The WCenter has several new resources to support students in their writing development, including five new handouts designed to provide students with additional tools to succeed in their writing for courses at SBCC.

“Structure of a Personal Narrative Essay” and “Writing a Compare/Contrast Essay” focus on common types of academic writing and supplement our standard “Structure of an Expository Essay” handout. These handouts provide students with information about each essay type, and what elements each commonly employs, as well as structured space in which to prepare to write in these modes.

“Independent Grammar Workshop: Sample Sentences” is designed to provide tutors and students with common vocabulary, methods, and examples with which to systematically address sentence-level writing issues.

“Preparing for In-Class Writing” suggests strategies to prepare for an essay exam effectively, such as writing potential test questions before the exam and organizing time during the test. “Developing a Thesis Statement” outlines the basic function of the academic thesis and provides examples of theses for common essay types. Students can use the tables provided to practice writing theses for their current assignments.

These handouts and all of our writing support materials are available on the Writing Center website. In addition you will find a downloadable Power Point orientation to Writing Center services, the Instructor Referral Form, and past issues of Notes from the Writing Center.

Special thanks to tutors Lou Erb and Sarah Rodríguez for their contributions to the thesis statement and sample sentences handouts.

~ Nicole Biergiel, LT A
Lisa Danhi, LTA

Spring Hours:
MON - TH 9 AM — 7 PM
FRI 9 AM — 3 PM
SAT 10 AM — 2 PM
Also see Calendar of Events, Page 2

ON THE PULSE OF THE WCENTER

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CLRC DIRECTOR NOTES

Many students think that asking for help implies weakness. Practices within the WCenter attempt to correct this misconception by engaging students in activities that invite self-reliance throughout the tutoring process. Many of the procedures and forms in the WCenter help students appreciate a higher-order alternative to “I need help; therefore, I’m weak.”

For example, students fill out a Directed Learning Activity (DLA) before meeting with a tutor. It asks them to read their paper, circle a couple of sections on which to focus, and then write one specific question for the tutor. They next check off some boxes listed in Prewriting, Working Draft, and Sentence Level respectively. The check-boxes encourage another bit of self-direction and also remind them of the three major categories of the writing process. Then students indicate what they covered if they previously met with a tutor regarding this assignment and what their “next steps” were from that session. “Next Steps” are established between the tutor and the student at the end of each tutoring session. This way, the student sees that learning events don’t exist in a vacuum, that learning is a process, that in the immortal words of Mark Ferrer, “writing is never done; it’s just due.”

If you have any questions about learning assistance, please email or give me a call at X2673.

~ Dr. Jerry Pike, CLRC Director
I am a graduate student in the English Department at UCSB, currently working on my Ph.D. Though my background is in researching and teaching literature, especially nineteenth-century British poetry, I have also taught in Art History, Black Studies, and composition, and worked as a proofreader for colleagues and an academic journal. I have been at the Writing Center for almost two years now.

My experiences in these different fields and as a writer myself all tell me the same thing: writing is not easy, so any resource that makes it just a little less frustrating is a welcome one. I am proud to be part of the team at the Writing Center because the tutors not only seek to ease the immediate difficulties of every writer but also help each of them recognize the bigger ideas and overarching strategies that connect every assignment to an ongoing process of intellectual development.

Will Scilacci, Writing Center Tutor

One difference between informal speech and formal academic writing is the use of the pronoun you. Although one might say “You should go to the museum to see the terrific exhibit of miniature sculpture” to introduce a topic in conversation. “You” is an expression of “direct address” (i.e., spoken directly to another and generally not appropriate in an essay. To get the yous out of an essay, underline them first, then try these strategies to revise each sentence:

INFORMAL: You can tell the sculptures are ancient by the cracks in their edges.

1. Replace the pronoun you with a specific noun: viewers, people, visitors
   Viewers can tell the sculptures are ancient by the cracks in their edges.

2. Restructure the sentence by changing the subject:
   The cracks in the sculpture mark the age of the pieces.

Learn a variety of Self-Editing Strategies by attending the Self-Editing Writing Skills Workshop in the CLRC, Thursday, March 12, 1 – 1:50 PM. The workshop materials are also available on the Handouts page of the Writing Center website: www.sbcc.edu/learningresources/website/WL/WritingCenter.htm

INSTRUCTOR INQUIRIES

Will tutors work with students before they have written their papers?

Yes, students are invited to begin their writing assignments by meeting with a tutor before they write the essay itself. In fact, some of the most productive, effective tutoring sessions focus on assignment analysis, brainstorming, outlining, and critical discussion of the student’s assignment and topic.

Some instructors incorporate WCenter tutorials into their curriculum by requiring students to see a tutor at least once for each essay. Students often benefit by working with a tutor in the planning of their work instead of waiting until later in the process. By utilizing Socratic open-ended questions, graphic organizers, reflective listening, list making, and other strategies, tutors help students articulate, arrange, and develop their ideas in alignment with the assignment criteria. This process assists students in formulating a comprehensive and systematic approach to the essay, which often results in a more cohesive, analytical, thoughtful paper.

Students should bring the course syllabus, assignment sheet, class notes and other texts in order to guide their work with the tutor. Additionally, students can complete the blue Pre-Writing DLA before the tutorial to request this type of session.

Instructors may submit questions for this column to writingcenter@sbcc.edu.