

University Writing Center

Annual Report: 2015-2016

The mission of the University Writing Center is to foster effective writing strategies that will not only help writers with their current assignments, but also build foundations for success in future academic and professional writing situations.



ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

The University Writing Center, located in the D.F. Lowry Building, is an academic support program that provides individual peer tutoring in writing to all UNCP students. The Center is supported jointly by Academic Affairs and the Department of English, Theatre, and Foreign Languages and is housed in Student Academic Support and Retention. The Interim Director of the Center, Dr. Michael J. Berntsen, is an assistant professor in the Department of English, Theatre, and Foreign Languages. The University Writing Center employs student tutors from all disciplines, paying them an hourly wage for their tutoring services. A Graduate Student Assistant is also assigned to the University Writing Center. The University Writing Center provides one-to-one tutoring in writing to UNCP students who are working on writing related to UNCP coursework, scholarships, or other applications.

This annual report provides usage information gleaned from our database of student records. It also provides updated information regarding improvements, new programs, and other developments that have taken place in the University Writing Center over the past academic year.

If you have questions about this report or would like more information, please contact:

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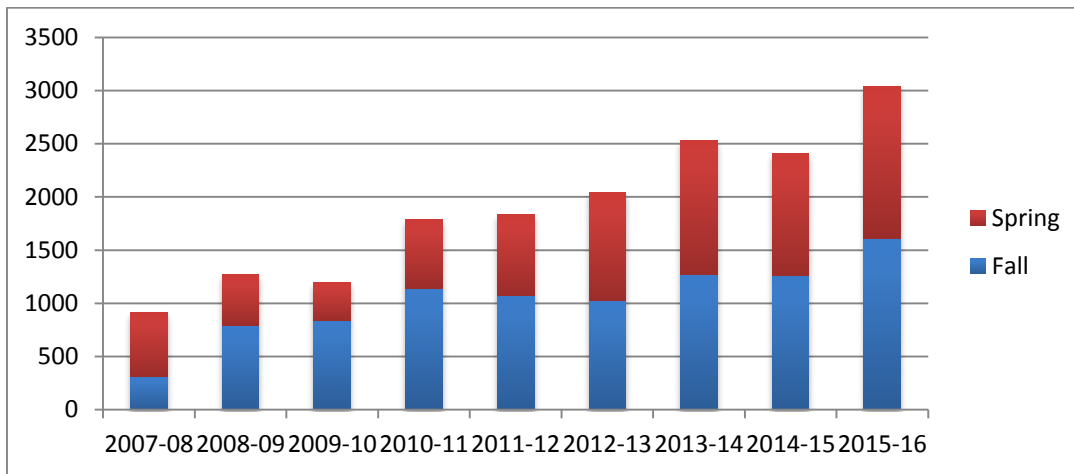
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Writing Center Usage

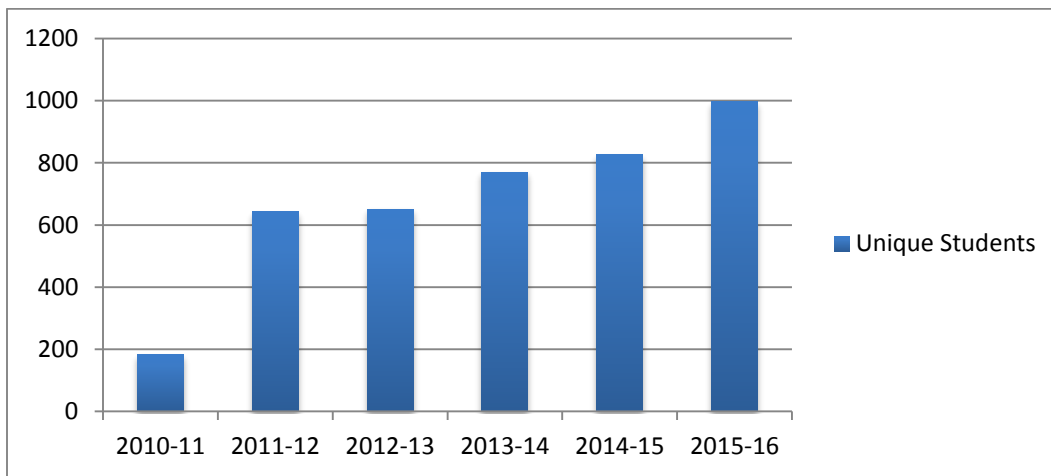
YEAR AT A GLANCE

- **3,041** writing tutorials
- **996** total unique student users
- **546** online writing tutorials

