

Michigan Tech Writing Center

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From: Nancy Grimm
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Subject: **Michigan Tech Writing Center Annual Report 2008-2009**

cc: Max Seel, Acting Provost
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The annual report of the Michigan Tech Writing Center is divided into the following sections:

Summary of Report Data

Attachments: emails from students, parents, alumni expressing satisfaction with the writing center

Section I: Assessment Data: Contributions to supporting the university's strategic plan.

Section II: Contributions to graduate education

Section III: Goals for the 2009-2010 academic year

The summary section is sent to select stakeholders, and the complete report will be available online at www.hu.mtu.edu/wc.

Michigan Tech Writing Center Mission Statement

The Michigan Tech Writing Center works with students, faculty, and staff to address the challenges of learning and communicating in complex and culturally diverse environments.

Summary of the report data

- Coach **evaluations of individual appointments** maintained a high rate of **4.71** (on 5.0 scale) in fall semester and **4.8** in spring semester.
- **Study team evaluations** averaged **4.45** in the fall semester and **4.7** in the spring semester.
- **1,330 individual Michigan Tech students** used the Writing Center this academic year, an increase of 140 students over last year.
- **Total number of visits for 2008-09 was 17,455, over a thousand more visits than in 07-08.**
- **The grades of students participating on World Cultures Study Teams are consistently higher:** 33% of the As (compared to 15% for non-team members); 17% of the ABs (compared to 12% for non-team members), and far fewer Cs, Ds, and Fs.

- **Demonstrated writing center impact on retention.** The writing center, with support from Institutional Analysis, tracks the retention rates of students who use the writing center for a weekly appointment. All of these tracked students have below average English ACTs (19 or below).

Results for students who entered for academic year 2007-2008:

Retention rate	
90.29%	<19 ACT students who used weekly writing center appointment
68.75%	<19 ACT students who did not use writing center appointments
81.93%	overall retention rate of all Michigan Tech first-year students

In summary, students with lower ACTs who used the writing center for weekly appointments had a **30% higher retention rate** compared to their cohorts who did not use the writing center. Additionally, their retention rate was 8 points higher than first-year students overall.

- **Diversity:** In light of our mission, the writing center actively works to actualize a diverse working environment by recruiting as diverse a staff as possible. **This year, the percentage of underrepresented populations on Michigan Tech Writing Center staff was 48.7%.** The percentage of people of color on staff was 23%. (See pp. 6 of Report for details on Writing Center's work with diversity on campus.)
- Number of different **discipline majors** on MTU Writing Center staff: **20**
- **International students** continue to make frequent use of the writing center. In fall semester, they comprise **24% of weekly** appointments, and in spring semester, **42% of weekly** appointments. During both semesters, they comprise **36% of walk-in appointments**. More than 27 different first languages other than English were represented.
- Number of **graduate students currently writing dissertations** related to writing center programs: 2
- **Staff honors:** Grimm was a leader for the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Summer Institute in 2008, and she delivered the keynote address at the IWCA conference in October 2008. Theresa Laubrick (undergraduate coach) was named MTU Outstanding Woman in Business, was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma, the International Business Honor Society, and received the Wall Street Journal Award. Ashley Yenior (undergraduate coach) received her sorority's 'Smart Cookie' of the year award, and Becky Klank (undergraduate coach) was named a PCA Woman of Promise.
- The second issue of the annual **Michigan Tech Writing Center Newsletter** is in press and will be mailed to all alumni who worked in the writing center.

Michigan Tech Writing Center Annual Report 2008-2009

I. Assessment Data: Evidence of Contributions to Supporting a World-Class Student Population, Discovery-based learning, and International Engagement.

A. Significant Impact on Retention of First-Year Students

With the support of the Office of Institutional Analysis, the Writing Center has been conducting a yearly study of the retention rates of first-year students who have had weekly appointments.

The group we examined this year consisted of the targeted Fall 2007 entering students with English ACTs of 19 or less who used the Writing Center on a weekly basis. This group had a **thirty percent higher rate of retention (90.29)** than their cohorts who did not make a weekly Writing Center appointment (68.75). Additionally, this group had a 8 point higher retention rate than the Michigan Tech average (81.93).

Retention Results for students who entered for academic year 2007-2008:

<u>Retention rate</u>	
90.29%	<19 ACT students who used weekly writing center appointment
68.75%	<19 ACT students who did not use writing center appointments
81.93%	overall retention rate of all Michigan Tech first-year students

B. Quantitative Measures of Effectiveness

In the fall of 2008, about 76% of the students who used the Writing Center on a *weekly* basis came for a General Education course. In this spring of 2008, about 75% of these regular users were from General Education courses. Their evaluations, along with a high level of participation and a broad base of student users, are quantitative measures of student satisfaction.

