



Newsletter

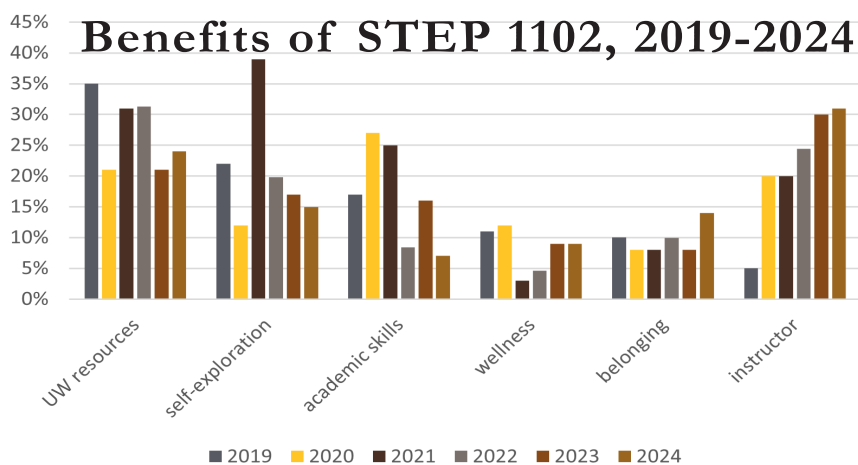


Welcome from the Director, April Heaney

In the past year, LeaRN staff and faculty have supported UW students in their academic work in exciting ways! From breaking records in tutoring and writing consultations, to celebrating first-generation undergraduate and graduate students, to offering education abroad programs to limited income students, LeaRN programs have extended academic impact and gathered many success stories. We welcome your ideas and feedback on the updates in this newsletter!

First Year Experience

FYE (First Year Experience) is a course offered to incoming freshmen to help with college transition. In the six years it has been offered, the FYE course has shown continued growth. The graph on the right shows what students find most beneficial in STEP 1102 from 2019-2024. The updated curriculum incorporates design thinking and asks students to "Create Your UW."



FYE, Summer Bridge, FIGs

FYE and Summer Bridge help first-year students find friends, succeed in their programs, and explore interests.



The LeaRN Summer Bridge Program helps students prepare for math and earn 6 credits during July and early August. Students who participate in Summer Bridge often move into credit-bearing math courses in their first semester, rather than taking preparatory math courses. Pictured on the left is a moment from the Summer Bridge reunion that was hosted in the fall. Students eagerly gathered to reminisce about Summer Bridge where they met some of their first and closest friends in college.

Study Abroad: Costa Rica and Iceland



The Geography of Bliss is a 1-credit First Year Experience (FYE) study abroad course, first launched in 2022 through the LeaRN Program. Students met weekly at UW for 6 weeks before traveling together to Costa Rica for a 10-day study abroad experience.

For many students, this course was their first time traveling outside the U.S. They described gaining a deep sense of belonging and community, during and after the class. We believe this connection has contributed to the high freshman-to-sophomore retention rates for our cohort of mostly first-generation, Pell-Eligible (limited-income) students.

(Left) UW students and instructors gather in front of an ancient Ceiba Tree in Costa Rica, January 2023.

“Studying abroad has been the most impactful thing for my education.”

Allana Warren (right), a two-time Costa Rica participant, shares her experience as a first-generation student studying abroad in an interview with Allison Gernant, Assistant Lecturer and co-instructor of the Costa Rica FYE course. Support from LeaRN made it possible for Allana to study abroad multiple times—an opportunity that would have otherwise been out of reach.

[Access Allana’s full interview about her experience here!](#)



TIP: press Ctrl + R click to keep the newsletter open in your browser.

Icelandic Myths and Folklore

In May 2026, Writing Center Director and Associate Lecturer Francesca King will lead a First Year Seminar (FYS) course in Iceland, Icelandic Myth and Folklore. Students will explore how myths, sagas, and folklore shape cultural identity and our relationship to the natural world. The course culminates in a 10-day study abroad experience in Iceland, where students will visit the landscapes tied to these stories—lava fields, waterfalls, and legendary sites like Ásbyrgi canyon. This course provides another opportunity for students less likely to participate in study abroad, including first-generation, under-prepared, and limited-income students.

First-Gen Programs & Celebrations



Tri-Alpha

The Gamma Epsilon chapter of Alpha Alpha Alpha (Tri-Alpha) was founded at UW in spring 2022. Originally established in 2018 at Moravian University, Tri-Alpha highlights the academic accomplishments of first-generation college students. Since its founding at UW, 194 UW undergraduate and graduate students have been inducted. Pictured above is the most recent Tri-Alpha induction ceremony.

First-Gen Scholars

First-Gen Scholars provides a range of support opportunities, including a first-year learning community, mentorship for sophomores, a research-focused mentorship program, and membership in Alpha Alpha Alpha—an honor society recognizing high-achieving first-generation students. Together, these programs help students strengthen their support networks, connect with fellow first-gen peers, and build relationships with faculty and staff who were also the first in their families to attend college.



First-Gen Celebration Day

Each year in early November, UW celebrates National First-Generation College Student Celebration Day. In 2024, LeaRN co-sponsored a campus-wide resources scavenger hunt for first-gen students. Students were invited to visit the 28 participating campus locations, learn about the services the office provides, and scan a QR code to be entered in a drawing. Over three days, there were 402 unique QR code scans.

“The Tri-Alpha initiation ceremony is one of my favorite events of the year. I love celebrating the accomplishments of first-gen students.”

Makayla Stewart, staff advisor for Tri-Alpha

Fall Bridge

Fall Bridge is a course-based learning community for first-year students. Each year approximately 350 students participate in one of two options Fall Bridge provides: the one-course option (Human Culture course) or the two-course option (Human Culture course and English 1010).

