

UMKC GRADUATE WRITING INITIATIVE

<https://sgs.umkc.edu/current-students/graduatewritingresources/>

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Graduate Writing Initiative is a response to a demonstrated need for cross-campus support for graduate-level writing. The Graduate Writing Initiative guides, supports and evaluates UMKC's resources and programs for graduate writers, and provides resources for faculty working with graduate students. We do this by:

- Identifying writing and research needs of graduate students;
- Collaborating with graduate students, departments and offices across campus;
- Providing resources and learning opportunities, with the goal of improving student understanding and mastery of writing by focusing on skills like:
 - reflecting on the writing process;
 - analyzing and writing in new academic modes;
 - providing and receiving feedback with peers;
 - developing language to talk about writing.
- Supporting writing through multiple channels and formats, thereby accommodating student learning styles, program and department expectations, progress toward degree, location (on campus vs online), demographics, and life/work balance scenarios;
- Connecting students with peers, aiding in socialization in the academic community, providing mentorship opportunities, and supporting students in securing and maintaining momentum.

Action Statement for '17-'18 academic year: The Graduate Writing Initiative will seek diverse input on UMKC's graduate writing resources and look for creative ways to address further student needs; continue collaborating with students, faculty and staff across campus; and seek greater support and involvement on campus, with the ultimate goal of growing the Graduate Writing Initiative from a campus initiative to a program.

OUR PROGRAMS

Resources

- Workshop series
- Online resources

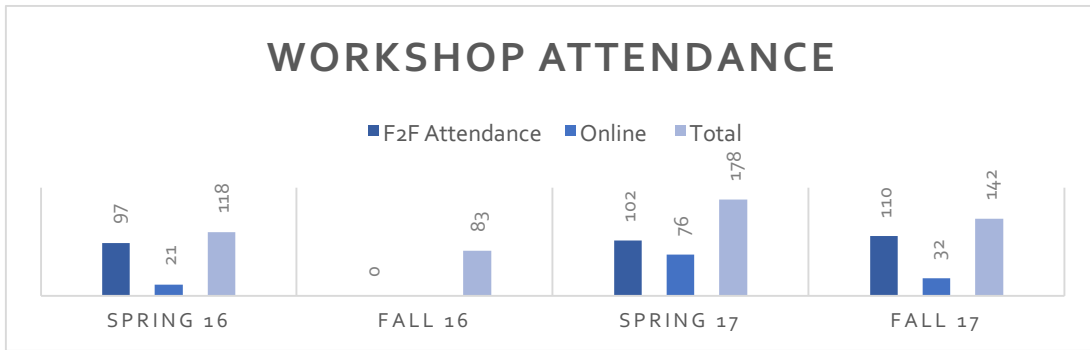
Community

- Write Ins
- Writing groups
- Graduate workstations

Feedback

- Writing Studio appointments
- Emeritus Mentorship program

Resources: We teach writers through workshops.



Community: We connect writers, help them engage in the writing process, and encourage momentum through Write Ins and writing groups.

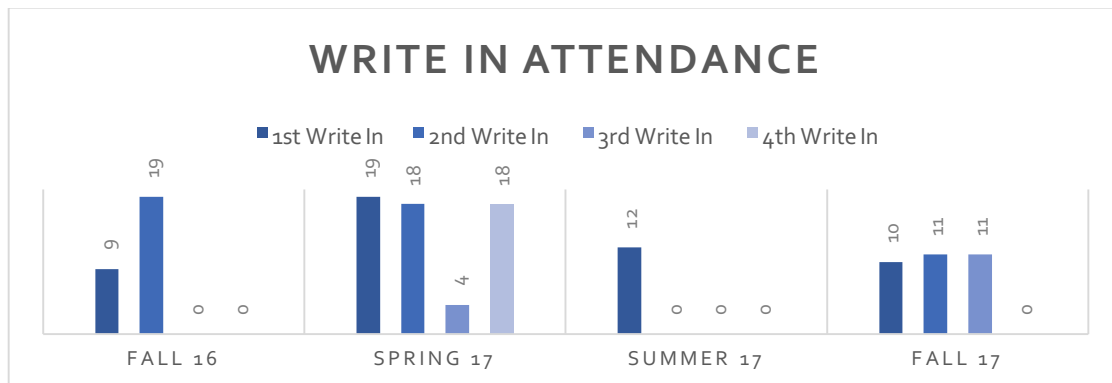
Write Ins

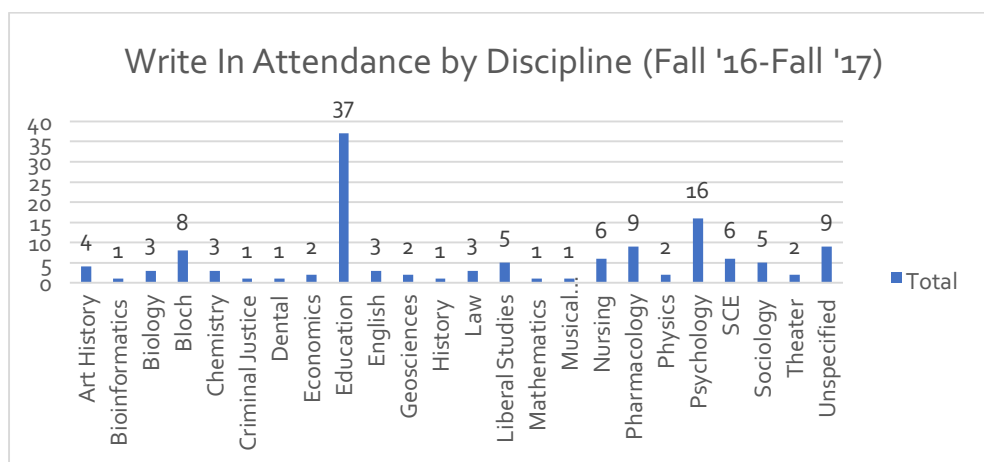
What:

- Day-long writing retreats
- Writing consultants and research librarians on hand
- Coffee, breakfast, lunch & snacks

Where:

- Diastole & Miller Nichols Library





Writers say they value the Write Ins for [goal setting & time management strategies](#), [community](#), the [encouraging & motivating environment](#), [feedback](#), and a chance to learn about their own [writing process](#). Here's how writers describe the benefits of Write Ins:

- "I think anyone willing to attend a Write-In is already fairly disciplined, but being around like-minded people who want to write is excellent."
- "I greatly benefitted from the intro presentation....[and I] would like to learn more about reworking my writing process."
- "Not to rush. At the beginning, it's important to spend time reading/taking notes/making connections prior to writing"
- "It's ok to realize when I've reached my stopping point for the day and to not burn out. There's always tomorrow to pick it back up!"
- "Revisions + drafts are so important to refining and comprehend[ing] the content."
- "The amount of work that I got done in a short time, in addition to planning out future writing sessions over the next several weeks."

Writing Group #8

- Since Summer 2016, the GWI has organized 6-8 writing groups per semester. Writing Group #8 is our star group, meeting since that first summer:
 - Interdisciplinary writing group with Master's & Doctoral students from Counseling & Ed Psych, Psychology, Urban Studies, Art History, Law, Education

What Writing Group #8 says:

- "Joining a graduate writing group...was the best thing I have done as a graduate student at UMKC. I felt isolated without a cohort as a part-time student in the MALS until the smart, warm, encouraging people of Group 8 became my graduate family." --Urban Studies, MALS
- "We[re] all there for protected time. As busy individuals, talking ourselves out of making time for writing was our common problem. With this group, that [doesn't] happen. I NEED that protected time, free from distraction, in order to write...or at least to develop the habits that will make consistent writing easier." --Psychology, PhD
- "[I] really enjoyed the opportunity to meet other people who are struggling in writing—but in different disciplines. I believe that just meeting has been the motivator for me to get myself back on track and actually get something accomplished."--Art History, MA

Feedback: We help writers revise with Writing Studio appointments.

Academic Year	Students	Visits	% of Total Visits to Writing Studio
AY 2009-2010	64	170	6.6%
AY 2010-2011	84	198	9.0%
AY 2011-2012	142	449	15.4%
AY 2012-2013	304	1151	24.4%
AY 2013-2014	299	957	21.2%
AY 2014-2015	286	1006	23.0%
AY 2015-2016	291	1182	27%
AY 2016-2017	239	1008	25.6 %

OUR MOTIVATION

Why Should We Provide Graduate Writing Support?

- Across academia, a “felt need” for graduate writing support (Simpson, Caplan, Cox, & Phillips, 2016)
 - Expectation that students come to grad school prepared to write
 - But that’s not always true. Institutions are now supporting grad writers.
- At least ¼ of students who begin a PhD don’t finish (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008)
 - Biggest roadblock is often writing the dissertation
- Graduate school is an “apprenticeship”
 - I.e. graduate school is a *learning* experience. Students are writing in new disciplines and genres, often in high stakes situations.
 - Important time to develop professional and scholarly identity

- Learning in grad school is decentralized, relying on mentorship/advising relationships –and these can vary greatly depending on department and/or adviser (Simpson, 2012)
- Graduate support has been described as “fragmented” (Simpson, Caplan, Cox, & Phillips, 2016), with little agreement on who should provide it
- Research shows that graduate writing support relies on partnerships between faculty and students across campus (Brady & Singh-Corcoran), like UMKC’s Graduate Writing Initiative
- Graduate writers need a “network” of support (Goad, Harrison, Hedengren, & Lindsey, 2017)
 - Multiple sources of writing support are necessary—students can’t just rely on one.
 - The Graduate Writing Initiative provides important elements of this network
- At UMKC:
 - Graduate students report feeling underprepared and left to fend for themselves
 - Faculty say that their students need support and that they need teaching and mentorship support
 - Provost has expressed a need for stronger graduate programs, especially M.A. programs
 - Some students are taking a long time to finish
 - And many are ABD
 - Writing is a transferable skill—employees in the KC area request better writing and communication skills from graduates

FOR FURTHER READING

- Brady & Singh-Corcoran (2016). A space for change: Writing center partnerships to support graduate writing.” *Writing Lab Newsletter*, 40 (5-6), 2-9.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2008). *Ph.D. completion project*. Retrieved from <http://www.phdcompletion.org/>
- Goad, R.G., Harrison, H.V., Hedengren, M., Lindsay, T. (2017, March). Crop rotation: Toward a Holistic Cultivation of Graduate Writers. Session at the meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Portland, OR.
- Lawrence, S. & Myers Zawacki, T. (2016). Special issue on writing center support for graduate thesis and dissertation writers. *Writing Lab Newsletter: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, 40 (5-6).
- Simpson, S. (2012). The problem of graduate-level writing support: Building a cross-campus graduate writing initiative. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 36(1), 95-118.
- Simpson, S., Caplan, N., Cox, M., & Phillips, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Supporting graduate writers: Research, curriculum, & program design*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.