Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Karl Toepfer, the Dean of the College of Humanities, John Engell, Chair of the English Department, and the San José State University Writing Requirements Committee for their enthusiastic support of the Writing Center.

Special thanks to Dina Kameda, Lecturer in the Justice Studies Department, for her technical expertise in helping with the charts for this report.
# San José State University
## Writing Center
### Year-End Report AY 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Use of Writing Center</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Use of Writing Center by Major/College</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Spoken by Writing Center Clients</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Calls</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Communication about Writing Across the Campus</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJSU Writing Center as a Model</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Focus for AY 2009-2010</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Personnel</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Director</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Faculty-in-Residence</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Specialists</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Specialists’ Accomplishments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense Composition (Online textbook)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabretto/SJSU Writing Center Partnership</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Homegrown Handouts</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B:</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selected Emails between Writing Specialists and Instructors</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Selected Replies from Instructors to Writing Specialists</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Selected Unsolicited Emails from Instructors</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Published comments about the Writing Center</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: The Writing Center in the Press</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
San José State University
Writing Center
Year-End Report AY 2008-2009

Staff:
Director: Linda C. Mitchell

Faculty-in-Residence: Janet Hagemann, Justice Studies
Gloria Collins, English

Writing Specialists: Crystle Bruno Jen Jebens
Alana Callaway Marcus Landon
Emily Clark Misty Moon
Fabio Coehlo Harilaos Petropoulakis
Peter Gambrill Gary Wong

Administrative Assistant: Andrea Smith

Mission: The Writing Center at San José State University is committed to furthering the educational mission of the university. Our goal is to help SJSU students become better writers and to assist faculty by eliciting the best writing from their students. The Writing Center pledges to work with students to prepare them for both academic and professional writing. We help students learn to communicate ideas clearly and succinctly to increase their chances of success at SJSU and beyond.

Student Use of the Writing Center
During AY 2008-2009, the Writing Center served a student population of approximately 32,500 students. Our Writing Specialists met one-on-one with 1,403 different students from 79 majors. Those students made a total of 4,685 appointments. Students who made multiple appointments to work on their writing frequently showed the most improvement.

While the Writing Center serves students of all levels, we specifically target upper-division and graduate students. The Center continued to provide outstanding tutoring to junior, senior, and graduate students, with many of these students returning for multiple appointments. Students reserved over 90% of the appointments available. In spring 2009, due to more effective appointment scheduling the Writing Center offered more than 400 additional appointments compared to spring 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in</td>
<td>1,403</td>
<td>2,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of appointments</td>
<td>4,685</td>
<td>9,781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clients by Standing: AY 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standing</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appointments by Standing: AY 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standing</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>1083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>1083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Specialists worked with students from all majors and all colleges. However, some majors are using the Writing Center more than others. This may be due to differing levels of faculty awareness in various majors. We have found that faculty who are familiar with the services the Writing Center provides are more likely to encourage their students to use the Writing Center.

### Tutees by college:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number of Tutees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Applied Sciences &amp; Arts</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Business</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Engineering</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Humanities</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Science</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Social Sciences</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Applied Sciences and Arts

- Aerospace Studies: 37
- Hospitality: 10
- Journalism and Mass Comm.: 8
- Kinesiology: 30
- Nursing: 57
- Nutrition, Food Science, & Packaging: 48
- Rec. & Tourism Mgmt: 5
- Social Work: 39
- Occupational Therapy: 37
- Library & Info. Science: 79
- Rec. & Tourism Mgmt: 55
- Applied Sciences & Arts: 1
### Engineering

- Aviation and Technology: 3
- Chemical & Materials Engineering: 17
- Civil & Environmental Engineering: 18
- Computer Engineering: 35
- Electrical Engineering: 16
- General Engineering: 14
- Industrial & Systems Engineering: 6
- Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering: 16

### Humanities

- Art & Design: 48
- English: 21
- Foreign Languages: 10
- Humanities: 26
- Linguistics & Language Development: 10
- Music & Dance: 9
- Philosophy: 3
- Television, Radio, Film & Theater: 15
Languages Spoken by Writing Center Clients

The demographic data for students using the Writing Center indicate that a significant proportion of our clientele identify themselves as English speakers. Of the 1,400 students who used the Writing Center during AY 2008-2009, more than 50% indicated English as their primary language. The second most common language group was Asian languages – Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, or Arabic. These languages were identified for roughly 25% of the students using the Writing Center. Students who primarily speak Spanish made up less than 10% of the Writing Center clientele for AY 2008-2008. The remaining students selected either a European language, “Other,” or declined to state their primary language.

Students who make more than one appointment at the Writing Center are likely to make significant improvements in their writing. The Writing Specialists often recommend additional tutoring sessions for students if it appears those students would strongly benefit from more assistance.

Many students do make multiple appointments at the Writing Center. When examining the data on Appointments by Language, we find that students who identified themselves as primarily English speakers at home made an average of 2.9 appointments per student. Interestingly, when looking at the same information for students who identified an Asian language as their primary language, that number increases to an average of 4 appointments per student.

Since the Writing Center opened in February 2007, the overall data indicates that those who fall into the English language group have made an average of 2.89 appointments per student, while those who fall into the Asian language group have a slightly higher number of appointments per student at 4.37.

