While I was walking the hallways of Kellenberg last semester, I ran into someone who asked me, “What is going on in the Writing Center?” She had heard that no one could get an appointment to see a consultant. It is true that more students are finding their way to the Writing Center these days. The word is out. Not only are students competing for available appointments, but more faculty members have requested class presentations. Consultants presented to thirty classes in the fall, representing nine disciplines. We also conducted nine free workshops on a variety of topics, which is something we do every semester. Over six hundred students learned about the Center’s services through these class presentations and workshops, and, consequently, many registered for appointments.

Unfortunately, the demand for appointments has led to longer wait-list periods, so we advise students to register early; our online system allows students to make appointments up to a month in advance. Even so, there are only so many available consultants and hours. While the online system makes it easier for students to access the calendar to secure appointments, or to add their names to the waitlist, it also serves as a visual reminder, at times, of how few slots are available, if any—particularly during mid-terms and finals.

There are other things going on in the Center, besides the constant jostle for appointments. Even during the flinty days of winter, we are thinking ahead to summer.

We offered our first pre-college summer writing program in July 2014, and we are planning for an extended eight-day program this summer. The students who participated in the program all commented on how much they enjoyed the community atmosphere of the workshops and the opportunity to interact with each other in small groups and receive feedback from their writing instructors. Several of these students are now attending Molloy, and they frequently stop by the Center to say hello, or they send their friends to us, papers in hand. These friends tell their friends about our services. And so it goes.

Even when it appears to be quiet in the Center, things are happening. Consultants are working on assessment and research projects, creating handouts, planning workshops, and addressing specific Center concerns before the next burst of students finds their way through the door, with more questions about what, exactly, is going on down here in the garden level of Casey.
I have been teaching at Molloy College for five years. One of my primary concerns about our students during this time has been their under-developed writing skills. It seems that with increasing frequency, students are graduating from high school without the basic skills that characterize great writing. It is not the students’ fault that they are under-prepared for college level writing. However, we, as professors, often do not have the time to teach them the fundamentals of good writing that are so important for their academic and professional success. What are we to do?

Fortunately, Molloy is blessed with an outstanding writing center where consultants go out of their way to meet the needs of our students. I am always impressed by the quality of the written work submitted by students who use the Writing Center. The Center has truly been transformational for countless social work majors who have initially struggled to meet academic demands.

So here are my top eight (it was going to be five, but I kept adding...) reasons why you should encourage your students to use the Writing Center.

8. **Your students’ grades will improve.** Notice I put this reason last. While it might be first on the list of the students, and research has demonstrated that students who use writing centers improve their grades, we as professors are more concerned with the long-term development of student writing. So I’ll put it on the list— but there are even better reasons... read on.

7. **The Center has convenient hours to fit students’ busy schedules.** The Center has evening and weekend hours. Seriously, these people work all the time! They are there from 9:00 to 8:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Fridays, and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (for grad students) on Saturdays during fall and spring semesters. Students are able to make appointments up to a month in advance.

6. **You can require students to attend.** Yes, there is a form for that. If you have a student who you feel needs to be using the Writing Center, you can provide a referral for the student to bring to the Center; a consultant will send an email confirmation following the student’s session. This way you know the student is getting the help that is needed, and he or she won’t forget to make an appointment.

5. **Your students will be happier.** The members of the Writing Center staff are a group of caring professionals, who always work to support the students. They understand that writing can be an anxiety producing endeavor for many (professors included!) and they work to build the students’ confidence.

4. **Your students won’t procrastinate.** One of the main reasons students procrastinate is because they actually don’t know how to begin the assignment. Students don’t necessarily need to come to the Center with a completed draft. Consultants can help students just “get started” on a paper. They can help students brainstorm ideas, and understand their assignment better. (In addition— if students need to make an appointment before the assignment is due, they will have to start writing before...
A Student’s Story

Brianne first found her way to the Molloy Writing Center because she needed a job. She was new to the campus. Back then, as an incoming freshman, she was still finding her way around. She didn’t “know anything,” she tells me, other than she needed a way to supplement her income. When she first walked into the Writing Center, she was immediately struck by the “happy and calm atmosphere,” she says. I suggest that had she visited later in the semester, she might have encountered a less serene scenario. She giggles because she knows just how busy the Center can become. Now she is one of our seasoned assistants, serving as a receptionist and general aide to our many visitors. With her quiet, friendly demeanor, Brianne has become adept at fielding phone calls and questions from the many student writers, harried and otherwise, who come looking for appointments.

In a blue-striped sweater, jeans, and black ankle boots, Brianne looks relaxed, swinging one foot toward the floor from the chair opposite me. When the phone rings, she is ready to answer. She sits fluttering her red-nailed hands as she speaks—her large green eyes widening in contemplation as she considers each question. She likes the new online system, she says. Students can register for their own appointments, and the phones do not ring incessantly. She spends more time telling students about the Center, showing them how to register and explaining how the new system works. During breaks, Brianne can be found turning the pages of a fat text book. She tells me that when she was in kindergarten and writing something for the class time capsule, she wrote that she wanted to be a nurse when she grew up. Now she is a nursing major, learning about pathophysiology and etiology, memorizing terms, and contemplating the implications of being a caregiver. Brianne has a way of ending sentences with a small laugh, which she does now when she tells me about the time capsule. Funny how things work out, I observe,
thinking that she will be a good nurse, imagining her spreading a quiet blanket of calmness, a wink of good humor, in the midst of doubt and turbulence.

Brianne not only works at the front desk, she has also had appointments in the Writing Center. She has come to know the value of having another pair of eyes look over her work, a perspective other than her own. She notes that reading her work aloud to the consultant helped her to recognize some of her own errors. She says that she found the consultants “kind and helpful.” “Well, what else are you going to say to your boss?” I ask, and she shakes her head, laughing, long hair sweeping straight across her small face.

When I ask Brianne what advice she would give others who are considering coming to the Writing Center for help, she says she would tell them to schedule their appointments in advance—“because if you come the day of—blah.” In other words, you may be out of luck. As Brianne observes, “There are only five consultants for so many students!” She has witnessed the sometimes frantic last-minute requests of writers who call in or drop by in the hopes of snagging a no-show or cancelled appointment. She has had to juggle the disappointment and frustration of those who have rushed in, paper in hand, requesting “a quick ten-minute” review. She has explained over and over that consultants are not editors—that the work we do here in the Center involves helping students to help themselves. She has distributed handouts, helped students to navigate the online system, and assisted with computer format questions. She does so with a low-key charm in a bustling room of activity. “I like so many things about working in the Writing Center,” she says. We like that she found her way here back when she didn’t know anything.

Pamela Kenley-Meschino
Writing Center Coordinator

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**Writing Center Hours**

Monday to Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday (graduate students) 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Summer Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(Schedule may change depending on consultant availability)

Coordinator
Pamela Kenley-Meschino, M.A.

Consultants:
Stephen Albanese, M.F.A.
Valerie Griggs, M.F.A.
Mary Ann Howell, M.A.
Pam Smith, M.S.

Office Assistant
Denise Hughes, M.S.

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**We are on the Web!**

For information regarding faculty referral forms, format handouts, and general policy guidelines, visit the Writing Center website:

http://www.molloy.edu/offices-and-services/writing-center

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**Students should register for appointments early to avoid disappointment**