

Writing Matters:

Stetson Writing Program Newsletter



Fall 2020

#BLACKLIVESMATTER

Welcome to David Johnson,
Brown Center Visiting Scholar-
Teacher in Developmental
Writing and Writing Center
Studies

Taking the Writing Center
Online!

The Guide to Writing at Stetson

CALENDAR

FALL 2020

*AUG: DAVID JOHNSON APPOINTED
AS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE
WRITING CENTER*

SEPT ANNUAL JSEM MEETING

*OCT: NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PEER
TUTORING IN WRITING (NCPTW)
ONLINE CELEBRATION OF
RESEARCH*

SPRING 2021

*JAN SLAC-WPA GOES ONLINE
(JANUARY)*

*APRIL COLLOQUIUM ON
TEACHING AND LEARNING (APRIL)*

*MAY WRITING PROGRAM AWARD
FOR BEST STUDENT WRITING IN A
JSEM (MAY)*

MAY FSEM FALL PREPARATION

Welcome to Fall 2020, one of the most challenging semesters most of us have ever seen. So much has changed in our world, from national civil division to open violence on our streets, from the panicked Stetson shutdown in March to our controlled reopening in August, from the Libby Administration to the Roellke Administration (welcome!), and from teaching “on the fly” to the more fully informed and supported teaching we’re doing now – all of our changes have had significant impact on many, many elements of our daily lives.

During the summer of 2020, movements developed here and elsewhere to overtly commit to anti-racist actions, plans, and approaches. As just one result, departments on campus have begun to make their commitments clear by releasing position statements.

We in the Writing Program know that as faculty and as human beings, how we teach writing – and how we grade it, and on what grounds – offers territory for close examination. In this issue of the Newsletter, we commit to this examination and commit to helping our colleagues and our students actively work against racism.

The Writing Program is delighted to announce that **Dr David Johnson, Brown Visiting Teacher-Scholar**, has joined our team. David’s work here will touch faculty development around writing, including anti-racist models for support and assessment, and he will have an active role in Writing Tutor and Writing Fellow training as Assistant Director of the Writing Center. He will also be helping us structure curricular and pedagogical support for students who may struggle with writing, the population who usually take ENGL 100 College Writing. Leigh Ann and I could not be happier that David chose Stetson as his home for the duration of his term as Brown Scholar.

One last note...in May, faculty, staff, and students collectively chose the University’s topic for a ten-year quality enhancement plan. The Writing Program is fully in support of all the goals of the QEP, and we pledge to support the Communication and Critical Skills initiative.

**In solidarity -
Megan O’Neill, Director of the Writing Program**

Writing Program Statement of Support for #BLACKLIVESMATTER

To our faculty colleagues and all members of our campus community at Stetson University,

The faculty of the Writing Program acknowledges that writing instruction in English is bound to formations of power, privilege, and identity. As writing instructors, scholars, and program administrators, we are often expected to teach and evaluate writing in ways that give prestige to dominant, “unraced” dialects of English – while limiting non-dominant raced, cultural, and regional Englishes to home language status. And we recognize that these expectations and practices are not compatible with a commitment to antiracist teaching practices in writing instruction.

Dominant discourses go by many names in the American academy, including Standard American English (SAE), Edited American English (EAE), White English Vernacular (WEV), or even English for Academic Purposes (EAP). And a pervasive, erroneous, and harmful attitude across disciplines, fields, and the general public is that mastery of these dialects is a marker of intelligence, education level, richness of ideas, worth, and even goodness.

This attitude is often coupled with the misguided belief that wielding dominant discourses gives students greater access to power, while shielding them from racial and linguistic discrimination.

But deep-seated bias does not disappear when confronted with a privileged tongue, nor are metaphorical seats at a table guaranteed when systems are set in place to bar access to the front door. These barriers are set most sturdily against Black, Indigenous, and bodies of color.

Writing that does not follow a dominant standard is no less rhetorically powerful, and good writing is not determined by grammatical soundness—as evidenced by our own language practices and the volumes of theory, empirical research, and creative genres that fill our lives. Good writing is based in good ideas; it is audience driven and contextual. Conventions, much like audiences and contexts, are fluid and discipline specific.

[Scholars across writing studies](#) have debunked the myth that a dominant discourse has any more validity than the many discourses that students bring with them to the classroom.

And yet, the colonial violence of educators demanding that students conform to a standard over the “dialects of their nurture, or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style” ([SRTOL 1974](#)) persists.