Ideally, students will come to the Writing Center for multiple appointments rather than just one time for assistance on one paper. We encourage students to make multiple appointments because they are more likely to significantly benefit from intensive one-on-one tutoring when the concepts covered are repeatedly reinforced.
**Workshops**

Each semester, the Writing Center offers numerous workshops targeting particular areas of need which have been identified by faculty, Writing Specialists, or students using the Writing Center. Most of these workshops are presented in seminar fashion for up to 15 students. All our workshops are taught by Writing Center Faculty-in-Residence, Writing Specialists, or the Director of the Writing Center. This year we offered 59 workshops on the following topics:

- Analyzing Essay Prompts
- Basic APA Style
- APA Style: Creating a Reference Page
- APA Style: Paraphrasing and Quoting
- Basic Latin and Greek Roots
- Basic MLA Style
- Body Paragraphs
- Common Grammar and Punctuation Errors
- Essay Exams
- The GLYFADA Method of Writing
- Latin and Greek Roots: Vocabulary from Mythology
- Netiquette
- Nominalization
- Paraphrasing
- Punctuation
- Writing under Pressure: Time Management

Student feedback on these workshops has been overwhelmingly positive. Students appreciate the small class size and in-depth presentation of the material.

In some cases, faculty make specific requests for customized workshops to be presented in their classrooms. This year we presented 14 custom workshops in both graduate and undergraduate classes on APA style and on the Glyfada Method.

**House Calls**

The Writing Center offers in-class orientations to the Writing Center. These “house calls,” presented by Writing Specialists, teach students about Writing Center services. Writing Specialists explain what can be covered in a Writing Center appointment, how to sign up for an appointment, and what protocol is expected of all Writing Center clients. Students are also taught how to sign up for Writing Center workshops. House calls are usually presented in the classroom; in some cases, faculty will bring their students to the Writing Center for a tour. Writing Specialists presented 91 house calls in AY 2008-2009.

**Special Events**

In addition to our regular services, the Writing Center attended eight special events in the past year. These included campus events such as the Disability Resource Center’s "Sweet Success" reception; resource fairs for Faculty Development; graduate student orientations for Engineering, Nursing, and Health Sciences; New Faculty Orientation; and Admitted Spartan Day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Period</th>
<th>Writing Center Workshops</th>
<th>Custom Workshops</th>
<th>“House Calls”</th>
<th>Special Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AY 2008-2009</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2007 – May 2009</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enhancing Communication about Writing across Campus

As part of the mission of the Writing Center, we engage faculty in a discussion of writing and the teaching of writing. At the conclusion of each tutoring session, with the tutee’s permission, Writing Specialists send an email report about the session to the instructor. This email identifies what assignment was worked on and what issues were addressed during the session.

In many cases, Writing Specialists receive replies from instructors expressing appreciation and gratitude for the individualized attention their student is getting at the Writing Center. Sometimes the reply provides the Writing Specialist with feedback on the specifics of the assignment or comments about the challenges that student is facing in his or her writing. In all cases, the email report heightens faculty awareness of how Writing Specialists and faculty can collaborate to improve student writing on a case-by-case basis.

When we opened in February 2007, very few students wanted Writing Specialists to contact their instructor. Sometimes tutees expressed a fear that their instructor might consider use of the Writing Center “cheating.” Some tutees were embarrassed to admit that they needed writing assistance, and many of them just marked “No Instructor Contact” for no reason at all. We have increased the number of students who give permission to contact their instructor from 28% in spring 2007 to slightly more than 50% in AY 2008-2009. Of the 4,685 tutees who came to the Writing Center this year, 1,962 gave us permission to contact their instructor, 1,933 did not give us permission, and 790 did not indicate yes or no when asked (“Not stated”).

(For examples of email correspondence between Writing Specialists and faculty, see Appendix A; for examples of unsolicited faculty feedback about the Writing Center, see Appendix B.)

The SJSU Writing Center as a Model

We have had significant interest in using the SJSU Writing Center as a model for other university writing centers both in the United States and abroad. Representatives from various college campuses who want to learn more about the SJSU Writing Center have visited the Writing Center and requested a copy of the SJSU Writing Center Manual, e.g. Santa Monica City College (spring 2009). Representatives from a university in Taiwan toured the Writing Center in fall 2008 and were very interested in how we work with non-native speakers of English. We visited Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN – Estelí) in March while working on the Fabretto Project (see page 23). The administration and faculty at UNAN wished to learn how we set up and operate the Writing Center. UNAN – Estelí is currently using the SJSU Writing Center Manual as a model to develop their own writing center.
Areas of Focus for 2009-2010:

The Writing Center faculty and staff strive to improve the services the Writing Center offers to students and faculty. Two important areas of concern are increasing contact with faculty about students who use the Writing Center, and increasing the number of “at risk” students who use the Writing Center.

We consider communication about student writing to be an essential component to improving writing across the campus. The benefits of work done in tutoring sessions can be multiplied exponentially if instructors also participate actively in improving their students’ writing. Many faculty members consider themselves experts in their “content area,” e.g., physics, art, justice studies, but are less confident about their ability to teach writing. The emails from the Writing Specialists to faculty thus serve three purposes:

- They report back to faculty about issues covered in each tutoring session and encourage faculty to reply with any additional concerns about that particular student’s work. When faculty communicate with the Writing Specialists, it shows students that good writing is valued by the entire SJSU community, not just the “writers” in the Writing Center.
- They highlight the student’s hard work and extra effort, encouraging the instructor to take notice of that student’s efforts.
- They educate faculty about writing issues. A typical email from one of our Writing Specialists will precisely detail what issues were covered in the session. (As an example: “In this session we focused on subject/verb agreement. I noticed that Dung sometimes had trouble telling whether a verb should be conjugated in the singular or plural when it was separated from its subject by a long phrase; thus I showed Dung an easy way to tell how to conjugate his verbs. I had Dung cover the words between the subject and the verb with his finger and then tell me how to conjugate the verb. By doing this Dung was able to clearly see the subject and verb without getting distracted by other phrases.”) When that instructor reads Dung’s paper, he or she will be likely to take notice of his subject/verb agreement, and may even feel empowered by the Writing Specialist’s email to indicate subject/verb agreement errors in other papers. (See Appendix B: Communication between Writing Specialists and Faculty for additional Writing Specialist’s emails.)