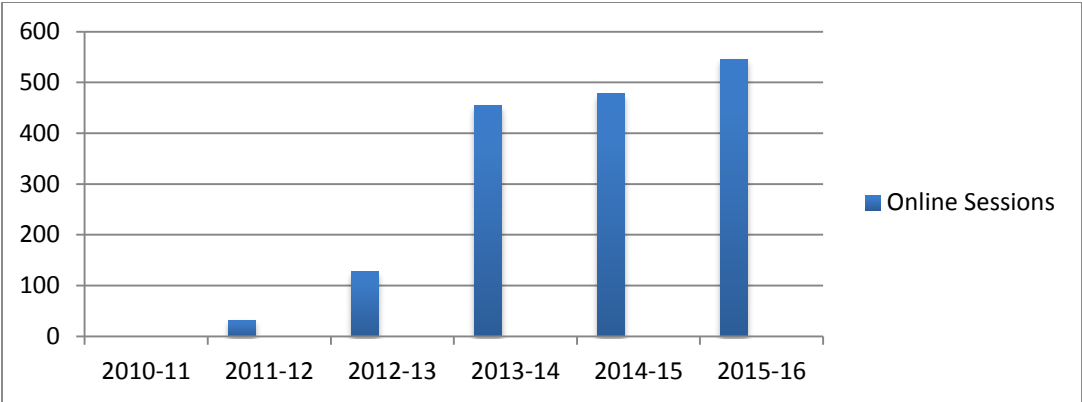
This year saw a large increase of 638 tutorial sessions, with a total of 3,041:



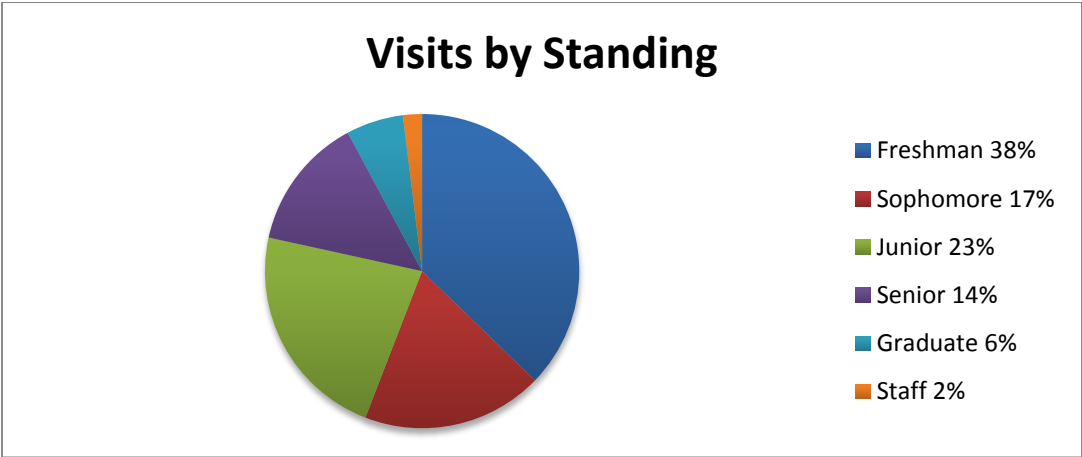
The total number of unique users increased by 169 students, to total at 996. The Writing Center tutored 15% of the UNCP student body this academic year:



