This semester we have taken significant steps to better serve the needs of the Walton College of Business. We have added three communication tutors to our staff to help students with public speaking and presentations. Their expertise includes interviewing, speech evaluations, conflict resolution, remote interviews, teleconferencing, webinars, and much more. In addition, they have created website resources, many of which will soon be converted into videos. These resources cover various topics in the field of oral communication, including overcoming speech apprehension, outlining speeches, analyzing audience, and vocalics, or using your voice to create meaning.

We are at the beginning of a fruitful relationship within the Business Communication Center and also between the BCC and Walton College. Through hard work and with support from Walton College, the BCC will be a success this semester and for many semesters to come.

Merging the writing and communication staff has created a better way to serve both Walton students and faculty. Our writing tutors have worked extensively with faculty in the past to create and evaluate writing-related assignments. Now, the Communication Center has evolved its partnership with the faculty and staff of Walton College by also catering to oral-communication-related assignments.

Letter from the Editor

Writing this introduction to our quarterly newsletter is a great honor and joy because it is the Sam M. Walton Business Communication Center’s first ever newsletter. We have always wanted to disseminate literature about our center, and now we are proud to present our Winter edition.

In this quarter’s newsletter, we celebrate the addition of graduate communication specialists to our staff. Consisting of both written and oral communication experts, we now can better meet the needs of the Walton Business College. This union has prompted our name change from the Walton Writing Center to the more accurate Business Communication Center.

This edition highlights two of our tutors, Cami English and Courtney Wilson, and Business Librarian, Jonathan Torres. Also, this newsletter recounts the participation of several of our tutors at academic conferences. Cannon Varnell and Jeannie Waller attended the Symposium on Second Language Writing in Auckland, New Zealand. Our communication specialists, Rachael Jensen and Shelby Riggs, attended the National Communication Association’s 101st Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. Our tutors’ attendance and presentations at these prestigious conferences reflect our commitment to advancing our knowledge and remain current in our ever-evolving fields.

I want to thank all the contributors, our director, Jeannie Waller, and our creative director, Cannon Varnell; we hope you enjoy our Winter issue.

Writing Center Becomes Business Communication Center
The Fall semester brought lots of excitement to the Business Communication Center! We welcomed new tutors who have brought a wide range of skills and expertise to the table, and they worked hard to help Walton College students with a variety of written assignments and oral presentations. Now the Spring semester has begun and when our tutors are between appointments, the BCC has been buzzing with interesting conversations about the assignments we’ve worked on with students, from scholarship applications to honors theses. We have begun a very interesting and fruitful dialogue about the relationship between written and oral communication. Our staff has come together to form a dynamic and collaborative group of talented, bright, and caring tutors.

Our new tutors were put to the test right away when students began submitting their FBC writing assignments early in the Fall semester, and they handled the daunting process of evaluating hundreds of briefs with patience and skill. Even though we all got a bit bleary-eyed after staring at our computer screens for hours, we are very proud of what we have accomplished and believe that freshman students in the Walton College will benefit tremendously from that experience.

With our oral communication tutors on board, we can now work with faculty to help students develop their public speaking skills. It’s been so rewarding to learn about new strategies for giving presentations and engaging audiences; as we’ve been helping students, I have been picking our new tutors’ brains for ideas about how to enhance my own skills!

Now, as the spring semester is just beginning, we’re ready for the challenge!

Creating a Communication Culture in the Sam M. Walton College of Business

Last fall, Walton on Writing (WOW) – consisting of Jeannie Waller, Director of Business Communication Center, Dr. Jeff Hood, Director of Undergraduate Programs, Wayne Jones, Director of Instructional Design and Assurance of Learning, and Dr. Karen Boston, Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs – developed a writing project designed to introduce Walton freshmen to business writing. WOW created a writing assignment that challenged students enrolled in Freshman Business Connections (FBC) to create a business brief based on information gathered from a wide array of business trade journals and directed to a fictitious board of directors. The assignment met five important business literacy goals set by the team: 1) to teach students the difference between academic and business writing; 2) to introduce students to critical thinking skills and writing strategies for illustrating the analysis of the information; 3) to demonstrate the importance of writing in the business profession; 4) to introduce the students to the communication center staff; and 5) to provide an indicator of where students might be struggling. The team members felt that the exercise was a huge success with a 92.3% participation rate on an assignment that wasn’t required. They hope to require all students to participate in a similar assignment next year, which will also be carried out through the Freshman Business Connections course. Waller says, “Creating a large literacy project that focuses on specific literacies such as communication or, in this case, business writing, is not only innovative in our college and our university, but it is also innovative for business colleges nationwide.” She hopes that Walton can provide a model for other business colleges worldwide for creating and implementing such a huge writing event and for interdisciplinary collaboration.
Staff Spotlight

Courtney Wilson

Courtney Wilson is a tutor in the Business Communication Center; as a tutor she assists students with their written and oral communication assignments. A key component of her job is leading students to find solutions to barriers that they may have in their efforts to communicate effectively. In her desire to help students, she creates a better learning experience in showing students how to find solutions rather than giving the solutions herself.

