The question “Where is the Writing Center?” is often followed by “What do they do in the Writing Center?” The expectations of students, faculty and administrators don’t usually line up neatly. For example, students often view the Center as a laundry service, where they can drop off a paper and have a consultant clean it up. (Incidentally, this is known as a “low level” concern in writing instruction pedagogy). Faculty may look to consultants to transform disorganized ideas and weak syntax into well organized and flawlessly expressed insights. (A “high level” concern). Administrators want to know if the Writing Center is a financial asset.

Which perspective is most accurate about who we writing consultants are and how we perceive our work here in the lower level of Casey? None of the above. In 2013–2014, we are committed to clarifying our vision so that everyone in the Molloy community can benefit from our contribution towards academic excellence.

The research regarding assessing writing centers opens windows onto the multifaceted purposes of university writing centers. The first step is for a writing center to get a handle on its operational goals: how it works, and who uses it. In 2012–2013, students scheduled over 3,600 appointments with the Molloy Writing Center. When students come to the Center, they fill out a Registration Form. The Registration Form is a core piece of data collection and the data for 2012–2013 show that of the 4,696 degree-seeking students* (graduate and undergraduate) enrolled at Molloy in 2012–2013:

- 944 registered at the Writing Center (21.23% of the total Molloy population)
- 26.237 % were ESL students
- 9.32% were Freshmen
- 35.08% were 1st Timers
- 39.93% were Referred by faculty
- 43% were Transfers
- 48.99% were Non-traditional (not necessarily recent high school graduates)

*Courtesy of Michael Torres and Institutional Research

Finally, we know that graduate nursing students are the most frequent users of the Writing Center. Of the 576 undergraduate registrants 382, or 66.31%, were Nursing majors. Of the 326 graduate registrants 227, or 69.63 %, were Nursing majors.

After looking at who comes to the Writing Center, we also want to know why they come, so we developed a system for tracking the number and kinds of assignments brought in. In 2012–2013, consultants reviewed over 2,300 assignments. Of those, 293 assignments were brought by students enrolled in Writing Intensive courses across area disciplines. Other departments were represented this way:

- fewer than 50 assignments: CORE, EDU, MUS, PSY, SWK, ENG
- greater than 50 assignments: ART, AH, BIO, BUS COM, CRJ, HIST, FST, PE, SLP, THEO

When we look at who comes to us and why, the Writing Center staff can make choices about resources, professional growth, staffing and work space to create the optimum learning environment.
What do consultants expect to happen at the Writing Center? We value process over product. Tutoring sessions are contextual and complex because writing skills differ for each student; learning goals vary from assignment to assignment. We want to mentor students in their long-term development as writers by increasing confidence and self-sufficiency. Research supports that relationships and conversation are essential in fostering critical thinking skills and language development. The research is there: a correlation can be demonstrated between students who use writing centers and improved academic performance.

Do you see yourself in the Writing Center mirror? Are you a student who has used the Writing Center and benefitted? Are you a student or faculty member who hasn’t yet given us a close look? Are you looking to develop clear expression? If so, come to the Writing Center, where we value reflection and collaborative effort.

Valerie Griggs
Writing Center Consultant

...a correlation can be demonstrated between students who use writing centers and improved academic performance.

A Professor’s Perspective

As I began my undergraduate studies at Molloy in 2003, I was overwhelmed by the pressure and responsibilities of a college student. After a short time I had adjusted well to my schedule and course load, but found myself extremely disappointed when assignments were returned to me and I had lost credit for not following APA (American Psychology Association) format properly.

Fortunately for me, through the assistance of the staff in the Molloy College Writing Center, I became a better writer, and I no longer lost credit for improperly using APA format in either my undergraduate (Nursing) or graduate (Nursing Education) coursework at Molloy. Not only had the consultants provided me assistance with understanding the nuances of APA format, but they had also helped me with my organization and grammar. After revising a paper several times, it becomes increasingly challenging to identify grammatical errors. I found it very reassuring to have another set of eyes reviewing my papers to ensure I did not have grammatical errors, improper APA format, and, lastly, that I met the assignment requirements.

Today, as an adjunct faculty member here at Molloy in the Department of Nursing, I notice puzzled expressions on the faces of my students when I indicate their assignments need to follow APA format. To their benefit, I was once in their shoes and I am happy to share my story and experience with the Writing Center. To assist my students this semester, I invited the staff of the Molloy College Writing Center into my classroom to introduce themselves and the services that they provide. I am proud to say that more than half of my students have reported utilizing the services provided by the Writing Center and that they are able to apply what they have learned. Many are no longer losing credit for grammatical errors or improper APA format, and their papers are clearer and better organized. Ten years later, it is clear to me that the Molloy College Writing Center is still meeting the needs of its students!

