



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Nebraska Wesleyan University

# Cooper Center

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We work *Better*  
when we work *Together*

[nebrwesleyan.edu/coopercenter](https://nebrwesleyan.edu/coopercenter)

# ABOUT US

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The Cooper Center is the Academic Resource Center at Nebraska Wesleyan University. We support collaborative learning through one-on-one and small group peer tutoring across disciplines. We also provide workshops on a variety of writing and study skills topics, host test review sessions, coordinate campus-wide events that promote collaborative learning within our community, and support faculty with writing and curriculum development.

## MISSION & VISION

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### **Mission**

The Cooper Center empowers the NWU community to achieve their academic goals within a collaborative and inclusive environment.

### **Vision**

To foster academic success by creating and empowering confident and effective learners.

## LEADERSHIP

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This is the third year for Dr. Melissa Hayes as Director of the Cooper Center. She has been with the Cooper Center since 2016. Her background and expertise are in 20th-century American Literature, and Rhetoric and Composition. She is a certified Learning Center Leader, Level 3 through the International College Learning Center Association.

Assistant Director Tracy Ensor, MAS, is also in her third year. Her background and expertise are in applied science, educational outreach, and program management. She is a certified Learning Center Leader, Level 1 through the International College Learning Center Association

Cooper Center administrators supervise and train the undergraduate peer tutors and serve as “embedded consultants” by working directly with the student population through in-class workshops and one-on-one writing consultations with graduate students.

## COOPER CENTER STAFF AND SERVICES

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This year, 44 Peer Tutors offered 450+ tutoring hours per week in support of their undergraduate peers. Peer Tutors utilized both in-person and online options for their appointments in Writing, Biology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physics, Anatomy and Physiology, Math, Accounting, Music Theory and Musicianship, Musical Theatre Theory, Nursing, Modern Languages, and Computer/Data Science. For graduate student appointments, Hayes and Ensor offered 19 hours per week of open availability in both daytime and evening slots to fit busy graduate student schedules.

In addition to the 44 undergraduate Peer Tutors, the Cooper Center employed two student staff assistants and five welcome desk workers this year. A new transfer student to NWU also volunteered her help with outreach projects and grant writing.

Our efforts to hire staff that reflect the NWU community have been successful. This year we employed a diverse group of students. Our staff included persons of color, neurodiverse thinkers, those of varied abilities, LGBTQ+ individuals and allies, student-athletes, and first-gen students.

# 2023-2024 PEER TUTORS AND WELCOME DESK STAFF

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**2023-24 Cooper Center Peer Tutors and Welcome Desk Staff** (from left): **Front Row:** Nat Kroll, Audrey Stetcher, Jasmine Doell, Carli Wurdeman, Alannah Ventura, Abigail Jacobs, McKenna Weber, Noah Longoria, Maya Qualset, Libby Retzlaff, Kate Leimbach, Blake Cogan. **2nd Row:** MacKenzie Nelsen, Sophia Chavanu, Margaret Eisenbarth, Logan Evans, Macie Thomas, Allyson Weber, Graci McGinnis, Emalie Wightman, Eric Kaps, Ashley Warner, Scarlett Kingery. **3rd Row:** Rin Wallace, Micky Prince, Cedric Gerdes, Daniel McMullin. **4th Row:** Ava Johnson, Drew VunCannon, Abigail Parten, Maura Loberg, Christian Sunderland, Zane Beltz, Alexis Hobelman, Kevin Starnes, Michael Biertzer, Nate Nowel, Rick Meskiman, Kensington Paugh, Jamya Hogan, Benjamin Mitnick. **Not pictured:** Austin Reinke, Brittany Oschner, Sarah Hultquist, Aniaya Reed, Bella Longoria, Joy Lerch, Madelyn Philbrick, Maggie Weatherwax, Nick Roghair.

## TRAININGS FOR STAFF AND TUTORS

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All Cooper Center staff complete both online and in-person trainings, as well as attend regular staff meetings, to secure their knowledge of tutoring best practices. This year, the Cooper Center transitioned to a new online tutor training program developed by Hayes and Ensor. Staff completed the new modules before the start of the school year. Additionally, staff attended an in-person training at the beginning of fall semester where they reviewed the online training modules and engaged in interactive team building exercises. Tutors also worked to identify tutee needs, developed pedagogical strategies, and planned for the management of sessions. At the start of the spring semester, staff took the VIA Strengths Assessment and received training on their character strengths. They spent time reflecting on the values of various strengths and how they can encourage tutee strengths during a session. Finally, weekly staff meetings throughout the year continued staff members' professional development.