Increasing the number of students who agree to instructor contact is an essential component to improving student writing at SJSU, and we will continue to actively educate students about the many benefits of this communication. To accomplish this, we will emphasize the benefits of instructor contact during “house calls” and at the beginning of each tutoring session.

The next area of concern, articulated in “Vision 2010,” was that SJSU improve retention and graduation rates of African-American and Hispanic males. SJSU prides itself on its diversity and on the opportunities it offers for under-represented students. It is essential that the university provide access to the tools these students will need to be successful. A key factor in these students’ lack of academic success may be poor writing skills. The Writing Center provides
outstanding tutoring and workshops to empower these students’ success by enhancing their ability to communicate effectively.

Our data indicate that 10% of our tutees last year spoke Spanish as their primary language. While that percentage reflects the number of Hispanic male students at SJSU as indicated on the Office of Institutional Research website (Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 Update), we would like to see an increase in the number of Hispanic males coming to the Writing Center for tutoring. Additionally, although we have not tracked tutees by ethnicity prior to fall 2009, it appears anecdotally that African-American males are also under-represented in the Writing Center.

To address this, we will schedule “house calls” to Hispanic and African-American classes and student groups. We will continue reaching out to other under-represented students, majors, and colleges across campus by increasing faculty awareness of the Writing Center. We actively seek out ways to help students improve writing skills beyond participating in a tutoring session, e.g., through Homegrown Handouts posted on the Writing Center website, Writing Center workshops, etc..
Writing Center Personnel

**Director**

**Linda C. Mitchell**

Dr. Mitchell’s duties at the Writing Center include hiring and training top Writing Specialists, teaching relevant workshops to student and faculty groups, supervising two faculty-in residence and their research projects, writing the Writing Center Manual, and communicating with professors.

She mentors Writing Specialists and teaches them to create and present workshops with knowledge-based content and pedagogy. Dr. Mitchell also works with students on graduate research projects, and serves on a graduate thesis committee. She coaches students in writing conference abstracts, guides them in preparing conference papers, advises students on Ph.D. programs, and teaches them how to write statements of purpose. As a result, SJSU students get into top graduate programs, have papers accepted at major conferences, get essays published in books and journals, and are hired at top schools and companies.

During 2008-09, Dr. Mitchell taught three independent study courses and served on two committees in Linguistics and Language Development. She also served on the publicity committee in the English department and organized the English department graduation. She has accepted a position on the English department Composition Committee.

She has represented the Writing Center in the Writing Requirements Committee from 2007-09. She was a McNair Mentor to one of the scholars. Dr. Mitchell also participated in Admitted Spartan Day, New Faculty Orientation, and Transfer Student Day.

Dr. Mitchell is directing a partnership between the SJSU Writing Center and the Fabretto Children’s Foundation in Nicaragua (March 2008-present). This partnership is supported by Congressman Mike Honda and the American Ambassador to Nicaragua. In March 2009, she traveled to Nicaragua to assess the work to be done in Fabretto schools.

She has an article appearing in the collection *Studies in the History of Lexicography and Lexicology* (Cambridge Scholars Press 2010). She presented at three international conferences and published two book reviews in major journals. She mentored three graduate students from the abstract stage through presentation of their conference papers for the Northern Renaissance Conference. She is publishing a chapter in a textbook, *Common Sense Composition*, to be published on [www.c-k12.org](http://www.c-k12.org) in January 2010.
Faculty-in-Residence

Faculty-in-Residence at the Writing Center improve writing across the curriculum by doing research, mentoring Writing Specialists, developing and teaching workshops, working with SJSU faculty, reporting to the Writing Requirements Committee, and completing a project that contributes to improving student writing. The Faculty-in-Residence for AY 2008-2009 were Gloria Collins (English) and Janet Hagemann (Justice Studies).

Gloria Collins

During her first semester as a Faculty-in-Residence at the Writing Center, Ms. Collins conducted a comprehensive survey and report on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). The California State University (CSU) requires that each campus establish a Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) for all upper division students. At SJSU, completion of a 100W course with a passing grade satisfies the GWAR. However, a passing score on the Writing Skills Test (WST) is required for all students prior to enrollment in 100W courses, and at SJSU, many students have to take the WST multiple times before passing. Ms. Collins examined how the GWAR is working at SJSU and how the university can help under-prepared students meet the GWAR.

Ms. Collins contacted each of the CSU campuses to determine how they satisfy the GWAR, and how they deal with students who have a persistent failure rate on the WST or whatever instrument is utilized to determine eligibility for the GWAR designated course at that campus.

This report has been useful to the WRC as SJSU faces cutbacks in funding that may impact the number of courses we are able to afford to offer, particularly the LLD 98 and 99 courses, an alternative provided for students who have not been able to pass the WST. The data on how other CSU campuses are addressing the challenge of under-prepared students has given the WRC some alternatives to consider as they face the challenges ahead.

