

SOUTHERN
DISCOURSE
in the CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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- Writing Center Training Through the Lens of Human
Resource Management
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- “The Walking Definition of an Apprehensive Writer”:
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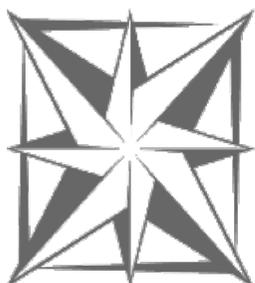
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Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation (SDC) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) biannually from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. As a forum for practitioners in writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers, SDC publishes articles from administrators, consultants, and other scholars concerned with issues related to training, consulting, labor, administration, theory, and innovative practices.

Our editorial board welcomes scholarly essays on consulting, research, administration, training, technology, and theory relevant to writing centers, speaking centers, and digital/multiliteracy centers. Article submissions may be based in theoretical and critical approaches, applied practices, or empirical research (qualitative or quantitative). Submissions are evaluated by the editors, and promising articles are sent to our national editorial board for double-blind review. To honor Southern Discourse's historical context, future issues will include special sections that profile the work of regional associations, emerging undergraduate research, and centers across the country, providing a sustained look at regional and national concerns that centers face in the 21st century.



SWCA

Southeastern Writing Center Association

Our Mission

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing, speaking, and digital centers and others interested in center work from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

The Journal

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation is the journal of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. Published twice annually, this peer-reviewed journal promotes a community of writing center scholarship within the southeast and nationally while serving as a forum for innovative work across the field. Subscribe to SDC by becoming a member of SWCA at <http://www.iwca-swca.org>

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Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation invites articles that engage in scholarship about writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers. The journal welcomes a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to theoretical perspectives in the center, administration, center training, consulting and initiatives. An essay prepared for publication in SDC will address a noteworthy issue related to work in the center and will join an important dialogue that focuses on improving or celebrating center work. Please submit manuscripts through this website <http://multiliteracycenters.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/discourse/>.

Genre, Format, Length, Citation

Most articles in SDC will be between 3,000 and 5,000 words. We ask that all articles be documented in accordance with the MLA Style Manual, 3rd Edition. Consistent with traditional writing center practice, SDC promotes a feedback model. Articles will be sent out to our national board for blind review and reviewed by our editorial team. SDC is excited to work with you.

"Back to the Center" Guidelines for Writers

Alongside scholarly articles, each issue of SDC will include an article of roughly 1,500 words that focuses on a specific writing center, speaking center, digital center or multiliteracy center. "Back to the Center" will share a center's successes and hopes for improvement. By incorporating visual images, "Back to the Center" should give its readers an authentic sense of the ethos of the center and of the work done there. What is working in the center? What are the areas that need improving? What are the goals for the center?

"Back to the Center" will also include a section titled "Center Insight." In this section, we'd like to know the numbers: How many sessions are held in the center per semester? How many consultants are working in the center? How many hours a week is the center open? How does consultant recruitment occur? How long is the training process for consultants before they work in the center?

"Consultant Insight" Guidelines for Writers

Consistent with the consultant-writer model of the mutual exchange of ideas, we invite consultants to provide insight into center experiences. This article of roughly 2,000 words can be research driven or can take a more narrative and personal approach that illuminates consultant experiences. SDC is interested in both struggles and achievements. The article may focus specifically on one aspect of consulting or it may provide a broader sense of center work.

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From the Editor

SARA LITTLEJOHN

I am pleased to present the second issue of SDC in its new peer-reviewed format. Our editorial team has worked hard to assemble a smart and thoughtful issue that addresses key ideas in our field. This issue was a different animal to produce, as we worked to polish and refine our editorial and printing processes, and we have come a long way in streamlining work flows that contribute to the finished product you see here.

In this issue, we include articles that address a range of issues in the field. More specifically, Scott Pleasant's article tackles a long-standing debate: should faculty require students to visit centers? This is a question we as directors have all faced, and his research is compelling. Bonnie Devet's piece draws on her previous experience in the business world, analyzing how the field Human Resources Management can inform and enrich tutor and consultant training. Writing apprehension is a real concern for most of us, and I have observed (not without irony) that it is particularly true for many of us in writing studies work as well. Jane Bowman Smith's article looks at this issue of tutors' writing apprehension in rich ways.

Our "Back to the Center" article features the Communication Lab at Arizona State's West Campus. Bonnie Wentzel provides an insightful look at her center. Liliana Naydan takes of the issue of just Multiliteracy

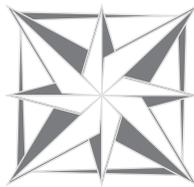
for basic writers, asking directors to engage with the issue of how our conceptions of genre and multiliteracy impact the practices of basic writers' audience and agency. Finally, Brooke Morgan Wilner provides readers with a discussion of how blogs create community in the center.

