“Most people have had bad experiences with writing. They have come to dislike it or fear it and usually they avoid it. Few people write by choice. Nevertheless, though good writing takes hard work and skill, I insist on some hopeful truths .... It is possible for anyone to write things that others will want to read. When people manage to say what they really mean and to get themselves into their writing, readers tend to have the experience of making contact with the writer—an experience that most people seek.”

—Peter Elbow

Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing
“In an environment that nurtures creativity and intellectual curiosity...
WHO WE ARE: WHAT WE DO

Our Mission
The Gavilan College Writing Center serves the campus community by fostering, celebrating and encouraging writers and the varied and multiple purposes and audiences that writing serves.

The center assists writers in identifying and developing tools and strategies to meet goals for their writing both in and out of the classroom. Likewise, the center collaborates with instructors in identifying and developing best writing teaching practices across the curriculum. It offers space for exploration and reflection on a wide range of written material, promotes an appreciation for literature and literacy, and cultivates diverse writers’ voices and the communities that nurture them.

Programs & Services

WRITING ASSISTANCE & CONSULTATION
- Drop-in & by appointment, five days a week, beginning at 8 a.m., up to 12 hours a day

SPACE & TUTORING SUPPORT FOR LAB INSTRUCTION
- Serving English 420, 440, & 250 labs

COMPUTER ACCESS & STUDY SPACE FOR ALL GAVILAN STUDENTS
- Drop-in five days a week, beginning at 8 a.m., up to 12 hours a day

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT LEARNING COMMUNITIES
- Peer tutors for up to 10 hours a week per section

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & FACULTY SERVICES
- Computer, printing, & phone access & meeting space
- Special writing across the curriculum events

ON-GOING TUTOR TRAINING & RECRUITMENT
- English 12A-D, providing 18 hours of training before the fall semester begins & ongoing training thereafter

VISITING ARTISTS & WRITERS & SCHOLARS IN RESIDENCE
- Literary workshops, performances, & other events with esteemed writers & scholars

PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITIES
- Vox Calumus, newsletter
- Friction literary journal
- Writing contests

STUDENT DRIVEN WRITING EVENTS
- Practice department exam
- Writing contests
- Open-mics
- Literary club meetings
Statistical Overview

The Writing Center serves Gavilan’s students, staff and faculty by providing peer tutoring, computer access, literary events, professional development, and meeting and study space to all. It serves the English Department through its supplemental instructional services to basic English skills labs and learning community classrooms.

Each semester, the center hires between 15-20 Writing Assistants (peer tutors) who are specially trained in specific strategies and approaches to help students improve their understanding of and ability to successfully master the writing and reading process. Tutors accomplish this in both one-on-one and small group sessions.

A GROWING NEED
The number of students logged-in for drop-in services increased by more than 16 percent between academic years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, reaching 5,345 hours. We anticipate that this increase will continue and be reflected in this year’s data, available at the end of the spring term.

The center has also seen the number of labs it covers through its peer-tutoring staff nearly double within the same time frame. It now covers more than 60 labs per term. This reflects a change in the number of lab classes being offered and a related growth in the English Department’s basic skills program, which now includes English 438 and 439, a set of basic literacy classes.

Funding

STUDENT STAFF/PEER TUTORS
The center receives $18,000 a year to pay its peer tutoring staff. During their first year of employment Writing Assistants are paid $9 an hour and receive $10 an hour in subsequent years, figures that have not increased for almost a decade. Depending on availability, work study funds cover the costs of some peer tutors. Additional funding to cover supplemental instruction for English Department Learning Communities, including First Year Experience, have been provided through about $5,000 of the Title V grant for each of the last two years.

COORDINATOR & ASSISTANT COORDINATOR
The Writing Center Coordinator is an English Instructor. Sixty percent of her load is covered by duties outside the coordination of the center. The Writing Center has an assistant coordinator, who costs about $19,000 a year. The assistant works 20 hours a week and covers the center when its coordinator is teaching. Additionally, the assistant coordinator performs a number of key functions critical to the center’s operation.

