

**Make It Happen:
How Libraries Can Start
a Grassroots Campus-
Wide Graduate Writing
Initiative**

Hello!

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1.

In the
beginning...

It all started
with a group of
people
passionate
about
improving
graduate
writing.

What we did

- ▣ Researched other programs
- ▣ Compiled some options
- ▣ Found a backer (School of Graduate Studies) to provide direction – and the \$\$\$

2.

**No guessing
allowed**

We surveyed
graduate
students and
graduate
faculty.

537

Graduate student responses

14%

142

Graduate faculty responses

40%

3,800

Total graduate students

354

Total graduate faculty

Graduate student survey results



Age

22% - 18-24
33% - 25-30
23% - 31-39
21% - 40+



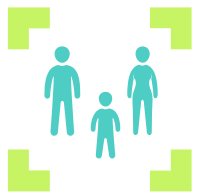
National Origin

84% U.S. domestic
16% International



Household Status

55% single
45% married/partnered
30% have dependents



Household Size

19% live alone
41% live with 1 person
33% live with 2-3 people
7% live with 4-6 people



Household Income

\$0K - \$25K	32%
\$25K - \$50K	22%
\$50K - \$75K	17%
\$75K +	29%



Educational Status

88% still in coursework
12% matriculating for thesis/dissertation



87%

Graduate students reported
using campus library resources
on site or from home

Graduate student survey results



	Yes, from campus	Yes, from home	No/not sure
Use campus library resources	59%	75%	13%
Use SGS Thesis/Dissertation workshops	13%	3%	72%
Use the Writing Studio	16%	4%	72%



35% have presented at a conference



15% have been authors on a multi-author article



14% have been authors on a single-author article



13% have completed a grant proposal



51% have done none of the above

3.

Get them talking

The free-form answers gave students and faculty an opportunity to give specific input.



Reading my classmates' writing [...] is difficult.

As far as I'm concerned, if you don't know how to write, you shouldn't be in graduate school. I've read some shockingly bad work since I've been at [UMKC].



I need assistance with editing and flow/continuity from someone who can read sections of my thesis and provide feedback, not so much on quality of content but on readability.

...spending 4-8 weeks on APA style and research would be extremely beneficial, especially to those of us who did not use APA in our undergraduate studies.

Departmental support

48% Yes

Students and faculty said their departments offered course-based or one-on-one writing support

52% No

Students and faculty said their departments did not offer course-based or one-on-one writing support



