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Writing Center Assists Students with Assignments

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Writing Center Assists Students with Assignments

April 1, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Spring semester is in full swing at Illinois Wesleyan University and many students are busy researching and writing papers for finals. While students may feel overwhelmed with their studies and writing requirements, the University provides assistance. If students would like their papers read by trained eyes or even need help starting their research, they can visit the on-campus Writing Center, available for consultation on papers and projects of any topic.

Joel Haefner, director of the Writing Center, says the main goal is “to help students see how they can help themselves” not just on a particular paper, however, with their writing in general. Many Gateway professors (small, discussion-oriented classes designed to develop students’ proficiency in writing) have taken advantage of these services, either bringing their classes into the center or requiring that students visit the center for a certain number of papers.

The Writing Center, with a staff of 15 tutors, is located on the main floor of Buck Memorial Library. Each year approximately 1500-1800 tutorials are completed.

According to Haefner, most papers are five pages or less and are typically brought in by walk-ins, or students without an appointment. The tutor presents the student with a form asking his or her basic information, whether or not to e-mail the professor who assigned the paper and for the context of the writing assignment. The tutor then reads the paper, making corrections and suggestions.

The Writing Center is useful not only for rough drafts but also before the writing process begins. The tutor can help the student narrow the topic and look for material. The tutors, who do not write the papers for the students, take a semester long non-credit course that is certified by the College Reading and Learning Association. In this program the writing coaches are taught to gloss the rough draft, test each paragraph against the thesis, discuss the paper and provide a summary of what the writer should do to strengthen the paper. Haefner has found that it is helpful to have a list of corrections to make during the rough draft stage.

Amanda Swanson, a senior English major from Park Ridge, Ill., is one of the writing tutors. She began the “Tutor Training” program in spring 2008. According to Swanson, the Writing Center is very useful. “Sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes to notice some rough parts in the language of a paper or holes in the presented argument,” said Swanson.

Thinking about using these services, Swanson says, “The best way to use the Writing Center is to come in a few days before the paper is due. This gives the student enough time to edit the paper based on the suggestions made. Also, it leaves enough time for a tutor to look at the new draft after the changes are made because there is still time to schedule a second appointment” said Swanson. “There’s nothing wrong or painful about getting a second opinion on your paper before turning it in. It’s free, after all.”

For more information, call the Writing Center at (309) 556- 3810 or visit their Web site at <http://www.iwu.edu/writingcenter/>.

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