

The Oakland University Writing Center Timeline

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Executive Summary

The information in this timeline was compiled using existing Oakland University Writing Center (OUWC) records, WCONLINE systems statistics reports, and personal communications with faculty and consultants. The first semester of this project was done in conjunction with data compilation from Noah Thompson, OUWC consultant. This is a living document to be updated following each Oakland University academic semester with entries including center activities, notable accomplishments, staff size, usage, and other relevant information. Staff size and usage data is compiled from WCONLINE reports, unless indicated otherwise. For supporting documents and additional information, visit the OUWC E-space page.

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The Beginning:

1960s: According to Leah Gilbert's (2012) writing center history, OU opened a writing center in the 1960s with the original goal of helping first-year writers, which was directed by professor Joan Rosen. The center ran out of funding and closed.

2003: A committee, headed by Alice Horning and Bruce Mann, formed to talk about opening a new writing center at OU in 2003 while the rest of campus was working on better integrating writing into its departments (Gilbert, 2012).

2004: The committee, which included current writing center director, Dr. Sherry Wynn Perdue, prepared to establish the OU writing center by completing research, speaking to members of other centers, visiting neighboring university writing centers, and reviewing articles from *The Writing Center Journal* (Gilbert, 2012).

The Reinvention:

Fall 2005- Winter 2006: Horning and Mann crafted a proposal after extensive committee research, which passed and allowed construction of the writing center to begin in November 2005 (Gilbert, 2012). An article on OU's website written by Rebecca Wyatt said a temporary writing center opened in the Winter 2006 semester, and another article by Amy Baker said in May 2006 that the temporary center had moved to its permanent location (as cited in Gilbert, 2012). Jeanie Robertson was appointed as the center's interim director, and Sherry Wynn Perdue became the part-time assistant director.

Notable accomplishments: Joan Rosen and her husband, Robert, donated \$300,000 to renovate the initial writing center space and fund beginning operations (Conway, 2008).

Staff size: 12 (Robertson, 2007).

Usage: Winter 2006: 628 clients signed in, per Conway (2008)

Fall 2006- Winter 2007: Robertson was named writing center director at the beginning of the Winter 2007 term (Robertson, 2007). During the academic year, consultants worked with undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty members. Rebecca Wyatt from OU's news outlet said in October 2006 that "14 tutors, many of whom were trained and paid undergraduates, had worked with 645 students in the new center. It saw 80 visitors in the first week and 175 by the fifth week" (as cited in Gilbert, 2012, p. 5). The center's scope of academic discipline and class rank began to increase and become more diverse (Robertson, 2007).

Notable Accomplishments: The Joan Rosen Writing Studio was dedicated on October 23, 2006 (Robertson, 2007).

Staff Size: 14 consultants in Fall 2006, 16 in Winter 2007, per Robertson (2007)

Usage: Fall 2006: 1,600 appointments, per Robertson (2007).
3,745 total sign-in appointments logged from Winter 2006- Summer 2007, per Robertson (2007)

Fall 2007- Winter 2008: Sherry Wynn Perdue was appointed as new director of the center. Pamela Mitzelfeld was appointed as the associate director.

Notable Accomplishments: The writing center helped launch the Embedded Tutor Program.

Usage: Fall 2007: 1,600 appointments, according to the Fall 2008 statistics report (Wynn Perdue, 2008).

Fall 2008- Winter 2009: The center worked with the library and the Continued Learning and Advancement Workshops program to offer a plagiarism workshop during the Fall 2008 semester, according to the “Fall 2008 Statistics” (Wynn Perdue, 2008). Wynn Perdue and literacy librarian Anne Switzer launched Dissertation 101: A Seminar for PhD students in the College of Education and offered it on Martin Luther King Day. Throughout the academic year, consultants visited classrooms and offered workshops, APA tutorials, and other instruction (Wynn Perdue & Mitzelfeld, 2010).

Notable Accomplishments: Five consultants and director Wynn Perdue traveled to St. John Vianney school in Flint and conducted writing consultations and a writer’s workshop for fifth-graders. The consultants also worked with Pre-College Programs to hold writing consultations with ninth-graders (Wynn Perdue, 2008). The writing center also acquired Sam the Plant from an OU trustee family.

