

Writing Studio @ FIT
Annual Report
Academic Year 2008-09

Mission Statement

The Writing Studio is committed to excellence in writing for personal, professional, and pedagogical reasons. The Writing Studio provides student writers with a non-evaluative environment to work on their writing with writing consultants who understand the particular needs and interests of FIT writers. Writers at FIT find a creative hub for expressing their ideas through practical and artistic means at the Studio.

Communicating one's ideas through writing effectively is a vital part of achieving professional and personal goals in an increasingly digital age. Because of the kinds of communicative demands we face today, the Writing Studio places an emphasis on helping writers become better learners and writers by supporting them through the process of writing. Although the ability to create polished written products is important, the Writing Studio seeks to focus on each individual writer's process to ensure that they leave the studio with a better understanding of how to create effective texts. The Studio works toward these goals through the peer-tutoring model, which creates a learning environment that fosters growth for both student writing consultants and writers. Furthermore, the peer-tutoring model makes the Writing Studio a leading example of FIT's commitment to a culture of student-centeredness.

In addition to providing FIT students the best individualized writing support possible, the Writing Studio is also committed to assisting faculty members in everything from incorporating writing into their courses to working with multilingual writers to developing and responding to writing assignments that effectively target the concerns of their courses. Since the Writing Studio is strongly committed to collaboration, building and fostering strong relationships with faculty members across the disciplines and in the various programs offered at FIT is important to us. Such relationships, we hope, will offer us, and our students, the best opportunities for teaching and learning in a cross-curricular effort to strengthen the academic core, especially when writing is used as a medium for these opportunities. The Writing Studio invites faculty and staff to contact us about possibilities for creating writing partnerships that benefit courses and writers at FIT.

Accomplished Goals from 2008-09

The Writing Studio accomplished all of the goals that had been established early in the AY 2008-09. Given that this was the Studio's inaugural year, there were many objectives that had to be not only set but also accomplished. The four main areas that required close attention included practical issues, recruiting and maintaining personnel, administrative concerns, and pedagogical issues. Instead of listing individual accomplished goals, I will sum up a number of accomplishments using these broader categories:

Practical Goals

The main issue of practicality was where the Writing Studio should be, how to renovate that space, and how to ensure that the space was functional in time for student writers to visit. By August, it had been decided that the Writing Studio would take over the Placement Testing Center in room C612. Although the Director moved into the space in early September, the Writing Studio did not officially open until October 2, 2008. The space started to undergo transition during the fall semester when all of the testing center's computers were removed along with the data and electrical wiring. Additionally, new furniture and office supplies were purchased and brought into the Studio during the fall semester. The main renovations (i.e., walls, carpeting, painting) were not started until the Winter Break. By the start of the summer session, the main area of the Writing Studio was complete and also now serves as a student gallery in addition to its primary purpose as a center for teaching and learning. Although many of these practical goals were met, there is still work that needs to be done in the office adjacent to the main Studio. A work order has been submitted to finish this work and the entire physical space will be complete by the start of the Fall 2009 semester.

Recruitment and Personnel Goals

Along with ensuring and renovating space, the goal of bringing in quality and appropriate writing consultants to staff the Studio was accomplished by mid-October 2008. Announcements for all available positions were posted by the middle of September. The goal was to hire writing consultants from outside FIT who had knowledge of either writing center theory and practice or who showed a high propensity to learning about peer tutoring and writing center administration. Furthermore, the individuals hired for this position had to be willing to work collaboratively and respectfully with undergraduate peer writing consultants. Four individuals met these qualifications and were hired in late September. As the fall semester progressed, ten peer writing consultants were hired and two more were hired as the spring semester commenced. The peer writing consultants were recruited from the Presidential Scholars program, the Peer Mentoring program, and with the help of English and Speech faculty recommendations.

Throughout this academic year, a number of staff meetings and one-to-one conferences with the director took place to ensure the development and continued success of the writing consultants.

Administrative Goals

Administrative goals for the new Studio were numerous this year and included everything from marketing the Studio to meeting with faculty and administrators to collecting data. Administrative goals are continuous in that although there may be some plateaus of accomplishment, there will always be room to continue moving toward more extensive goals.

Throughout this year, the director developed advertising materials for the Studio including pens, shirts, bookmarks, and signs. The signs were designed and made with the assistance of the student organization Ad Group. In an effort to market the Writing Studio, the director and writing studio consultants made visits to classes to provide information about the Studio or to assist in writing workshops.

In order to fulfill the writing across the curriculum mission of the Writing Studio, the director consulted with faculty from each of the schools of the college. These consultations ranged from working on developing writing assignments to discussions of how to respond to student writing. Often times, faculty were interested in helping their students to become stronger writers and were seeking advice on how to prepare students to write effective responses to their assignments. In addition to working with faculty on writing, the director was able to make inroads with faculty through the CET and other venues on a number of other important issues, including curriculum development, best practices in teaching, working with second language learners, and critical thinking.

