

WRITING CENTER

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE

MUCH TO CELEBRATE

By Dr. Steve Price, *Writing Center Director*

"We had 20 + tutors who worked with 2,000 + writers this year! Also, we have a wonderful group of tutors graduating in May," proclaims our flyer for the "Writing Center End-of-the-Year Open House," eloquently designed by Lingshan Song, our Assistant Director.

Those are HUGE numbers for us, and so much has happened in the MC Writing Center this year, including:

- Our move to the Leland Speed Library: after months of planning, we found ourselves in August tucked inside the Learning Resource Center, in the midst of VCR tapes, a lamination machine, and a bust of Governor Thomas Bailey. But it's worked. Really well.
- New tutors, both semesters: for the first time, we ran the semester-long, 3-credit tutor training course (ENG 398) in both the fall and the spring. Thirteen new tutors joined our staff in January.
- New undergraduate receptionists: Lingshan suggested that we needed receptionists during all of the hours that we were open. And she was right. Gwen, Mallory, Caroline, and Charlotte have been smart, inviting, and engaged as they welcome writers to the center.
- Staff development: five times each semester we've gathered to learn about ESL strategies, personality inventories, citing sources, information literacy, approaches for working with grammar, and so on. No credits, no grades . . . and yet there everyone was.
- The Mississippi Writing Centers Association Annual Meeting: Administrators and tutors from 11 different Mississippi schools, including Ole Miss and MS State, met here at MC in the beginning of March. Our tutors made presentations, and our very own Professor Daniel White was a keynote speaker. The MC Writing Center is leading the way for our state organization.

Those are some serious accomplishments, and it all starts with the most creative, smart, and fun people that I know at MC: our tutors. They challenge me with their insightful questions. They impress me with their adaptability, intelligence, care, and commitment. They make me laugh. With fond memories of them *all*, I present our graduating tutors from the 2012-13 school year: Susan Atkinson, Tori Crosby, Kim Dingess, Heather Greenlee, Taylor Gressett, Haley Hawsey, Larry Jones, Julianna Pardue, Micah Smith, Frank Summerlin, and Caroline Wyatt.

Represented in that group are future teachers, lawyers, business people, accountants, artists, writers, and musicians. And we will proudly always remember them as MC Writing Center tutors.

We have much to celebrate this year in the Writing Center. And celebrate we will . . . until August, when we'll start all over again!



Writing Center tutors posed for a quick shot after a staff development meeting. Alex, Christine, and Kala led fellow tutors in a discussion on strategies for challenging sessions.

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TIPS FOR WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS

By Taylor Gressett, *Writing Tutor*

For most students, the prospect of writing a research paper seems daunting and overwhelming, to say the least, and almost every area of study at MC requires you to write such a paper. Even if your particular field of study does not directly involve writing, it is impossible to come out of MC without having to face and tackle one of these papers. So how should you approach an assignment like this? Here are a few helpful tips and suggestions that I, as a senior, have implemented into my own strategy for tackling these hefty assignments.

First, I have learned to view research papers as *projects* instead of simply as essays. This first step may not seem to be very profound, but if you have ever sat down to do any school work at all, you know that your mindset and attitude towards the assignment are key factors in its completion. By thinking of a research paper as a project, I am preparing myself for the extra work that comes with writing a piece based on research. I understand that I am going to be required to do more than write a paper; I am also required to learn more about the topic at hand, see what is critically being said on this topic, and form new ideas on this subject.

A second tip for writing research papers is this: Go to the library. I know the library is not the ideal study location for everyone, but do not let that ward you off from the wealth of information sitting on its shelves.

Hopefully we have all had a lecture on how to research using the resources in the library. If you are a bit rusty on research techniques, ask one of the many qualified librarians to help you get started. Also, you can begin by going to the library website and searching for books or articles relating to your topic.

Make use of bibliographies and citations in other articles. Usually, when you find one good article, that article will cite at least three more articles that will be useful to you. If you have ever heard your teacher ask you to "put your voice into the existing conversation," this is a great way to do so.

