

University Writing Program Update • Fall 2009

Introduction

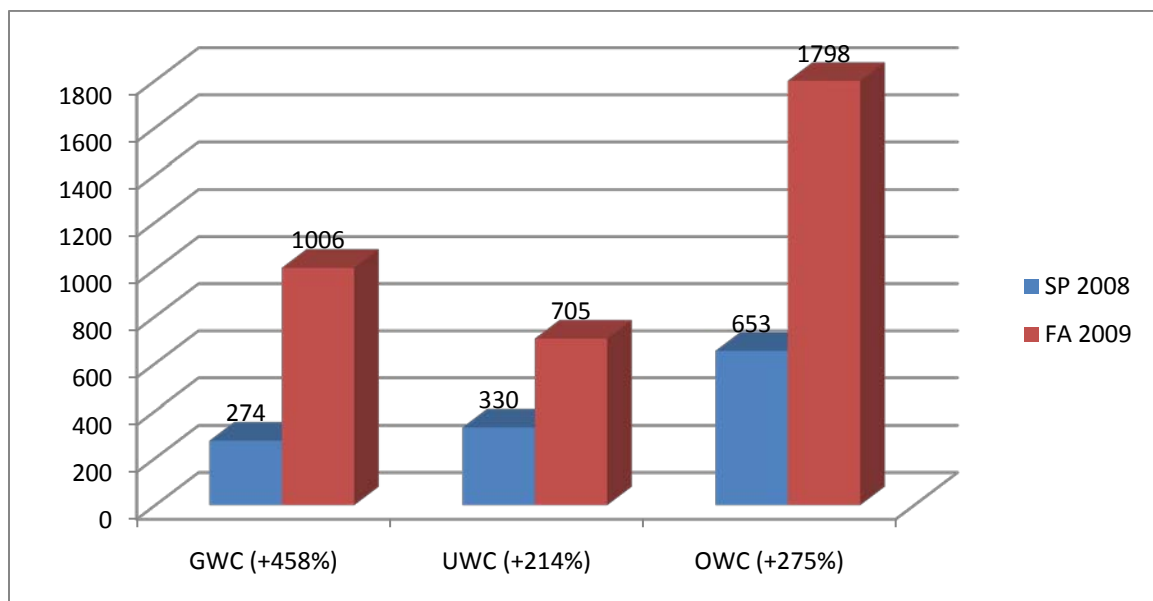
The University Writing Program (UWP) is the umbrella organization created as part of the University's QEP during the last accreditation cycle. The UWP is responsible for administering the University's writing centers, spearheading writing-related assessments University-wide, developing and delivering GRST 500 (Introduction to Graduate Writing), and assisting faculty with writing-related issues in the classroom and beyond. This report summarizes progress in relation to those activities.

Writing Centers

The University's three writing centers provide writing tutoring to LU students, staff, and faculty both residentially and online. By SP 2010, all students (undergraduate and graduate, residential and online) will have full access to the UWP's resources.

a. Usage

The writing centers are used at increasingly high levels, with 3,509 appointments occurring during FA 09. Current usage levels now exceed the national average, and more growth is expected in the future. The increase in the number of appointments from SP 09 to FA 09 is evident in the following table:



b. Satisfaction

Students who come to the writing center complete satisfaction surveys after their appointments. Overall satisfaction ratings are high. With 1 being "very dissatisfied" and 5 being "very satisfied," students reported the following levels of satisfaction:

GWC – Residential	UWC – Residential	Online Writing Center
4.96	4.77	4.67

Scores for the UWC and OWC are slightly lower, due probably to the fact that so many of their students are required to make appointments by their instructors, rather than self-referring as GWC students do.

Writing Assessments

The UWP is involved in the administration of three main writing assessments. The first, GRAT 500, evaluates the preparedness of incoming graduate students for academic writing and is administered entirely under the auspices of the UWP. The UWP also assists the Office of Institutional Effectiveness with the Core Competency writing evaluation, which provides data about students' writing skills university-wide. Finally, each semester the UWP completes an evaluation of the writing skills demonstrated in dissertations placed on the Digital Commons by graduating LU students.

a. GRAT 500 – Graduate Writing Assessment

In FA 09, 6,855 incoming graduate students completed this exam, a 35% participation rate. 51% attained a passing score. Students who did not attain a passing score were advised either to take GRST 500, a developmental writing course, or to seek further help in the writing center.

b. Core Competency Assessment

In SP 09, sample papers were gathered from graduate courses in each program and were scored by a cadre of faculty using the Liberty University Writing Rubric. Students attained an average score of 3.08/4.00 overall, which places them above the competency level.

c. Dissertation Evaluation

A random sampling of graduating students' dissertations is gathered each semester, and the scores of students who used the UWP's services consistently are compared to those of students who did not contact the UWP. Students who used the UWP's services scored higher in all areas (content, structure, readability, and documentation). The differences in content and structure were not significant, but a wide margin of difference was noted in relation to readability and documentation.

GRST 500 – Introduction to Graduate Writing

In FA 09, 28 sections of GRST 500, Introduction to Graduate Writing, were offered to students who scored poorly on the University's writing assessment, who were admitted on probation, or who chose to self-enroll in this writing refresher course.

a. Pass/Fail Rate

The course is non-credit and is graded pass/fail, with students who complete all requirements attaining a "pass" grade. 68% of students passed the class.

b. Improvement at Midterm

A sampling of students enrolled in the course is given a midterm that tracks improvement from the initial writing assessment, especially in the areas of grammar and documentation. Students taking the midterm in FA 09 showed a significant improvement.

c. Improvement in Writing

All students enrolled in GRST 500 complete a two-draft writing project. Both drafts are evaluated using the Liberty University Writing Rubric. In all areas (Content, Structure, Readability, and Documentation), students demonstrated significant improvement as a result of the course.

Faculty Projects

UWP personnel have completed a number of faculty-driven projects in FA 09, including all of the following:

- Producing and updating writing aids (PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, etc.)
- Offering in-class presentations on topics such as APA formatting or thesis statements
- Consulting on academic integrity-related issues (plagiarism)
- Assisting faculty with their own writing, including editing articles and book manuscripts for publication
- Offering training in rubrics, preventing plagiarism, and other writing-related topics
- Assisting faculty who are completing the dissertation process with their writing-related needs.

Future Plans

The UWP has thus far successfully accomplished its mission, and recent improvements have all proven effective. Current plans involve expanding the OWC to undergraduate students. Beyond this, changes, including adding personnel or reallocating resources, will be made on an as-needed basis.