



The UConn Writing Center and its elegant nature



Students quietly complete essays, papers, and other writing assignments in the W Center. The establishment is located on the second floor of UConn’s Hommer D. Babbidge Library.

PHOTO BY ALEX RENZULLI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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The University of Connecticut Writing Center is not just a location; it’s a valuable resource for students who need assistance in writing, a skill that’s necessary to succeed.

“Writing is central to almost every academic discipline,” said Tom Deans, the director of the Writing Center. “Some people think that writing is associated with English and the humanities, but all of us have to write, no matter what our field is.”

Asfandiyar Ali, a fifth semester political science student and undergraduate tutor at the Writing Center, agrees with Deans.

“I think a lot of people don’t really know that writing in general is more than just English,” Ali said. “It can be poetry, resumes, cover letters, etc.”

According to Deans, the Writing Center was founded in the 1980s.

“When we started, we were in a small basement in what’s now the Philip E. Austin Building. I think it was called CLAS at that time,” Deans said. “There were only five tutors and there were two graduate students who ran it.”

Since then, the Writing Center has expanded. Today, it has a faculty director, an associate faculty director, three graduate assistant directors and 25 undergraduate tutors.

“We’ve just grown exponentially in scale and that was in part so we can better support W classes,” Deans said. “And then we added graduate student support, which originally wasn’t there.”

The Writing Center’s undergraduate tutors hail from diverse majors and backgrounds.

“It’s not just English and journalism,” Deans said. “Our tutors come from STEM fields, social sciences, many different areas.”

Students can meet with the center’s tutors in-person or online by scheduling an appointment on the Writing Center’s website.

Tristan Evans, an eleventh semester doctoral candidate in structural biology who’s one of the assistant directors, said the Writing Center’s one-on-one tutoring services are advantageous.

“The benefits of one-on-one tutoring at the Writing Center are endless,” Evans said. “We help with all forms of writing at any stage in the writing process. So, whether you’re finding it difficult to start a piece, need an extra set of eyes

before final submission or anywhere in between, we will be there. Our goal is to work collaboratively with writers, not line edit or make demands on the best way to fix something. Writing is personal and our tutors work hard to help undergrads and grads craft pieces that are uniquely theirs.”

Liam Smith, a seventh semester English major who is an undergraduate tutor at the Writing Center, concurs.

“I think having writing tutors that are students is important because working with a peer is less intimidating than going to a professor’s office hours,” Smith said. “It’s helpful to have someone who can give you guidance and is at the same level as you.”

Besides one-on-one tutoring, the Writing Centers offers written feedback, a platform that allows students to receive suggestions from a tutor without meeting them online or in-person. There are also Accountability, Intentional Work, Motivation sessions, a beneficial resource for students working on larger-scale projects. In AIM sessions, students are given the opportunity to maintain their progress and schedule meetings to work on their projects with a tutor.

Outside services, the Writing Center hosts

events throughout the academic year. A major one is the W Center Secondary School Conference. According to Deans, it’s designed to support Connecticut schools with writing centers. This year’s conference is on Oct. 16 from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Student Union. The theme is Subverting the Center, which represents writing centers being inclusive spaces that provide counter-hegemonic leadership and tutoring practices.

Another event is Night Against Procrastination. According to Evans, it’s a semesterly get-together where students come together and set goals for the night. For each goal they accomplish, they receive an opportunity to enter a raffle to win prizes. This semester’s Night of Procrastination is on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m.

In the past few years, the Writing Center has had some challenges. One is the number of students it receives each year.

“We hit a real low during Covid because we weren’t here and the students were retreating to remote teaching,” Deans said.

A few years after Covid, the Writing Center overcame this setback.

“Before Covid, we were seeing about 4,000 appointments a year,” Deans said. “And we got

back to that level in the past year or so.”

In the future, the Writing Center hopes to develop closer connections with other campus resources, including the Quantitative Center.

“Even though it seems we do very different kinds of things, we want to co-operate more in terms of training and supporting each other’s missions because we both really care about peer learning,” Deans said.

The Writing Center also wants to develop closer ties with the regional campuses so they can have parallel services.

“We want to make sure they have as much high-quality student support,” Deans said.

Another goal is familiarizing international students with the Writing Center. This is crucial because writing centers aren’t common in foreign countries.

“It’s a very American thing,” Deans said. “There aren’t many writing centers in China or in Europe. There are some, but they were mostly built on a North American model where everybody’s got a writing center.”

For those interested in learning more about the Writing Center, check its website and Instagram page @uconnwritingcenterstorrs.