She is in a unique position as a freshman tutor because it is usually upperclassmen who hold tutoring positions. Tutoring as a freshman is advantageous for her, because the information and processes involved are still fresh, as she experiences classes along with other students. Thus, she has a clear understanding of the objectives and expectations of the assignments. Courtney’s unique role as a peer tutor benefits Walton College students and expands the depth of the communication center staff.

Courtney is an accounting major, and she fully understands that effective oral and written communication is a key component of any professional career. Since she has always enjoyed helping others, she now enjoys being able to grow and developing better communication skills through tutoring her peers.

Cami English

Cami English is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Public Policy Program focusing on community development and family policy. Prior to entering the program, Cami double-majored in broadcast journalism and communication, and then went on to pursue a master’s degree in communication focusing on political rhetoric with an emphasis on race and gender politics.

Currently, Cami studies the social construction of domestic violence victims and the policy outcomes resulting from those constructions. Additionally, she is conducting a comprehensive needs assessment for domestic violence policies and programs in the state of Arkansas in conjunction with the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts Domestic Violence Program. In addition to her work on campus, Cami is also an active participant in the community. She has volunteered with many non-profit and government organizations, including Habitat for Humanity of Washington County, the Arkansas Sierra Club, and the Telecommunications Board for the City of Fayetteville, serving on the board of directors for each organization.

At the Business Communication Center, Cami serves as a communication specialist. With several years of banking experience prior to her return to school, Cami plans to apply industry knowledge to her communication background and assist students and faculty with their oral communication needs within the Walton College. Her specific areas of expertise include public speaking, rhetorical analysis, cultural diversity, and business communication.

Did you know?
You may already know that the Business Communication Center staff has expertise in a wide variety of academic areas, everything from anthropology to gender studies to organizational sustainability, but did you know that we also represent a broad range of professional fields as well? For example, Rachael Jensen has experience in Accounts Receivable, and Cannon Varnell was the CFO of a neuroscience research company. Cami English worked for years in banking, and Jon Green was a professional writer in the insurance industry.

Rachael Jensen Wins at National Communication Conference!

Rachael Jensen received a Top Student Paper Award at the National Communication Association (NCA) convention, and was the only undergraduate selected to present on the Top Student Papers in Political Communication panel, which included masters and Ph.D. students from the best programs in the country. Her paper is entitled “Subordination of the Feminine Voice: Hillary Clinton’s Speech to the 2008 Democratic National Convention.” She is currently preparing to submit the article for publication. Congratulations, Rachael!
In 2011, when Dr. Karen Boston, Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Programs, Dr. Javier Reyes, Associate Dean for Executive Education and Undergraduate Programs, and I began our discussion of creating a writing center, we always knew that it would eventually evolve into a communication center, and that evolution began this semester with the addition of three oral communication graduate tutors and one communication undergraduate tutor.

Our goals in 2011 remain our goals today: 1) to work with our faculty to assist in creating more communication opportunities for our students, providing supplemental resources to accompany a wide range of communication assignments; 2) to improve our students’ oral and written communication skills, using their own written and oral communication work as a teaching tool; and 3) to create a communication culture within the college that will expect all of our students to improve their communication skills so that they will be a coveted commodity for corporations everywhere and through their communication skills they will be the leaders of corporations nationwide. Additionally, to add to what our center offers, we have partnered with Jonathan Torres, our business librarian, so that our students now have everything they need to create and execute the perfect communication event.

We continue to strive toward improving business students’ communication skills, both written and oral, and we do this through tutoring, in-class presentations, workshops, and supplemental resources. Finally, our expanding website houses a variety of written and oral communication resources, and recently we have begun to create and upload a variety of videos addressing oral and written communication events. We still have work to do, so stay tuned for updates on how the Business Communication Center is working to improve students’ communication skills.

A Word from the Director

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By Jonathan M. Torres

I’ve always had a passion for helping others. My father who currently works as a Library Associate for Rutgers University introduced me to the world of academic libraries at a young age. However, my desire to learn about business management and organizational theory grew throughout my years at Rutgers University. After years of working in both the corporate world, as well as at several academic libraries, I finally decided that my path to success aimed directly at librarianship.

The research and information industry continues to rapidly evolve. As a business librarian, I am always learning about innovative resources and databases that I can introduce to the students and faculty of Walton. Nonetheless, one of the greatest incentives in my profession is learning and helping others succeed with their academic goals.

When teaching library instruction to my students I often mention the “competitive advantage” that Walton students have over many academic institutions. The University of Arkansas Libraries offers the highest quality of research content. Many of the academic databases that are available to students are often utilized by corporations for various purposes. As a result, the value of learning the functionalities of specific library databases can help students succeed both academically and professionally.

Overall, it has been a pleasure to work in conjunction with the Walton Business Communication Center. We have provided exceptional services to students who need assistance with writing, research, and communication-related areas. I’m looking forward to developing this partnership for many years to come!

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