

The Richard Wright Center

Writing | Rhetoric | Research

Annual Report 2014-2015¹

I. Summary of the RWC Services and Use

A. Teaching and Learning

In AY 2014-2015, the Richard Wright Center (RWC) engaged in the following teaching and learning activities:

<u>One-to-one conversations</u>	<u>1542</u>
By appointment	662
Walk-in	880

Activities (see Appendix A for breakdown of activities and number of users per activity)

Workshops	26
Class presentations	16
Thesis and Dissertation Roundtables	9
Graduate Seminars ²	4
Faculty conversations	6
Tutor Training Sessions	10

B. Engagement

1. Provided a community service site for 9 undergraduate peer tutors.
2. Partnered with Honors College in recruiting tutors: 5 recruited
3. Consulted the Office of Testing and Assessment regarding writing assessment and School of Lifelong Learning regarding professional development opportunities
4. RWC Blog: 6 posts
5. Collaborated with ICN Summer Institute and Summer Bridge Program in offering individual and group writing consultations

On-campus Demonstrations

- Honors College Orientation, Fall 2014
- Wingfield High School - Presentation on diversity in college and in the writing center, Spring 2015: 30 students
- CIA Fair - Presentation on community service in the RWC, Spring 2015: 6 visitors
- Liberal Arts Festival, Spring 2015
- JSU Information Fair - Display, Spring 2015

C. Research

Three presentations given by the RWC staff at the following conferences:

1. Transitioning to College Writing 2014

¹ See Appendix C for Goals 2013-2014 and brief summary of Outcomes.

² Co-hosted with CLA faculty and Graduate School

2. Amur State University, Russia, 7th International Conference on Current in Issues in Communication between Cultures 2014
3. Mississippi Writing Center Association 2015

Proposal Accepted

International Writing Center Association 2016 Annual Convention

Proposal Submitted

Conference on College Composition and Communication 2016 Annual Convention

Publication

Daoying Liu, graduate tutor in the RWC and a newly minted Ph.D. published has his article “Writing in ESP Courses: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Student Needs” accepted in the *Journal of Liaoning Technology University* (a highly regarded journal in China)

Grant Proposal Submitted

Paul P. Fidler Research Grant at The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Stipend of \$5,000.

Works in progress include

1. Article on RAD Research in the Writing Center on our effectiveness
2. IRB-approved research on first-year composition in US and China

D. Staff

Director: Kathi R. Griffin, Ph.D., full-time administrative position with affiliation to the English Department, that includes teaching (1 course/semester)

Coordinator: Tatiana A. Glushko, Ph.D., administrative position

Two graduate assistants (**funded by the College of Liberal Arts**)

- Each completed 12 hours of training
- work 20 hours a week

Five undergraduate peer tutors (**Volunteers**)

- recruited from the Honors College
- completed the minimum 12-hour training program
- receive community service hours for training and tutoring

Two faculty volunteers

English and Psychology professors, 1 hour per week each

Undergraduate support staff (funded by Federal Work-study Program)

Two student workers, up to 15 hours per week each

II. Discussion of Teaching and Learning, Engagement, and Research Initiatives and Accomplishments, 2014–2015

A. Teaching and Learning

Tutor Training

We continue our collaboration with the Honors College, which started in August 2013, to recruit and train peer tutors.

Fall 2014	8 training sessions	4 students completed training
Spring 2015	2 training sessions	postponed until Fall 2015 due to low attendance

Problems: Retention of trained tutors remains a problem. Out of 9 students who volunteered this year, only 5 may be returning. Some students graduate. Others leave because they have jobs or other paid professional development opportunities (e.g., internships).

Solutions: Two undergraduate course proposals were submitted in Spring 2015: Tutor Training (1 hour) and Issues in Tutoring Writing (1 hour) (Course ID TBD). These two courses will address the problems of recruitment and retention by

- providing a continuous tutor training program
- providing the opportunity for more students to become peer tutors
- improving tutor training
- increasing professional development opportunities for peer tutors
- creating a community of trained peer tutors.

Tutoring Sessions

In this reporting period, the RWC conducted **1542 one-to-one conversations** about writing, speaking, and research:

One-to-one, face-to-face conversations with students is the method supported by the theory of rhetoric and composition and used by all effective writers and communicators and by 101 top writing centers in the nation (Isaacs & Knight, 2014).

Problems: The library flooded and closed, so we had significantly less traffic; news about the RWC being open was confusing at best; and we no longer had the means to communicate via the *Blast* (See Appendix C, Goal 1, p. 13).