Staff Size: Fall 2008, 16 undergraduate consultants and four graduate student consultants, according to the statistics report (Wynn Perdue, 2008).

Usage: Fall 2008: over 1,700 appointments, 165 of which were graduate appointments and about 20 of which were faculty appointments, per the statistics report (Wynn Perdue, 2008).

Fall 2009- Winter 2010: The center established Cite Right, a 7-week program for students sanctioned for academic dishonesty (Wynn Perdue, 2010). Wynn Perdue was asked for assistance in training WRT102 instructors, where they worked with embedded writing specialists from the writing center (personal communication, August 7, 2018). Four consultants offered extra support to WRT 102 classes, and consultants who took ENG 215: Fundamentals of Grammar provided course-specific tutoring (Wynn Perdue & Mitzelfeld, 2010). The center worked with Disability Support Services to better verse consultants’ abilities to work with differently-abled clients.

Notable Accomplishments: The center hosted the 2009 Michigan Writing Centers Association Conference, with more than 175 attendees (Wynn Perdue. 2014).

Usage: Fall 2009: Over 2,000 clients, per Wynn Perdue and Mitzelfeld (2010)
Summer 2010: 284 undergraduate students, 102 graduate students (“Summer 2010 Client Data,” 2010).

Fall 2010- Winter 2011: In the Fall 2010 semester, the writing center paired each WRT 102 professor with a writing consultant, Wynn Perdue serving as the WRT 102 coordinator (Wynn Perdue, 2010).

Notable Accomplishments: The writing center continued to form connections with other student organizations, visit classrooms to discuss documentation, and offer support to dissertation writers (Wynn Perdue, 2010).

Usage: Fall 2010: over 2,500 clients, an increase of over 500 from the previous fall semester, per the status update (Wynn Perdue, 2010)
Winter 2011: 2,192 sessions

Fall 2011- Winter 2012: Consultants at the Writing Center worked with students of all levels and disciplines. Gilbert (2012) said the center offered the Cite Right plagiarism-prevention program and resources such as an APA tutorial, social media pages, and a weekly podcast.

Notable Accomplishments: The writing center first contracted the WCONLINE scheduling system. Consultants served as embedded writing specialists, helped WRT102 students. In 2011, the writing center upgraded its technology by purchasing eight iPads (Wynn Perdue, 2014).

Fall 2012- Winter 2013: Ashley Cerku, a Writing and Rhetoric graduate and former writing center consultant, was appointed as operations coordinator of the writing center. Dana Driscoll became the head of the EWS program (Wynn Perdue, personal communication, August 7, 2018).

Notable Accomplishments: An article written by Dana Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue (2012) titled “Theory, Lore, and More: An Analysis of RAD Research in *The Writing Center Journal*, 1980-2009” earned the International Writing Centers Association Outstanding Article Award. The center obtained an International Writing Center Association Grant (2012) to support writing center research (Wynn Perdue, 2014).

Usage: Fall 2012: 2,332 appointments with 1,106 clients, per the client welcome survey responses and WCONLINE (2018)
Winter 2013: 2,216 appointments with 873 clients
Summer 2013: 572 appointments with 250 clients

Then to Now:

Fall 2013- Winter 2014: In September 2013, the center presented a web-seminar on writing center research to an international audience after receiving an invitation from *The Writing Center Journal* and the IWCA (Wynn Perdue, 2014).

Staff Size: Fall 2013: 17

Winter 2014: 16

Summer 2014: 5

Usage: Fall 2013: 2,648 appointments with 1,143 clients

Winter 2014: 2,614 appointments with 1,002 clients

Summer 2014: 517 appointments with 194 clients, per the client welcome survey responses and WCONLINE (2018)

Fall 2014- Winter 2015:

Notable Accomplishments: The center obtained an International Writing Center Association Grant (2014) to support writing center research (Wynn Perdue, 2014).

Staff size: Fall 2014: 15

Winter 2015: 19

Summer 2015: 6

Usage: Fall 2014: 2,644 appointments with 1,116 clients, per the client welcome survey responses and WCONLINE (2018)

Winter 2015: 2,956 appointments with 1,028 clients

Summer 2015: 657 appointments with 250 clients

Fall 2015- Winter 2016:

2015: The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences approved the appointment of Elizabeth (Betsy) Allan as the new EWS program director. Writing center consultants continued to work with WRT 1020 students as embedded writing specialists.