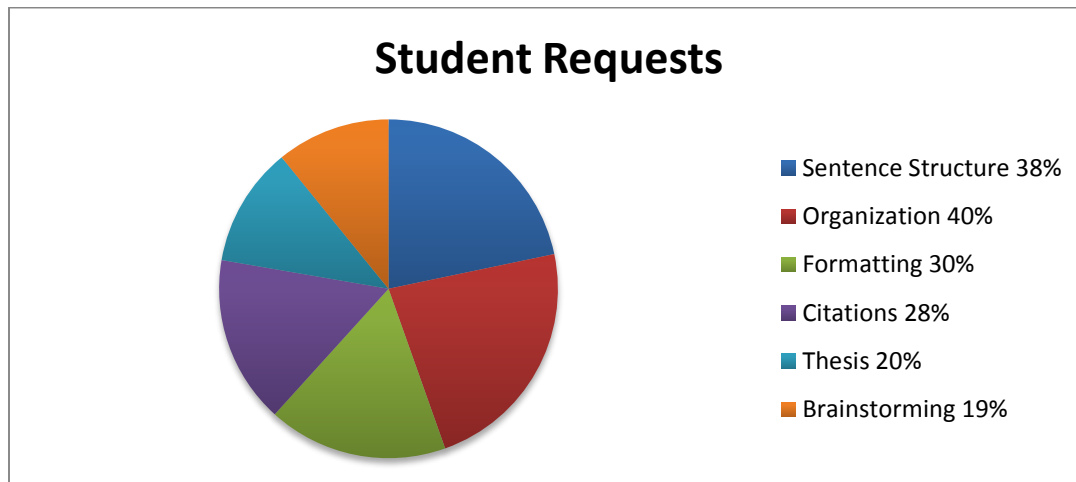
Online appointments increased by 78 compared with last year, with a total of 546:



Student visits were made predominantly by freshman, but with a strong mix of upper-level and graduate visits as well:



Students requested assistance on various aspects of writing, with many requests focusing on sentence structure and organization:



WRITING CENTER USAGE & FUNDING

As is evident in the usage data above, the Writing Center's student usage has grown significantly over the past eight years. This growth has been facilitated by additional funds granted each year upon request. Three years ago, however, the Writing Center received a permanent funding increase. These funds, in part, account for the higher usage since the 2012-2013 academic year. The Writing Center, as a student academic support unit, plays a role in student success and retention. This additional funding has helped the Writing Center play this role effectively.

This year saw a large increase in usage, and many factors can help explain this sharp rise in visits. Firstly, with UNCP seeing its largest in-coming first year student population, this increase certainly impacted Center usage. Many first year students sought assistance from the Center, especially in the fall semester. Secondly, Teagan Decker, the previous director, hired skilled and talented tutors. This year was many of these tutors' last year, which meant that they have been tutoring for 2-4 years. This time frame has provided them many opportunities to cultivate their approaches to best serve UNCP's population. Thirdly, as Interim Director, Michael J. Berntsen has taken an active role to communicate with the faculty. For example, he worked with faculty from the School of Business to ensure that they understood more clearly what occurs during a session. The result was a more comprehensive Instructor Notification Form that he drafted, which faculty from numerous departments appreciate. Furthermore, he followed up with any faculty complaints. For example, when a faculty member from the ETFL department informed him that a regular Center client noticed a decline in energy and service near the end of the Fall semester, he met with the student, discussed the issue with the student and the faculty member, informed the staff of the complaint, and added break times to help ease the stress of back-to-back tutoring. These steps were always communicated with the student and faculty member, which showed that the tutors are dedicated to solving client issues.