Ms. Collins also represented the Writing Center at the monthly meetings of the SJSU Writing Requirements Committee.

Janet Hagemann

Ms. Hagemann has been with the Writing Center since it opened in February 2007. Her research examines the impact the Writing Center has on student success at SJSU. She studies Writing Center data to determine tutees’ progress, and to correlate student use of the Writing Center with retention and graduation rates. She hypothesizes that the data will show a positive correlation between students using the Writing Center and students who graduate. She is also examining demographic data for the student population the Writing Center serves: grade level, major, ethnicity, primary language spoken, the course for which tutoring was needed, and material covered in the tutoring session.
In addition to her work assessing the impact of the Writing Center, Ms. Hagemann wrote the Writing Center year-end reports for AY 2007, 2008, and 2009. She also collaborated with Writing Center Director Linda C. Mitchell on the presentation to the University Planning Council (UPC) in June 2008. This presentation was ranked as the #1 Overall Presentation by the UPC because it “demonstrated success and outcomes in relation to Vision 2010” and was “closely aligned with the identified goals of Vision 2010.” This ranking resulted in the Writing Center becoming a line item on the budget rather than a one-time funding item.

Ms. Hagemann also teaches ten workshops on APA style and on netiquette each year. Her workshops are always fully enrolled, and her evaluations are outstanding. A school in Palo Alto is now using her lesson plans for the netiquette workshop.

Ms. Hagemann co-authored the article “Promoting Autonomy in English Language Learners’ Writing at the University Level” with Writing Specialist Fabio Coelho. This article was published in English Learners in Higher Education: Strategies for Supporting Students Across Academic Disciplines. She also represents the Writing Center and the College of Applied Sciences & Arts at the monthly meetings of the SJSU Writing Requirements Committee.

In March 2009, Ms. Hagemann was part of a team of SJSU faculty and students who traveled to Nicaragua to collaborate with the non-profit Fabretto Children’s Foundation. This team worked on developing and implementing an English-as-a-Foreign-Language program for Fabretto’s secondary schools.

**Administrative Assistant**

**Andrea Smith**

As the Administrative Assistant for the Writing Center, Ms. Smith handles a wide variety of tasks. She runs the front desk, answering phone calls, responding to e-mails, and assisting all visitors to the Writing Center. She manages the Writing Center’s online appointment system, WC Online, and serves as the Writing Center website Webmaster. She also coordinates the tutoring schedule, the workshop schedule, all Writing Center appointments, and requests for house calls.

Behind the scenes, Ms. Smith helps manage the Writing Specialists, organizes their hours, and coordinates their payroll. She manages all budgeting and purchasing for the Writing Center. She also collects and coordinates all demographic data for the Writing Center through the WC Online system. Using her graphic design background, she creates promotional fliers and literature for the Writing Center. Ms. Smith also assists the Writing Center staff in editing documents, e.g., the Employee Manual, website information, “homegrown handouts,” and other projects.
**Writing Specialists**

Writing Specialists are student employees who have been rigorously screened to determine how well they understand the conventions of academic English and grammar, and to determine how well they can teach these conventions to students. Once hired, Writing Specialists receive ongoing training in effective tutoring and teaching techniques.

Writing Specialists do more than tutor. They inform faculty about what happens in each tutoring session. When the students give their permission, the Writing Specialists contact faculty via email to report about the tutoring session. These emails are generally very positive; however, occasionally they require some diplomacy. The email on page 25 is an example. In this case, the tutee was clearly not engaged in the session. The Writing Specialist communicated the tutee’s attitude honestly and tactfully. The faculty member’s response indicated that this was not an isolated incident for this student. These links between faculty and Writing Specialists contribute to the continued success of the Writing Center by including faculty in the process. These communications are also a tremendous learning experience for our Writing Specialists.

Each semester, Writing Specialists prepare an original one-page “homegrown handout” on a concept and explain it with theory, model, and exercises. These “homegrown handouts” are used as teaching aids in the Writing Center and are posted on the Writing Center website. They have received enthusiastic acclaim from students at SJSU and other universities. (For a list of “homegrown handouts” see Appendix A.)

Under supervision of the Writing Center Director, Writing Specialists develop and teach their own workshops. They follow a format which emphasizes pedagogy, classroom management, learning objectives, and appropriate activities to teach and reinforce their learning objectives.

In addition to their workshops, Writing Specialists are exposed to a wide array of academic and professional opportunities. During AY 2008-2009, Writing Specialists published articles, received scholarships, presented papers at a conference, published a short story, were hired for internships, were accepted into graduate schools, received graduate assistant and teaching positions, taught one semester in Mexico on a fellowship, and travelled to Nicaragua to work on an international project supporting English-as-a-Second-Language teachers.

This summer, four Writing Specialists began working on a high school composition textbook which will be posted on the website www.ck-12.org in January 2010. One of the Writing Specialists is serving as the general editor of the textbook. The chapters for this book are based on workshops and activities developed by the Writing Specialists.

Working at the Writing Center has motivated many of our Writing Specialists to attend graduate school. They are well prepared for their appointments as graduate assistants or teaching assistants (English 1A and 1B). Writing Specialists enrich the Writing Center and the university at large with their contributions.
Writing Specialists’ Accomplishments

Crystle Bruno
- Is one of the authors for an online high school English textbook with Dr. Linda Mitchell. The text, *Common Sense Composition*, will be posted on www.c-k12.org in January 2010.
- Accepted into the MA program in the English Department.
- Received a graduate assistantship.

