

**ART,
CONTINUED**

On top of all this, the building and the equipment inside have been used decades past its expiration date.

With this new building comes along new opportunities. Dr. Temma Balducci, chair of the Department of Art + Design, looks for the Center for Three-Dimensional Arts to provide new opportunities for art majors to explore new territories and feature new works.

“We’re very excited about the new possibilities and learning experiences the 3D building will bring our students as well as the opportunities for community engagement and recruiting,” Balducci said.

One interesting addition to the building is a foundry, which can allow students to create artwork through casting.



Photo by: Sam Scott | News Writer

The new Center for Three-Dimensional Arts is currently under construction. The building is located near the Pack Place apartments.

This is something Dr. Balducci expressed excitement over, explaining, “The foundry will give students the

opportunity to do casting, which is something that has been missing from our program.” The foundry is said to be

an important component of the building, since this is the first time casting would be available in years.

Before COVID-19 slowed everything to a crawl, the Fine Arts Center Gallery was busy, Balducci said. This is

the primary space for people to see 3D sculptures created by art majors, outside of the Bradbury Art Museum.

With the inclusion of a second art gallery, this could expand the reach for students and local artists to display their work.

The Center for Three-Dimensional Arts represents the new heights many art students can reach.

A new space for 3D artwork can present not only new stylistic possibilities for students to take but it could also provide new opportunities for their work to be displayed in the community.

It could even be used by local artists in the Jonesboro area, creating a new generation of artists representing Northeast Arkansas.

The Writing Center adapts to changes forced by the pandemic, continues helping students

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The Writing Center in the Dean B. Ellis Library stands as one of the many campus resources affected by the coronavirus, but the center has taken steps to make sure it’s still giving students the support they need.

In the past, the center was a place where students could just walk straight in for an unscheduled appointment, but now the Writing Center has become a place where appointments must be scheduled and many appointments are online.

Students, faculty and staff alike are all having to adjust to the changes.

“I think it was probably a big adjustment for our returning tutors,” Writing Center Director Tabatha Simpson-Farrow said. “(They) already had a groove, already had certain tutoring methods in place. They had to readjust that entirely. Truly there’s been a fundamental reconsideration of how we conduct physical tutoring from body language to (other methods of tutoring).”

Tutor, graduate student and Skills Workshop Director Logan Huggins has had to adapt her tutoring methods to an online setting that’s very different from the in-person environments she’s worked with in the past.

“You’re trained a specific way and then all of a sudden it changes,” Huggins said. “Now we’re having to learn how to communicate via Zoom or Webex. All the ways we’ve learned how to communicate with other students has changed. They don’t relay the same way through the computer.”

Before COVID-19, Huggins could form an in-person, friendly connection with students who visited the Writing Center. The switch to online tutoring sessions made the task of forming that connection much harder.

Simpson-Farrow said it creates a barrier that might not have been there before.

“I see some of the same



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE.EDU
Tabatha Simpson-Farrow is the Writing Center director. The Writing Center has had to adapt its services to the pandemic.

people everyday or every week and it’s hard to keep up with what they’re doing and who they are if you don’t really get to meet them,” Huggins said. “I have no idea what they look like, some of them.”

Some of the steps taken to combat these challenges included more online training, including Blackboard training, for tutors and graduate assistants, and the implementation of an app called Penji. In a joint effort with Learning Support Services, the Writing Center implemented the Penji app to streamline the process of online scheduling and tutoring to help students not bounce around from app to app.

“The Penji app has been helpful in specific ways and hurtful in others,” Huggins said. “We’re just going with it I think, adapting as best we can.”

Simpson-Farrow said the Penji app is a new app and there have been bugs and alterations along the way.

That being said, the Penji app gives students a place to find other campus resources that the Writing Center would usually refer them to in person. A student might come to the

center for help with the writing aspects of an assignment, but also need help with the math aspects of the assignment too.

“Normally we might be able to refer to those other services but when we aren’t meeting with the students in the same way, they aren’t feeling as comfortable sharing their challenges with us, we haven’t been able to really fill that gap as much as we’d like to,” Simpson-Farrow said. “So Penji kind of helped that.”

The Writing Center also created a YouTube channel to post monthly writing workshops to help out students. These workshops existed in a physical setting in the past, but they are yet another aspect of the center that has transferred to an online platform because of the pandemic.

While the Writing Center had already been talking about putting more content online before COVID-19, the pandemic really forced an increase in speed when it came to creating more digital resources.

“Now they’re just easily accessible for everyone,” Huggins said. “You don’t actually have to be in person or talking to me to learn about things. If you go to the YouTube channel you might hear my voice. You’ll probably hear some of the other GAs.”

While the Writing Center is including a survey at the end of each session to solicit feedback from students about their experience, that data will not be accessed until the end of the semester.

Currently, feedback comes in various ways in individual situations. Sometimes students have problems with the Penji app that links out to a Webex page and generates a Google folder to share their work with a tutor.

“We’ve had kind of a mixed response,” Simpson-Farrow said. “Some students take really easily to online instruction and have no problem navigating the different technology that we’re using. In theory (the Penji software) should be very user friendly. When you encounter tech problems with the software and you’re not in front of the student who may

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The Writing Center posts monthly workshop videos on its YouTube channel to help students with their writing. Appointments with the center can be scheduled for in-person or online.

not be as tech savvy as the next person, it’s a challenge.”

Huggins said students already approach the Writing Center in a vulnerable state as they are coming to share their written work but technical issues lead to tutors not being able to even see that work. This leads to situations where students have to be calmed down or tutors have to deal with frustrated students.

“Sometimes,” Huggins said, “they feel like it would be better to just give up and not have it worked on because they can’t figure out the software.”

However, once the students get used to the software and come back more than once, the students tend to enjoy it.

This semester, the Writing Center has seen a drop in the amount of students using its services. As of around last week, the center is 200 sessions short of where it was in the fall of 2019.

Although in-person appointments can still be scheduled, the elimination of walk-in appointments has played a factor in the low session numbers.

“Because we have dropped the option of a walk-in session, we don’t get that walk-in, sort of last minute traffic that we may have had this time last year,” Simpson-Farrow said. “I think that’s a big contributing factor. Otherwise I think that some students may just

not know how to access us.”

Huggins said she’s even heard from students that they thought the Writing Center had stopped its operations because of the coronavirus. Moving forward throughout the rest of the semester and into spring, this could be one of the biggest challenges for the center.

“I think I would just like to see us reaching more students who just don’t know that we’re here this semester,” Simpson-Farrow said. “We haven’t been able to do as much physical campus outreach as we do normally. So picking that back up in spring, I think, will be a big improvement.”