Staff Size: Fall 2015: 20

Winter 2016: 20

Summer 2016: 9

Usage: Fall 2015: 3,548 appointments with 1,372 clients, per the client welcome survey responses and WCONLINE (2018)

Winter 2016: 3,502 appointments with 1,184 clients

Summer 2016: 1,090 appointments with 255 clients

Fall 2016- Winter 2017:

Staff Size: Fall 2016: 19 consultants

Winter 2017: 23 consultants

Summer 2017: 8 consultants

Usage: Fall 2016: 3,225 appointments with 1,344 clients

Winter 2017: 3,305 appointments with 1,145 clients

Summer 2017: 1,804 appointments with 682 clients

Fall 2017- Winter 2018: The center employed its updated Cite Right program throughout the academic year. The consultant mentorship program began its use in the Summer 2017 semester, offering consultants a new form of guidance during training and practice. At the end of the Summer 2018 semester, consultants developed their skills at two professional development days, focusing on synthesis, consultant-client rapport, privacy policies, Cite Right, and writing center housekeeping.

Notable Accomplishments: The center began to train new and old consultants with its 5-week Consult Right program. Carol Burns-Wortham successfully updated the Cite Right program to be more thorough and to improve ease-of-use and transferability among consultants. The center and staff hosted the 2017 MiWCA conference in October.

Staff Size: Fall 2017: 26 consultants

Winter 2018: 23 consultants

Summer 2018: 9 consultants

Usage: Fall 2017: 3,135 appointments with 1,198 clients

Winter 2018: 2,565 appointments with 922 clients

Summer 2018: 545 appointments with 201 clients

Fall 2018- Winter 2019: The center set up monthly engagement events to bring in more clients. In September, the WC invited members of the Kresge Library, William Beaumont Library, and all units housed within the library to a staff meet and greet and hosted a fall carnival to introduce the U community to the WC, something we hope to make an annual event. Consultants attended the IWCA conference and attended and presented at the MiWCA and ECWCA conferences and the on-campus Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Instructional Fair. The Dissertation 101 workshop series covered topics such as Troubleshooting Your IRB Application, Understanding Copyright and Fair Use, Data Storage, Writing with Statistics, and Composing the Literature Review.

Notable Accomplishments: The center staffed a greater percentage of graduate student appointments than in any other semester (now over 15% of overall sessions when sessions with the director are included) (Wynn Perdue, personal communication, May 10, 2019). The biweekly writing retreat, Sit Down and Write!, has served 123 graduate writers and regularly has 15 attendees from multiple disciplines at each session. The WC launched the second iteration of the Rosen Supervision Fellowship in January with 11 faculty members from all branches of Engineering (7), Chemistry (1), Nursing (2), and Physical Therapy (1).

Staff Size: Fall 2018: 19 consultants

Winter 2019: 21 consultants

Summer 2019: 5 consultants and 1 receptionist

Usage: Fall 2018: 2,925 appointments with 1,142 clients

Winter 2019: 2,533 appointments with 972 clients

Summer 2019: 700 appointments with 245 clients

Fall 2019-Winter 2020: Faculty members in the Rosen Supervision Fellowship worked on individual supervision initiatives over the summer. The OUWC summer staff members worked on individual projects to contribute additional resources, such as MLA and APA instructional lightboard videos and worksheets, better ADA compliance for our online resources, and an online archive and written histories of the MiWCA conference.

Notable accomplishments: Staff fall training focused on “the face of the client.” We reached out to Athletics to offer support for students in the O’rena and expanded our reach to offer “Sit Down and Write!” sessions for graduate students. We orchestrated “Letters to Lansing,” a workshop event for writers to communicate with their local and state representatives. In March 2020, campus closed to prevent the spread of coronavirus, and the OUWC successfully moved online and continued to provide remote services to students.

Launched Statistical Consulting Support

This fall, we created a three-module adaptation of Consult Right for graduate statistical consultants. Module One overviews the unique needs of graduate writers and specific graduate stakeholders, Module Two maps out a framework for a statistical consultation and examines common error patterns, and Module Three explores how to help people understand and write about their analyses.