Allana Callaway
- Got a full-time teaching job in the school district.
- Completed a Writing Center research project on learning grammar through composition.

Fabio Coelho
- Published essay with Janet Hagemann: “Promoting Autonomy in English Language Learners’ Writing at the University Level.” *English Learners in Higher Education: Strategies for Supporting Students Across Academic Disciplines*, January 2009. Edited by Katharine Davies Samway et al.
- Is one of the authors for an online high school English textbook with Dr. Linda Mitchell. The text, *Common Sense Composition*, will be posted on www.c-k12.org in January 2010.
- Enthusiastically responded to a request from the non-profit Fabretto Children's Foundation for assistance in developing an English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) curriculum at its educational centers in Nicaragua. He has taken the lead in facilitating this endeavor and has visited Fabretto in Nicaragua three times since summer 2008. Through the partnership with Fabretto, the SJSU Writing Center is committed to facilitating the development and sustainability of Fabretto's English language teaching program. In March 2009, a team of faculty and students from SJSU went to Nicaragua to begin work on this important project. (More on this project can be found on Writing Center website: www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/partnership.)
- Received a scholarship and took a semester leave to study and teach in Mexico in fall of 2008.

Peter Gambrill
- Had a short story published in Reed magazine: “A Bad Scorsese Movie.”
- Is one of the authors for an online high school English textbook with Dr. Linda Mitchell. The text, *Common Sense Composition*, will be posted on www.c-k12.org in January 2010.
- Accepted into the MA program in the English Department.
- Received a graduate assistantship.

Jen Jebens
• Is one of the authors for an online high school English textbook with Dr. Linda Mitchell. The text, *Common Sense Composition*, will be posted on [www.c-k12.org](http://www.c-k12.org) in January 2010.

• Accepted into the MA program in the English Department.

• Accepted as a TA in the English Department (English 1A) for 2009-2010.

**Katie Masters** (former Writing Specialist), currently working on her MA in Linguistics at UC Davis, has reconnected with the Writing Center to assist in the Fabretto Project. She spent eight weeks in Nicaragua this summer to conduct English-as-a-Foreign-Language workshops for Fabretto faculty.

**Harilaos Petropoulakis**  

**Georgia Saratsiotis**  
• Taught English 1A in fall’08 and spring ’09  
• Will contribute to *Common Sense Composition*.

**Gary Wong**  

• Got a teaching job in the school district.
Writing Specialists are composing an online high school English textbook, *Common Sense Composition*, which will be posted on www.c-k12.org in January 2010. Contributors are Crystle Bruno, Fabio Coelho, Peter Gambrill, Jen Jebens, Janet Hagemann, and Linda C. Mitchell.

*Common Sense Composition*
Editor Crystle Bruno

Table of Contents

Section 1: Glyfada Method
Ch 1: Invention and the Glyfada Method  Linda C. Mitchell

Section 2: Expository Essays
Ch. 2: Anatomy of an Expository Essay  Crystle Bruno

Section 3: Argumentative Essays
Ch. 3: Building an Argumentative Essay  Crystle Bruno

Section 4: Tone & Style
Ch. 4: Tone & Style  Fabio Coelho

Section 5: Responding to Literature
Ch. 5  The Why and How of It  Jen Jebens
Ch. 6  Prose  Jen Jebens
Ch. 7  Drama  Jen Jebens
Ch. 8  Poetry  Jen Jebens

Section 6: Real World Applications
Ch. 9  Technical Documents  Jen Jebens
Ch. 10  Netiquette  Jan Hagemann

Section 7: Understanding Grammar
Ch. 11: Parts of Speech  Peter Gambrill
Ch. 12: Parts of the Sentence  Peter Gambrill
Ch. 13: Punctuation  Peter Gambrill
Ch. 14: Verbs and Sentence Types  Peter Gambrill
Ch 15: Common Errors in Grammar and Punctuation  Peter Gambrill
Fabretto/SJSU Writing Center Partnership

In March 2008, Fabretto Children's Foundation contacted the SJSU Writing Center for assistance in developing an English-as-a- Foreign-Language (EFL) curriculum for its educational centers in Nicaragua. The Writing Center assembled a team of five faculty and graduate students to begin planning. On April 21, 2008, Congressman Mike Honda announced the launch of the new initiative to support Fabretto's schools and teachers in Nicaragua. This initiative has since become the Fabretto/SJSU Writing Center Partnership.

The SJSU Writing Center team included Dr. Linda C. Mitchell, Director of the Writing Center, Rosemary Henze, Professor of Linguistics and Language Development, Janet Hagemann, Coordinator of the Writing Center, and graduate students Fabio Coelho (Linguistics and Bilingual Teaching Credential Program), and Mayra Cerda (Anthropology).

In March 2009, this team was invited to observe Fabretto’s English-as-a-Foreign-Language program in Nicaragua. During their seven day trip to Nicaragua, the SJSU Writing Center team met with faculty and administrators from Fabretto, observed Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial (SAT) classes as well as English classes, and met with representatives from additional U.S. agencies in Nicaragua such as the Peace Corps, U.S. Aid, and the U.S. Embassy.