Solutions: We sent emails with fliers attached; we continued to lobby *JSU Today*; we tweeted through our own account and through the Honors College; we set up a ClassPager.com account; we developed bookmarks to hand out, and more.

The RWC conducted **1** online appointment.

- We offered online tutorials through WOnline, a system that allows us to schedule appointments, register walk-ins, collect data, and conduct online tutoring.
- On several occasions, when we encouraged students to schedule online appointments, students replied that they preferred to meet face-to-face. However, with an increase in hybrid and online course, we expect the demand to grow.

Problem: Providing online service would require additional training and experienced tutors.

Considering that most of our tutors are novice and volunteers, only Dr. Glushko was offering online appointments.

Solution: We have postponed offering online tutoring until we can acquire the training,³ increase the number of tutors and pay them, and require staff meetings.

Workshops, Roundtables, and Seminars

- 56 workshops were offered; only 26 were attended by students. Topics included
 - UEPE Preparation
 - GECE Preparation
 - Thesis Statements that Work
 - Editing: Explanations & Strategies
 - Writing Under Pressure: Exams are coming! Exams are coming!
 - Documentation: Building Your Credibility as a Scholar
 - Presenting Your Ideas Using Visual Aids
 - Making Your Paper or Speech Flow
 - “My Teacher Told Me I Need to Proofread My Paper”
 - Speaking: Say What?
- 9 roundtables were offered; 7 were attended. Topics included
 - Master’s Thesis & Dissertation Overview
 - Writing up your Proposal
 - The Literature Review
 - Writing up the Results of Your Research
 - What Is a Discussion Chapter?
 - Presenting Research Orally and Visually
- 16 class presentations were conducted. Topics included
 - Introduction to the RWC
 - Documentation of Sources
 - Resume and Cover Letters
 - Scholarly Writing
- 4 seminars for graduate students were conducted in collaboration with Dr. Gardner (Graduate Studies), Dr. Potter, and Dr. Bruce:
 - Thriving in Graduate School: Some Modest Advice on Being Successful
 - Mixed Methods Workshop
 - Research, Ethics, and Scholarly Inquiry
 - Early Career Publishing: From Chapters to Articles and/or Book Manuscript

Problems: We encountered the problem of low attendance for all workshops and seminars. In the past we advertised our workshops in *JSU Today*, which resulted in significantly higher attendance. This year, however, *JSU Today* changed its focus from an internal to an external audience, so we tried other means of communication with our stakeholders:

- Posting information about workshops on the RWC website and Twitter page.

³ We have identified experienced trainers locally and received an estimate of \$900.

- Using **texting** through ClassPager.com, a method that seems more convenient for a younger generation of students who prefer texting to e-mail.
- Sending information directly to other departments (CLA faculty, Graduate School, Office of Testing and Assessment).

These methods, however, have not proven effective.

Solution: For 2015-2016, we plan to conduct most undergraduate and graduate workshops by request. We will continue to offer scheduled roundtables and seminars for graduate students.

Support for Faculty

- 6 faculty conversations on CLA Core Review and Revision
- Collected and posted on the RWC website information about curriculum review
- Developed CLA Curriculum Review Forms
- Provided feedback to departments regarding SLO statements

Teaching and Learning Resources

- Instructional resources and handouts addressing writing skills and issues (available upon request)
- Reference library of books, journals and reference materials for student and faculty use
- Technology for writing and tutorials: 8 computer stations, 1 black and white copier machine, 1 Mondo-pad for collaborative work on projects and presentations available for general student use throughout the day
- Each computer has a link to the Bedford St. Martin's Exercise Central, a resource for grammar and writing tutorials, and information about APA and MLA documentation styles, and to SPSS.

Assessment

- Tutoring sessions: We are developing a new form of assessment of our effectiveness, one that would be aligned with the goal of the writing center—to improve the writer rather than the document being produced. Student satisfaction survey traditionally conducted in writing centers to measure effectiveness cannot tell us whether we are achieving our goal. Thus we have initiated a research project to try to determine our level of effectiveness (See "Works in progress," p. 2).

The form of assessment that we are developing involves collecting and analyzing students' language about their writing on post-tutorial reflection forms. This information will allow us to see indications of improvements in the writer, such as increased awareness of the writing process, understanding of the rhetorical situation increases, and reduced resistance to seeking feedback.

- Tutor training: We used a survey to evaluate tutor training (See Appendix B). These responses demonstrate the serious need for formalized training and staff meetings, so we can appropriately address issues related to tutoring.

