Welcome to the Spring 2016 edition of the MSU Writing Center Newsletter! We’ve taken the name for our newsletter from the “session notes” that each writer receives after a visit to the Writing Center. Session notes serve an important function, helping us extend our conversation beyond our physical walls. We hope Session Notes keeps you in our conversation.

Here are some highlights of what we’ve been doing: We have been blessed by our work with the Community Café, where we volunteer each semester. We have been working with Bozeman and Belgrade High Schools as they develop their own Writing Centers. We hosted a Montana Writing Centers Day. And, highlighted in these pages, our tutors have represented MSU at the International Writing Center Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing. Enjoy reading about their research and meeting our community members in these pages. Please let us know how we can partner with you!

—Michelle Miley
Director of the MSU Writing Center & Assistant Professor of English
Congratulations!
Many of our peer tutors are doing amazing things in the academic community on both the local and the national levels. We want to congratulate the following tutors on their work:

**Jack Bouchard** received a travel grant from the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing.

**Kerry Byrnes** received the prestigious Burkean Parlor Grant at the NCPTW.

**Kelsey Weyerbacher** received an IWCA Future Leaders Award for her leadership in the MSU Writing Center, an award from The Denny Fund at the IWCA Conference, and a Burkean Parlor Grant at the NCPTW.

**Bri Bos** received funding from the Undergraduate Scholars Program to research Writing and Communications in Engineering Courses at MSU.

**Liz Kovalchuk** won a Scholarship from the American Society for Engineering Management.

**Amy Fiel** was a 2014-15 McNair Scholar researching the Utilization of Interactive Technology in the MENA region.

**Kristie Russette** is a 2015-16 McNair Scholar, and will be researching creative resources and programs for the Rocky Boy’s Indian Reservation.

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**ESL Specialist: Jamin Casey**
Provided by Office of International Programs

After Jamin earned his Master of Arts in English at MSU, he began teaching at the college level and has been at it for about ten years. Adopting his sons internationally sparked his interest in teaching English as a Second Language. Soon after this, Jamin traveled to Chile to teach as a visiting professor. Upon returning he started working with the A.C.E. Language Institute at MSU to assist international students with their transition to an English-based curriculum.

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**Tutor Spotlight: Jack Bouchard**

*What interests you most about Writing Center work?*

The whole reason I started is because I’m aiming to eventually become a writing teacher for seventh grade to high school students, somewhere in there. So I was like, maybe this is a good way to see if 1) I would actually like that, and 2) if maybe I would be good at it.

*What are you currently researching?*

My current research topic would be the relationship between writing centers and writing faculty, or writing centers and instructors in general. One of the things that interested me pretty soon after I started working here is what can our perspective as tutors contribute to the teacher’s perspective in the classroom?

*What do you wish more professors knew about the Writing Center, or the processes that you’ve been talking about?*

What we value in the Writing Center is the collaborative process of writing, so I guess if more professors understood what’s at the root of having peer tutors, the roots of having tutors work on writing in that sort of a collaborative way, that might change their perspective on what their students’ needs in writing are. If you’re worried about your student writer and their development, then you’re thinking more along the lines of process, more along the lines we are thinking.

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We support our students best when we are in conversation with our faculty. We have several current models of course partnerships and are always happy to discuss new ones.

Contact Michelle Miley (michelle.miley@montana.edu) or Jess Carroll (jcarroll@montana.edu) for more information.
Bill Wyckoff, a Professor of Geography at Montana State University, focuses his research on the historical and cultural geography of the American West. His most recent publication is *How to Read The American West: A Field Guide* (2014), which utilizes stories, photographs, maps, and diagrams to detail 100 landscape features of the West.

As both a writer and a professor at MSU, Wyckoff is invested in ensuring the students in the Department of Earth Sciences are receiving the writing and communication skills they will need after graduation. In a recent interview with one of our Writing Center Peer Tutors, Wyckoff discussed the subject of writing within his field.

“As a geographer, we speak in many different languages. And one of those languages is maps. We still hang and build our arguments, and tell our stories, really, around words. And that’s why I think writing is such an essential part of being a geographer. And it’s something we really work on here in the Earth Sciences Department to try to bring writing into our classes.”

Wyckoff sees resources, such as the Writing Center, as being part of this learning process for the students in his department. “Students, these days, can’t just learn how to write, because it’s an increasingly visual culture. And so, I think, it’s integrating the ability to write with the ability to tell stories visually that is the key to successful communication. I think that is the skill set we really need to foster. With the help of places like the Writing Center, we are giving students an opportunity to learn how to interconnect those skills.”
I began my research in the Writing Center the same year I started working as both a peer tutor and an administrative intern. Our director, Dr. Michelle Miley, asked me to consider submitting a proposal with two other peer tutors for the 2014 International Writing Center Association/National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (IWCA/NCPTW) joint conference. In the fall that we presented at IWCA/NCPTW, I stopped thinking of my peer tutoring as a college job, and started thinking about it as a professional career opportunity. However, I worried that the faculty, staff, and students at MSU didn’t see our identities as peer tutors as anything more than those 45-minute sessions at the Writing Center.

I wanted to use my experience as an undergraduate peer tutor to analyze the ways in which tutor roles were being constructed. In my independent study in the fall of 2015, I decided to use autoethnography as a research method, so I, as the author, would not only be the researcher, but also the subject of the research. Instead of a traditional ethnography where the researcher is the “outsider looking in” to a particular culture, the autoethnography allows for the researcher to be the one within that particular culture to share both their story and research.

As a result of this autoethnographical study, I came to understand that I am not just a tutor. I am also a researcher, a writing group facilitator, a newsletter editor, a mentor, a classroom presenter, and a marketing videographer. My identity, and those of other peer tutors, exists in so many places outside of our tutoring sessions.

When I became a peer tutor at MSU in the spring of 2014, I entered a space of research that enabled me to gain professional experience and confidence. I was able to present at academic conferences, gain confidence in grant writing while applying for travel grants, network with graduate schools when I was introduced to academics at the forefront of research within the community of writing center work.

Being a peer tutor at the MSU Writing Center has been the single most influential aspect of my undergraduate career, and I hope that after I graduate in May, the identities of the peer tutors who follow me are recognized to be as diverse as they truly are.

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**Support for Student Writers**

**One-on-One Tutoring** — for student writers of all disciplines at any stage in the writing process.

**ESL Specialists** — supported by the Office of International Programs, available for English language learners.

**Writing Groups** — time, space, and a facilitator for any group of writers.

**Online Tutoring** — one-on-one tutoring in our virtual space.

**Course Partnerships** — partnering with faculty to support the teaching of writing through workshops, studios, and assignment design.

*See our website for more information!*