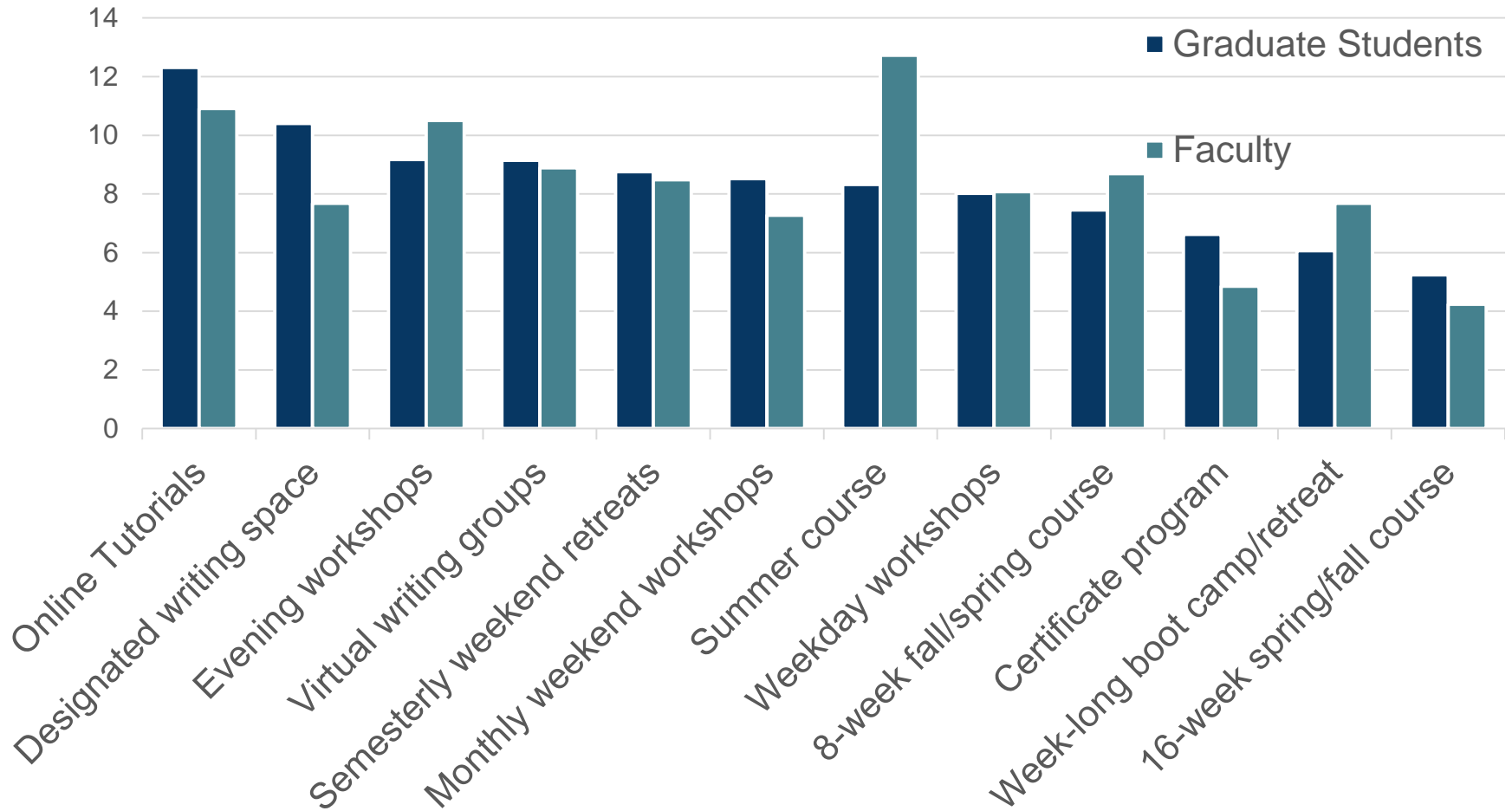
About half of graduate degree programs offer an intensive research, methods, or writing course



What can we do to fill the gap?


Things got really interesting when we compared student and faculty responses.

Graduate Student vs. Faculty Responses



Students: how likely are you to participate in these initiatives?

Faculty: what types of initiatives would be most beneficial for your students?



Only **12%** of faculty
said they previously
participated in a
program for graduate
writing.

Top 3 challenges graduate students face*



* according to their faculty members



Students should be able to write before being admitted.

Some actually don't learn from repeated corrections of the same mistake!

They arrive ill-prepared – not that they lack preparation, but many do not write well when they arrive.

[It would be most beneficial] in high school; certainly **BEFORE** they get to graduate school.



Mandatory
Voluntary

At the beginning of coursework
After comprehensive exams

Teaching loads
Costs and funding

Basic writing skills
Reading comprehension
Specific advanced skills

We (faculty) are the problem
We need help with writing
ourselves

Focus Groups

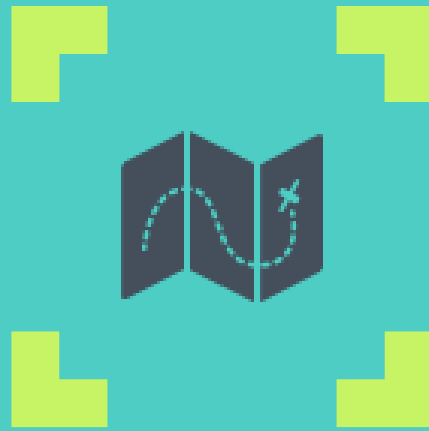
Student Groups

- International students (1)
- Students writing dissertations (1)
- Beginning doctoral students (1)

Faculty Groups

- Graduate faculty/non-advisers (1)
- Graduate faculty advisers (3)





Recommendations

Our roadmap for the quest to a Graduate
Writing Initiative

Bring everyone to the table

- Form a Graduate Writing Advisory Committee (GWAC)
- Representatives from all over campus
- Identified 16 parties that could contribute representatives

How has this worked out after 1.5 years?