In a community of scholars, the appellation of “standard” to a particular discourse should provoke the questions of who has historically set this standard, by what mechanisms this standard has come to exist, who does this standard privilege, who has access, and who is left or kept out.

Therefore, the faculty of the [Writing Program](#) will make our commitments to [antiracist teaching and assessment practices actionable](#) by

- intervening in support of Black Lives and Black Language and against racism in the classroom, campus community, profession, and beyond
- examining how our teaching practices enable or confront normalized whiteness
- foregrounding praise over deficit and emphasizing labor, effort, investment, originality, and depth over superficial textual features
- routinely revisiting these commitments, critically interrogating how well we have honored them, and ceaselessly working toward self-improvement, advocacy, and allyship with our most vulnerable students.

And finally, we affirm that [Black Lives Matter](#), we demand [Black Linguistic Justice](#), we affirm a [Student’s Right to Their Own Language](#), and we urge our faculty colleagues to do the same.

We stand ready to assist. [Check the resources available here](#). And reach out to us for more.

[David Johnson](#), Assistant Director of the Writing Center

[Leigh Ann Dunning](#), Director of the Writing Center

[Megan O’Neill](#), Director of the Writing Program

Who to Contact with Questions

Policies, WE proposals, pedagogy, resources:

Megan O'Neill, Director

[Writing Center, Writing Fellows, and Writing Tutors](#)

Leigh Ann Dunning, Director

David Johnson, Asst Director of the Writing Center

[Guide to Writing at Stetson](#)

[Research Skills and Information Literacy](#)

Hunter Murphy, duPont-Ball Library

Core Learning Experiences:

Ranjini Thaver, [FSEM](#)

Martin Blackwell, FSEM Associate Director

Megan O'Neill, FSEM/JSEM/Capstone

Oral Communication:

Tara Schuwerk, Communication and Media Studies

Transfers, Credits, Audit:

Terri Richards, [Registrar's Office](#)

[General Education and Gen Ed Assessment:](#)

Lisa Coulter, UGEC Chair

Brown Center Visiting Teacher-Scholar David Johnson Joins the Writing Program



We are thrilled to announce that the [Brown Center for Faculty Innovation and Excellence](#), in concert with the Provost's office, has made possible an addition to the Writing Program staff: David Johnson, PhD (Ohio University) has joined us as

Assistant Director of the Writing Center.

David's doctoral work in writing, race, rhetoric, and representation is a valuable benefit for us in these times. His research provides Stetson with a depth of practice that we have never had.

David's primary work in the Writing Center will be to identify and implement innovative strategies to support students and faculty, particularly students who face big challenges and the faculty who work with them in FSEM and throughout their educations. He will be working closely with Writing Center Tutors and Fellows. In addition, he will be teaching ENGL 100 College Writing.

We're eager to see what David can bring to create resources around developing writers and their faculty in WE courses, and we appreciate Stetson's investment in writing at the DeLand campus.

Reach out to David [here](#).

Welcome!

TAKING THE WRITING CENTER ONLINE

- Leigh Ann Dunning



When the pandemic began back in early March, the Writing Center motto, much like the rest of academia, became “stay flexible!” Our Center shifted online on March

18 and used Microsoft Teams to complete 109 successful tutoring sessions by the end of the semester. For many of the tutors, this was the first time they tutored writing online.

Although 109 sessions is lower than in an average semester, this number demonstrates the resiliency of our tutors as we quickly had to translate our face-to-face tutoring practices to meet the demands of our new online reality. At the end of Spring 2020, after a competitive hiring process, seven new tutors joined our staff. In the last couple of weeks of the semester, we celebrated our graduating seniors and began to brainstorm what writing tutoring might look like in Fall 2020.

Over the summer, we spent time learning about best practices for online tutoring and brainstorming ways of improving our Online Writing Center. The tutors completed an online training that asked them to read articles from writing centers scholars about online tutoring and digital literacy and to share their own strategies for online tutoring. We have continued this conversation since reopening for Fall 2020.

Since fall semester commenced, we’ve seen an uptick in the number of students making appointments from last spring. Tutors have attended several classes across campus to introduce and discuss our services, and we scheduled several 40-minute workshops on issues related to writing.

If you would like us to lead a workshop in your class, please [email me](#) for more information. Our Writing Fellows are back in JSEM and ENGL 100 courses. As we find our new normal in an online context, we are excited to continue to provide writing support to students across campus. Follow us on Instagram (@stetsonwritingcenter) and Facebook (Writing Center at Stetson).

Writing Fellows: Ask for one now! If you....

