The Writing Center and First Year Seminars

The tutors in the Writing Center can help at any stage of the writing process: understanding an assignment, generating ideas, drafting, organizing, revising, editing (addressing sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation concerns), and documenting sources. Students do not have to have a finished final draft before they seek feedback.

The mission of the Writing Center is to support writers in their efforts to become better writers. The Writing Center thus does not provide proofreading services, where a writer drops off an essay for us to ‘fix’ before the writer picks it up again. Tutors will, however, do something better: they’ll sit down with writers, assisting them in learning how to proofread for their own particular pattern of errors and to develop strategies for editing their own work. As experienced writers know, discussing a writing project and getting informed feedback helps all writers to clarify their ideas and to express them more effectively.

Students who would like to schedule an appointment with a tutor should please give us a call at 513-745-2875. (Walk-in sessions are sometimes possible, but we suggest making an appt., especially at busy times of the semester.) If two or three classmates would like to come together, we can also accommodate this; just let us know when making the appointment. The Writing Center also has some manuals available in our resource library for help with MLA, APA, Chicago Style, CSE and Harvard Blue Book formats.

Besides offering one-on-one sessions, the Writing Center can assist through class visits, group study sessions, workshops, tipsheets and blog postings. Please contact our director, Rebecca Todd, at toddr@xavier.edu or x2093 to discuss the possibilities.
Tips for Helping Students Get the Most Out of the Writing Center

Our Major Advice:

Don’t present the WC as a place for ‘bad writers’ or as a proofreading shop. This characterization can give students a false idea about the center, one that could be counterproductive for an effective tutoring session.

Do point out that all writers can benefit from a friendly, skilled peer reviewer.

Syllabus-Friendly Language:

Instead of simply saying “go to the WC for extra credit,” be more specific. The former phrase can lead to a visitor merely going through the motions, and not being really engaged in learning. Try specifying that the student can get extra credit for each substantive visit to the WC, and/or send them with a referral articulating what you would like the student to work on.

Instead of requiring that all of your students visit the WC in a single week, try building more time into that element of the coursework. The WC serves the entire Xavier community, and thus may not be able to accommodate all of your students in too narrow a timeframe. Or perhaps ask students to come in groups of two or three to a session, so that we can make sure they have a spot in the schedule, and a chance to work with a tutor.

We have found that students who simply hear that everyone who has “below an X grade must visit the WC” tend to feel that the suggestion, although intended to help the students with their writing, is actually punitive. Emphasizing that all writers, of all levels of ability, use the Writing Center can help overcome this false impression.

Let students know that the WC can help at any stage of the writing process: development, revision/style, and grammar/mechanics. Many first-year students mistakenly believe they must have a full draft to meet with a tutor.

Do you (or your department) have documents that you would like the WC to house on its website? Tips for writing within your discipline? If so, please contact our director, Rebecca Todd, at toddr@xavier.edu/x2093, so we can make arrangements.