Next year we plan to distribute a survey to RWC alumni. This will allow evaluating the impact of the writing center on students' professional development.

- Workshops: We used a survey to evaluate workshops. All responses were positive. See results in Appendix B.

B. Engagement

The RWC staff initiated a blog that addresses issues of teaching and learning writing.

By invitation from the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, an international publication, we submitted an article to their new blog: "A Writing Center to Envy":

<http://www.wlnjournal.org/blog/2015/04/a-writing-center-to-envy/>

This year we engaged mostly with campus constituents (see Summary, p. 1 of report), but we have planned outreach activities for the coming year. This, however, will require administrative support (see Planning for AY 2015-2016, p. 8)

C. Research

Currently we are conducting two research projects: (1) on writing center effectiveness and (2) on audience awareness in first-year composition. Both projects are collaborative and involve Daoying Liu, RWC graduate assistant in 2013-2015, now alumnus, who teaches academic writing at Nantong University, China.

We also provided opportunities for two RWC graduate assistants and a former graduate assistant now teaching in the English Department to attend MSWCA 2015 conference.

Conference Presentations

Griffin, Kathi, Daoying Liu, and Tatiana Glushko. "Searching for Evidence of Our Effectiveness: A Discourse Analysis of Post-Tutorial Writer's Language." Mississippi Writing Center Association. Oxford, MS. January 2015

Glushko, Tatiana. "Developing Intercultural Competence by Exploring Academic Writing." Amur State University, Russia, 7th International Conference on Current in Issues in Communication between Cultures 2014. Blagoveshchensk, Russia. October 2014. Via Skype

Conference Proposal Submitted

Griffin, Kathi, and Tatiana Glushko. "Negotiating 'those moments' with faculty." Conference on College Composition and Communication 2016. Panel discussion on civil discourse in writing classes and writing centers. In collaboration with Molly Parsons, University of Michigan, and Douglas S. Kern, University of Maryland in College Park

Conference Proposal Accepted

Griffin, Kathi, Daoying Liu, and Tatiana Glushko. "Developing a RAD Methodology: A Discourse Analysis of Post-tutorial Writers' Language." International Writing Center Association 2016 Conference. Pittsburg, PA. October 2015.

Publication

Liu, Daoying. "Writing in ESP Courses: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Student Needs." *Journal of Liaoning Technology University*.

Grant Proposal Submitted

Paul P. Fidler Research Grant at The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Stipend of \$5,000.

III. Planning for AY 2015–2016

Our plans for AY 2015–2016 are aligned with our vision and strategic plan for AY 2014–2017.

A. Teaching and Learning

1. Offer 1-credit course, Tutor Training, to increase the number of trained peer tutors beginning Spring 2016 - subject to approval
2. Offer 1-credit course, which can be repeated, Issues in Tutoring Writing beginning Spring 2016 to improve professional development for tutors - subject to approval
3. Look into starting a speaking and writing group for ESL students
4. Staff to complete training course in online tutoring - subject to funding
5. Update data collection and assessment forms

B. Engagement

1. Survey students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community to understand the perception of the RWC (Fall 2015)
2. Establish an advisory board that would include stakeholders, i.e., faculty, students, members of the community, and JSU and RWC alumni (Spring 2016)
3. Request a letter of intent; complete and submit application to the National Writing Project (NWP) to extend RWC services to pre-service teachers, faculty, and to extend our influence to local teachers (Fall 2015)
4. Plan a summer writing retreat for Jackson Public School K-12 educators (Spring 2016)

C. Research

1. Submit research article for publication (see "Works in progress," p. 2)
2. Present at IWCA 2015
3. Submit proposal to MSWCA 2016
4. Submit application for IRB approval for research on writing centers and retention
5. Present current research at Center for University Scholars Brown Bag Series

D. Administration

Staff

1. Revise RWC Coordinator job description
2. Develop job description for Administrative Assistant
3. Submit request for approval and funds for Administrative Assistant, additional graduate tutors, and peer tutors who complete the training course

Communication

Explore additional options for communicating with students, staff and faculty about the RWC (e.g., campaign signs, blog comments, podcasts)

