

Newsletter



Welcome From the Director, April Heaney

I am excited to focus this spring's newsletter on voices from LeaRN students. Please enjoy learning about three students who have participated in and then worked for Fall Bridge, the Writing Center, and STEP Tutoring! Also check out a few of our biggest accomplishments of 2025 below. I wish you a wonderful summer and invite your feedback on LeaRN programs!

A Few LeaRN Accomplishments from 2025!

Science Writing at UW. Thanks to a gift from LeaRN donor, Roy Shlemon, and support from Life Sciences and the Haub School, students in STEM fields can now access more help with science writing. The new programming includes support for introductory biology courses, increased training for tutors supporting STEM courses, and writing help for graduate students completing theses and dissertations.

Study abroad course for low-income students. Writing Center Director Francesca King is launching a new course for students less likely to study abroad in college called "Icelandic Mythology and Folklore." Starting in March, students will begin learning about Icelandic sagas, Norse mythology, and folktales before spending ten days traveling around Iceland in mid-May.

Expanding UW's "First-Year Experience" classes. In 2026, LeaRN's "Design Your UW" classes recruited the largest group of faculty and students to date, with 16 sections offered and nearly 200 students enrolled! Many courses have themes aimed at connecting students in the same major or through shared interests.

Supporting first-year students in academic recovery. Many college students struggle when they arrive in college and find it is vastly different from their high school experience. In partnership with UW's advising center (ACES), LeaRN's Academic Recovery Program has helped many first-years on academic probation to find concrete support and mentorship.

First-Gen First Friday

UW's first-generation students are invited to participate in LeaRN's new "First-Gen First Friday" program offered on the first Friday of every month. First-Gen First Friday works with campus partners to highlight campus resources, community organizations, or student voices focused on first-generation college student success.



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Jackson's Experience with STEP Tutoring



Jackson Fouras is a recent UW graduate in Chemistry who is excited to start a PhD in Chemistry this Fall. Jackson has a strong passion for music, education, mentorship, and scientific research, and reports that their academic journey has been deeply shaped by early involvement as a student in the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program under the STEP Tutor Center. Later, Jackson became a SI leader!

Jackson credits STEP with promoting a feeling of support and connection during early chemistry coursework. This experience not only strengthened Jackson's commitment to the discipline but also inspired them to pursue a leadership role in academic support. A strong advocate for collaborative learning, Jackson emphasizes the importance of peer support in academic success.

“I think the STEP program is the most important resource students can use.”

Jackson is passionate about helping students overcome challenges, build confidence, and feel a sense of belonging in science. These programs are essential to student success, not only for academic performance, but also for fostering community and personal growth.



Why Jackson Recommends STEP

Jackson describes the STEP & SI as a meaningful experience for both its academic and personal value, noting that these programs were “the reason I stayed in chemistry.” Jackson also highlights how STEP helps students feel “connected” during critical moments along their academic journey, calling STEP “the most important resource students can use” and “a privilege... to have this free avenue for success.” As an SI Leader, Jackson finds the greatest reward in “making people feel like they belong in their field of study.”

Ileah's Experience with Fall Bridge



Ileah Mwangi is a junior at the University of Wyoming, double majoring in Nursing and Sociology. Originally from Casper, Wyoming, she is also an active member of the university's rugby team. Ileah is deeply passionate about mentorship, student support, and working with diverse populations, interests that align closely with her future career in healthcare. Her academic and personal journey has been positively influenced by her involvement in the Fall Bridge program, where she first participated as a student and later became a peer mentor.

“The Fall Bridge program helped me grow as a person”

Encouraged by her Fall Bridge instructor to apply for a position as a peer mentor, Ileah stepped into the role, ultimately discovering a strong passion for supporting students. Through her time as a peer mentor for Fall Bridge, she refined her communication and collaboration skills. Ileah credits the program with helping her grow both professionally and personally. As a mentor, she values building connections with students and helping them navigate both academic and personal challenges.



Why Ileah Recommends Fall Bridge

For Ileah, one of the most meaningful aspects of the Fall Bridge program has been the opportunity to build genuine relationships with students. Ileah noted that “I absolutely love working with them” and she truly cares about her students’ academic and personal journeys. Ileah recommends the program as a way to “kickstart” essential skills for life after college, encouraging students to embrace the process, “give yourself grace,” and “remember your why” when facing challenges. Ultimately, she sees Fall Bridge as a space that not only supports student success but helps individuals grow into more confident, capable, and compassionate people.

Alex's Experience with the Writing Center



Alex Huss is a senior undergraduate student majoring in zoology with a minor in insect biology, who would like to pursue graduate studies in entomology. Alex's introduction to the Writing Center came through an English course requirement. Initially, Alex was worried about being judged, but after meeting with a consultant realized the Writing Center is one of the most constructive and welcoming student resources on campus! It's a true judgement-free zone. This first consultation led to many more meetings: now, Alex works at the Writing Center as an undergraduate consultant and Writing Fellow.

“At the Writing Center I learned a lot about writing, and have become a better writer”

As a Writing Fellow, Alex provides informed writing support to English 1010 students both in the classroom and the Center. Alex appreciates the working relationships formed during these consultations, and enjoys watching students gain confidence in their ability to communicate their ideas. Alex recognizes that consultants occupy a privileged position to address gaps in students' prior writing education in ways that many instructors, constrained by course demands, simply cannot.



Why Alex Recommends the Writing Center

Alex recommends the Writing Center because it provides a nonjudgmental environment that helps students overcome common fears about seeking writing help. Alex notes, “I was very scared of my writing being judged,” but this concern was quickly alleviated upon realizing that consultants are “not judging you in any way.” Alex also encourages students to visit the Writing Center to experience what it's like to get into the weeds of a writing project with the guidance of another human, especially in a world where it is easy to outsource thinking and writing to AI. “It's all about connection... I'm making a connection with you,” Alex explained.