We're now rethinking committee makeup

- Active members
- Advisory members

Create a one-stop webpage

- On the [School of Graduate Studies website](#)
- All information about graduate writing in one place, linking out to other units' sites
- Looked at other universities as models:
 - [University of Maryland](#)
 - [Arizona State University](#)
 - [University of Kansas](#)
 - [University of Minnesota](#)
 - [Yale Graduate School of Arts & Sciences](#)
 - [Liberty University](#)

Create online tutorials

- Easier said than done
 - Adobe Captivate is a beast
 - Who has the time?

- Using [YouTube](#) and LibGuides in the interim
 - [Literature reviews guide](#)
 - [Technical writing guide](#)

Where are we on this after 1.5 years?

Tutorials are still on the docket, but we are also recording our in-person workshops and putting them online for self-paced viewing.

Create designated writing spaces

- ❑ Neutral territory
- ❑ Focus groups helped identify furnishing, availability needs
- ❑ [Crowdfunded](#) for technology needs (through [Scalefunder](#))



The library is planning for graduate student workspace in upcoming renovations.



Thomas Ferrel, Director of the UMKC Writing Studio, and Kara Bollinger, Graduate Writing Specialist at the UMKC Writing Studio, standing near the Graduate Workstations in the Writing Studio's main location in the Atterbury Student Success Center.

Offer workshops (in-person and online)

Workshop Title	Taught by
Thesis & Dissertation Formatting	School of Graduate Studies
Writing in the Humanities	English Faculty (GWAC)
Writing in the Sciences	Physics Faculty (GWAC)
Grant Funding Opportunities & Grant Writing	Office of Research Services
Read Like a Writer	Writing Studio
Proofreading Tips & Techniques	Writing Studio
The Hidden Web: Searching for Articles Google Scholar Can't Find	University Libraries
Writing with Scholarly Integrity	University Libraries/Writing Studio
Tech Tools for Writing	University Libraries/Writing Studio

Other recommendations (yet to do)



Expand workshop offerings

Live online through Blackboard, perhaps in the evenings



Develop and propose for-credit courses

Who will teach these courses? Must be graduate faculty.



Offer writing retreat/write-in

When in the semester to do this? Maybe in the summer?



Designate a faculty “writing consultant” in each department

Compensation/course relief or count us out.



Develop orientation materials for incoming students and faculty

So no one can say they didn't know.



Implement in-person and online writing groups

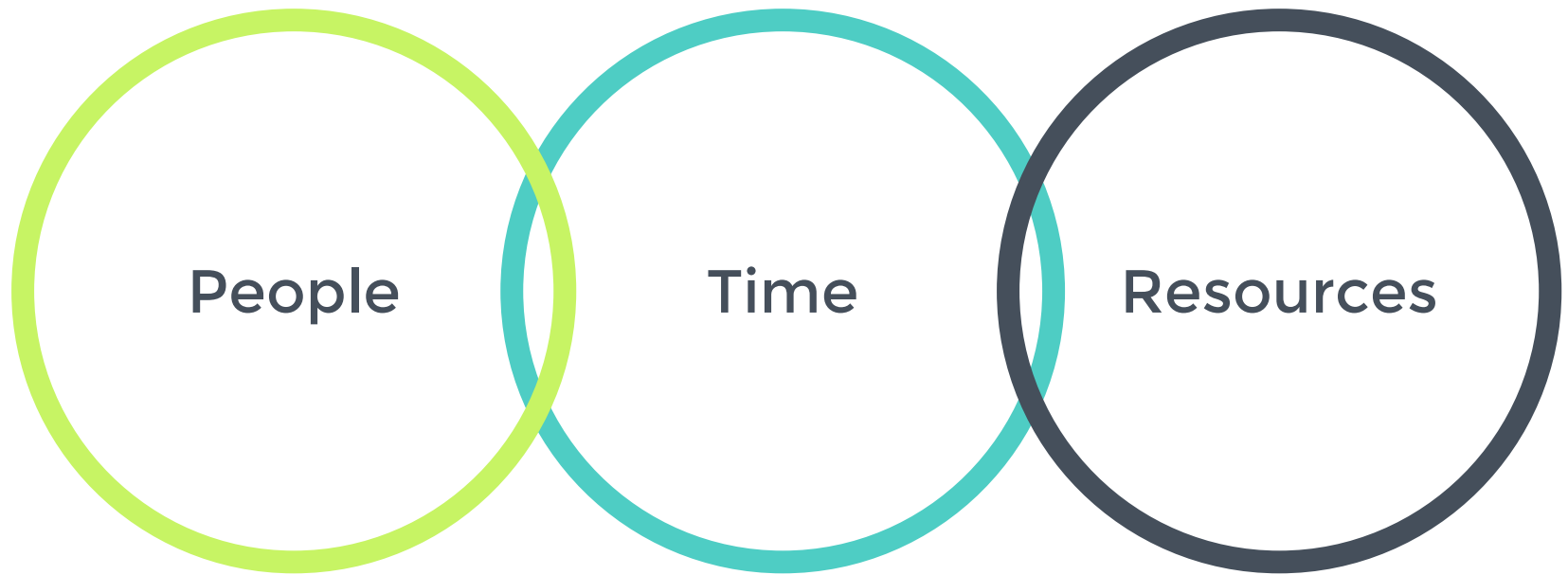
Self-organized groups didn't work.