An important fourth factor involves the International Program, which created a New International Student Orientation and invited Michael J. Berntsen to talk with students about the Center's services. The rise in the number of international students using the center is a clear indicator of this new orientation's success. Fifthly, the Interim Director and staff made sure the room was more accessible to a variety of students with special needs. They also ensured all Writing Center documents had the ARC accessibility statement. These steps helped create an inclusive environment. Moreover, all tutors have been trained in the LGBTQ and Secular Safe Zones, adding to the notion on campus that the Writing Center is a place for all ideas and peoples. In arranging the room to be more accessible, they also designed it to look more like an office, with a waiting area, which helped professionalize the Center's environment. Lastly, as Interim Director, Michael J. Berntsen adjusted how new tutors shadow and are trained, allowing for more attention. In addition, he created paperwork break periods for students who worked more than 3 ½ hours. These breaks provided a mental respite from back-to-back tutoring as well as a less rushed period to work on client report forms. These changes helped cultivate a high morale among the tutors.

Technology

WCONLINE

For the past five years the University Writing Center has subscribed to WOnline, a web-based system that includes the following features:

- A web-based appointment system.
- A database that tracks students and student visits by various attributes.
- A survey tool.
- Usage reporting capabilities.
- Online tutoring capabilities.

ONLINE TUTORING SESSIONS

The online tutoring capabilities feature a web-based platform where students paste or upload documents to a shared space. Tutors and clients can both highlight and modify the document. Communication is carried out through a chat feature. This is a popular feature for online and distance students.

WEBSITE

The University Writing Center's website includes an 'about us' page which includes a mission statement and an explanation of our approach. The website also features a page for faculty, a

page with pictures and biographies of the tutoring staff, a page of helpful links, a page that explains how to apply for a tutoring position, and a page explaining our online tutoring platform. Students can make appointments via our website.

HARDWARE

The University Writing Center has six computers that are available for student use, one of which has DSS software installed. One printer is also available. The computers are less than two years old and in good condition. The Writing Center also has a StarBoard projector for presentations and for group writing projects.

Tutor Training & Professional Development

TUTOR TRAINING COURSE

University Writing Center tutors are trained in a full-credit course, ENG 2990: Writing Center Theory and Practice. In the course, students read theoretical and practical texts in the writing center field. They also write three papers, one of which requires research on a writing-center related topic. Each of the three papers is written in a different format: MLA, APA, and Chicago. The class creates a knowledgeable and skilled cohort of tutors in the University Writing Center. This experience and training greatly enhances the students' qualifications for teaching and related careers.

MONTHLY TRAINING SESSIONS

All University Writing Center tutors participate in monthly staff-training sessions. Many sessions this year focused on developing MLA and APA workshops.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Writing Center staff has researched group-paper writing and tutoring over the past three years. This involved keeping session logs on all group paper tutorials, surveying five sections of Business Communication students (IRB approved), conducting web-based and scholarly research, and coding survey information. Also, many staff training sessions have been partially devoted to analyzing the data and determining best practices for group paper tutoring. Staff have developed and tested new approaches to tutoring group papers. Dr. Teagan Decker, Zachary Lunn, Chéron McMullen, and Kenley Patanella are submitting their article, "Facilitating

Collaboration in Group-Authorship: A Collaborative Writing Center Research Study,” for publication this summer.

PRESENTATIONS

Kelli Jacobs and Zachary Lunn acted as session facilitators and presented during the North Carolina Writing Center Collaboration Day at Wake Forest University for the “Advice from Veteran Tutors” session.

Michael J. Berntsen acted as a session facilitator for the “Sharing Our Success” session and a panel speaker for “Writing Center Professional Development” during the North Carolina Writing Center Collaboration Day at Wake Forest University.

Michael J. Berntsen also presented a paper, “How *Bar Rescue*, *Adam-12*, and *Spongebob* Made Me a Better Writing Center Director,” at The South Central Writing Centers Association Conference hosted by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette during March 10-12, 2016.

