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.

![Workshop Attendance Chart]

**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

![Write In Attendance Chart]
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.

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

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 ⅓ 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)
  o Multiple sources of writing support are necessary—students can’t just rely on one.
  o The Graduate Writing Initiative provides important elements of this network
• At UMKC:
  o Graduate students report feeling underprepared and left to fend for themselves
  o Faculty say that their students need support and that they need teaching and mentorship support
  o Provost has expressed a need for stronger graduate programs, especially M.A. programs
  o Some students are taking a long time to finish
    ▪ And many are ABD
  o 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.
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.