### NEW Tutor Training Modules in Canvas

For the first time in recent history, all-staff training was created in-house by Cooper Center Administration. This online training is implemented via Canvas and all tutors and desk staff are also required to complete it. Staff work through three modules that cover a variety of tutoring basics such as FERPA and Title IX policies, tutoring ethics, learning theories, and how to run an effective tutoring session. These modules require staff to create a tutoring philosophy statement, which is revised throughout training, as well as take a series of quizzes to move from one module to the next. The information covered in this online training serves as the foundation for a Level 1 CRLA tutor certification. Creating this training not only tailors the content specifically to the needs of NWU, but also saves the institution about \$500 annually.

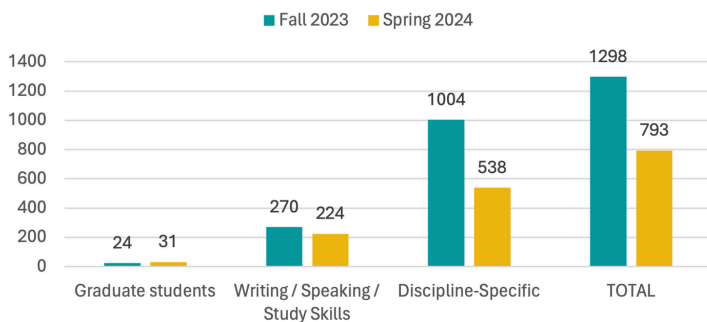
# YEAR AT A GLANCE

In 2023-24, the Cooper Center served more than 26% of the entire NWU student population with a total of 450 unique clients, marking a 37% increase over last year.

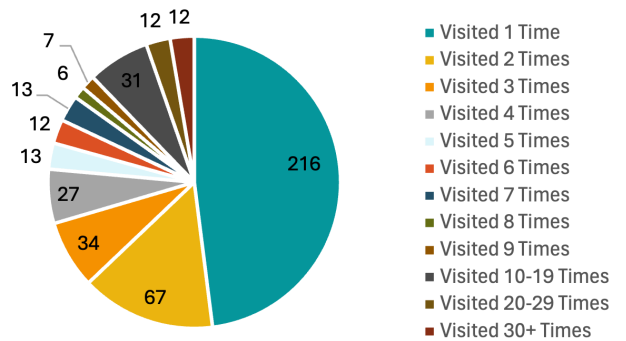
Of the 2,091 client appointments (up 20% from last year), 62% took place during the fall semester

52% of clients visited two times or more. Twelve students visited 30+ times each.

Appointments by Semester



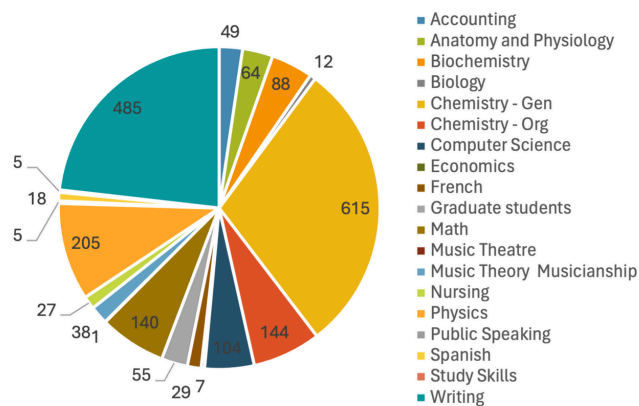
Visits per Client 2023-2024



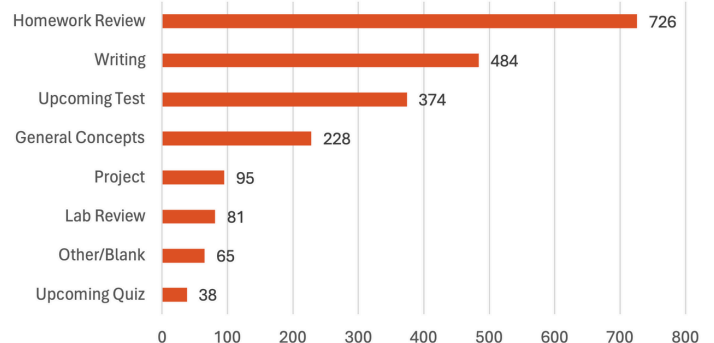
Of all appointment focuses, the most popular were General Chemistry (29%), Writing (23%), Physics (10%), Math (7%), and Organic Chemistry (7%).

