

Writing Matters: The Writing Center Newsletter

Western Illinois University

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In heart of campus, an oasis for writers

It took until Alex Callahan's senior year at WIU to make his first visit to the University Writing Center.

Callahan, of North Aurora, and Kyle Allison, of Williamsville, jointly sought help on a group project for a Communication class.

"It's hard to write a paper as a group," Callahan explained of his decision to meet with a tutor on the Friday before Thanksgiving break. He and Allison met for nearly an hour with a tutor in the Writing Center, which recently found a new home on the third floor of Malpass Library.

Callahan and Allison's visit showed that the University Writing Center is not just for English majors. But from its founding in the 1960s until fall 2012, the main Writing



Tutor Brittani Wascher discusses Donghee Koh's proposal for a graduate thesis in geography during a consultation at the Malpass Library Writing Center in November. Koh is an international student from Jeju Island, South Korea. Photo by Lisa Kernek.

Center was housed with the English Department, first in Sallee Hall and later in

Simpkins Hall. That changed last year when the main Writing

(please turn to page 2)

A WIU senior who lends a friendly ear

Brittani Wascher recently helped a graduate student polish his proposal for a master's thesis in geography-- though she is neither a graduate student nor a geographer.

Wascher is a WIU senior majoring in communication.

As a consultant who works in the University Writing Center, Wascher said she tries to establish a friendly atmosphere, peer to peer, in

one-on-one meetings with students.

"I'm not an authority figure," she said.

Wascher started working

(Please turn to page 2)

Writing Center History

- The Writing Center was started in 1965 in Sallee Hall by John F. Castle, then chair of the English Department, according to *First Century: A Pictorial History of Western Illinois University* by John E. Halwas
- The Writing Center later moved to Simpkins Hall with the Department of English and Journalism
- The Writing Center moved its main center from Simpkins to Malpass Library in August 2012

Heart of campus, continued

Center relocated to Malpass Library.

The move was as much symbolic as practical, said Jim Schmidt, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

"It made it seem like less of an English Department thing and more of a university resource," Schmidt said.

"It seems like there's a perception that it's primarily for students in English 180 and 280," which are required writing courses. "I think it's a great resource for students at all levels."

After Callahan and Allison met with one of the tutors--or consultants--for the better part of an hour, Callahan said he would use the Center again.

Once students use the Center once, they are likely to return, according to Writing Center Director Neil Baird, an Assistant Professor of English.

Another reason for the move was the lack of elevator access to the center's old home at the top of a flight of stairs in Simpkins Hall, Baird said.

The number of visits to the main center

remained about the same--about 3,750 sessions-- in its first year in Malpass from 2012 to 2013 as it had been the year before.

"This is great," Baird said in an email, "because when the satellite centers have moved, we experienced a significant drop in usage. When we moved to Malpass, I had anticipated a similar drop."

The Writing Center operates satellite centers in Bayliss and Tanner Residence Halls and in Simpkins Hall.

Friendly ear, continued

at the Writing Center in fall 2013 after a friend encouraged her to apply. She is one of more than 20 paid, trained consultants; the majority are graduate students.

Wascher works in the main center in Malpass Library and in two satellite writing centers in Tanner and Bayliss residence halls.

The graduate student she helped recently was Donghee Koh, a graduate student in geography who sought help with this thesis proposal.

"I use the Writing Center a lot," said Koh, who is from Jeju Island, South Korea, and is in his second year at WIU. "This is not my native language."

During each one-on-one meeting, Wascher asks for a copy of a writing assignment. If a student brings a draft, she asks him or her to read it aloud.

She said the experience has made her a better writer.

"Any student at any point in the writing process should come here for anything," she said.

University Writing Center locations, hours

Malpass Library, 3rd Floor (West Side)

Monday - Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Phone: 309-298-2815
Walk-ins welcome

Malpass Library, 2nd Floor

Sunday - Thursday: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Phone: 309-298-2815
Walk-ins welcome

Simpkins Hall, Room 25

Monday - Friday: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Phone: 309-298-3512
Walk-ins welcome

Bayliss Hall, Basement (*across from laundry room*)

Sunday - Thursday: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Phone: 309-298-3624
Walk-ins welcome

Tanner Hall, Room 108 (*near men's elevators*)

Sunday - Thursday: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Phone: 309-298-3477
Walk-ins welcome

Please visit our website:
http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english_and_journalism/university_writing_center/