The SAT curriculum has been used in other Latin American countries and was introduced to Nicaragua by Fabretto in 2007. All content area classes are based on SAT books, while English classes rely on materials the English teachers produce as needed. The SJSU team noted that the students in SAT classes were very engaged and participated actively in class discussion, while the students in English classes were less enthusiastic and attentive.

Upon their return, the SJSU team began work on expanding the English language component of the SAT curriculum. They also followed up with faculty and administrators from two major Nicaraguan universities to explore opportunities for collaboration and to create a source of well-qualified EFL teachers for Fabretto Schools.

Through this partnership, the SJSU Writing Center is committed to facilitating the development and sustainability of Fabretto's English language teaching program. The goals are

- to assist Fabretto leaders in establishing an EFL curriculum that specifically addresses the needs of Fabretto students, in both primary and secondary schools;
- to create a model of ongoing professional learning for Fabretto's EFL teachers so that they can enhance student learning of English;
- to create an exchange program for Fabretto teachers to attend professional development courses at San José State University, and for students from SJSU to do volunteer teaching and other service learning projects at Fabretto centers;
- to establish a professional network within Nicaragua to exchange resources and offer support to help Nicaragua's poorest children, this network will include the Fabretto Centers, U.S. Embassy, Peace Corps, NICA-TESOL, and universities;
- to secure funding that will allow the partnership to reach and expand the above goals.
Since returning from Nicaragua, the Writing Center team has accomplished a great deal. Two representatives from the Writing Center have visited Nicaragua to work with Fabretto’s EFL faculty. Writing Specialist Fabio Coelho, along with Katie Masters, a former Writing Specialist currently working on her Masters in TESOL at U.C. Davis, collaborated with Professor Rosemary Henze to develop a variety of workshops on EFL pedagogy and effective classroom activities and materials. In summer 2009 they went to Nicaragua to work with Fabretto faculty; Fabio was in Nicaragua for two weeks; Katie was there for almost 6 weeks.

Rosemary Henze and Fabio Coelho have also already created supplemental English materials and activities to integrate EFL into the SAT curriculum.

Plans for the upcoming year include seeking outside sources of funding to support the Fabretto/SJSU Writing Center Partnership, adding team members from other departments at SJSU, and creating an exchange program for SJSU faculty and students to travel to Nicaragua to work with EFL faculty on staff and program development.
Appendix A

Homegrown Handouts

The “homegrown handout” page on the Writing Center website lists handouts created by our Writing Specialists. These handouts address the most common questions tutees ask in the Writing Center. We also solicit ideas for topics that students or others may like to see addressed in future handouts. We post eight additional homegrown handouts each semester.

Grammar

- Appositives (Restrictive and Non-Restrictive)
- Articles
- Capitalization
- Count and Noncount Nouns
- Coordinating Conjunctions (FANBOYS)
- Dangling Modifiers
- Fewer or Less
- Independent Clauses in Compound Sentences
- Parallelism
- Passive Voice
- Prepositions of Time
- Present and Past Perfect Tense
- Pronoun and Antecedent Agreement
- Nominalization
- Reflexive Pronouns
- Subordinating Conjunctions in Complex Sentences
- That, Who/Whom, and Which
- Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Punctuation

- Comma Splices
- Hyphens
- Quotation Marks
- Semicolons

The Writing Process

- Comparing/Contrasting - Essay Planning
- Conclusions
- Introductions
- Outlines - Essay Planning
- Reporting Verbs

Other Writing Concerns

- Essay Exam Preparation
- Old Information before New Information
Appendix B

I. Selected E-mails between Writing Specialists and Instructors

A. Follow-up e-mail from the Writing Specialist to the Instructor

From: Emily Clark [mailto:emilyc24@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2009 10:00 AM
To: dkamedasjsu@aol.com; Linda Mitchell; Jan Hagemann
Subject: Writing Center- _____ _____, Justice Studies 105

Dear Professor Kameda,

My name is Emily, and I am a writing specialist at the Writing Center in Clark Hall. I worked with _____ _____ from your Justice Studies 105 course on May 12th.

_____ has given me permission to contact you regarding her visit to the Writing Center.

During her hour appointment, we worked on her final paper. We discussed the rules for numbers and citations in APA. I noticed that several of her sentences were incomplete because she switched her idea half-way through, so we went over structure. We also went over hyphens, conjunctions, and parallelism. I could tell that she was tense, but by the end of the session she felt much better about the direction of her paper. I hope that she continues to come to the Writing Center in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact me by emailing me at this address or by calling the Writing Center at 924-2308.

Thank you for your time,
Emily Clark
The Writing Center

B. Reply from the Instructor to the Writing Specialist:

Hello Emily:

Thank you for the update on _____’s visit to the writing center. She has a tendency to express herself in incomplete thoughts, and to over complicate what she is trying to convey. As a result, her writing often comes across as fragmented and disorganized at times. She is a student with a lot of potential, but needs help with direction and focus in her writing. I teach JS100W and JS105, both of which are fairly rigorous courses that require clarity of direction and precision of expression. I greatly appreciate the time you spent working with her.

Thank you -
Dina M. Kameda, M.S.
Department of Justice Studies, MH 527
A. Follow-up e-mail from the Writing Specialist to the Instructor

Dear Professor Mesher,

My name is Crystle, and I am a writing specialist at the Writing Center in Clark Hall. I worked with your student _____ _____ from your Humanities 1B course on March 3rd.