For the 2nd year in a row, the most popular reason for visiting the Cooper Center was Homework Review, followed by Writing and Upcoming Test.

Appointments by Focus Area 2023-2024

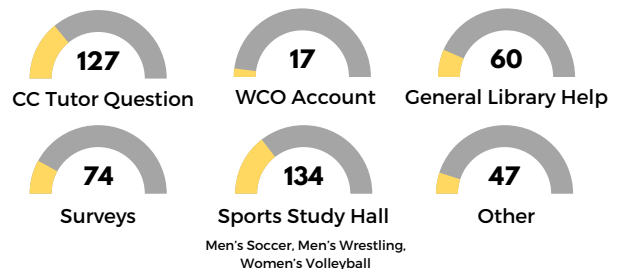


Type of Assignment in Sessions, 2023-2024



459

Number of visitors to the Cooper Center who asked questions and sought tutoring information during staffed Welcome Desk hours.





# A COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS YEARS

Another 20% jump in appointments over last year

This year, the Cooper Center navigated another 20% jump in appointments on top of last year's 29% increase, which equates to an additional 844 sessions this year when compared to the 2021-2022 academic year.

Overall, staff have seen a 68% increase in the number of appointments since the move to the first floor library location prior to the 2021-2022 academic year.

68% increase in number of appointments since moving to 1st floor location

450 unique clients - highest number to date

The number of unique clients was up again this year, reaching our highest number to date (450 unique clients).

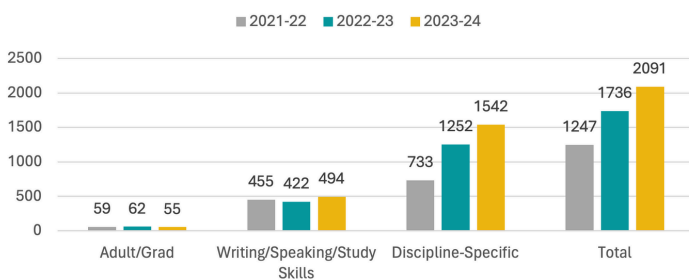
Of these unique clients, those who visited more than once increased from 203 last year to 234 this year. Additionally, the number of clients visiting more than 10 times increased from 29 to 55.

Discipline-specific appointments sharply increased again this year, buoyed by the strong demand for Chemistry sessions.

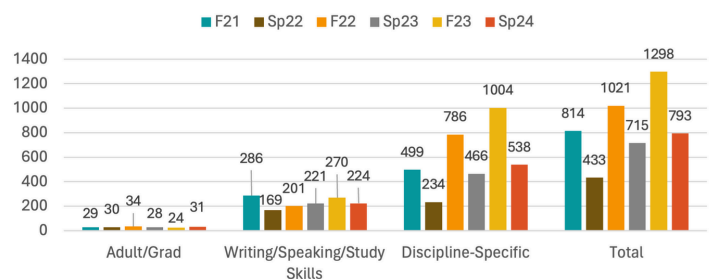
Graduate appointments have remained steady over the past three years, while the number of traditional undergraduate writing appointments increased this year.

Fall appointments continued a steep upward trajectory, increasing 25% and 27% respectively the last two years. Spring appointments also increased an additional 14% on top of last year's 69% increase.

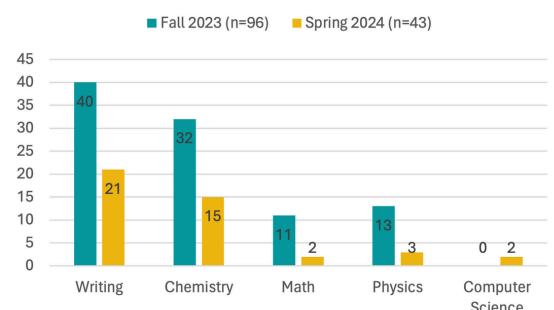
Appointments by Academic Year, 2021-2024



Appointments by Semester, Fall 2021 - Spring 2024



Drop-In Sessions by Semester, 2023-2024



286%

increase in Drop-In sessions from 2022-2023, the first year of implementation.