Professor Katelyn Shirlow
Division of Nursing

I found it very reassuring having another set of eyes reviewing my papers.

“Careful citation shows your reader that you’ve done your homework. . .
It amounts to laying your intellectual cards on the table.”

-Jack Lynch
Matt sauntered into the Writing Center with a flat box of Dunkin’ Donuts in one hand and a box of coffee in the other. He put his offerings on the table, opening a lid to reveal a collage of rainbow-colored, chocolate covered, sugar-sprinkled donuts lying in neat rows like an edible art project. Students in the Center gathered around to admire the garish display, discussing the pros and cons of eating the donuts. The pumpkin was deemed to be the most appealing, but the chocolate proved the most popular.

When I first met Matt Leeb, an affable young man with a wide, dimpled smile, he was in his final semester here at Molloy. He told me that he was a “terrible” writer, which wasn’t true, and that he was having trouble with the papers he was required to write for one of his classes. He used the phrase “It’s kicking my butt…” on more than one occasion when referring to this class, as he leaned into the screen of his laptop waiting for further inspiration from above and suggestions from me. Our weekly meetings became an enjoyable collaboration of discussion and critique as Matt read his papers aloud, stopping occasionally to ask what I thought, revising ideas and sentences in the same breezy humor, hitting the delete key without remorse.

Matt first learned about the Molloy Writing Center at Freshman Orientation. Various professors also mentioned the Center in some of Matt’s classes, but it took him a while to find his way to the lower level of Casey. “It’s kind of stupid not to come here,” he said, when I asked him about his initial experiences with the Center. He told me that he first came without a paper; he just wanted to brainstorm and work on an outline for an upcoming assignment. He soon returned with a draft. “I realized that I had to actually do the work if I wanted to make the most of the sessions,” he said. Matt scheduled an appointment every week while he was taking a writing intensive class. He said he found it advantageous to work with the same consultant because “she gets to know your voice and whether your writing sounds like you.”

Clearly, Matt was concerned with developing his writing skills, beyond just getting a good grade. He often asked for explanations about grammar and punctuation. The sessions were not just about fixing the paper and recognizing errors; they were about making meaning of the assignment, juggling with word choices, and revising ideas. During one of our first sessions, he told me that he wanted to become a better writer. At first, it was apparent that he thought this meant he had to adopt a certain voice on the page; he had to sound academic. Later, as he exchanged lofty-sounding words for straightforward ones, he admitted, “Complex isn’t always better.” He learned the importance of clarity.

When asked Matt what advice he would give a new student at the College with regard to the Writing Center, he replied without hesitation, “Go!” He smiled broadly and shook his head as if for emphasis. “If you have a writing assignment, there’s no reason not to go,” he said, as he eyed the donuts on the table in front of us. Then he leaned back in his chair and laughed. “Make an appointment now,” he said. I asked him if he was looking for a job as a writing center promoter, and he laughed again.

When Matt told me that he had been named Valedictorian for the graduating class of 2013, he was, as usual, self-deprecating. “You’ll have to help me with the speech,” he said. “I have no idea what I’m going to say.” He didn’t need my help, though. When he stood in front of a crowd of his peers and professors to give his speech, he was articulate and funny. Just as he’d learned in his writing that there was no need to adopt an inflated voice or tone to express himself, his words that day demonstrated that he had learned the importance of just being the best version of himself that he could be. He smiled out at the crowd before him, and we all smiled back.

Pamela Kenley-Meschino
Writing Center Coordinator

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Pamela Kenley-Meschino
Writing Center Coordinator

“The beautiful part of writing is that you don’t have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon. You can always do it better, find the exact word, the apt phrase, the leaping smile.”

-Robert Corimer
In response to our call for submissions for the National Day of Writing celebration in October, we congratulate Catherine Brown! The following poem was chosen for inclusion in this semester's newsletter.

**Writing 2Connect**

I write because I am here and you are there.  
I write because when I am awake you are asleep.  
If you are not by my side to share the moment, I can capture  
my excitement  
my sorrow  
or the questions that fill my thoughts  
When I put them in writing.  
When I write, I share myself with you.  
Write back to me.

Catherine Brown  
Librarian

*Catherine has been an adjunct librarian at Molloy for about seven years and is a full-time librarian at Malverne High School.*

~Contact us about upcoming workshops in the spring~

**Advice from the Center**— To avoid disappointment, schedule your sessions in advance, and bring two copies of your draft and/or your assignment.

**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.

We are on the Web!  
For information regarding faculty referral forms, format handouts, and general policy guidelines, visit the Writing Center website:  
http://www.buzzfeed.com  
http://www.molloy.edu/offices-and-services/writing-center