_____ has given me permission to contact you regarding his visit to the Writing Center.

During the 30-minute appointment we reviewed his assignment about Beowulf. At the beginning of the session, _____ admitted that he did not understand how to do the assignment. _____ explained that he had to write a paragraph about a major theme in Beowulf; however, he could neither articulate a theme from Beowulf nor define theme as a term. In addition, _____ had difficulty accessing the story due to the language, so many of his explanations and details were hazy or untrue. In an effort to refresh _____’s memory, I asked him to explain the story to me. We then discussed the argument he was attempting to make in his paragraphs. While reading these paragraphs, we also reviewed the grammar rules associated with his errors. _____ is striving to not only do well on this assignment, but also to learn new concepts to aid in his development as a writer and student.

I am writing to let you know of this tutoring session. If you have any questions concerning this visit, or would like me to cover any particular writing issues, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Crystle
Writing Center Specialist

B. Reply from the Instructor to the Writing Specialist

Hi Crystle. Thanks for the help with _____ . It's nice to know that he's in good hands. In talking to him in my office, I got the sense that he needed a lot of help on constructing an argument, forming complex grammatical sentencing, proofreading, and other detail-oriented functions. That may also include a close reading of the text, which might be why he couldn't articulate a theme from Beowulf. I'm a little surprised that his problems weren't noticed in the first semester of the Humanities Honors sequence, but I'm hoping he can at least begin to improve his composition skills this semester. Thanks again.

D.
A. Follow-up e-mail from the Writing Specialist to the Instructor

From: Emily Clark
Sent: Thu 11/13/2008 10:14 PM
To: Deepa Singamsetti; Forward to Jan Hagemann; linda mitchell
Subject: Writing Center- _____ _____, NFS 139

Dear Professor Singamsetti,

This is Emily again from the Writing Center in Clark Hall. _____ _____ was my second student from your Nutrition and Food Science 139 course on November 12th.

_____ has given me permission to contact you regarding his visit to the Writing Center.

During his half-hour appointment, we worked on his foreign aid paper. I was impressed by how eager he was to get started. He got out the guidelines paper, and we went point by point. I advised him to continue to check his paper this way at home. We had to restructure his introductory paragraph in order to make it touch upon each requirement. We also discussed relating his thesis back to each of his body paragraphs. At the beginning, he had all of his positive points in one paragraph. I told him that each point should have its own paragraph with a supporting quote. He also had to change the structure of his essay, and he was not upset either! Your students are very positive people. I really appreciated their attitudes, and I would love to keep working with them.

If you have any questions, please contact me by emailing me at this address or by calling the Writing Center at 924-2308.

Thank you for your upbeat and driven students.

Emily Clark
The Writing Center

B. Reply from the Instructor to the Writing Specialist

Emily,
Thank you for your synopsis that you send after working with each of my students. I am really glad to hear that the sessions are so productive! You are right, my students are pretty cool! :) This debate paper let them choose their own topic and as a result I think they chose subjects that they really were interested in! There is one more assignment that I have coming up which you may see a few more students coming into the writing center to have analyzed. I think your service is very valuable to the students here at SJSU and I am so glad that you are there! I'd love to continue sending my students over to you :) Next semester if I get my act together, I'd like to get one of your specialists to come in and do a session on writing papers in APA style.

-deepa :)}
II. Selected Replies from Instructors to the Writing Specialists

From: Tina C Foley <Tina.Foley@sjsu.edu>  
Date: Wed, Oct 22, 2008 at 1:26 PM  
Subject: Re: Writing Center- __________, Psychology 82  
To: Emily Clark <emilyc24@gmail.com>

Dear Emily,

Thank you so much for bring me up-to-date on _____’s progress. She is such a delightful young woman and is trying very hard in the class. Due to the nature of the mixed-mode method, students have lots of writing assignments!

The Writing Center is a godsend to lower-division students taking Core GE classes. It's one of the first things that I go over on the first day of class.

Thanks again, Emily, and I so hope that _____ continues to visit the Center. If there is anything more that I can do to help, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards,
Tina

Dr. Tina Camagna Foley  
Department of Psychology

From: William Mains <WMains@scu.edu>  
Date: Wed, Apr 22, 2009 at 3:01 PM  
Subject: Re: Writing Center- __________ Psychology 100W  
To: Emily Clark <emilyc24@gmail.com>

Hi Emily,

Thank you for your note about meeting with ______. Thank you, also, for meeting with him and working with him on his paper. I am glad that he followed up on my recommendation and made use of the fine service your Center provides.

In addition to the issues you addressed, I also asked him to focus on clarity. I have found that he does not always clearly express his good thoughts with good writing. His grammatical and mechanical mistakes detract from the good points he is attempting to convey to his reader.

Thanks again,

Bill
Thanks, Peter, for helping _____ and for letting me know about the nature of the work you did with her. What you did is exactly what she needs to improve on as I commented on her paper. It is wonderful to know that your writing center offers such a wonderful tutoring service to students. Thank you very much again for your great help!

Dr. Hyun-Sook Park

Thank you for contacting me and relaying what you worked on with _____ at the Writing Center. I have not yet reviewed her revised cover letter assignment.

I very much appreciate you candidness about _____’s resistant participation. For your information she has been abrasive to my constructive criticism of her work as well. I hope her attitude improves and she demonstrates a willingness to absorb all she can from my instruction and the writing center’s expertise. I will do what I can to instill in her the importance of receiving input from others in a respectful manner. This is an important life-skills lesson.