In order to better serve our clients, we offered workshops devoted to conducting statistical analyses and reporting them, and we gained a graduate assistant line for fall 2020 to support the program.

Letters to Lansing

In February, Red Douglas and Rachael Baker led a bipartisan workshop to teach students how to write letters in order to reach out to their local and state representatives to best affect change in their communities. While the OUWC led the event, the College Republicans, College Democrats, and the Center for Civic Engagement from the political science department co-sponsored. Democrat State Senator Rosemary Bayer and Republican State Representative Andrea Schroeder attended and spoke on the importance of civic engagement.

Extended Online Writing Support for All Students

1. Created consultant and user guides for making the best use of the writing consultation in WCOonline.
2. Enhanced training in online writing support pedagogy.

3. Altered the center's online support policy to allow all students, not just distance and online students, to make use of virtual appointments.
4. Added a Virtual Help Desk—with real-time consultant help via chat—after migrating fully online in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
5. Added virtual office support via Slack, Trello, WebEx, and Tawk To to ensure that our remote crew could remain connected and well supported through the pandemic.

Launched a Collaboration on Cite Right with Athletics

1. Trained athletics' advisors at the request of the assistant athletics director.
2. Ashley Cerku, Ashley Muller, Jen Sroka, Red Douglas, and Victoria O'Connor. leveraged the collaboration to launch a survey of student athletes, which they presented at ECWCA and about which they are drafting an article.

Sponsored Writing Consultant Participation in Local, Regional, and National Conferences

1. Brought 5 members to MiWCA in October 2019, three of whom presented
2. Brought 5 members to IWCA in Columbus, Ohio, also in October 2019, all who presented.
3. Brought 5 members (4 of whom presented) to ECWCA in Indianapolis, Indiana, in March 2020.

Grew Writing Support for Graduate Students and Their Faculty. Sit Down and Write!

Continued to offer accountability, sometimes twice a month, and Dissertation 101 added more presentations — such as Composing in LaTeX — to support graduate students from multiple departments and disciplines. Moreover, the second iteration of the Rosen Supervision Fellowship for 10 faculty members from STEM and Health Science continued its work with STEM and Health Science faculty throughout fall 2019.

Staff Size: Fall 2019: 22 consultants, 4 receptionists

Usage: Fall 2019: 3,055 appointments with 1,158 clients

How to Archive the OUWC's Records

The OUWC's records will need to be updated at least once every academic year to include the most relevant numbers and notable accomplishments. In order to ensure accurate data archiving and prevent our history from being lost, one or two people should be assigned as the archivists, and when those students graduate, new ones should be taught how to properly log the OUWC's history. To update this document, first reach out to Ashley Cerku, the OUWC operations coordinator, for WCOonline usage data for whichever semesters you are filling out. That will provide you with the number of appointments, clients, and consultants who staffed appointments. Also reach out to Sherry for a list of the center's accomplishments for that year and important events or historical moments. Once that data is secure, make a new entry of the timeline by typing the academic year in bold, flush left, followed by a colon (**e.g. Fall 2019-Winter 2020:**). Write out the center's large-scale accomplishments. Below, on a line indented once, state the OUWC's notable accomplishments, such as research awards given, conferences presented at, and opportunities given to consultants. After that, note the staff size, indenting that section further by .5 inches (one tab) and then indenting subsequent lines once more. The staff size should include both consultants and receptionists if possible. Next, the usage data should go in another section in the same indentation style. This data comes from the OUWC statistics reports on WCONLINE. Once that's complete, you have successfully completed the entry.

For upcoming semesters, it may be useful to create a "future" section by speaking to Sherry and then noting the activities consultants and staff members are completing, future conferences, future events, etc. An example of one of these entries would be if you were

updating this resource at the end of a winter semester and wanted to include the consultants summer projects, you could add something along the lines of: “The OUWC summer staff members are working on individual projects to contribute additional resources, such as MLA and APA instructional lightboard videos and worksheets, better ADA compliance for our online resources, and an online archive and written histories of the MiWCA conference.” That way, at the end of the semester, you can simply confirm whether those goals were met and then add additional accomplishments. All in all, this resource is meant to serve as the running record of the OUWC, and with your help, it can stay up-to-date for the foreseeable future.

References

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