1. Average Student Rating of Perspectives Coaching

4.75 on a 5-point scale

2. Student Rating of World Cultures Study Teams

4.7 on 5.0-point scale

3. High Level of Student Participation

	2008-09	2007-08
Number of individual students using the Writing Center: (Includes weekly and walk-in students)	1,330	(1,190)
Number of weekly visits	15,087	(11,553)
Number of walk-in visits	2,369	(1,925)
Number of IGTAAP visits:	0	(2,466)
Number of one-time apt. visits	153	(137)
Total number of visits:	17,455	(16,018)

Note: Because IGTAAP is now a separate program and the numbers did not include IGTAAP students this year, it should be noted that the writing center budget supported 6,000 more student visits this year than last year. The number of international students using the writing center actually increased.

4. Broad base of campus community who use Writing Center Walk-in Hours

	2007-2008	2006-07
First-year students	40%	(33%)
Second-year	13%	(17%)

Third-year	14%	(15%)
Fourth/fifth-year	24%	(18%)
Masters	4%	(4%)
PhD	3%	(10%)
Staff/Faculty	2%	(3%)

5. Strong participation on World Cultures Study Teams

363 students participated on World Culture’s Study Teams, compared to 275 last year, an increase of 88 students. This year there were 56 teams compared to 55 last year.

6. Impact on Grades in Perspectives and World Cultures

According to reports from Institutional Analysis, of the targeted students (<19 ACT) who used the writing center for a weekly appointment while enrolled in Perspectives in the fall, 41% earned As compared to 25% for their cohort who did not use the writing center. This was equal to the number of As for students overall.

The students who enrolled in Study Teams for World Cultures earned higher grades and fewer lower grades. Team members earned 33% As (compared to 15% of non-team members); 17% ABs (compared to 12% for non-team members); and 1% Fs (compared to 9% for non-team members.)

C. Qualitative Measures of Effectiveness

Qualitative measurements of Michigan Tech Writing Center effectiveness as reported in students’ written evaluations are summarized below.

1. Written evaluations of students who had weekly appointments for Perspectives Coaching:

Students’ most frequent comments about the value of the Perspectives coaching were in the following categories:

- Critical thinking skills
- Brainstorming for ideas
- Talking assisted in formulating ideas
- Organizational skills
- Increased confidence
- Learning citation practices
- Designing resumes

2. Sample of individual Perspective's students' responses to the following prompt: In what way has your weekly appointment with your writing coach helped you?

“My writing center experience was very positive. I was made aware of different ways to approach writing, and I developed my critical thinking skills, which are vital to success in college.”

“I am able to communicate my ideas more effectively now. It is easier for me to write an organized and grammatically correct paper. The coach helped me with my overall thought process and the technical side of writing a paper.”

“The grades in my Perspectives class have greatly improved. I have learned how to write as a college student rather than someone just out of high school. This adds a great deal of confidence when writing papers, which makes writing much more fun and enjoyable.”

“By the coach critiquing my engineering memos, I have learned how to set up an even flow of ideas and present them in such a way that has resulted in almost perfect grades.”

“The coach always explained to me how to get a paper started and how to find useful resources online or through books.”

International Student comments about Individual Appts:

“I think I have improved a lot by talking with my coach. Conversation is the best way to enhance my speaking skills. (I am a non-native speaker of English).”

“Having a weekly appointment helped me improve my organizing skills and confidence in writing in my non-native language (English).”

3. Written evaluations of students who participated twice weekly on World Cultures Study Teams

Students' most frequent comments about the value of the study teams were in the following categories:

- Made new friends
- Improved communication skills
- Learned new perspectives
- Refreshed my memory of material
- Made new connections among the materials
- Better prepared for texts, quizzes, and papers
- Increased motivation

Sample of individual students' comments on benefits of World Culture Study Teams:

“It gave me the motivation to learn the material in order to teach it to other team members.”

“It helped answer questions that I wasn't able to answer by myself in class.”

“Meeting together brought out interesting conversations and got me actually thinking about and reviewing what we learned in class.”

“I made new friends and that made it easier to learn.”

“It helped me make connections with students from a class that was very large and difficult to make such connections on a normal basis!”

“It was a good way to get me more motivated to study for world cultures. And I really think it helped to interact with others in my class. It was nice to be able to go over notes again and be able to get things that others may have caught and I didn't.”

“It helped make new connections among the material and review topics covered. I have definitely answered quiz questions by remembering what we talked about on the team.”

“It was EXTREMELY helpful, and not only did I retain the information better but learned some amazing facts too.”

“It made me get up in the morning, kept me on track, and made me read the book!”