I instruct the Communications Skills for Planners Class. The course focus is on strengthening writing and speaking skills. I recommend that students attend the writing center, especially when I do not see improvement after one or two drafts. I look forward to your input and a stronger a partnership with the writing center in the future.

Sincerely,
Reena Mathew

Thank you Misty,

I agree that an additional tutoring session would be useful and I always encourage this in any 100W student. We have been working on subject/verb agreement in class. Unfortunately _____ missed the session as her father was in hospital, but I will ask her to work through the assignment. I have a few students who I have recommended need to work on this and other grammar. Could you suggest any links, I could use at the Writing Center? I would be grateful. The only situation I see is much practice. Hopefully they see these exercises as something like playing Sidoku!

Many thanks,
Josh Mackie
From: Steven Lee <sblee999@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 2, 2008 at 9:16 PM
Subject: Re: Writing Center- ______ ______, Justice Studies 159
To: Emily Clark <emilyc24@gmail.com>

Emily
I am really grateful to you and thrilled you have been helping ______. He is really passionate about his topic and I believe that this will help him to not only succeed on the paper, but will also set a good foundation for his future writing.

Thank you to you and the center for making this resource available to all our students!

Steve
III. Selected Unsolicited E-mails from Instructors

Date: Fri, 05 Sep 2008 19:06:30 -0400
From: jbestill@aol.com
To: linda.mitchell@sjsu.edu
Cc: carmen.sigle@sjsu.edu
Subject: Writing Center

Dear Linda:

This is a long overdue thank you. I am a lecturer in the Economics Department. I have been lecturing on Principles of Microeconomics for the last three semesters. I have been disappointed in the general level of writing that my students have displayed for the writing element of the class. I am also owner of a construction company and have experienced similar disappointment in college graduate job applicants. In an effort to become part of the solution, I asked Sabine Rech if she would provide a brief overview of the Writing Center to my students during one of my lectures. She agreed and did a great job (according to the students). Many went to the Center and used its resources. Their writing improved. I intend to incorporate more use in the future including using rubrics and requiring students with obvious writing deficiencies in these rubrics to attend in order to receive full credit. I am thrilled that the Writing Center exists and believe it can and will make a difference!

Thank you.

John (Jack) Estill

PS - I just completed an outline for a seminar for new lecturers in economics and included this information. I continue to encourage my colleagues to make use of the Center, as well.

I would like to thank The Writing Center for helping my students in Occupational Therapy 115. Not only have they received help in a timely manner, but I have been notified each time someone was seen. This is extremely helpful to me as an instructor. I have already seen grammatical and organizational improvement in the papers that I have been correcting during the current semester.

My thanks for a job well done!

Best,
Carolyn Held, OT, MA
Department of Occupational Therapy
Date: Monday, November 17, 2008, 6:29 PM

Dear Professor Mitchell

I would just like to express my appreciation to you and the staff of the writing center. Many of my students have found the center to significantly help them. ______ who has been attending and really working hard did well on her research essay. ______ and ______ also did well.

______ in my other class remarked how the tutor helped her find articles for her research essay, and she had excellent sources on her paper.

The Writing Center is a crucial factor for many students who have difficulty writing. The tutors seem to really help the students who go there understand their weaknesses. Many semesters I have had difficulty getting some students to go. This semester many of my students signed up early. They really like the service.

One student who didn’t understand that he was not answering the question asked on an in-class essay finally realized some of his problem.

I hope with all the budget cuts, the writing center remains. Thank you and all the tutors for all the help! I know that you train the tutors and have high standards and it shows.

Sincerely,
Inga Silva, Lecturer in the English Department
--Inga Silvaisilva@email.sjsu.edu
Appendix C

Published Excerpts about the Writing Center


The following anecdote demonstrates the important role the Writing Center plays in the success of students at SJSU. In this excerpt from her article “Give her a chance” Professor Lonna Smith (Secondary Education) explains how the Writing Center helped a student teacher succeed.

According to Dr. Smith, the young woman in question was bright, knowledgeable in her subject, hardworking, analytical, and reflective. However, Dr. Smith was extremely concerned about the student’s ability to communicate effectively with her students, both orally and in writing. Dr. Smith noted that although some of her written communications were fine, much of this student’s writing was filled with syntactic and semantic errors. Dr. Smith realized that this young woman was not going to be successful without assistance in her writing and verbal communication skills.

She pointed out to the student how important it is for a teacher to have excellent communication skills. Teachers are expected to be able to write tests, worksheets and other instructional materials in clear academic English, as well as communicate effectively with students, parents, faculty and other teaching professionals. She urged the student to seek help from the San José State University Writing Center in Clark Hall.

Dr. Smith was delighted when the student followed up on her suggestion. Taking virtually all her written assignments to the Writing Center, the student worked with a tutor who helped her identify common grammatical errors, proofread her work for these types of errors, and make necessary corrections. As a result, there was a marked improvement in both her writing and proofreading skills.

Dr. Smith concluded the article by stating that the student is well on her way to becoming an excellent teacher who was able to communicate effectively with her students. She credits the student’s success with the confidence she acquired through her teaching and improved writing and communication skills acquired through her work at the Writing Center.
Appendix D

The Writing Center in the Press

The Writing Center was featured in several publications during AY 2008-2009. *Washington Square*, SJSU’s alumni magazine, featured the Writing Center in their Spring 2009 edition. Two major Nicaraguan newspapers (*La Prensa* and *Nacionales*) wrote stories about the Fabretto/SJSU Writing Center Partnership in March 2009, when we visited Nicaragua.