Students with low high school GPAs choose courses in the program as part of their admission. Other students who are encouraged to participate include first-generation, Exploratory Studies, and other students seeking a close course-based community in their first semester of college.



Peer Mentors

Fall Bridge Peer Mentors are sophomore and older students who are hired to serve as role models and resources for students in Fall Bridge classes. The Peer Mentors facilitate activities and discussions in class, covering topics ranging from study tips and tricks, to getting involved in campus clubs and organizations. Attending the Fall Bridge class each day means these Peer Mentors form strong relationships with their students and are an integral part of the support offered through Fall Bridge.

“With the smaller class sizes and the extra help from my peer mentor, I was able to develop strong academic and life skills. It had such a big impact on my academic career that I wanted to be a part of this program and give back to it.”

Grace Buhler, Peer Mentor and Fall Bridge Participant

“The peer mentor program fosters connections, growth, opportunity, and the ability to learn from others.”

Allana Warren, Peer Mentor and Fall Bridge Participant

John & Dara Corkery Scholarship

The John and Dara Corkery Sophomore Scholarship recognizes students who demonstrate commitment and excellence in their academics. Students who participated in the Fall Bridge Program are eligible to apply and receive funds the summer after completing their first year. Scholarships help students with the cost of books, supplies, and living expenses—and this recognition helps support Fall Bridge students' confidence and motivation as they approach their second year of college.

“This award provided me with the means to purchase textbooks along with needing less in student loans.”

Ethan Lacey, Corkery Scholarship Recipient

Writing Center

Fall 2024 was the Writing Center's second-busiest semester ever, surpassed only by Fall 2022. The Center saw a total of 915 appointments and served over 450 clients. Freshmen and graduate students were the largest populations of students who visited the Center, representing 35% and 29% of appointments respectively. This is what a few of our consultants had to say:

Gregory

In the personal statement workshop I ran, students used the rhetorical steps of choosing a story, pulling values from that story, and explaining how those values make them uniquely qualified for their area of study. One attendee claimed her personal statement "became 10 times better" as a result.

Sadie

This semester, as a Writing Fellow, I interacted mainly with Bridge English 1010 students by presenting information on punctuation, annotated bibliographies, MLA citations, and public speaking. I also met with around 75% of my students in the Writing Center to work on their 1010 assignments.

Amelia

As a Writing Fellow, I worked with two instructors. I had a record number of English 1010 students visiting me at the Center with around 50% of students from each class making appointments. Within these classes, I also presented on annotated bibliographies, brainstorming, and TEA paragraph structure.

WC Science Initiatives

The Writing Center has been actively strengthening partnerships with science programs on campus. Recent initiatives include the Guild of Science and Story, a graduate learning community; Sci-Grad Writing Accountability Hours; and a new partnership with LIFE 1010, where a Writing Center PhD science consultant trains graduate teaching assistants to teach lab report writing in their sections.



Client Feedback

- Virginia is the BEST!! She gives detailed and considerate feedback. I particularly appreciate her care and attention to my needs on my paper. I recommend her for anyone!
- I thoroughly enjoyed my first appointment with Erin! She was welcoming and offered various suggestions. I will absolutely be using the Writing Center again.
- I'm not sure how I would make it through my EdD program without Barbara. My papers are much better with her suggestions.

STEP Tutoring

Statistics Fall 2024

- 2,389 STEP appointments
- 634 STEP unique students
- 112,570 minutes of tutoring
- 2,686 SI contact hours
- 710 SI unique students
- 188,830 minutes of SI

STEP Tutoring is UW's primary tutoring center, predominantly supporting students in a wide range of 1000- and 2000-level courses.

In addition to one-on-one tutoring, STEP offers group-based services such as Supplemental Instruction (SI) and tutoring groups, giving students the chance to regularly review material and learn collaboratively with peers throughout the semester.

Top 5 Classes

- CHEM 1020
- CHEM 2420
- MATH 2210
- ACCT 3430
- STAT 2050



Student Comments

"Thank you for your help this semester! I think I passed!"

"Amazing session. Worked through each question with me giving me new ways to think through the challenging topics."

"She helped explain things in a way that was different to how my teacher presented the information."

"It was great. She walked me through the things that I struggled with and made sure that I understood the material."

"The tutor would simplify things to easily understand and would also make sure that I was understanding everything all the way through the session."

Featured Alum & Donor: William White

Biography

Will White left home at 14 and worked a series of odd jobs in California after leaving school. When he first visited Wyoming, he fell in love with the natural landscape and eventually moved there to work on an oil rig. Still, he dreamed of attending college. After several visits to the University of Wyoming, he was admitted and joined Fall Bridge his first year. The program helped him transition into academics after years in the workforce.

Interview

When asked why he chose to give back to the program that supported him, Will reflected on the teachers who truly cared and took the time to know him. His instructors helped him recognize a learning-related processing issue and guided him toward the resources he needed. He credits Fall Bridge with setting him on the path to academic, career, and lifelong success.



Will stayed in touch with Fall Bridge faculty and staff, and his regular visits inspired him to create an engagement program that he believed would enhance students' experience in their first semester. He believes that being personally involved has allowed him to see real results and build meaningful connections. Will also emphasizes that giving time can be just as valuable as financial support: "Time is the ultimate currency and it's worth spending!"

"If you stay involved, you'll see the results."

Opportunities to Give

Please consider supporting our giving priorities for the next three years!

- **Expand academic coaching for first-year students who are struggling or on academic probation**
- **Make [education abroad](#) possible for students unlikely to experience travel**
- **Create one of UW's only scholarships for first-generation students**
- **Support the faculty mentor initiative for first-generation sophomores**
- **[Learn more about giving opportunities by visiting our giving page!](#)**



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