackboard users? Call us! (x8095).

- **Assistance in designing written assignments:**

We are happy to offer you help in creating clear and effective writing assignments. Having seen many assignments from many classes and observing students' problems in understanding and responding to them, we can offer suggestions about useful language in your assignments' guidelines. All of our professional tutors are instructors themselves and have faced the same situations. We'll be glad, if you wish, to field test an assignment with our student tutors, who have given faculty highly useful feedback about making their assignments more "user friendly" for students.

- **A file of model student papers for your assignments:**

Some teachers send the Writing Center samples of responses to their assignments from previous students. They want their students to review models of strong (and sometimes weak) essay responses with the tutors. Model papers are kept in an open file, which students are free to read and copy (by faculty permission), and a reserve, restricted-access file for read-only papers. Contact the director to arrange an exchange or update of model papers for your course.

- **Referral forms for students:**

The Writing Center can supply you with referral forms that prepare you and your students for their visit to us. These easy check-off and brief response forms let us know initially what writing issues you and your student have already discussed, and what issues you and the student would like the tutoring session to target. These forms encourage productive three-way communication. You will not make specific referrals for all of your students, but the form can be helpful for students who you feel need special guidance. Copies of the referral form can be requested at the Center in Hudson 503 or found in any of the black filing cabinets in our computer labs in Hudson 501, 504, and 506.

Help us as we help you:

- **Please be encouraging to students about their writing and their use of the Writing Center:**

Avoid making students feel as if going to the Center is a punishment for their "bad" writing; if you do, we'll have to work hard to overcome negative attitudes. Instead, let your students know that (1) you value effective written communication, and so will their future employers, and (2) **ALL** writers, at any level of skill, can benefit by testing their ideas and measuring the effectiveness of their writing with the support of a skilled listener and reader. The Writing Center provides the place where students can find this support, free of judgment or grades (and free of charge!).

- **Contact us in advance about your students' assignments:**

Let us know when we can expect to see your students with their major writing assignments from your classes, particularly if you're requiring them to visit us. Send us a copy of your assignment; we can review it with our tutors and help them prepare for students' likely concerns and difficulties.

- **Stay in touch:**

Our students are best served when there is mutual understanding among students, faculty and staff, and Writing Center staff about your objectives for students' learning and our services for helping them achieve those objectives. Your questions, comments, and suggestions help us improve our programs.

What is the Teaching Resource Project for faculty and staff?

The focal point of the Project is the Roundtable Discussions, a series of lunch meetings each semester that brings together faculty from all disciplines and staff from different service areas. Participants in this lively and entertaining program talk about a wide range of topics that are important to them. Discussions over the years have included technology and teaching, grading standards, assessment, collaborative and cooperative learning, civility in the classroom, advisement, developmental education, race and gender in the classroom, SUNY core curriculum requirements, and an array of issues related to writing and critical thinking. The group determines its own agenda. Conversations are enhanced by the buffet lunches, some of which are catered by local ethnic restaurants. Past participants have called the Roundtable lunches “fun, exhilarating, rejuvenating,” and “a crucial site for joining colleagues in other disciplines.” At the beginning of each semester, faculty and staff receive paper and electronic invitations to join the Roundtable group.

A second emphasis of the Teaching Resource Project is the annual January professional development workshop, funded by the DCC Foundation. Faculty and staff gather for a full day to explore selected topics that have included argumentation in the classroom, technology in the classroom, quantitative reasoning in the humanities and humanism in the sciences, critical thinking and multiculturalism in the community college, collaborative learning, writing to learn, and writing across the disciplines at Dutchess.

Participants have found the workshops to be stimulating opportunities to learn how their colleagues in different disciplines approach the classroom challenges that all instructors face. For questions, contact Leigh Williams, the coordinator of the Project.