INCREASED COSTS/FLAT FUNDING
Though the center has significantly increased the number of drop-in hours it logs by 16 percent and the labs it covers by 174 percent, its funding has remained flat for at least a decade. In the past, the center has received $2,500 to cover all instructional supplies, including printing and copier costs. It is now facing cuts in this area.

...providing a high quality learning experience...
Assessment Information

Since 2003, the Writing Center has worked to provide students with high quality writing and reading experiences and to increase the number of students who know about and seek its services. It has also expanded its mission to include providing students, faculty and staff with opportunities to explore writing across the curriculum in a multitude of forms, including poetry and fiction. Over the last three years, it has strived to establish a community of writers and readers on and beyond the Gavilan campus, helping the college further develop its reputation as a place to foster creativity and inspire intellectual engagement.

To better understand how the center is or is not meeting its goals, it utilizes a number of assessment tools, including collecting log-in data for students using the center, end-of-the-year anonymous surveys, session record reflection forms, and feedback discussions with various members of the campus community.

AN EMPHASIS ON TRAINING

A qualitative review of end-of-the-year anonymous surveys from spring 2005 and 2006 found that students appreciated the center’s helpful and informed staff of peer tutors. Some students felt that the noise level at the center, which offers instructional labs and drop-in consultation sessions simultaneously throughout the day, hindered their learning.

The center has requested that the center’s redesign, part of the library building, include designated quiet rooms for students who need to work in relative silence while reading and writing but also need easy access to center staff.

WRITERS REPORT BENEFITS

The center’s “Writing Center Session Record” form asks students to rate their confidence and/or willingness to continue working on a piece of writing as a result of meeting with a peer tutor. Of 85 students who filled out the form, 58 percent reported a confidence level of 8 or higher on a scale of 1-10. Thirteen percent reported a confidence level of 6 or higher. Only one student said his or her confidence level reached only a level 2 or higher after the session.

STUDENTS’ KNOWLEDGE OF CENTER SERVICES

Between the academic years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the center saw the number of hours students logged in increase by 16 percent. However, a qualitative review of end-of-the-year surveys revealed that many students, including those enrolled in English classes were not aware of the center or its programs.

FACULTY FEEDBACK

It has proven difficult to get written feedback from faculty and staff members. Of the dozen or so surveys distributed at the end of last semester to English Department faculty working directly with the center’s peer tutors, only one was returned. Informal feedback discussions, however, indicate that faculty and staff appreciate the following: the center’s warm, relaxed environment; the dedication of its student staff; and its role in
collaborating around writing across the curriculum issues. Likewise, some instructors express confusion and/or a lack of clarity about how to best work with and utilize peer tutors. Currently, there are no formal training or orientation sessions to address these issues.

THE FUTURE
In an effort to continue providing high quality experiences and improving its ability to serve all students, the center has established the following goals:

- Continue to advocate for a more functional Writing Center during the library building redesign efforts, ensuring some quiet study areas are created.
- Increase promotional efforts so more people are aware of the center’s programs and services across the curriculum.
- Establish professional development training opportunities for instructors who are working directly with the center’s peer tutors.

People Say...

In anonymous surveys, the writers we serve say:

- “The staff is very friendly, and they help you to the fullest extent. They make sure you are ready to do a paper on your own.”
- “It’s fun and very comfortable.”
- “The people are nice.”
- “I love to do my homework at the lab center [sic].”
- “Awesome environment.”
- “They listen to everything you need.”
- “Friends say you concentrate better there.”
- “The environment is cool, and you get a lot of help there.”
- “The Writing Assistants are very good.”
- “Being surrounded by writers inspires writing.”
- I’m “writing better after every essay.”
- They “help with encouragement to stick it out.”
- “Despite the mistakes I made, people there looked beyond them.”