Once you have a pile of research to use as you write your paper, keeping useful ideas and quotes from these articles organized and accessible is imperative. One of the most frustrating things I have run into while writing a research paper is remembering a quote from an article and not remembering who said it or where it came from.

An easy and simple way to alleviate this problem is this: Get one piece of paper per article or source. Write the title of the article and the name of its author at the top of each page. As you read and skim the article, jot down ideas and quotes with their page numbers on the sheet of paper. This is a simple and easy step you can implement into your research that can help you to avoid frustration and frantic searching when you actually sit down to write your paper.

As you may have noticed, all of these tips deal with the *pre-writing* process. This leads to perhaps the most important thing to know about writing a research paper. To write a research paper, you need to do the background work. Students often overlook what makes a research paper different from other papers. Spend just as much time, if not more, researching your topic as you spend writing your paper, and you will feel more prepared as you tackle these assignments.

WRITING CENTER COMIC

By Micah Smith & Julianna Pardue, *Writing Tutors*

science words



HOSTING MSWCA: ACCOMPLISHMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

By Alex Hendry, *Writing Tutor*

There sat the poor, innocent MC Writing Center, minding its own business, when WHAM! On March 1-2, the Mississippi Writing Center Association (MSWCA) conference came crashing onto our campus. Tutors grew frenzied and distracted. Presenters felt the impending pressure. Don't forget Dr. Price. Ah, the agony our brave leader endured!

While I might be getting a little poetic, the build-up to the conference was palpable. It required tasks to which we were unaccustomed. Facilitating and participating in a sophisticated, academic discussion on a whole discipline is very different from a casual talk about grammar in a play analysis. It shook up business as usual, but it clearly showed that MC Writing Center staff know how to cope with *un-usual* business.

At the conference the crowning glory of all-things-writing-center took place – productive conversations. There were workshops for tutors, practical discussion on issues such as improving communication with ESL students, navigating emotionally charged sessions, and explaining “crediting” and “credibility” to inexperienced researchers. Dr. Price said, “Without the tutors, this doesn't matter. I'm proud of them.”

The conference also generated helpful discussions for administrators. Topics covered included staff development, center assessment, and the growth of a community within a center. Discussion did not focus strictly on growing individual writing centers, but also expanded to strengthening the whole organization. On the second day of the conference, administrators met to plan out the future of the MSWCA.

One aspect of the conference MC staff seemed to value most was the interaction with tutors and teachers from other schools. When MC tutor Kim Dingess was asked what her favorite part of the conference was, she said, “It was interesting to see how other writing centers operated and dealt with problems.” Many workshops had spontaneous moments of “Wait – that might work!” when someone shared a solution for a problem they had encountered and one or more tutors gasped as they realized how useful such a tactic might be. Procedures or tactics that were taken for granted at one university proved to be an idea both novel and promising for another university.

While consultants and facilitators from across the state were discovering the challenges and possible solutions we had in common, MC staff were also discovering just how unique each center is. They saw how tutors from other schools struggle with unsupportive administrations, cramped spaces, and multiple campuses. While we developed a deeper sympathy for our fellow writing center companions, we also saw what was unique in our own center. It lends a new appreciation for our charming receptionists, our plentiful opportunities to work with international students, and our multi-functional space.

It also warrants a shout-out to our efficient yet personable assistant director Lingshan and our endearingly quirky, supernaturally nice director, Dr. Price. These two, with the help of Writing Center and English Department staff, set a high standard of productivity and hospitality for the next association meeting. Dr. Price said hosting the event signified, “MC is taking a leadership role in helping the organization. I want the tutors to know that we're becoming influential.” This standard, however, comes out of a conference which set the stage well for the function, maturation, and legitimacy of the Mississippi Writing Center Association.

