

JACOBSON CENTER TELEGRAM



Issued in early fall and spring, the Jacobson Center Telegram informs Smith staff, faculty, and students about newsworthy developments in the work of the Jacobson Center and the teaching of writing.

NEWS & DEVELOPMENTS

We are delighted to announce that Laura Greenfield is the Jacobson Center's interim Learning Specialist & Tutorial Services Coordinator. Laura was a Writing Instructor in the fall and stepped into the new role in January when Duncan Griffin resigned. Reach out or refer students to her if you have students who could benefit from coaching on college success skills (time management, study skills, test taking techniques, etc.) or from tutoring in the non-quantitative disciplines. We are also delighted to welcome Erin Hayes, our new Administrative Assistant, to the department.

These days, the writing instructors are especially focused on our Thesis Writing Mentoring Project. We have been accompanying 20 enthusiastic thesis writers all year and have organized a last writing push for them right before spring break: a daily write-on-site event with snacks from 4:30 to 7:30. The thesis writers are working very hard.

Perhaps you noticed that the Jacobson Center writers hit the airwaves this winter. Pamela Petro was interviewed by travel guru Rick Steves on his [Travel with Rick Steves](#) podcast about her book [The Long Field: Wales and the Presence of Absence, a Memoir](#). Sara Eddy, poet, was interviewed in collaboration with singer-songwriters Dave Dersham and Louise Mosrie on [Valley Free Radio](#) about Sundays at Ana Bandeira Chocolates, a monthly performance series run by Dersham. Naila Moreira was interviewed twice (!) about her article "[The Forest and the Trees](#)" for The Shoestring: by Bill Newman and Buz Eisenberg on WHMP's [Talk the Talk](#) (the interview starts at 54:00) and again by Monte Belmonte and Kallis Smith on NEPM's [The Fabulous 413](#). Also on WHMP's [Talk the Talk](#), Naila was interviewed with Stephen Petegorsky about their art/poetry exhibit [Clearstories](#).

Lastly, issue #4 of Smith Writes, an annual publication dedicated to exemplary work by first-year writers in WI courses, is live. The current issue features essays on drag & spirituality at Smith, walkability in American cities, and Mrs. Dalloway as a consumerist icon, among others. [You can read the issue here](#).

SPOTLIGHT

The Jacobson Center has been awarded a grant from Smith's Racial Justice Action Planning Board to purchase artwork for our newly remodeled center. The grant will be used to purchase artwork that creates a visual reminder of the Jacobson Center's commitment to racial justice.

UPCOMING EVENTS

6/9, *Ana Bandeira Chocolates*, 4:00pm
Poetry Reading
Sara Eddy

6/21, *Amherst Books*, 7:00pm
Book Launch
Sara Eddy

7/20, *Dreamaway Lodge*, 6:30pm
Poetry Reading
Sara Eddy & Ocean Vuong

COMMENTARY

on writing center visits
by Julio Alves, Director

Sometimes we know things to be true because we have personal experience with them, or we hear anecdotes that say they're true, or we've seen evidence that supports the assertion, or we've even read entire studies that say they're true. But once in a while, a book or an article comes along that moves us closer to something like truth. Jesús José Salazar's "The Meaningful and Significant Impact of Writing Center Visits on College Writing Performance" in the 2021 issue of *The Writing Center Journal* did that for me recently..

Do writing center visits improve student writing?

We've had answers in the past, but Salazar's comprehensive study resoundingly says, *Yes!* To get to this answer, Salazar conducted seven meta-analyses of 64 studies conducted between 1954 and 2019. Common in some fields—like public health—but not in writing studies, meta-analyses combine the results of many studies into one. The studies Salazar analyzed all had control groups, and in all measured 71 outcomes. 8,168 writing center visitors and 15,119 non-visitors participated.

Salazar concluded that, when compared to non-visitors, between 27% and 42% more writing center visitors had positive outcomes from visiting the writing center, and that the strongest effect was for struggling writers. This finding suggests that writing centers can play a critical role in closing the achievement gap between students coming from well-resourced and underserved communities, and for that reason alone, if nothing else, they are an essential part of higher education.

PERSPECTIVES

on writing center support
from Elizabeth Peters '24

I didn't start using the Jacobson Center services until my Sophomore year, and I couldn't be more grateful that I took that first step. Initially, I was nervous about coming. I felt like if I asked for writing help, that I was somehow incompetent, but I couldn't have been more wrong. When I first arrived, I was struck by how kind and open the staff was, and immediately took a liking to my tutoring sessions. I randomly chose Jonathan Ruseski, and kept coming back because he seemed to understand what I was trying to say even when I was unable to form the words. For the last two years since my initial appointment, I have worked with Jon on a number of assignments ranging from small class reflections to my current Senior Honors Thesis, and I feel so lucky to have participated in this program. Jon gives such thoughtful feedback, and I can tell that he not only wants to help me produce an excellent piece of writing for the sake of class, but he also wants to teach me to write.

Through working together, I've noticed myself making the same errors, and as funny as it might sound, each time I make those mistakes, there's a little voice in my head that tells me to explain that point more, or move it somewhere else. I don't think I would be exaggerating to say that little voice is the result of Jon walking me through my papers, and pointing out spots that could be tweaked for the better. In all my time working with Jon, I have felt nothing but seen and heard, and he really goes the extra mile to make sure I get the most out of our sessions. Sometimes, when I'm feeling like I can't get an organized thought out, we just sit and talk about my paper, and each time it helps me to articulate what I'm trying to say. I can confidently say that I wouldn't be nearly the writer I am today without Jon's encouragement and support. He is always ready to think creatively and guide me through an assignment.

Places like the Jacobson Center are incredibly important because they give students the tools to communicate their thoughts in an organized and effective way within a safe and comfortable environment. Sometimes with tutors, students feel intimidated by their lack of expertise, but I have never felt embarrassed about a piece I brought in. I knew that regardless of how developed it was, Jon and I would be able to work through it together. The Jacobson Center has an emphasis on working through issues and creating something that a student can be proud of, and I am a testament to that. Because I have worked with the Jacobson Center, I have felt ready to undertake an Honors Thesis, which I am also working on with Jon.