Drop-In sessions are increasingly popular, with 139 sessions over the 2023-2024 academic year. Writing (n=61) and Chemistry (n=47) comprised the bulk of drop-in traffic, but students also walked in without an appointment for Math, Physics, and Computer Science sessions.

# SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE



## Workshops

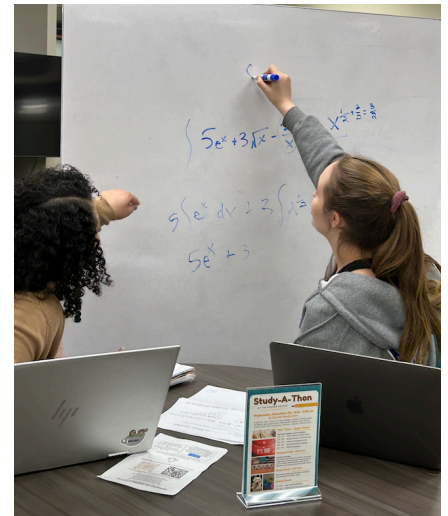
The Cooper Center continued its outreach to Archway, Integrative, First Year Writing (FYW), and Success Seminars. In the Fall 2023 semester, we saw a greater engagement with these classes. Additionally, we presented workshops for PAWS, Research Methods, Senior Capstone, and more. Peer Tutors were also more engaged with outreach and gave "Intro to the Cooper Center" workshops in a variety of classes.

- 80 total workshops and presentations in 2023-2024
  - **27% increase from 2022-2023**
- 38 Archway, Integrative, FYW, and Success Seminar workshops
  - **58% increase from 2022-2023**
- 14 Peer Tutor-led workshops
  - **8% increase from 2022-2023**



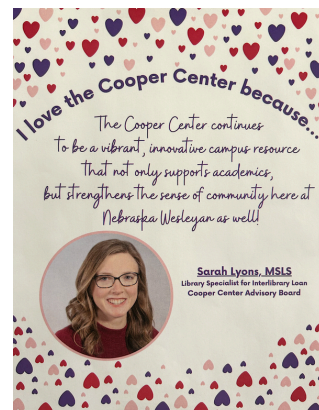
## Study-A-Thon

The Cooper Center continues to host the Study-A-Thon, which has become our signature campus-wide event each semester. This celebration of collaborative learning brings together students, faculty, and staff to support one another during culmination week in preparation for final exams. The spring semester included collaboration with the newly formed Neurodiversity Club, which helped maintain the Focused Study and Sensory Seating rooms. During the Study-A-Thon, students could also take a yoga break, eat snacks, and relax with therapy dogs. The Study-A-Thon proved to be a big success with over 350 students in attendance across both semesters.



## Advisory Board

The Cooper Center Advisory Board (CCAB) continued to meet this year. Sarah Lyons (Library) joined the board as a staff member and Nick Roghair and Melanie Lawson joined as student representatives. Meetings took place every other month. The board focused on outreach opportunities this year and served as a sounding board for the development of new projects. Martha Tanner is leaving the board after a 2 year tenure, and Bill Motzer will also step down due to his retirement from NWU. We look to fill these positions with new faculty and staff members next year.



# SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

## Performance Evaluations and Self-Assessments

For the second year, Peer Tutor and Welcome Desk Worker performance evaluations were completed. Staff were first asked to do a self-assessment which served as the basis for a written performance evaluation from Melissa and Tracy. This process was required for any staff returning to the Cooper Center for the 2024-2025 academic year. Both the self-assessment and the performance evaluation were based on the standardized evaluation NWU uses for professional staff. This process proves helpful for continued growth in the field of tutoring and prepares staff for future careers. Additionally, this process aligns with best practices in the field of learning center administration.



## Conferences

Hayes and Ensor attended several great learning and networking conferences this year. In September of 2023, Dr. Hayes and a colleague from the University of Arkansas presented at the International College Learning Center Association about the pre-work of strategic planning [Planning to Plan](#).