- *Are a faculty member teaching a course that asks students to submit multiple written drafts of assignments*
- *Will have less than 20 students in a course*
- *Are willing to require that all enrolled students work with the assigned fellow at least once through out the semester*
- *Are willing to communicate regularly with the assigned fellow to discuss assignments, due dates*

If you wish to apply for a Spring 2021 Writing Fellow, complete and submit the following [short application](#) to Leigh Ann Dunning, Director of the Writing Center, at ldunning@stetson.edu

HEAR FROM THE (ONLINE) WRITING TUTORS!



Emma Knowles

*Lead Tutor, Psychology Major
and Gender Studies Minor*

My tutoring experience online has been very positive. I have had many appointments, and I feel like my talents have been utilized working with the students virtually. I am pleasantly surprised at how busy I have been because I was not sure people would use the online format.

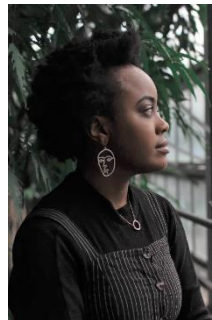
However, I think the students have really appreciated the accessibility of our services. I think my main challenge at first was keeping the tutees engaged in their assignments. In-person, it is easier to have a collaborative session because you are interacting in a more personable manner. Online, I had to make sure that the session was still collaborative and not just me giving them the answers/edits. A way that I handled this problem that saw successful results was to have the tutee read their paper instead of me reading it. This forced them to engage with the material and to examine any errors that were present.

Additionally, in moments that required more effort from the tutee, such as building sentences, writing paragraphs, or replacing words, I utilized wait time and silence in order to encourage them to come up with an answer themselves. Of course, if they struggled, I was always there with feedback or suggestions. But I liked seeing how hard the students worked and how well they responded to challenges and positive comments. There are many benefits to tutoring online, and I enjoy being there to help

students just as much, if not more, than I was when we had in-person appointments.

Bijou Aliza

*Lead Tutor, Political Science Major & French
Minor*



The transition from in person to virtual tutoring has been a peculiar experience for me. Our Writing Center strives to provide successful peer tutoring for students on campus, and with this, there have been many challenges, especially at first. Virtual sessions have made appointments less personal, technical difficulties have intervened in our tutoring process, and unfamiliarity of Microsoft Teams has been difficult.

However, these challenges have also made our tutors more proactive in preparing for the session, has enhanced our communication skills with the tutee, and more! These challenges have not devalued the reward our services brings to tutees, especially during this difficult transition for many students.

Being able to provide other students support in a session is so rewarding; everyone needs a bit of help right now, and what's better than being able to offer a hand?



Alexis Waller

*Lead Tutor, English major
and Education Minor*



The transition to online tutoring was honestly easier than I expected it to be, especially considering the uncertainties in the beginning. There were, and sometimes still are, many issues with the technological aspect of online tutoring. Sometimes the platform may have issues with the connection or its document functions, but I've learned how to adapt and work around these problems as they arise.

Tutoring is about being flexible in a lot of ways, so this was no different. Researching different resources, utilizing chat functions, sharing work and feedback through applications like Google Docs and its comments - each issue

could be solved as long as I kept the student's best interests in mind no matter the situation.

Due to this experience, I have learned to adapt to the unpredictability of a session far better than I would have without this transition. While online tutoring presents new challenges, there are also unexpected benefits that come with this new format. Tutees can receive help from the comfort of their home which can make tutoring feel a lot less intimidating and a lot more personal. Making sure that my students feel comfortable is a priority of mine so this casual and distanced method can often work to a session's advantage.

The versatility and accessibility that online tutoring can offer outweigh the potential drawbacks, in my opinion, and I have thoroughly enjoyed my experiences thus far as a result.

The Guide to Writing at Stetson Returns!

After a hiatus, while the Writing Program decided how best to make a Stetson-specific Guide to Writing available to students and faculty, particularly those in FSEM, we are happy to have worked closely with Hunter Murphy of the duPont-Ball Library to bring you this [fully online writing resource](#).

The new format allows us to constantly update the site with disciplinary writing formats, provide links to resources already available to the faculty and students, and expand the existing Guide to reflect the University's commitment to writing and information literacy. We welcome your suggestions and additions to better serve the campus community with writing resources.

From the [home page](#):

Our mission for this guide is to support students in developing writing strategies: an awareness of differing audience needs, writing at the college level, the particular needs of students speaking English as an additional language, the mechanics of sentences and paragraphs, and much more.

Faculty input is very welcome! Tell us what you need or give us the links!



Welcome, 2020!

Bring us your challenges.

We're ready to meet them with you.