I hope you all will enjoy reading these articles as much as we have enjoyed putting the issue together. This is a natural segue to my news that I must now step down as Editor of SDC. Though I have thoroughly enjoyed birthing this new version of a long-standing publication, my work situation no longer allows me to continue in this role. However, I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Karen Head, Assistant Professor and Director of the Communication Center at the Georgia Institute of Technology will step in as the new Editor of SDC. We will work in the next month to ensure a smooth transition. Karen is well positioned to take over the helm, and we can all look forward to ongoing growth and recognition for SDC in the coming years.

I wish all the best to the future editors of SDC and feel honored to be part of that legacy, if only for a short time.

A Note of Thanks

We have a new crop of Editorial Assistants: Gia Coturri and Andrew Kennedy. And again I have leaned on the talents of Jennifer Whitaker and Sunny Stewart far too long: people I am lucky to call friends and colleagues.



Required Appointments: The Debate and the Data

SCOTT PLEASANT

When I took over as the Writing Center Coordinator in the fall of 2010, I looked at the center's usage data from the previous few years and felt that the center could increase volume by doubling the number of one-on-one consultations without overburdening our resources. Some of the tutors on staff were not as sure as I was that the center could handle such an increase, though, and in fact, one of them came to my office on my first day to propose a policy that would have actively discouraged students from coming to the center. The tutor asked me to contact all first-year composition teachers and tell them not to require their students to come to the center because these mandatory sessions were counterproductive. Only students who come in voluntarily, the tutor said, get anything positive out of a tutoring session.

I thanked the tutor for her input, but explained that I would not be able to send out a message like that even if I wanted to because I had already that morning met with the faculty of the English Department and asked for their help in increasing the usage of the center. In response, the tutor

Scott Pleasant became the writing center coordinator at Coastal Carolina University in August 2010 after more than twenty years in the classroom at CCU, Auburn University, and East Tennessee State University. He has published and presented on assessment, tutor training, and writing center promotions since moving into his current position.

managed a facial expression that was somehow deflated and defiant at the same time. She then became even more concerned when I told her that I had actually encouraged the writing faculty to feel free to require their students to visit the center for tutoring appointments. The tutor pleaded with me to change my mind and told me that the previous writing center coordinator had discouraged mandatory appointments, without outright banning them. She had hoped that a new coordinator would adopt an even harder line on this issue.

After hearing the tutor out for about ten minutes, I assured her that I appreciated her point of view and that I was aware of the fact that other writing center directors and tutors shared her opinion, but I also told her that I had a long history of effective tutoring sessions with both required and voluntary students. Not wanting to send this well-meaning (and unusually persistent) tutor away with the feeling that her concerns had been ignored, I told her that I would monitor the situation closely and would be willing to change my stance on the issue if I felt it was necessary. Some of my colleagues might wonder why I “put up” with the tutor for as long as I did, but I don’t regret engaging in a discussion with her about this issue. After all, I knew that her position was common in our field.

Before I accepted my current position, I had worked in two other writing centers, and both of them had discouraged, but not outright forbidden, instructors from requiring their students to come in for tutoring. I had always suspected, though, that rules restricting the practice of required appointments served more as traffic-control policies than as a way to prevent counter-productive tutoring. As I told the tutor, I had never noticed in my own sessions that required students were especially difficult to work with or even that they were less receptive to advice than voluntary students. My refusal to adopt the policy was not, then, simply borne out of a desire to increase visits, but was an attempt to work against a common practice whose validity I had questioned for years. I would like to be able to say that my first step was to review the literature on this issue before

making this important decision, but I didn't do that until later. In reality, I made an intuitive call, which is another way of saying I had made a guess, albeit an informed guess.

After two full semesters in the position, I had accumulated evidence supporting my decision, at least from an administrator's point of view. We had increased individual tutoring sessions by 70% over the previous academic year, and the tutors did not appear to have been overwhelmed by resistant or poorly motivated students. While our appointment schedule was almost completely filled on some days, at no time during the year had a deluge of required students prevented students from making voluntary appointments. In short, as a new writing center coordinator who would soon be writing his first annual report, I had no regrets. But I also had no solid evidence to show that the influx of new students from required appointments had led to a higher number of genuinely productive sessions. All I had was a higher number of tutoring sessions.

In an attempt to determine whether I had made a correct or at least defensible decision, I began searching through the literature on this topic. I was pleased to find that previously published studies have done far more to support the practice of mandatory appointments than to question it. Also, a research study that I later designed and supervised offers additional evidence to question the common bias against required appointments. Five years after making what was initially a gut call, I still not only allow but promote the practice of mandatory appointments. I now encourage other writing center professionals who object to required sessions to consider the evidence in the published literature and the study described below and to rethink their positions.