Staffing & Recruitment

WRITING CENTER STAFF:

- Janae Aiken, Undergraduate Tutor (English Education)
- Ashley Allen, Undergraduate Tutor (Biology)
- Hannah Anderson, Undergraduate Tutor (English)
- Haley Bean, Undergraduate Tutor (Social Work)
- Michael J. Berntsen, Interim Director (English)
- Nestor Guerra, Graduate Assistant (English)
- Amber Hester, Undergraduate Tutor (English)
- Kelli Jacobs, Undergraduate Tutor (English Education)
- Krista Langley, Undergraduate Tutor (English)
- Zachary Lunn, Undergraduate Tutor (Biology)
- Cheron McMullen, Undergraduate Tutor (Criminal Justice)
- Kenley Patanella, Undergraduate Tutor (Biology)

RECRUITMENT

To replace graduating staff, recruitment was undertaken in the spring. This consists of emails to all students and faculty announcing tutoring positions available and a job announcement on Brave Opportunities. For consideration, students submit a cover letter, an application form, and a writing sample. They also list at least one UNCP faculty reference. Potential tutors are interviewed and those selected are invited to enroll in English 2990.

University Outreach

CITATION WORKSHOPS

This year, the writing center staff developed and conducted citation workshops for both MLA and APA citation styles. We conducted four MLA workshops and four APA workshops throughout the year. 44 students attended the workshops.

LIBRARY SATELLITE

The University Writing Center holds tutoring hours in the Mary Livermore Library Sunday-Tuesday 7:00pm – 10:00pm. Two tutors are on staff at these times. This service has proven to be popular with students. Since the service is targeted at the “point of need,” in the place and at the time that students are working on writing assignments, the utilization is stronger than that at the Writing Center’s main location. We will make an effort to continue this service since it is so convenient and beneficial to students.

GRADUATE RESEARCH & WRITING ACADEMY

For the past four years, the Writing Center has participated in a weekend writing and research workshop for graduate students. Michael Alewine, Robert Arndt, Anita Guynn, and Michael J. Berntsen conducted one Graduate Research and Writing Academy sessions per semester on Saturday mornings. These sessions were popular with students and student surveys of the academy were overwhelmingly positive.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SUMMER INSTITUTE

A Writing Center staff member conducts a workshop on cover letter writing for the DOT Summer Institute, a summer program for high school students located at the Regional Center.

FRESHMAN SEMINAR

Many Freshman Seminar instructors include the University Writing Center in their course. Some include the Center in their scavenger hunt, some bring their class by the Center, and some invite a representative of the Center to visit their class. We encourage all of the above and hope to strengthen our connection to Freshman Seminar in the coming year.

SPECIFIC COURSES

Many instructors teaching writing intensive courses have included the Writing Center in their syllabus. The instructors recommend, or in some cases require, all of their students to visit the Writing Center. Instructors forward copies of assignments and give us feedback on our work with their students. The Writing Center has relationships with instructors teaching courses in the following areas:

- English Composition
- Intro to Theatre
- History

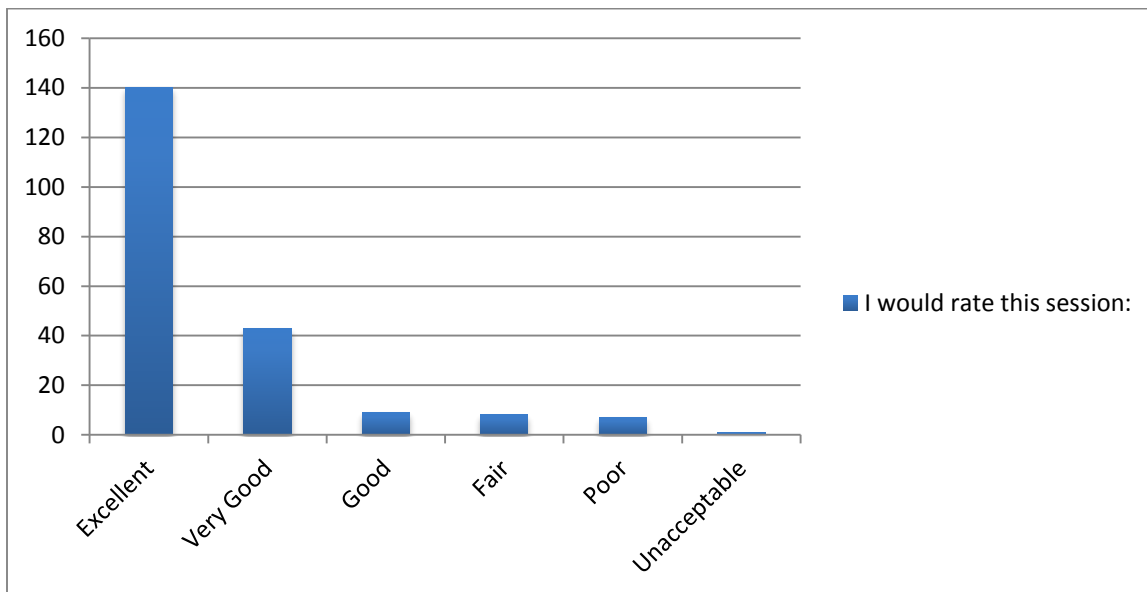
- Religion
- Mass Communication
- Business Communication