D. Diversity

In light of the mission of the Michigan Tech Writing Center, a core value practiced in the Writing Center is a positive commitment to domestic and international diversity as evidenced in the following information and activities:

1. Rich representation of underrepresented diversity on staff

The representation of people of color on the Writing Center staff was 23% this past year. Other underrepresented groups on staff include GLBT, international, multilingual, and women from the Upper Peninsula. Counting these groups, the overall percentage of underrepresented people on staff was 48%, making the Writing Center one of the most diverse sites on campus.

In 2008-09, the Writing Center staff included 2 Native Americans, 2 African Americans, 1 Indian student, 3 Africans, 3 self-identified GLBT students, 1 Asian American student, and 7 Upper Peninsula natives. There were also 8 multilingual students.

This diversity contributes to the vitality of our programs and our ability to work with World Englishes and World Cultures. Moreover, it not only tells mainstream students that they will be communicating in a diverse workplace, it actualizes that workplace.

2. Support for international students

This year, international students comprised 24% of our weekly appointments in the fall and 42 percent of our weekly appointments in the spring. International students also comprised 36% of our walk-in students. According to our records, this group of international students spoke more than 27 different languages.

3. Making Our Mark Website

This year we continued to add narratives to the Making Our Mark Website at <http://www.hu.mtu.edu/makingourmark>. The nine student writers contributed narratives that identify the adjustment strategies of students of color, nontraditional students, women from small UP high schools, and GLBT students.

4. Advising support

The Writing Center learning specialist, Jill Hodges, is the co-advisor for the Native American Association at Michigan Tech. She regularly works at the annual Speaker's Forum held in conjunction with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society's (AISES), the fall powwow, and the Parade of Nations.

5. Disciplinary and gender diversity

The Writing Center integrates disciplinary diversity as the result of undergraduate writing coaches representing 20 different majors. The Writing Center undergraduate staff also has a higher representation of women than the university as a whole.

6. Support for students who have learning disabilities

Jill Hodges worked extensively with 2 undergraduate students with learning disabilities each semester in the fall and spring for a total of 106 sessions.

E. Undergraduate Research and Design Projects

Each year, the writing center staff partners with talented undergraduates to conduct research and create designs to address problems and improve functioning. Some of these projects are done by the undergraduate coaches; others are undertaken by students enrolled in project and design classes

This year, some of those projects included

- a updated design for the learning center flyer that is distributed to incoming students.

- an updated cover and page design for the Writing Center Handbook
- redesigned writing center bookmarks advertising hours and services
- supplemental resources for working with students who have learning disabilities
- learning games for world cultures study teams
- second edition of the Michigan Tech Writing Center newsletter
- *'everything you always wanted to know about the writing center'* booklet for new coaches
- a 'Go Fish' Game for practicing citation
- a binder of conversation starters for working with international students
- map exercises for World Cultures study teams
- a you-tube video of learning games to play in study teams
- a resume book comparing early resumes and revised resumes

F. Improving Teaching and Learning

In addition to working individually and in small groups with students to improve their learning, the permanent staff members (Grimm, Hodges, Badke) of the Writing Center regularly consult with individual faculty members and GTIs to improve the clarity and purpose of writing assignments and develop a deeper understanding of obstacles and challenges of learning in global environments. They also serve on university and department committees where they find opportunities to represent the concerns of Michigan Tech students, and they conduct workshops to share their expertise.

This year's service is listed below:

1. University Committees:
 - General Education Task Force (Grimm)
 - Perspectives Committee (Grimm)
 - Climate Study Committee (Hodges)
 - Search Committee for Disabilities Services Coordinator (Hodges)
 - Provost Search Committee (Grimm)
 - AQIP Quality Improvement Committee (Grimm)
 - ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Committee (Hodges)
 - NCBI – National Coalition Building Institute – Michigan Tech (Hodges)
2. General Education Courses
 - workshops and orientation sessions for Perspectives faculty (Grimm)
 - consultation with Perspectives faculty on course design and grading rubrics (Grimm and Hodges)
 - visits to World Cultures' classes to introduce Study Teams (Grimm, Badke)
 - annual meeting with World Cultures faculty members and entire Writing Center staff (Grimm, Hodges, Badke)
 - workshops for Revisions GTIs (Grimm, Hodges, Badke)
 - collaboration with Revisions coordinator (Grimm)
3. Special Workshops:
 - orientation workshops for new RAs, Orientation Team Leaders, and Mentors for first-year students. (Grimm, Hodges)
 - University Expos (Grimm, Hodges)
 - session leaders with the Summer Reading Initiative (Hodges)
 - diversity workshops (Grimm, Hodges)
 - academic integrity: learning citation practices (Grimm, Hodges)
4. Course Design
 - consult with GTIs and faculty on assignment design, syllabus design, and grading rubrics. (Grimm, Hodges, Badke)
5. Classroom Presentations
 - presentations about learning and literacy issues in teacher education classes and graduate courses.