In November 2023, Ensor and a group of NWU staff attended the Student Success US conference at UCLA where they learned about innovative student support methods that could be implemented on our campus. Also in November, Hayes and Ensor, and three students attended the Nebraska Writing Center Consortium annual conference at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. Dr. Hayes is the current NWCC President.

## Social Media

The Cooper Center uses Instagram to connect with students, faculty, and staff. We have 321 followers, with 13 new followers added this academic year. Our impressions averaged 116 and our reach averaged 105 across 73 stories, reels, and posts for the year. Our student staff assistant, Libby Retzlaff, planned and coordinated many of these posts to provide a valuable student perspective.





# NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

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## Learning Center Leadership Certifications (LCLC)

This internationally recognized credential through the International College Learning Center Association (ICLCA) provides a set of standards across four levels of experience by which learning center professionals foster their future growth and development. This certification also validates individuals' expertise in the field of learning assistance through external review. Ensor received Level 1 certification in June 2023 and Dr. Hayes received Level 3 certification in September 2023. [ICLCA LCLC Certifications](#)



## Mens Wrestling Team Study Hall

During the fall semester, the Cooper Center created a pilot program with the men's wrestling team to foster group and individual study skills. Over the course of 6 weeks, student-athletes attended weekly study hours, and Dr. Hayes presented short workshops on a variety of topics, from organization and using a planner to note taking. Cooper Center Peer Tutors were also available at the study hall to lend support for writing, chemistry, math, and computer science. A short survey was administered to wrestlers at the beginning and end of the 6-week program. Overall, the Wrestling Study Hall program showed a positive impact on the wrestling team as 84% felt they could better balance academic and athletic responsibilities because of this program. Iteration #2 of the program will launch fall 2024. [Cooper Center Wrestling Study Hall Pilot Program Results](#)



## CRLA Tutor Training Program + Scope and Sequence

Staff meetings build professional skills in our staff and this year, the Cooper Center created a three-year scope and sequence detailing our staff meeting process. Topics match those required for CRLA tutor certification levels 1-3 and are rotated across a three-year cycle. Topics range from goal setting and giving feedback to motivation and communication styles. Additionally, the Career Center and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offices each provide workshops to our staff. The Cooper Center submitted documents in support of the application for CRLA Tutor Training Program certification in March 2023. We anticipate approval from the CRLA committee in summer 2024. [3-year CRLA training curriculum.](#)



## Added Musical Theatre Theory Tutoring

For the first time in Cooper Center history, Musical Theatre Theory tutoring was offered. Nat Kroll was hired for this position at the suggestion of Dr. Talea Bloch. Nat facilitated one-on-one and small group test reviews, and Dr. Bloch noted the improved performance of her theory students.



## AI Policy and Generative AI Task Force

To help faculty decide how they would use AI models such as ChatGPT in their classes, Dr. Hayes created 3 distinct syllabus statements for the Associate Provost during the summer of 2023. These statements took positive, neutral, and negative stances for the use of AI in the classroom. Following these efforts, Ensor worked with the Generative AI Task Force to draft a university-wide policy concerning the use and implementation of Generative AI on campus. Additionally, the Cooper Center administration updated the Cooper Center AI policy stance. [Cooper Center AI Policy Statement](#)



# NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

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## Technology Grant: Digital Signage +

The Cooper Center won this year's Institutional Technology Development Grant offered through the Faculty Development Committee. Our grant proposal showed the need for new digital signage in the Cooper Center, and an adaptable 55" screen will be installed this summer. This screen will facilitate information sharing by displaying campus-wide digital signage while also functioning as a tool for tutoring with a shared teaching screen when connected to a laptop. Peer Tutors will be able to take full advantage of this small group teaching space with this new addition. [Cooper Center Technology Grant Application](#)



## Spring Semester Welcome Event

In January, the Cooper Center, Cochrane-Woods Library, and Student Lift staff co-hosted a welcome event in the library learning commons, which promoted the services of the Cooper Center and the library. A hot chocolate bar, snacks, and resource materials were available to students for a three hour window over lunch. Melissa Hayes, Tracy Ensor, Derrick Gulley, Alex Munson, and Julie Pinnell were all present. The event resulted in 58 direct contacts with students regarding academic support services.



