



Winter 2-12-2021

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Rachel McCarthy
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Recommended Citation

McCarthy, Rachel, "Newly Virtual Writing Center Expands Services" (2021). *News and Events*. 4084.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/4084>

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Newly Virtual Writing Center Expands Services

Feb. 12, 2021

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The [Writing Center](#) is expanding its services beyond the walls of Illinois Wesleyan University, with additional online workshops and one-on-one tutoring sessions aimed at IWU graduates and high school students alike.

Led by IWU student tutors from all years and majors, the Writing Center has served as a long-standing resource for students looking to improve their writing skills. Located on the first floor of The Ames Library, it provides a welcoming space for students to discuss current assignments — Gateway essays, senior research papers, internship applications and more — with peers who are trained to offer support and constructive feedback.

Now, the shift to online tutoring during the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up new opportunities to connect with writers beyond campus. Assuming her position in the fall of 2019, it wasn't long before Director of the Writing Center Anna Scanlon, who has a doctorate in transatlantic literature and medical humanities, found herself revamping the Writing Center's typical layout when COVID-19 closed its physical doors during the spring of 2020. Online appointments, increased social media outreach, and campus-wide Zoom workshops kept the Writing Center connected to current students — and a few returning faces as well.

"It was clear to me that once our IWU students graduated, they often didn't know how to replace the Writing Center resource," explained Scanlon. "So, it seemed logical to let them know they didn't have to. We've got the skills, and the space now that we've upgraded our system to offer virtual appointments, to help any of our writers who need it."

Virtual writing workshops on topics such as cover letters and personal statements have consistently attracted alumni, who often schedule individual follow-up appointments with a Writing Center tutor. So far, most alumni engagement has come from recent graduates applying to graduate school, which means many of them have ties to current tutors from their undergraduate days. Working with alumni also gives tutors the opportunity to develop their tutoring styles further and catch a glimpse of what waits beyond graduation.

In maintaining alumni connections, the Writing Center serves as a reminder that Illinois Wesleyan students are supported by the University beyond graduation. "We hope that if students see that they're not just part of the University for four years, but instead for much longer, they'll be more willing to come back for events and more appreciative of the experiences they get," said Scanlon.

The Writing Center's expanded services also include offering assistance with college application essays to high school students. This outreach program, which is currently in development, provides students with valuable guidance from tutors who have experienced the college application process.

Increasing access to the Writing Center demonstrates that everyone is on a journey to become a better writer, from high school juniors drafting their first application essays to full-fledged adults pursuing their careers.

"We hope that those students who worry about using tutoring services—thinking they're only for "bad" students—will see that even graduates come back to take advantage of all the help they can get to achieve their goals. We believe this program can go a long way in removing the remedial stigma from tutoring."

For more information or to register for a workshop, please email Director of the Writing Center Anna Scanlon: ascanlon@iwu.edu.



Director of the Writing Center Anna Scanlon

By Rachel McCarthy '21