Writing Center News

As the new Writing Center Director, I am thrilled to be a part of a vibrant and engaged community with such a clear focus on student success. I come to the Writing Center from Houston, Texas, where I served as Assistant Director of Writing in the Disciplines for eight years. As I developed partnerships across the disciplines, I came to believe that a Writing Center not only provides a space for students to become active participants in their thinking and writing, but that it can do the same for those of us teaching writing. Writing Centers have the potential to be spaces where all of us involved in writing and the teaching of writing – students, tutors, those teaching writing, administrators – meet to talk about writing. Through our engaged conversations, the work of writing and teaching writing is made visible, allowing us to understand more deeply how our students write and how we can best engage them. My hope is that the MSU Writing Center can become the “hub” for writing – a creative space for collaboration. Working from our foundation in one-on-one peer tutoring, I have already seen that creative space begin to grow! From developing writing groups to talking with faculty about integrating writing into their courses and partnering with the Writing Center for support in writing instruction, our goal is to involve all of us teaching and learning about writing in conversation. If you have any questions or are interested in talking about how you might partner with the Writing Center, please feel free to contact me at michelle.miley@montana.edu, or call us at 994-5315. I look forward to building relationships and finding those spaces for collaboration and active engagement for us all!

Dr. Michelle Miley

Did you know?

We’re all over campus!
The Writing Center has designated spaces not only in Wilson Hall, but also in the Renne Library and the North Hedges Residence Hall. These latter locations allow us to reach students and writers outside of our normal weekday hours.

We have new Client Report Forms (CRF)!
Student writers complete the form with their tutors during their Writing Center session, making note of questions, of revisions, of things to think about. These report forms are then emailed to the writer. Student writers can refer to the CRFs as they are revising their papers. The CRFs not only provide proof of attendance when instructors require Writing Center visits but also offer the instructor a view of how their students are processing through their writing assignments.

We always have free coffee & tea! I mean, need we say more?

“Any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has put on full armor and attacked a hot fudge sundae.”
—Kurt Vonnegut
**Tutor Anecdote – From a Peer Tutor**

The other day I had a tutoring session with a girl who was working on a personal statement for grad school. As I oriented myself to her paper, it became clear that she needed to find a direction. She wasn’t sure how much she wanted to say, what she wanted to say, or how she wanted to say it; the struggles all writers experience. We began to dissect these struggles with questions. My questions lead to us examining the meaning of her writing; the purpose behind it. We discussed how to best get her life’s achievements and goals across to her readers. Did she want to list the facts in a clean, concise way, or in an exciting, creative manner? Or should she list facts at all? As we delved into these thoughts, my perceptions of writing expanded, making me feel as though I had been the one who was tutored when we ended the session.

Most people come to the writing center thinking that they are supposed to have the tutors “fix” their grammar, but I find that the tutoring sessions I love best are the ones where we stray away from things like punctuation marks and gear towards things that are far more interesting and important, like the essence of writing.

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**Lizzie’s Brain Fizzie**

Charles Dickens had to be facing north before he could write so he would be lined up with the poles. He usually wrote a minimum of 2,000 words a day (some days he managed 4,000) with a goose quill pen and blue ink on blue-gray slips of paper.

“**The role of a writer is not to say what we can all say, but what we are unable to say.**”

— Anaïs Nin

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**Peer Tutor Q & A - with Brooke Hampton**

**How have your own thoughts on writing changed since you became a writing tutor?**

I’ve found that writing has become a deeply integrated part of my life since joining the W.C. I find myself writing stories, constructing arguments, and searching for the right words all in my head as I walk to and from classes. I never knew how gripping the organization of thoughts and stories could be.

**What is the most commonly used phrase in your writing sessions?**

The phrase I find myself using a lot is, “Is that what you’re trying to say?” I always want to make sure that when I work with someone on their paper that I don’t change the direction without making sure it’s somewhere they want to go. Clarity in communication of ideas in sessions is just as important as it is in the essay.

**What do you see writers struggle with most in their writing?**

Overall, I find that writers struggle with getting their ideas across. When you talk to writers, the ideas are there, but points tend to get lost when translating them from speech to words on paper.

**What’s the best writing advice you’ve ever received?**

Don’t be afraid. So many people are afraid to put their words to paper, afraid that what they put down will be wrong or stupid. Don’t let yourself be controlled by those fears. Just write.

**What’s your favorite method of killing a character?**

With a rusty shovel.