

2023-2024

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# Writing Center

Annual Report

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Montana State University

## Our Mission

The MSU Writing Center supports students across MSU as they develop the written communication skills necessary in their academic, professional, and civic lives. Our undergraduate and graduate peer tutors provide one-on-one tutoring, resources for writing, writing group facilitation, and workshop facilitation that complement and support students' classroom instruction. We are a dynamic, collaborative environment. Our staff are available to talk with faculty about how to integrate meaningful writing experiences into their course designs.

### Our Commitment:

As members of the MSU Writing Center, we acknowledge that language can be used both to empower and to oppress.

We commit to enacting our land-grant mission as we welcome all students, staff, and faculty.

We commit to supporting those who have been historically underserved.

We commit to learning with and for our community about the power of language, using what we learn to provide resources and support for our community, and raising awareness about the power of language in shaping our lives and our world.

## Director's Note

When Open AI announced the launch of Chat GPT in the Fall of 2022, the world of academic writing felt a seismic shift. Generative AI requires all of us to rethink what we even mean by the activity of writing. But these moments of disruption and adaptation often lead to new innovations and ways of seeing. I am proud of our Writing Center community for the ways in which we have continued to adapt and to learn along with our MSU community. In these pages, I invite you to see how our community continues to live out our commitment to support MSU students and to learn with them about the power of language in shaping our world.

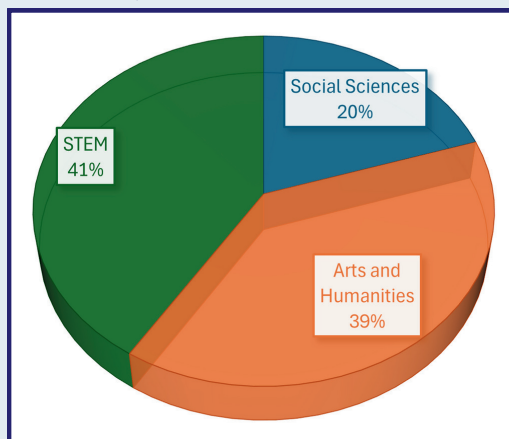


## Our Peer Tutors

### Total Student Contacts

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Writing Center had a total of 7,950 contacts. These contacts included one-on-one sessions, writing groups, course partnerships, and class presentations.

### Peer Tutor Majors



Our peer tutors represent 37 distinct majors and minors across MSU.

### Undergraduate Research

Two of our peer tutors presented original research at the 2023 National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) in Pittsburgh. Their project focused on visual mapping in the invention stage of the writing process.



Anna Emmans (English Literature) and Carly McGown (English Literature)

## Faculty Panels

- Dr. Maira Areguin (Psychology)
- Dr. Zack Bean (English-Literature and Creative Writing)
- Dr. Israel Borikini (Ecology)
- Dr. Jennifer Brown (Chemical Engineering)
- Dr. Micah Chang (History and Philosophy)
- Dr. Will Fassbender (English-Teaching)
- Dr. Xin Han (Political Science)
- Dr. Allechar Serrano López (Mathematical Sciences)
- Dr. Vijaya Tamla Rai (Sociology and Anthropology)
- Dr. Cathy Zabinski (Ecology)

“I learned so much about writing [at the Writing Center]-- how to communicate with people, how to format, how to summarize ideas, how to reverse outline, little grammatical stuff, and so many different genres!”

--Ainsley Kintz, Peer Tutor, Environmental Studies

Hearing from faculty gives tutors a unique opportunity to learn about diverse writing across disciplines and to share their experiences as student writers and writing tutors.

Thank you to our 2023-2024 faculty panelists for talking with us about writing in their discipline!



## Writing Across MSU (WAMSU)

Our primary focus in the Writing Center is supporting our students. We know, however, that collaboration with other faculty to create environments where students can develop as writers provides better holistic support. This last year, we collaborated directly with faculty teaching the following courses:

- Chemical Engineering Mass Transfer Operations (ECHM 323)
- Chemical Engineering Lab I (ECHM 442)
- Chemical Engineering Lab II (ECHM 443)
- Ecological Physiology of Aquatic Organisms (BIOO 418)
- Introduction to Creative Writing (CRWR 240)
- Introduction to Writing Studies (WRIT 205)
- Methods of Proof (MATH 242)

“I came in with a paper basically finished, but when reading over it and asking questions with a tutor, I realized that I was just completing the assignment without actually using my opinion and voice in the paper. My tutor encouraged me to change my idea to make my paper more authentic.”

--Evelyn Graham, Student, Microbiology/Pre-Med

# Graduate Education

**Writing Retreats** provide an opportunity for students to take time away from their regular schedule to focus on writing. The retreat supports students individually, with a tutor available to meet one-on-one to offer guidance and support. Thirty-one graduate students from the following disciplines attended retreats this year:

- Plant Sciences & Plant Pathologies
- Mechanical Engineering
- Ecology
- Counseling
- Public Administration
- Microbiology
- Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Earth Sciences

“Ongoing visits to the MSU Writing Center allowed me to break down a big project into digestible productive pieces, which provided a sense of accomplishment versus a constant sense of overwhelm & paralysis.”

--Shelly Banta, Graduate Student, Nursing



**Graduate Writing Groups** offer support for graduate students by providing accountability, motivation, and encouragement for thesis or dissertation work. This year, 12 students from various disciplines gathered weekly to collaborate on writing.

We had 71 total individuals attend our **Focus Fridays**, a weekly drop-in writing time for graduate students and faculty.

## Writing and Generative AI

In November 2022, Open AI announced that they were launching ChatGPT as an open-source platform. Although writing scholars have always understood technology as part of writing, this technology is different. Generative AI shapes the writing process in new ways. To help us understand the effects of this technology, a group of tutors studied AI throughout the 2023-2024 school year. Two of those tutors, Anna Emmans (English Literature) and TJ Dubler (Architecture), participated in a student panel at the MSU Center for Faculty Excellence Symposium on AI in Fall 2023. Three others - Ben Churchwell (Environmental Biology), Carly McGown (English Literature), and Quinn Sanderson (Economics) - presented their research on Writing Centers and AI in Tacoma at the 2024 National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing.

## Critical Consumption of AI



Quinn Sanderson, MSU Writing Center Tutor and Economics major, developed a web resource for students to help them navigate when, where, and why one might use Generative AI in their writing process.

To view Quinn's resource:

<https://msuwritingcenter.wixsite.com/critical-consumption>

“Whether tutors will have to provide insight into different AI tools and their uses, discuss AI-generated feedback on student papers, or compete with the efficiency of AI editors, AI is impacting and will impact writers, tutors, and their potential collaboration.”

-- Quinn Sanderson, Peer Tutor, Economics