Letter from the Editor

While students relax and recharge during the summer months, we in the Business Communication Center (BCC) at the Sam M. Walton College of Business are preparing for the new fall semester, and we are working hard to better serve Walton College.

In this issue, our tutors write about some of the things we are doing. Cami English describes the Fellows Program, which caters to Walton faculty. Paige Hermansen shares a moving story, Rachael Jensen writes about our growing online communication lab, and Shelby Riggs highlights sustainability in the BCC and beyond. This new issue also spotlights two of our tutors, Allison Banks and Jon Green, and welcomes a new teammember to the Center.

BCC Online Communication Lab
by Rachael Jensen

The Business Communication Center is in the process of updating our website, which hosts our online communication lab (OCL). Our OCL provides the academic and professional community with 24-hour access to a variety of categories of written and oral communication resources, such as Business Writing, Public Speaking/Presentation, Grammar, Document Design, and Research. Faculty members use our resources as teaching tools in the classroom or as guides for business writing assignments, and students seek out our resources for guidance, from thesis statements to business plans.

OCL resources are also used during tutoring sessions to inform both tutors and students, clarify abstract or difficult concepts, and provide students with a physical copy of what was discussed during the tutoring session. A number of people from the professional community and other universities have reported using our OCL, driving the number of website hits to more than 24,000 in the last year.

The objective for updating our website was to provide consistency and excellence. As the manager of our website, I began by implementing a system for editing, formatting, standardizing, branding, organizing, and publishing our resources. As a result, the OCL is becoming more consistently user-friendly.

In addition to updates, we have been working on a series of reserve resources that will exclusively benefit Walton students applying for scholarships and grants. We also are working on special resources for our dual degree students studying in Suzhou, China, which will be a part of the reserved resources. We have recently added a new page to our website for resources on oral communication and public speaking. The oral communication resources, in particular, will be another way to incorporate multimedia teaching tools.

In the very near future, we plan to provide links on our website to those resources in our video library. We will also be designing several PDFs that will include embedded video, designed for those who are more visual learners.

Expect to see many more exciting changes in the future, including an online tool for teaching APA, MLA, and Chicago style citations and a Walton Business Communication Center YouTube channel.
The Business Communication Fellows Program is designed to partner with faculty members to create, teach, and evaluate written or oral communication assignments in either academic or professional contexts. The goal is to increase communication opportunities for business students. In the past, we have had several graduate tutors partner with faculty members, tailoring the communication event to meet the Assurance of Learning goals and the course objectives.

All of our fellows are qualified MA or PhD students and are able to work with students as much or as little as a faculty member desires, inside and outside of scheduled class time. Additionally, the fellow provides feedback to students and to the faculty as the students complete their assignments. For example, in previous semesters, marketing professor Molly Jensen has worked with Paige Hermansen on response papers designed to improve students’ writing skills. Paige introduced the assignment and its goals to the students in half-hour workshops. Then she met with students outside class, individually and in small groups, to assist them. Cami English also worked as a fellow with Jensen for her Nonprofit/Cause Marketing course. The two worked together to improve the students’ presentation skills, with Cami coaching students during practice time before their final presentations.

Accounting professor Karen Pincus has also used the Fellows Program for both written and oral communication assignments in her Ethics and Corporate Governance course, a class for graduate and honors undergraduate accounting students. Since 2011, she and BCC director Jeannie Waller have developed four professional writing assignments for the class. They have also provided students with workshops aimed at improving the students’ written communication skills. For the final assignment, Waller provides constructive criticism on students’ writing, whereas Pincus provides criticism of the content.

In the fall of 2015, Cami began working with Pincus to teach the students how to deliver effective and engaging presentations. The students were assigned three presentations for which Cami provided in-class workshops and conferencing outside class. Students were required to complete dry-run rehearsals outside class for which they received feedback specific to them, and Cami also provided critiques on the final presentations. As a result, Pincus’s students showed marked improvement in both oral and written communication skills.

### Sidenote: Clarity in Business Writing

You can improve the clarity of your sentences by changing your syntax – the number and order of words in a sentence.

**Weak Subject and Unnecessary Words:** “The use of this procedure would eliminate a 15% loss in revenue, if followed.”

**Better:** This procedure would eliminate a 15% loss in revenue.

**Expletive Construction with Nominalization:** “After analysis, there are several recommendations that we have.”

**Better:** After analysis, we recommend these fixes.

**Negative Construction:** “Today, not many people don’t know how to use a computer.”

**Better:** Today, most people know how to use a computer.

### A Word from the Director

During the summer months, our center sees fewer students, so we have more time to work on projects for the fall and spring semesters. One of the projects of significance will be creating a communication handbook for the Suzhou students who are in the dual degree program.

Additionally, we are working toward creating a series of workshops for Leadership Walton, improving existing workshops for students in the Walton Honors Program, and developing our Freshman Business Connections freshmen writing assignment and workshops for the fall 2016. Of course, we are also working on our website and will begin editing our English as a Second Language resources and creating screen capture videos to assist students who may be struggling with their written English. We are excited to be partnering with the Career Development Center to bring an exciting project to our students this fall. If you have a minute or two, drop by the center and enjoy a cup of coffee and let us know how your summer is going. We are also open to new ideas about future projects.
Staff Spotlight

Allison Banks

Allison Banks has been a writing tutor at the BCC since May 2014, when she took a work-study position while attending the Academy of Math and Science Upward Bound Bridge Program.