The library is a key player.

How are libraries poised to start (and remain part of) a graduate writing initiative?

Dedicate and designate



People

Time

Resources

Start the conversation



- ▣ You can't do it alone
- ▣ It doesn't have to be big
- ▣ It doesn't have to be a top-down directive
- ▣ Work as a team; agree to set institutional politics aside

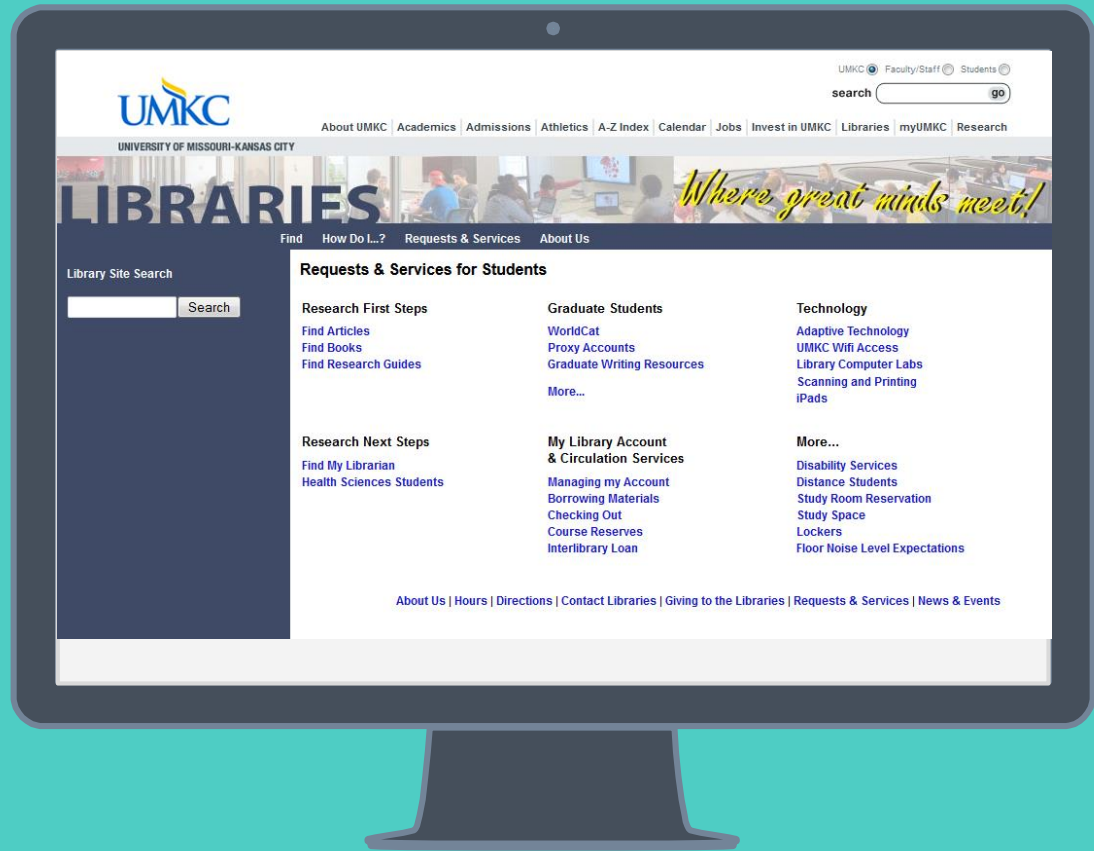
All it takes is a small group of passionate people to make the case and drive a campus-wide effort.