Technology

Acquire camera and tripod for students to practice speeches and presentations

Appendix A

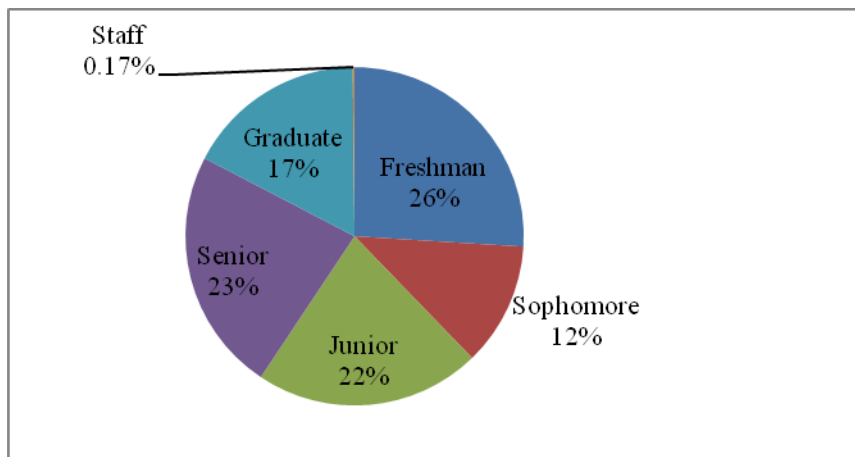
Uses of the RWC by Students and Faculty in AY 2014-2015

Types of Use	Number of Users/Times Used
Appointments	662
Walk-ins	880
Tutor Training Sessions	5
Workshops	113
Class Presentations	192
Roundtables	23
Graduate Seminars	approx. 30
Faculty Conversations	33
Total	1,938

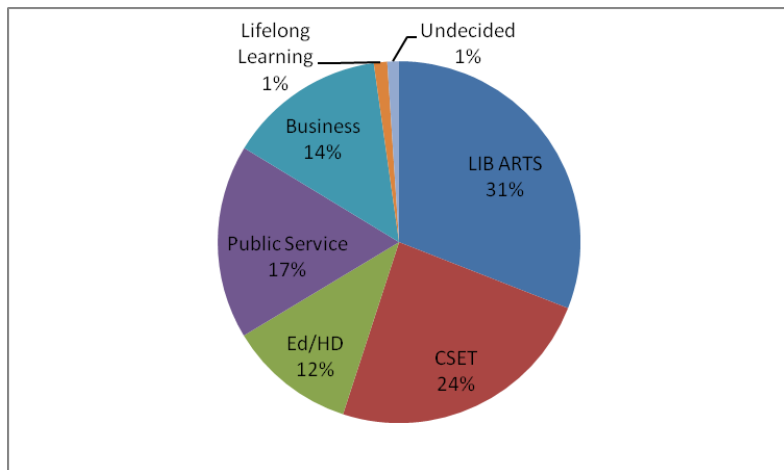
WOnline Registration: 825 new clients

The following information is based on appointment registration data.

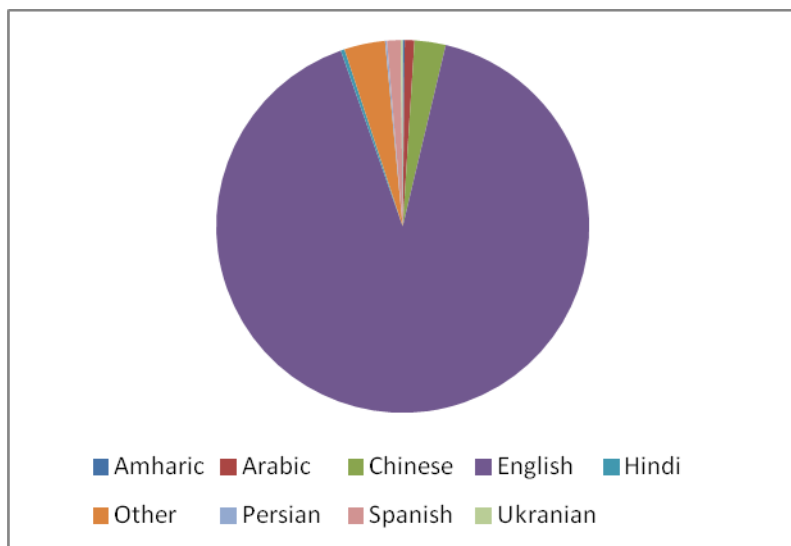
Users by Classification



Users by College



Users by First or Home Language



Appendix B

Tutor Training Evaluation

Responses	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel confident that the training prepared me well for peer tutoring.	17%	0%	0%	33%	
2. Being a peer tutor has increased my awareness of my writing process.	17%	0%	0%	33%	50%
3. I don't need to understand the theory of the writing center work to be a good peer tutor.	17%	50%	33%	0%	0%

4. One issue that we've discussed in our training and that I wish we'd spent more time on was...

Text Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources available to students that will help their writing process i.e. Purdue Owl, Grammarly.com, etc. How to correct students the role of a tutor suggesting how to improve the paper without writing it for the student.