## HUB Spokes Group

Spearheaded by University Librarian Julie Pinnell, the "Spokes Folks" began meeting monthly to discuss the work of each department and discover opportunities for collaboration. This group is comprised of staff from the Cooper Center, Library, Accessibility Services, and Academic Advising. The group will continue to meet together to develop an integrated network of academic support services while moving away from the current siloed approach to student support.



## AWS Training / Workshop / Presentation

This year, the Cooper Center presented to 22 of the 23 Archway Seminar (AWS) classes. Following the "Intro to the Cooper Center" workshop, most AWS classes stayed for additional workshops, with "Audience & Purpose" being the most popular. Providing AWS instructors with a link to the Cooper Center's Microsoft Booking page displayed our wide variety of workshop choices and simplified the process of scheduling a visit.

In May 2024, Dr. Hayes was invited by Associate Provost Meghan Winchell to address all AWS faculty regarding group work strategies and fostering a culture of collaboration in project-based learning classrooms. Instructors were also encouraged to utilize the Cooper Center Peer Tutors as a collaborative and high-impact approach to learning.



## Prairie Wolf Welcome Academic Success Panel

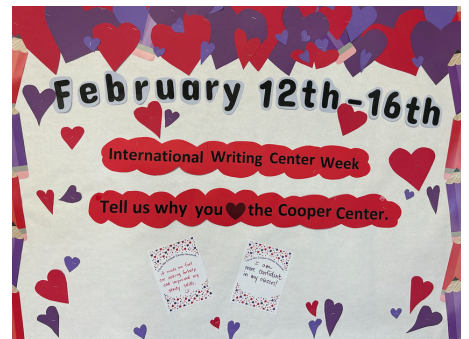
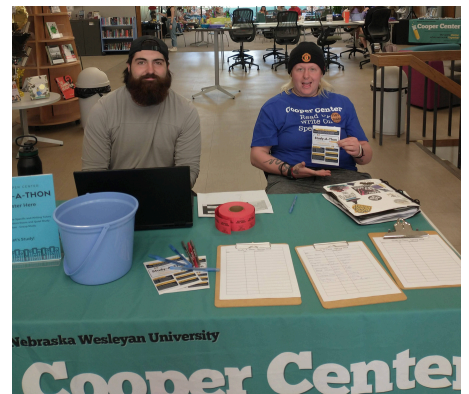
At this year's PWW, Dr. Hayes moderated a panel focused on academic success for all new students and their families. Student panelists answered a variety of questions, such as: *What tips can you share on how to stay organized? How have you grown as a writer since you started at NWU? How do you collaborate with professors, tutors, classmates, and others in the NWU community?* Students and parents described this event as engaging and helpful. Several students who visited the Cooper Center during the year stated that this event was a catalyst for coming to the Cooper Center for support and helped to reduce the stigma of asking for help. This event demonstrated to incoming students that seeking help is a natural part of learning at NWU.

# OUTREACH

The Cooper Center continues to increase awareness of our services for NWU students, faculty, staff, and the greater learning center community. We strive to promote the power of collaborative learning, create a safe space for all members of the NWU community, and foster a culture of help-seeking. We do this through all-campus outreach events, social media, custom workshops, relationship building within departments, and advocacy and outreach to other colleges/universities.

## This year Cooper Center Administration...

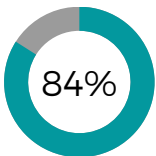
- Participated in New Student Orientation, MSW Orientation, Involvement Fairs, STEM for You, International Student Orientation, Innovative Problem Solving, PAWs, Staff and Faculty meetings, Prairie Wolf Launch, Jumpstart for Juniors, and more.
- Delivered in-class workshops to Archway, Integrative, First Year Writing, Success Seminars, and more.
- Hosted the Study-A-Thon with over 350+ students attending these events in the fall and spring semesters.
- Celebrated International Writing Center Week with daily activities for visitors to the Cooper Center.
- Maintained an Instagram account for campus awareness, calendar updates, and event promotion.
- Assessed the needs of individual departments by meeting one-on-one with department chairs.
- Met regularly with the Cooper Center Advisory Board.



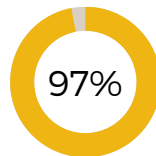
- Presented at and attended regional and national conferences.
- Conducted special trainings and presentations for faculty and staff at the request of administrators.
- Worked on numerous committees across campus, ranging from faculty and staff hiring to curriculum and program development.

# THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

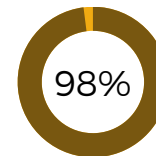
After each session, students were emailed a survey with questions about their Cooper Center experience. Out of the 2,091 sessions in 2023-2024, 524 student surveys were returned (a 25% response rate).



of students indicated that following their session, they felt comfortable explaining the concepts/ideas/strategies they learned to a friend.



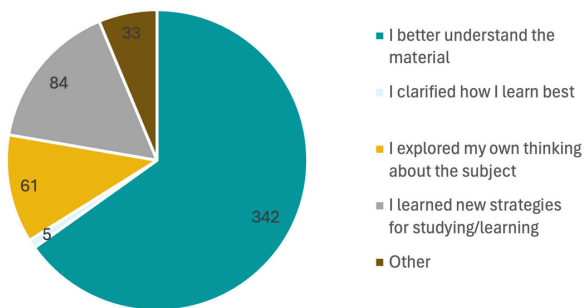
planned to return to the Cooper Center



would recommend the Cooper Center to a friend

**The Cooper Center's vision is to create and empower confident and effective learners, which includes helping students to better understand and take ownership of their learning processes.**

"How did your time with the tutor affect your learning today?"



Students were asked to examine their learning after a tutoring session. More than 65% (n=342) said they better understood the material, 16% (n=84) reported learning a new strategy for studying or learning, and 12% (n=61) reported exploring their own thinking, all of which indicates metacognitive thinking about their learning.

## What students are saying...

"[Tutor] not only helped me learn the material but also gave me some tips and ways to solve the problems...That was very helpful and showed that they care and want me to learn and succeed in this course."

"I love the Cooper Center! The walk-in writing option was so handy and just what I needed to get going on my assignment and feel confident."

As always [Tutor] explains concepts well and helps guide you to finding your own answers to things. They have a way of being patient...[even] when you keep asking the same questions.

"I have never been to the cooper center in my three years of being at Wesleyan, and going and having my tutor be friendly and open to my questions and actively problem solving with me was wonderful. I felt very comfortable and was no longer intimidated by the idea of seeking help for classes and homework."

# LOOKING FORWARD

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During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Cooper Center continued to successfully grow our services and supports. As we look towards future growth, we have identified the following priorities:

- **Learning Center of Excellence (LCE) Certification**
  - This learning center certification through ICLCA promotes professional standards of excellence for learning centers and encourages centers to develop, maintain, and assess quality programs and services that enhance student learning. LCLC, CRLA certification, and new approaches to assessment are to key our application's success. We plan to compile our application in the 2024-2025 year. [LCE applicant criteria](#)
- **Campus Collaboration**
  - In alignment with the Student Success Strategic Plan, the Cooper Center hopes to build a fully collaborative student academic support system with Library staff and the new directors of Accessibility and Advising. Working together, we can create a multi-pronged approach to care for our students and better serve their academic needs, as well as creating a more integrated network of support services.
- **Innovative Academic Support Programming**
  - The Cooper Center continues to provide new and innovative programming in support of various student populations. The second iteration of the Wrestling Study Hall program will offer greater support to wrestling student-athletes by offering more workshop topics, increasing study time, and adding more sessions across the semester. Additionally, the Cooper Center will spearhead a new peer-led team learning pilot program in General Chemistry with the goal of reducing DFW rates and further building the culture of collaborative learning on our campus. With positive outcomes in these two programs, we aim to expand to other sports teams and STEM classes.
- **Continued Campus-wide Outreach**
  - Over the next year, we aim to create a stronger presence in programs such as LSAMP and Wesleyan Honors Academy. We also hope to increase the amount of workshop sessions in FYW classes.
- **Update Registration and Assessment Software**
  - Our current software lacks features necessary for LCE certification. We plan to update this software as soon as funds allow and hope to find a software system that allows us to continue our work and integrate information with the offices of Accessibility and Advising.
- **Increased Assessment Efforts**
  - In 2023-2024, we increased our efforts to make data-informed decisions by focusing on program assessment and key performance indicators. We also began working directly with NWU's institutional research office to analyze additional areas of impact. In the next year, our goal is to examine Cooper Center data in a way that directly reflects our impact on university-wide persistence and retention efforts as well as Common Institutional Learning Outcomes (CILOs).

## CONTACT US

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