Activate library powers!



- ▣ Seek grant-funding opportunities
- ▣ Enlist help from other librarians
- ▣ Use outreach tools to spread the word

Use the library as an avenue for promoting graduate writing initiative efforts. Embed it in instruction, reference interviews, etc.



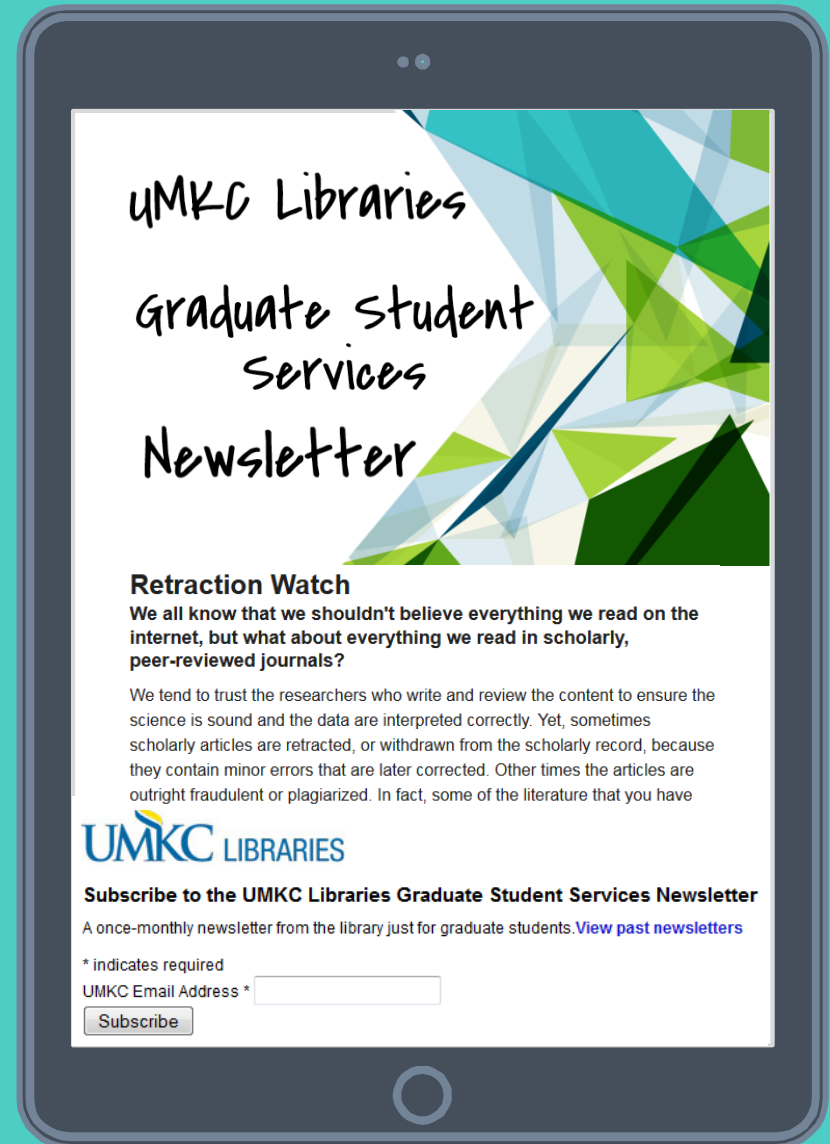
Put it on your webpages

Create a dedicated graduate student services page and link out to other campus resources.



Start a newsletter

- Embed the sign-up code on your website
- Bring manual sign-up sheets to graduate student orientations
- To date, no one has ever unsubscribed!





Talk to your faculty

They will, in turn, tell their students.
(Free marketing!)

A top-down view of a desk with a pair of glasses, several notebooks, and hands writing on a notebook. The text is centered over the image.

When your campus partners see your contributions and effort, they will step up their game.

Since we started, I've had..



**Faculty members asking for
stacks of my cards**

**Students recognizing me
walking around campus**

**Invitations to serve on other
campus committees**



The library is a key player.

We're valued on campus more
than ever before. (Yessss!)

Thanks!

Any questions?



You can find me on Instagram @jenmylibrarian

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- ▣ Surveys conducted using [SurveyMonkey](#)
- ▣ Newsletter produced using [MailChimp](#)
- ▣ Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- ▣ Photographs by [Death to the Stock Photo](#)