Surveys

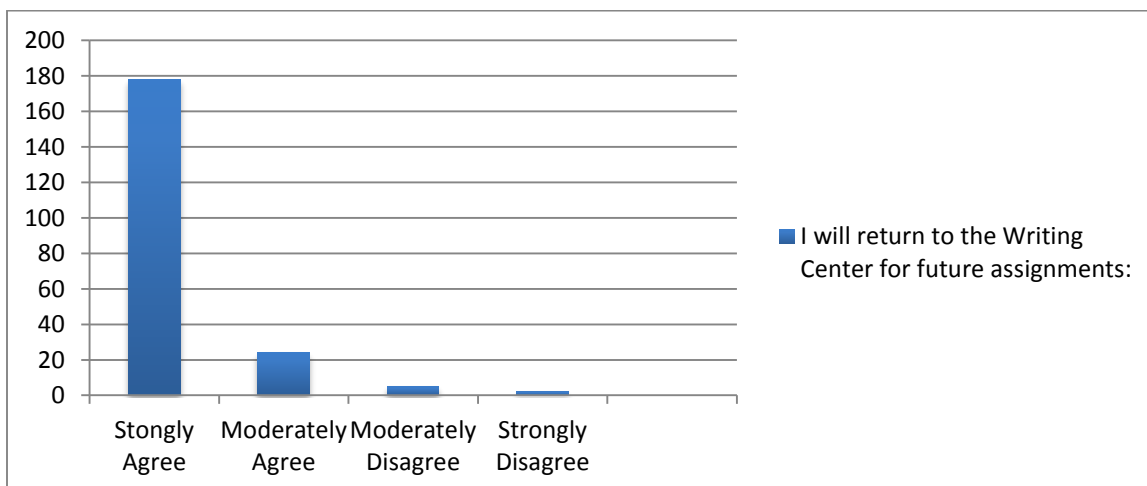
STUDENT SURVEYS

The student surveys were conducted throughout the 2015-2016 academic year. All students who visited the University Writing Center were sent an email with a link to the survey. 208 students responded.