Our student staff says:

- “It is fun to help others, and I have noticed that writers really like my help and appreciate it. That makes me feel good.”
  — Jose Hernandez
- “It is a sometimes busy, sometimes quiet place that is needed.”
  — Erin Jacksich
- “It’s helping me boost my self-esteem, little by little.”
  — Juana Guerra
- “I work with people all the time whose background, interests, topics, culture prove to me my love for people and culture .... I now know I can problem solve across language and cultural barriers—I have learned that there is more than one way to learn.”
  — Micara Reinz
- “I understand now that to be a leader, you don’t necessarily have to be in a superior position. You just need to have a perspective.”
  — Yvonne Gonzalez
- “I feel like we’re a think tank, devoted to coming up with new methods to assist students.”
  — Tiffany Williams

In email interviews, faculty & staff say

- “I know once our ESL students move into mainstream classes, continued assistance, especially with their writing, is vital to their success .... I also appreciate [the] spirit of collaboration. Activities such as that are very helpful in bringing the faculty and staff together in a fun and informative way!”
  — Kathy Campbell
  ESL Instructor
- “Students have a place to go to get assistance with writing and we refer them often when they are having difficulties in English classes. [It’s a] Friendly, supportive environment.”
  — Anne Ratto
  EOPS, Director
- “My students who have made going to the Writing Center a habit light up when I mention it to them .... The writing assistants are professional and caring. They are also peers who act as role models and can answer questions about the campus from a student’s perspective. This is invaluable to developmental students.”
  — Jessica Hooper
  English Instructor
Workshops & Events

The center is committed to providing the campus with multiple opportunities for writers and readers to deeply engage with literary and academic languages. We believe that students who learn to explore their creativity through writing are more likely to find their voices as scholars. Engaging in the process of writing and reading through workshops and performances solidifies students’ identities within the academy and allows them to connect with writing and reading in its more academic forms.

Since 2003, the center has offered multiple opportunities for students, faculty and staff to come together and celebrate, practice and explore literature. Such events are free of charge and have included the following:

- Family stories, a Gavfest multi-generational activity
- Writing Screenplays, with MTV award-winner Steven Hanft
- A Sense of Place, with nationally recognized novelist & Gav alumna, Nina Marie Martinez
- Open-mics on campus & at Sue's Coffee & Barnes & Noble
- Hosting a Central California Writing Project professional development event
- Yoga for Writers, with Poet Maria Garcia Tabor
- Friction literary club writer-rama
- Writing as Performance, with artist in residence theater director Simone Federman
- Writing Across Borders, film premiere & professional development panel discussion
- Department exam practice sessions
- Creative writing workshops
- Spoken-word Workshop, with Poet Kitty Pettruccelli
- Writing games & open houses
Visting artist, poet Kitty Petruccelli, encouraged writers to “perform” their words in her spoken-word workshop. A week later faculty, staff and students came together to perform the poetry of adjunct instructor Richard Tice, during the center’s open-mic event at the student center.

...an exemplary, student centered community...

Faculty, staff and students enjoy a presentation by nationally recognized novelist and Gavilan alumna, Nina Marie Martinez.
(Above) Nationally recognized novelist and Gavilan alumna, Nina Marie Martinez—center—was greeted by her former counselor and instructor during a workshop she delivered to a group of faculty, staff and students.

(Above) A student in a developmental English class, who participated in a spoken-word workshop, later read her poem out loud—a first for her—before a crowd at the student center during an open-mic event.

(Left) A Gavilan staff-member studies a poem with a student during a poetry workshop at the center.  (Right) A group of students met in San Juan Bautista one Saturday during to write and read during an event co-hosted by the center and members of the Central California Writers Project, an professional development organization for teachers.
Thanks to Donors

All Writing Center events are presented free of charge, and most are open to any student, faculty and staff or community member who would like to participate. The center has no budget line to cover these events. They therefore would not be possible without the generous donations of the following groups and individuals:

- The Gavilan Associated Student Body
- The Writing Center’s student staff
- Fran Lozano, Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- The Gavilan College English Department
- The Gavilan College Theater Department
- The Hartnell College Literary Club
- Nina Marie Martinez, author

(Above) Students in a developmental English class got ready to perform monologues they wrote themselves. They were coached by professional theater director, Simone Federman, who presented a number of events during her week-long artists in residence stint in Fall 2006.
OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Expanded Programming

