Seamless Support: Library and Writing Center Integration

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Key Takeaways

Utah Tech University, a primarily traditional residential university, has created a model where writing center peer tutors are placed at the reference desk of the library to increase student visits, to make better use of librarian time, and to be more effective in student instruction. **UMass Global**, a university with a fully online library, has created a model using professional writing center tutors to deliver integrated workshops and instruction on topics such as citations, topic development, document formatting, scholarly voice, etc. to deliver more robust services and increase outreach to campus.

Background: Utah Tech

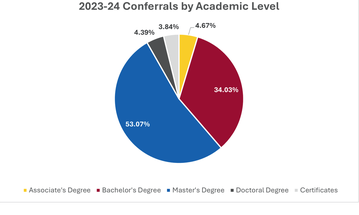
Utah Tech University is an open, comprehensive, polytechnic university featuring active and applied learning to advance students' knowledge and skills while fostering competent, resilient, lifelong learners to succeed in their careers and personal lives as creators, innovators, and responsible citizens.

Tutoring and Library

The Library and the Writing Center at Utah Tech University were in the same division, and the Writing Center had funding to put a peer tutor at the reference desk in place of a librarian.

Background: UMass Global

University of Massachusetts Global is a fully online university serving primarily non-traditional students and adult learners.



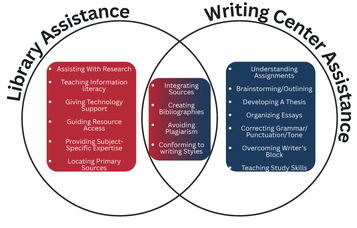
Tutoring and Library

The three tutors in the Online Writing Center are professional, part-time employees, similar to adjuncts, with many serving long-term. As working adults, they share experiences with our students, making them more relatable.

The Library is currently staffed with three librarians, including the director. The tutors in the Writing and Math centers have recently started reporting to librarians.

Challenge: Utah Tech

The Library and Writing Center were two separate programs, which had an overlap in services, creating student confusion and institutional inefficiencies.



Challenge: UMass Global

Blending departmental cultures while also making sure the transition was made without disrupting services to students. This required clear communication and a solid transition plan.

The Writing Center's reporting structure has changed several times, previously being assigned to a couple different departments on campus. This struggle to find an administrative 'home' for the Writing Center is not unique. This often leads to a sense of instability especially when tutors are part-time workers. Sabo, Bishop, Gatchel, and Dick (2023) explore the lived experiences of contingent professional tutors.

Integration Process: Utah Tech

- Librarians created a tutor training course.
- Writing Center tutors were placed at the library reference desk.
- Librarians remained on call for complex questions/instruction.

> **When given the choice of two providers of reference service, students clearly preferred the provider that was closer in age and most looked like them. In these situations, librarians served as backup and support to the more often approached tutor.**
>
> – Utah Tech Librarian Caleb A.

Integration Process: UMass Global

The UMass Global online library was established in 2022. The Library staff had the freedom to explore and innovate.

The process of integrating the Library and the Writing Center began through a partnership with the Library and the Center for Instructional Innovation.

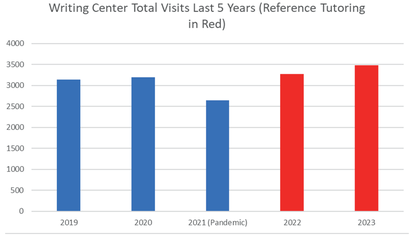
This partnership became more formal over time in a large part because a recognition of the "recursive nature of writing" (Zauha, 2014) and a need to leverage all available resources.

UMass Global Writing Center Integration Timeline

- **2023:** The Writing Center began teaching workshops
- **September 2024:** Writing Center tutors started helping with formatting guides and appointments for students working on dissertations
- **November 2024:** All citation workshops were officially moved to the Writing Center
- **December 2024:** Instruction materials moved to LibGuides
- **January 2025:** Staffing proposal to increase tutoring staff to help with dissertation review and instruction
- **March 2025:** The Writing Center formally reports to the Library

Results: Utah Tech

Although visits to the reference desk did not go up in number, visits to the Writing Center did. Many of these visits originated from initial visits with Writing Center tutors at the Library's reference desk. This program freed up librarians' time, so they could concentrate on classroom instruction, etc.



Results: UMass Global

Integrating the Library and Writing Center resulted in a substantial increase in instructional capacity for both areas.

Workshops saw better attendance when the Library advertised them on its website, and the Writing Center promoted collaboration with librarians during paper reviews.

All citation workshops and consultations transitioned to the Writing Center, allowing librarians more time to focus on supporting research and information literacy skills.

Librarians are able to take on leadership roles in campus initiatives such as OER, generative AI, and scholarly publishing.

Next Steps: Utah Tech

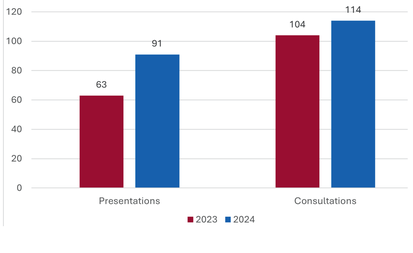
Utah Tech University administration moved the Writing Center to a different college/division, so unfortunately, the program was discontinued.

Next Steps: UMass Global

Complete the functional integration of the Writing Center and Library.

Integrate software platforms for seamless online student support and less redundancy. Using one suite of tools for research and writing support will make for a better student experience and help with data collection and analysis.

> **The challenge of a separate library and tutoring center has always been deciding who tackles those important student issues that seem to span both departments. When the library and tutoring combine, everyone's expertise can combine to create the best content and learning experience for students.**
>
> – Raeanna Paterson, Online Learning Librarian and Writing Center supervisor, UMass Global Library



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Contact Us!

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