6. Consulted regularly with faculty regarding students with learning challenges (Hodges)
7. Advising Support
 - AISES (American Indian Science & Engineering Society Chapter at Michigan Tech (Hodges)
 - National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) at Michigan Tech (Hodges)
8. Collaboration with other Student Support Professionals
 - Office of Judicial Affairs (Grimm, Hodges, Badke)
 - Dean of Students Office (Grimm, Hodges)
 - Michigan Tech Career Center—Resume Renew and Interview Skills Workshops (Hodges)

G. National and International Visibility

1. Grimm was one of the leaders at the International Writing Centers Association Summer Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison this past summer (2008).
2. Grimm delivered the keynote address at the International Writing Centers Association Conference in October 2008.
3. Grimm was involved in dissertation research projects for a graduate student at Purdue and a graduate student at University of South Florida.
4. Grimm consulted with writing center directors at Oregon State and at Ohio State about recruiting a more diverse writing center staff.
5. Grimm was nominated for the Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year Award.

II. Contributions to Graduate Education

A. Research

Currently, 2 RTC graduate students are conducting dissertation research related to Writing Center Programs.

B. Consultations with Graduate Students on Theses and Dissertations

As evident in the usage rates reported above, the Writing Center continues to be an important source of support for graduate students writing professional papers and theses or dissertations.

Graduate Student Visits:

Walk-ins:	Grad Students	Total Visits
Summer	29	63
Fall	17	60
Spring	30	43
Total	76	166

Weekly appointments	Grad Students
Summer	17
Fall	16
Spring	19
Total	52

C. Graduate Teaching Seminars

The Writing Center staff members are regularly involved in training and orientation workshops for new graduate students, Perspectives faculty, and Revisions faculty.

D. Professional Development Seminars for RTC Graduate Writing Coaches

The RTC Graduate Writing Coaches meet once a week for professional development. These weekly seminar meetings provide on-going discussion of theoretical issues with application to problems of practice.

This past academic year, these seminars focused on the theoretical frameworks underlying writing center discourse and on frameworks for productive engagement with differences in cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

These seminars utilize a rich body of interdisciplinary and international scholarship from fields such as literacy studies, race studies, intellectual property studies, and intercultural communication. We used articles by the New London Group (2000), Canagarajah (2002), Adler-Kassner, Anson, and Howard (2008), Barnett and Blumner ((2008), Bawarshi (2006), Howard and Carrick (2006), Ortmeier-Hooper (2008), and Boquet and Lerner (2008).

III. Goals

A. Accomplishment of goals for past academic year (2008-09)

1. Improvements Made

The Writing Center staff makes continuous improvements in its practice, many of which are suggested and initiated by the undergraduate writing coaches. This year, for example, we accomplished the following goals that we set last year:

- Initiated a new staff member into position of Administrative Coordinator
- Integrated a senior graduate writing coach, Steve Bailey into the work of coordinating coach education
- Developed the second issue of a yearly Writing Center newsletter, entitled, *Write On!*
- Initiated a redesign and revision of the Writing Center Handbook
- Integrated ideas from the International Writing Center Association Summer Institute into Graduate Coach Education
- Involved two undergraduate coaches in the development of materials and guidelines for working with students who have learning disabilities
- Revised coach interviewing process to include questions about working with diverse perspectives
- Provided anti-harassment education for the writing center staff
- Developed a better form for the coach payroll
- Updated Excel skills by attending workshops and working with Karen Salo
- Simplified database collection forms

B. Goals for the Next Academic Year (2009-2010)

1. Solicit more student feedback by developing a complaint/compliment box and making director's business cards available for email address.
2. Improve graduate writing coach education with more structured observations of coaching and study teams, assignment of a mentor, and structured interviews with experienced undergrad coaches.
3. Complete revision of Writing Center Handbook, integrate it into Coach Education Program, and collect feedback on effectiveness.
4. Distribute learning center flyers more systematically to advisors and Dean of Students' Office

5. Create a research-based coach education workshop for experienced coaches.
6. Coordinate with Graduate School to update cv assistance, statements of purpose, and applications for graduate school and faculty positions.
7. Conduct a review of on-line writing assistance programs on other campuses.
8. Update webpage with information for graduate students and faculty.
9. Host several meetings with new director of Revisions, Karla Kitalong.
10. Develop a segment of webpage to connect with alumni, particularly with photographs of writing center events and t-shirt designs.