The Writing Center’s success has generated a multitude of additional ideas. Underlying each is the belief that reading and writing are critical to academic success and effective participation in civic life. Among the ideas under review are the following:

BASIC SKILLS INITIATIVES
- Link the English Department’s reading and writing programs, expanding our coverage and become the Center for Reading & Writing.
- Provide supplemental instruction for all English 440, 420, 250 & 260 classes.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
- Offer in-class writing workshops facilitated by the center’s peer tutors upon request in any classroom.
- Establish a series of “scholar talks” panel discussions, featuring the best of Gavilan’s academics—students and instructors alike—and special visitors willing to share their process as researchers and writers.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
- Create two pilot programs, establishing centers for reading and writing at community-based sites, fostering a relationship between writing and reading, community empowerment and civic life.
- Generate new sources of funding for the college through a community partnership and non-credit programs.

(Please see the enclosed “Community Partnership Proposal” for more information.)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Establish training and orientation sessions for instructors working directly with the center’s peer tutors.
- Begin coordinating “teaching inquiry-circles,” informal dialogues across the curriculum for any instructor who would like to participate.
Technology

VIRTUAL WRITING CENTER
- Expand & maintain on-line resources at our website: http://gavilan.edu/writing
- Create a library of multi-media writing process & grammar lessons available on our website.
- Create a “video” library of one-on-one and small-group peer tutoring sessions for training and orientation purposes.

Institutional Support

OUR NEEDS
- Time for coordination & planning
- Significant recruitment & training of additional tutors
- Funding to support the hiring of additional tutors & a wage increase for all tutors
...with creativity and innovation and with a proactive, accessible and sensitive presence in the diverse communities it serves.”

From the Gavilan College Mission Statement
Document I
What is a Writing Center?
(A history and philosophy)

Document II
Writing Center Statistics: Tables & Graphs

Documents III & IV
Assessment Tools
A. Blank Writing Center Session Record Form
B. Blank End of Year Writing Center Survey Forms
**WHAT IS A WRITING CENTER?**

**A Long History: An International Phenomenon**

The first writing centers were developed on university campuses in the 1970s to meet the needs of under-prepared and “basic skills”* students. Current research demonstrates that the pedagogical approaches and services provided through a Writing Center effectively help writers and readers improve their engagement with literacy and meet academic and professional success.

Writing centers can now be found all over the world, providing programs at universities, community colleges and high school campuses across the United States and in Japan, Nigeria, Ukraine and Taiwan among other countries.

As the phenomenon grows, writing centers have recognized the connection and recursive relationship between reading and writing and seek to build on it.

**Philosophy**

The philosophical foundation of writing center work can be found in the following expressions:

- Anyone can engage in writing and reading in a meaningful manner.
- Writing and reading are recursive activities.
- Writers and readers benefit from dialogue in community with other writers and readers much like themselves.

**At Gavilan**

The Gavilan College Writing Center is a part of this larger international conversation, and since 2003, its campus mission has been to serve the campus community by fostering, celebrating and encouraging writers and the varied and multiple purposes and audiences that writing serves.

The Gavilan center assists writers in identifying and developing tools and strategies to meet goals for their writing both in and out of the classroom. It
offers space for exploration and reflection on a wide range of written material, promotes an appreciation for literature and literacy and cultivates diverse writers’ voices and the communities that nurture them.

**Programs & Services**
Programs and services the Gavilan center offers include the following:
- One on one consultation between student writers and specially trained peer writing assistants (tutors).
- Partnerships with lab instructors via writing assistants, who offer supplemental instruction and study group facilitation.
- Workshops on academic and creative writing.
- Self directed mini lessons on grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Special events through the Visiting Writers and Scholars in Residence Program.
- On line service, including mini lessons and multi media exploration of writing topics.
- Free use of computers, printing and the internet.

*The usage of the term “basic skills,” to indicate students who have had limited opportunities, access and/or exposure to academic language is increasingly being questioned. Other terms include, emerging scholars, Academic English language learners and members of generation 1.5.*