FUNNY BUSINESS

To honor Kim Dingess, our Tutor's Quote Book pusher, this section is dedicated to her in this issue. Read the lines below and discover evidence why Kim deserves the honor!

- “Where is Kim? That one was ‘Quote Book’ worthy!”
— Ariel Jade
- “My Harry Potter is your Lord of the Rings.”
— Hallie to Kim
- Gwen: “What are you allergic to?”
Kim: “Mississippi.”
- “Jesus is my everything everything, but writing is my everything else.”
— Kim
- Susan: “So, I have decided—”
Kim (in a sing-song voice): “To follow Jesus!”

WHAT TUTORS ARE READING

- “MWF Seeking BFF” by Rachel Bertsche
- “The Harbinger” by Jonathan Cahn
- “Multiply” by Francis Chan
- “The Circle Trilogy” by Ted Dekker
- “Priest's Graveyard” by Ted Dekker
- “True Dhama Eye” by Dogen
- “In the Woods” by Tana French
- “Seidways” by Jan Fries
- “The Meaning of Marriage” by Timothy Keller
- “The Problem of Pain” by C.S. Lewis
- “Start Something That Matters” by Blake Mycoskie
- “The Dream of a Common Language” by Adrienne Rich
- “The Pearl” by John Steinbeck

POSSESSIVE CASE PRONOUNS: ALLOW MY MAKING THEM CLEARER

By Kimberly Dingess, *Writing Tutor*

A grammar rule that probably few people will have heard of is the possessive case pronoun. This rule will need a bit of explaining first. The rule is this: Always use a possessive case pronoun before a gerund. (I've also heard that ACT and SAT graders love those that know this rule.)

We all know what pronouns are (I, you, he, him, she, etc.); possessive case pronouns show relationship or ownership (my, mine, your, yours, our, ours, etc.)

A gerund is a verb that is being used as a noun. Ex: 'Singing helps clear my mind.' (*Singing* is a noun and the subject of the sentence, but is in verb form.) Gerunds always end in -ing.

So when you have a pronoun before the gerund, you must have a possessive case pronoun.

Incorrect Ex: 'I appreciate you coming to see us.'

Correct Ex: 'I appreciate your coming to see us.'

You is not possessive; it has no relation to the word *coming*. However, *your* is possessive because it tells the reader who's coming I appreciated.

THE WRITING COMMUNITY IN UNUSUAL PLACES

By Kelsey Kitch, *Writing Tutor*

Most of Mississippi College's Writing Center tutors know that sustaining a healthy community is an important part of the writing process. Frequently tutors find themselves doing it without even noticing. They add musings to the quote book, doodle on the new whiteboard, and contribute to staff development meetings. However, there is a huge writing community online too that is sometimes forgotten. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and even blogs have thousands upon thousands of accounts held by journalists, teachers, librarians, editors, students, authors, and even writing centers. Around the world, people are talking about writing and engaging with each other. They are encouraging others, discussing common problems, and creating a positive place for writers to come to. The community at the MC Writing Center expands far beyond its home in the Leland Speed Library.

We invite you to "like" us on Facebook, "follow" us on Twitter, and become a part of our online community!

Here are the Writing Center's two accounts:

Facebook: Mississippi College Writing Center

Twitter: MC_WCenter

WRITING CENTER SERVICES

Our purpose is to help writers at any stage in the writing process. We confidentially work with writers on a variety of writing issues from brainstorming and pre-writing, to researching and evaluating sources.

We serve two types of writers: walk-ins and scheduled writers. You may drop in for a single visit, make an appointment before you come, or even establish regular appointments.

This year the Writing Center has moved to a bigger and better space in the LRC of the library. And yes, we still have candy. Come by and see us soon. We look forward to working with you!

Visit the Writing Center in the LRC, Leland Speed Library.

MONDAY-THURSDAY: 9 AM — 8 PM

FRIDAY: 9 AM — 3 PM

Call 601-925-7289

E-mail writingcenter@mc.edu

Drop by the Writing Center!