



News Release

May 21, 2008
[Nancy Livingston](#)
Public Relations
651-779-3222
Fax 651-779-3470

[Century College](#)
3300 Century Avenue North
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Century College’s Writing Center Named “Exemplary” by National Group

Century College’s Writing Center, the heartbeat of West Campus, has been named “Exemplary” by the Two-Year College Research Initiative, an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

This honor comes partly because of Century’s requirement that all students who take a four-credit composition course must use the center at least an hour a week throughout the semester. Century English professors who teach composition are available throughout the day in the Writing Center – another highly unusual feature.

“As far as we know, we are the only two-year college in the country that requires composition students to spend time in the writing center,” said English Prof. Andrew Nessel. “This requirement, and the fact that we have English faculty members who assist students throughout the day, demonstrates how highly we value writing at Century College. It is foundational to everything else that goes on here.”

Established to help and support students with a wide range of writing needs, the center is heavily used throughout the day and into the evening, 7:45 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Fridays and Saturdays have somewhat shorter hours.

“The center is very busy, especially at key crunch times during the semester,” said Laurel Hagge, the Writing Center Coordinator. “At any one time, you might have composition students and literature students in the center as well as science, nursing and psychology students. Anyone who wants to improve their writing comes here at one time or another.”

English Prof. Richard Kuss said it is advantageous for students to take a class from one professor, and receive help from a different professor in the Writing Center. “It is a real strength of the center that I can work with other instructors’ students,” said Kuss. “It gives students multiple perspectives.”

Unlike science labs, the Writing Center does not require students to sign up in advance for a particular time. Students simply come to the center when it is convenient for them. Logging onto a computer records their presence so they can fulfill their English course requirement.

“The writing of students who actively use the Writing Center on a regular basis improves considerably,” said Kuss. “Some students go way beyond the required time because they see the benefit.”

“With writing, practice is key,” said Nasset. “Writing is all about making choices and testing those choices.”

One thing that students quickly learn in the Writing Center is that the faculty and staff working there will not proofread their papers. “We do not fix their mistakes,” said Nasset. “We do point out patterns of errors. Students then revise their own papers.”

Nasset said the writing that students do in high school is often much different than the kind of writing that is expected in college. College professors, for example, often stress the importance of theme development and sentence construction as opposed to emphasizing self-expression.

Because the Writing Center’s 19 computers are so heavily used and the center is often overcrowded, English faculty and staff members, as well as students, are looking forward to expanding the Writing Center as Century enters its next phase of remodeling. The Minnesota Legislature this session approved

\$9.9 million in renovation funds that will help the college remodel the spaces left behind when the science and library programs move to the new Science/Library Building this fall. Tentative plans call for doubling the size of the center, and doubling the number of computers.

“Writing is painful for a lot of people,” said Writing Center student tutor Blythe Mayfield of St. Paul, the Century College Outstanding Student in English for 2008. “I used to really not like it. But now I understand how to write something effectively, and it is easier for me. For example, improving my writing skills has helped me fill out four-year college application essays. I have a better idea of how to present myself in a way that will stand out.”

As a student tutor, Mayfield said seeing the mistakes of others helped improve her own skills. “I am still always learning,” she said.

Though she was the Outstanding Student in English, Mayfield, 27, is pursuing a career in laboratory science and will attend the University of Minnesota’s Center for Allied Health in the fall. “I really hate to leave Century,” she said. “It’s been wonderful. Century College and the Writing Center have had a huge impact on my future.”



Photo: Century student Blythe Mayfield