The Studio kept records of the student writer visitors throughout the year. A data collection sheet was designed to find information about writers and what they needed help with. This data collection sheet allowed student writers to provide feedback on their Writing Studio experience. We were able to measure students' satisfaction level with their writing consultation in addition to the kinds of writing topics they were interested in learning about.

In addition to maintaining a schedule that worked for all of the 16 consultants, a number of classroom visits were scheduled as well as workshops and poetry readings. One of the administrative goals was to open the space to different kinds of events. Although Writing Studio held four successful events this past semester, we hope to continue working on this goal so as to continue to strengthen FIT as a creative hub.

Pedagogical Goals

One of the most important goals in developing the new Writing Studio is that it provides the FIT community with innovative and well-founded instruction in writing. The Goals listed above are all important but would mean nothing if the Writing Studio did not constantly strive to meet the goal of pedagogical excellence. In order to reach this goal, the Studio consultants participated in practicum meetings where a number of pedagogical issues were discussed and explored every other week. Consultants had the chance to regularly discuss issues that came up in their session and to learn new techniques through readings, observations, and conversations with experienced writing center and educational professionals. The Writing Studio's pedagogy centers on collaboration, listening, and seeking new possibilities in how students co-learn. Writing Studio consultants were asked to approach each session with a notion that they will have something to learn from the writer. This is what helps to accomplish the goal of being a center for collaboration and co-learning. Our pedagogical goals are always progressing and changing based on new theories in the field and new experiences on our own campus. Staff education and an on-going discussion in the Studio about tutoring is what helped to achieve the initial

pedagogical goals set for the Studio. As the Studio continues to grow, so will its pedagogical goals, ensuring that the Studio is always strengthening the academic core. Furthermore, with peer collaboration and co-learning as two central pedagogical goals, the Writing Studio is always experimenting with ways to become evermore committed to student-centeredness at FIT.

Set Goals for 2009-10

Now that the Writing Studio is renovated and returning consultants are in place with two semesters of experience, the goals set for the coming academic year will focus primarily on enhancing college-wide relationships through writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives and on Writing Studio consultant development. These two important goals will keep the Writing Studio on track in achieving its mission and in supporting the College's Strategic Plan. Furthermore, one of the goals for the coming year will be to seek alternative funding sources that can assist in funding the Studio's rigorous educational program for writing consultants and FIT writers. The Writing Studio will therefore seek to accomplish the following six objectives for AY 2009-10:

- **Writing Across the Curriculum Initiatives:** The Writing Studio will seek out new partnerships with academic departments and with other offices on campus to foster greater awareness of how writing can be used in a variety of sectors within the college. Some plans already include working with the School of Art and Design to prepare students for competitions in which their written skills will be used to evaluate their artistic work, partnering with Student Life to outreach to students at the dormitories, and creating new ways to meet and discuss writing with faculty outside of traditional forums such as the CET.
- **Increase Mainstream Student Visits:** The Writing Studio would like to see an increased use among traditional American students. In order to accomplish this, the Studio plans to target this audience specifically in its marketing schemes and work toward changing the perception of remediation that many students have about tutoring services.
- **Innovative Tutoring:** With a solid staff of consultants who each have a year's worth of experience, we can begin to push the ways we think about tutoring. To meet this goal we plan to explore online tutoring, tutoring in alternative spaces on campus, and new possibilities for best practices in tutoring, especially when it comes to working with ESL writers, group situations, and Learning Disabled writers.
- **Grants/Sponsorship:** The Writing Studio will seek grant funding to support Writing Studio consultant development, education, and training. Furthermore, later in AY 2009-10, the Studio will begin investigating potential sponsors that will be able to provide additional financial support for the Studio.
- **Peer Writing Consultant Education and Development:** As mentioned in the previous goal, peer writing consultant education and development is one of the most important goals. Writing consultants need to learn how to become effective communicators, collaborators, listeners, writers, readers, learners, and they must be supportive and nurturing sources of possibility. Therefore, there will be an emphasis on not only repeating known models of tutor education but also rethinking and reshaping those models through the work we do at FIT. Without

building a Writing Center Theory and Practice course for consultants to take into the larger FIT curriculum, we have to pioneer new ways to educate staff that will catapult our consultants beyond the level of consultants who tutor at traditional Research I state universities.

- Developing the Writing Consultant and Staff Positions: As time goes on, it becomes more apparent that a number of changes will have to be made to the current Writing Consultant positions. One of the goals for this coming academic year will be to begin changing the roles of the individuals in these positions so they can take on more responsibility in the Writing Studio and in Writing Across the Curriculum. Additionally, another goal will be to begin looking into a staff person who can assist with everything from scheduling to data collection.