5. One issue that has surfaced since I started tutoring and that I'd like to discuss is...

Text Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> optimum time needed per tutoring session. I haven't had any issues yet. audience awareness how to help multiple clients when you are the only tutor available.

Evaluation of Workshops, Roundtables, and Class Presentations

	Strongly Disagree		Neither		Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Workshop well organized	0	0	0	16%	84%	
2. Presenter knowledgeable	0	0	0	1%	99%	
3. Discussion relevant	0	0	0	3%	97%	
4. My understanding of the topic improved	0	0	1%	13%	86%	

5. What two things did you find most useful?

Text Responses:

"The presenter tailored [the workshop] to me."

"Dr. Griffin gave me information to assist in the completion of my writing assignment."

"Dr. Griffin's instruction on finding your strategy"

"Dr. Griffin instruction on focusing on your reader"

"How to manage resources"

"Information for better proofreading of my paper"

"The practice sentences were helpful. Proofreading was helpful as well because I learn to read sentence by sentence."

“Organizing thoughts”
“Outline rough draft”
“Strategies for professional presentation”
“Discussion of good/bad presentations”
“How to display confidence”
“Helping me understand how to interact with my audience”
“Providing guidelines to help with stage fright”
“The presenter kept you involved.”
“Knowing the different ways to cite for MLA and APA”

Comments:

“This workshop will give you a lot of pointers when reading a paper. Excellent.”
“The timing was great and well spent with the instructors. The insight was very helpful.”

Appendix C

Goals for 2013-2014 and Outcomes

Goal #1: Exceed our numbers of students using RWC, which means increasing our availability, our advertising, our interaction with faculty. With no additional staff, we will be open the same hours, provide the same number of workshops, will increase the number of roundtables by one, but we hope through outreach to faculty, through increasing use of social media and updating webpage and *Blast* weekly, and through students sharing via word of mouth will help more students find us as they engage in intellectual activities.

Outcome: We increased our graduate roundtables from 3 to 9, and in collaboration with Drs. Bruce and Potter, we participated in 4 more. However, just before the Fall 2014 semester began, the library flooded and remained closed for the first 3-4 weeks. The RWC was open, but the computer lab remained closed well into the spring semester, which slowed traffic considerably. Yet even after several parts of the library re-opened, *JSU Today* continued to inform readers that the library was closed. In addition, we were informed after submitting information about workshops and roundtables that *JSU Today* had changed its audience from internal to external, so we no longer had access to the *Blast*, which limited our ability to communicate information to faculty and students. Thus our overall numbers for the year dipped from 2,230 to 1,938.

Goal #2: Invite experts to campus to help us meet student and faculty needs as they relate to teaching and learning; to raise awareness of the need for feedback and reflection by all professionals engaged in intellectual pursuits.

Outcome: We invited Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young, but his flight was cancelled. We have rescheduled for Fall 2015. We also invited Dr. Wendy Atkins-Sayer; instead, we visited her speaking center at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Goal #3: Establish a budget: While we cannot do this on our own, we have identified our budgetary needs.

Outcome: We have established a budget and are seeking support.

Goal #4: Without an increase in staffing or funding, it will be difficult to increase the number of online tutorial sessions. However, we can plan review best practices and current research as we plan for training tutors for tutoring online.

Outcome: We reviewed best practices and identified local experts willing to train us, but we need funding to secure their services.

Goal #5: Provide opportunity for peer tutors to continue tutoring after completing Community Service hours, which has been requested. Some students may qualify for the student work program; however, to serve all, including international students, would require funding.

Outcome: We submitted 2 course proposals. We are waiting for approval.

Goal #6: Revise current assessment tools to align more directly with RWC mission.

Outcome: Completed; the process led to a conference presentation (January 2015), an article (to be submitted this summer), and an additional conference proposal (accepted for Fall 2015).

Goal #7: Submit proposal to MSWCA and SWCA, and include tutors at various stages of the process. To present, however, will take funding.

Outcome: We presented at MSWCA but not SWCA due to lack of funds. At MSWCA, one graduate tutor presented with us, and two accompanied us (we were able to drive). For one graduate tutor, it was his first professional conference.