While at the center, she has acquired experience in tutoring business majors on projects and papers ranging from honors theses to Comp I essays to PhD dissertations. Her expertise includes writing for composition courses, creative writing, social sciences, and environmental studies; however, she loves to tackle projects and papers of all genres. Since then, she has been an integral part of the team, not just as a tutor, but as a leader in several BCC partnerships, including the Freshman Business Connections writing assignment and international Model UN. In addition to coordinating the tutoring schedule, she has been working diligently for months on developing resources for the BCC website. Not only has she created many written business-writing resources, she has also helped to build an online video library that will soon be available via the BCC website.

In April, Allison represented the BCC at the College English Association conference in Denver, Colorado, where she co-presented “Out from Under Our Wing: Undergraduate Mentorship in the Writing Center,” a presentation examining current writing center pedagogy, particularly as it applies to the business college and writing across the curriculum. Much as with her degree program, Allison came to the center already prepared, and the BCC is fortunate to have her.

Jon Green

Jon Green is a PhD student in the Rhetoric and Composition program who is interested in the connections between teaching music and teaching writing. More specifically, Jon believes that many of the same practice methods music students use to improve their playing can be used similarly by writing students to improve their writing. His dissertation argues that college writing instructors should be cultivating the same habits of good practice that music educators teach to their own students. Jon has been an instructor for the English Department since 2010 (minus a two-year hiatus), where he has taught Composition I, Composition II, and Technical Writing. He has also been a writing tutor for the Business Communication Center for over a year, where he specializes in freshman composition, business correspondence, and legal writing. Jon has created multiple instructional resources for the BCC online writing lab, including step-by-step guides for the Composition I and II major paper assignments. As a teacher and tutor, Jon values one-on-one interaction, and he believes the best way to help students is to address the individual concerns that are most important to them.

Jon has led several discussions to help instructors in the English Department develop new and improved methods for giving feedback to their students. When he isn’t doing research, teaching, or tutoring, Jon likes to play music with his band, The Mountain Gypsies, and with his wife, Lucia, and one-year-old son, Occam (who still needs some practice).

Our Newest Member

Welcome, Austin Araujo! The newest member of our team is a junior from Elkins, Arkansas, majoring in English with a co-major in Latino/a Studies. Austin has expertise in both creative writing and journalism, and he served on the sports staff of The Arkansas Traveler; however, he is equally at home discussing math, science, and engineering, too.

Michelle Obama, May 26, 2016

Santa Fe Indian School Commencement, Santa Fe, New Mexico
One morning in February, an undergraduate student majoring in marketing stopped by the Business Communication Center to talk to one of our tutors about her honors thesis project. She was a bit frustrated. Although she had some fascinating ideas for research on local retailers, she had reached a dreaded (and sometimes inevitable) point in the writing process: She was stuck. She had questions, but she wasn’t sure how to go about asking them. She knew the area she wanted to explore, but she couldn’t quite get started. The blank page on her computer screen and that blinking cursor filled her with so much dread that her project was at a standstill.

As she talked about her concerns, a few of our tutors gathered around and started chatting with her about her ideas. They asked her questions about what sparked her interest in marketing. They asked her how her thesis project might fit into her career ambitions. She talked about how her research might help her after she graduates when she opens her own clothing boutique. As the conversation continued, her concerns turned into renewed curiosity.

Her answers revealed possible avenues for research and expanded research questions. Before she left the center after that first visit, she said something we hear from many of the Walton students who visit us: “I just wish I’d come here sooner!”

Underneath the anxiety and writer’s block surrounding her project was confidence and excitement about her topic. All it took was a conversation, and that’s what the Business Communication Center is at its heart: a place to start important conversations, a place to share ideas, a place to get excited about communicating our ideas with the world and watching them grow.

To encourage students to start that conversation about their projects, we hold regular honors thesis workshops to give undergraduate students in the Walton Honors Program the opportunity to get a jump-start on their projects. Our tutors have been happy to help them with every step along the way. From brainstorming to collecting data – and the formidable step of getting it all down on paper – Walton students are hard at work on projects that will make meaningful contributions to their fields.

As we enter another semester at the Business Communication Center, we hope to continue the conversation that we’ve begun. When students bring in their ideas and their drafts, they also bring the excitement that keeps our center humming.

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Green Behavior = Green Business
by Shelby Riggs

There is increasing pressure on businesses to reduce the environmental impact of global consumption while sustaining profits. By thinking systemically, sustainability can be incorporated in every decision and action of any organization no matter the size or structure.

Through actions such as measuring and reducing electricity and water consumption and recycling, Walton has taken great strides in achieving sustainable behaviors. It also promotes sustainable business practices through its highly successful entrepreneurship programs, which actively promote and encourage green businesses.

In the BCC, we cut costs by relying heavily on digital content. We turn computers off at the end of each day and take advantage of motion-sensor lighting, which is used in most Walton buildings. We reduce waste by using reusable lunch containers and dishes that stay in the office.

By balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns, it is possible for individuals, organizations, and even nations to innovate sustainable practices that both cut costs and increase productivity.