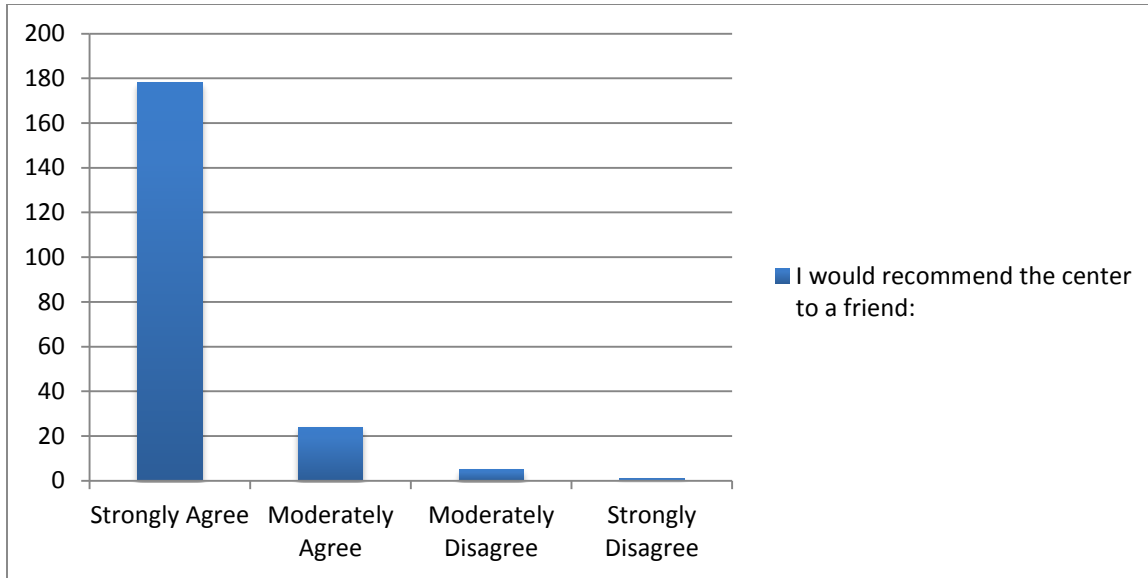
I would rate this session:



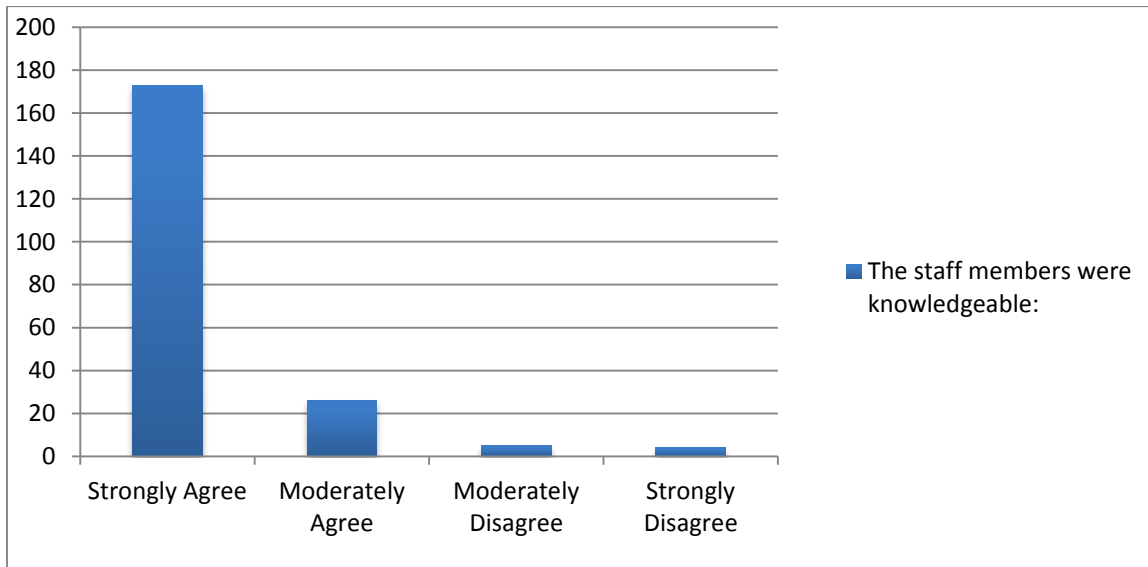
I will return to the Writing Center for future assignments:



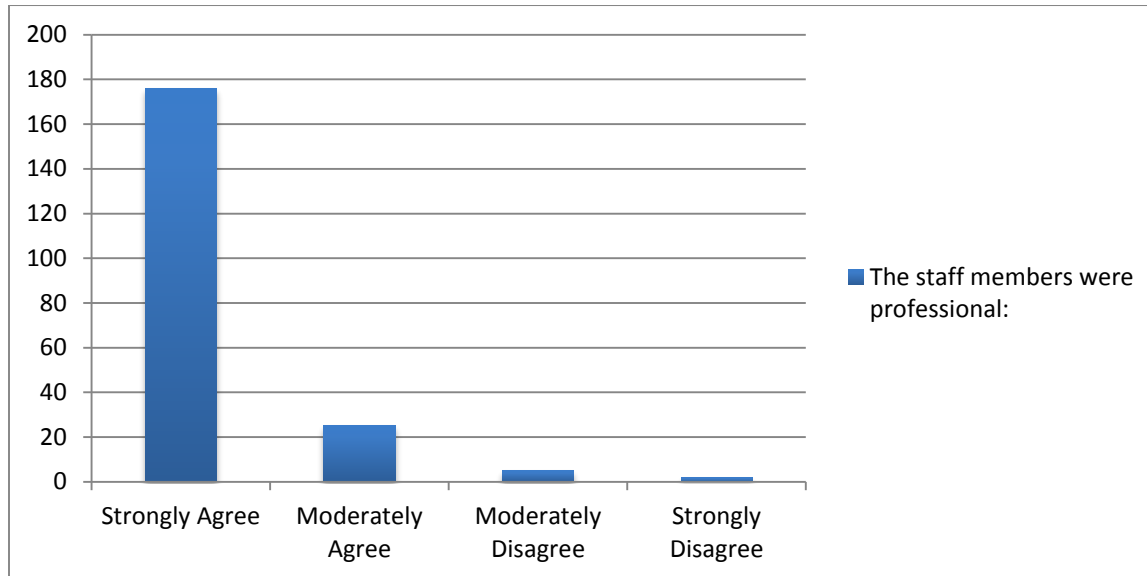
I would recommend the center to a friend:



The staff members were knowledgeable:



The staff members were professional:



STUDENT SURVEY: WRITTEN RESPONSES

- Awesome first time experience.
- [Tutor] was very helpful and good at explaining things. I found it easier to understand my assignment after talking to her.
- [Tutor] was awesome. She gave me great feedback and took the initiative to look things up that I was unsure about.
- I forgot the girl's name, but she was very helpful and she was focus on my writing for a report I learn a lot from her. I really enjoy her. I will remember her name the next time. I felt very satisfy with her.
- I was in and out and satisfied in less than 15min.
- [Tutor] was professional and very helpful. She took the time and helped review my papers and gave valued advice. Thank you.
- The online session answered all my questions. [Tutor] gave me helpful suggestions and corrections to punctuation.
- The woman who helped me was extremely nice very knowledgeable and super supportive. She helped me through the entire sign up process over the phone then edited my paper for me in a timely manner (I was in a time crunch so this was amazing) I've been here three years and never used the center. I certainly will from now on.
- They saved my life! :)
- Very helpful in assisting my specific needs.
- [Tutor] was awesome, quick and informative. Definitely convinced me to use the center in the future!
- The services offered by the writing center and its staff were extremely helpful. They presented

the information in an accessible, knowledgeable, and professional manner. I will definitely use this service again and am very glad that it is offered to students. Keep it up!

- [Tutor] was awesome! This was my first session (ever) and [tutor] did a great job explaining how I use the system and a great job answering my questions. I told her I would be back.
- [Tutor] was amazing this afternoon. She was thorough and informative in her evaluation of our papers. I would highly recommend her to anyone in need or assistance. Unfortunately this is not typical of my previous experience dealing with the Writing Center. It should be noted everyone has a different levels of writing competency and that competency has too large of an impact on the service provided. Overall I feel the Writing Center is an invaluable resource to students. The purpose of this comment is too bring attention to the various levels of quality and service administered.
- As I was reading the questions to my tutor, I realized the key to look at the first part of the questions first, because it can lead to the answers of the second question.
- When he explained what was wrong with my grammar, he also explained when to use the grammar I used in a sentence the right way.
- She is awesome love her a lot friendly and she knows what she is doing.

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