Statistical Information and Data Collection

Establishing the Writing Studio required a lot of outreach to faculty across the college. In addition to providing tutoring for FIT students, the Writing Studio developed working, writing, and teaching relationships with faculty and staff in the Schools of Liberal Arts, Business and Technology, Art and Design, Graduate Studies, and Continuing and Professional Studies. The director met one-to-one with 23 faculty and staff members who hail from a range of departments. These meetings focused on developing assignments, facilitating writing workshops, developing a writing curriculum, responding to student writing, and developing writing skills. In addition to these meetings with faculty, Writing Studio representatives spoke at several orientation events and visited 22 classes in the spring semester to make direct contact with students.

Furthermore, each time a student visited the Writing Studio for a tutorial, data about the session was recorded. Besides general information such as the number of contacts and individuals using the Studio, we are able to discern what students are working on during their sessions, whether or not they were willing to disclose their visits to their instructors, and whether or not they were satisfied with their experience.

The Writing Studio had 1,637 contacts with writers this year and worked with over 475 individual students. This means that students are using the Writing Studio multiple times throughout the year. One writer visited the Writing Studio over 45 times this year. Most visitors came to our C612 location, about 98%, while only 2% visited the library location.

Students made use of the Writing Studio for a range of topics. The table below demonstrates what students were interested in learning more about during their Writing Studio session. It is impressive to note that FIT Students value working on drafts, 57% noted that they were interested in draft review, rather than just thinking of the Writing Studio as a place for proofreading. It is also interesting to note how few students visited to work on research and documentation strategies, only about 3% in each area and only 10% came to work on prewriting strategies. This information may suggest that more might be done across the college to stress the importance of these strategies.

Session Topic*

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| Prewriting Strategies | 10% |
| Early Draft Review | 26% |
| Late Draft Review | 31% |
| Research Strategies | 3% |
| Citation/Documentation Strategies | 3% |
| Proofreading/Editing Strategies | 31% |
| Professional/Personal Writing | 13% |
| Other | 6% |

*People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Of the students who completed our disclosure section of the information sheet, 54% of students wanted their teachers to know they had visited the Writing Studio while 46% did not want their visit disclosed. This data might also be interesting to watch as the Writing Studio has greater recognition across the college. However, it is a positive sign that more students would like their teachers to be aware of the steps they are taking to seek out assistance and learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

Finally, student writers overwhelmingly found their Writing Studio sessions to be very helpful. Of the students who indicated their satisfaction level with their tutoring experience, 94 % found their session to be “very helpful,” 6% indicated it was “helpful,” and 0% indicated “not helpful.”

In the comments we encourage students to write, a number of writers stressed that they plan to revise, rewrite, and reread their work after their visit. Just to provide a sample of what students are saying about their sessions, I’ll include a few quotes from our visitors about what they learned:

- “I learned how to connect each paragraph to make it flow. Also, I learned how to cite sources.”
- “I have learned a lot about how I should organize my ideas, and I am much more clear about writing research papers.”
- “I learned that I have exceptional writing potential. I know I need to sit down and invest in my work. My goals were met.”
- “It was very helpful in the sense of writing sentences that are justified and as precise as possible instead of vague and general ideas.”
- “I’m learning every time more and more how to write correctly in English as it’s completely different from my mother tongue.”

Activities and Programming

During the 2008-09 academic year, the Writing Studio was involved in a number of activities and programs. Below are some of the highlights from these events/programs:

- The Studio hosted a group of high school seniors from the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Art, allowing them to meet face to face with FIT students, ask questions, and then the director brought them on a tour of the Museum.

- The Studio also hosted a group of high school teachers on their in-service day during which the director lead a discussion on college-level literacy expectations. This discussion also addressed the issue of access for student who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for students of color.
- The Studio hosted a CENGAGE Learning book fair in conjunction with Educational Skills and English and Speech.
- The Studio hosted two poetry events with the Words club and one with Faculty members in English and Speech.
- The Studio hosted the English 121 Essay Competition Awards Ceremony.
- In conjunction with Educational Skills, the Studio sponsored the “Dynamic Diversity: Students Talk Back,” an event supported with a grant from the Diversity Council.
- The director conducted number of CET presentations to engage faculty interested in writing in their courses.
- The Writing Studio is currently working with the Library to promote the connection between writing and research and provides writing tutoring at the Library on Saturdays.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, the 2008-09 academic year has been a successful inaugural year for the Writing Studio. A lot of outreach to other schools and departments on campus have not only helped to guide students to the Studio for writing help but has also helped to make the Writing Studio an asset to the larger FIT community. As we move into the next academic year, we hope to continue the momentum that the Studio has gained by building off of the activities and decisions that worked and by trying to infuse what we’ve accomplished and learned with new partnerships across the campus and new approaches to the teaching and learning of writing.