A Brief Overview of the Required-Visit Issue

A review of the literature on this topic has to include a reference to

Stephen North's highly influential 1984 article, "The Idea of a Writing Center." In it, North cautions against mandatory visits, saying that instructors who have such requirements are "essentially out of line" even though they have the students' best interests at heart. The problem, according to North, boils down to the students' reasons for coming to the writing center, and North is far from alone in taking this view. At the risk of drawing a simple binary distinction, intrinsic motivations are usually seen as good while extrinsic motivations are usually seen as bad. North says that it is difficult "to convert [required students] from people who have to see us to people who want to" (440).

It would be too strong to say that Stephen North is solely responsible for the long-standing resistance to mandatory tutoring sessions, though. SWCA co-founder Gary Olson had already taken a similar stance in 1981, and it seems likely that both he and North were expressing a common view among writing center directors at that time. In the three decades following their statements, their position has come to be accepted by many as self-evidently true because it is often assumed that students must be intrinsically motivated to come to the writing center if they are to get any benefit from tutoring. But if our main goal is, in North's enduring axiom, "to produce better writers, not better writing" (438), then the important question isn't why students come to the center but whether they improve when they do come.

Since North's admonition in 1984, the literature on this topic—while somewhat scant—has tended to refute rather than support his position. Only a year after North's article, Irene Clark published a study in *Writing Center Journal* that challenged the idea that students who are required to visit the writing center will be hard to "convert" into voluntary students later on. Using a Likert-scale questionnaire, Clark surveyed 329 students in writing courses and found that required students actually had

predominantly positive attitudes toward the writing center. A resounding 75% said they felt the writing center had improved their writing skills, and 50% said they thought the writing center had helped them improve their grades.

While Clark's article is strongly persuasive, it is only one article, and widespread beliefs and practices can be difficult to change. With so few examples of research in the professional literature on this topic in the first twenty years after Clark's piece was published, it is perhaps not surprising that opposition to the practice of mandatory tutoring continued and became a largely unquestioned orthodoxy in the writing center community. There are signs, though, that this view is increasingly being challenged by writing center directors. A 2014 thread on the WCenter e-mail listserv highlights what appears to be a widening schism in the writing center community. While a number of posters note that the existing literature is largely supportive of the value of required appointments, others are unwilling to embrace them. Their reasons often have as much to do with resource management issues, though, as with the effect of such tutoring sessions on the quality of students' writing.

In recounting his center's experiments with mandatory sessions, Mark Pedretti of Case Western Reserve University encapsulates many of the recurring concerns expressed on the listserv. According to Pedretti, some of the required students who visited his center "simply didn't need much help" and "were taking up appointment slots from other students who would benefit more from going to the WC." In addition, he worries that required appointments will "reinforce the perception of the WC as an editing service," and he feels that frequent repetition of "the same issues of brainstorming, organization, and argumentative structure" with students working on the same assignment could be avoided with group workshops.

Rachel Liberatore of Albright College echoes Pedretti's concerns as

she relates the story of her center's ongoing first-time experiment with required appointments. To prevent required students from overloading the center, she says she worked out a sign-up procedure to ensure that no more than three or four students a day from any given class would visit the center. The sign-ups were to be enforced only by what she called the "honor system." She asks, "Will they stick to the honor system?" and answers that question less than optimistically: "We shall see..." Liberatore then poses a more important question that expresses the primary reason many writing center directors are dubious about the value of required sessions: "Will the students be engaged with their sessions even if the sessions are not really voluntary?" She doesn't offer an answer to this question, but simply by asking it, Liberatore seems to be leaning toward no, they won't. North made this same point in 1984 and reaffirmed his stance in 1994, both times with no real data to back him up, and thirty years later, his fears are evidently still shared by many.

Pedretti and Liberatore's concerns are legitimate, but they don't address the most important question: Do students who are required to come to the writing center get as much benefit from the tutoring experience as students who come voluntarily? This research question has received relatively little attention over the last thirty years. Eliot Rendleman's thorough 2013 bibliography on this issue includes only twelve published quantitative or qualitative pieces on the advisability of mandatory visits in that time span, seven of which have appeared since 2002.

Most of the studies listed in this bibliography argue that mandatory sessions are effective if we measure their effectiveness by students' opinions on those sessions. In other words, these studies demonstrate rather persuasively that students have surprisingly positive attitudes toward required sessions and that mandates don't seem to harm their overall impressions of the writing center and the work the center does.

A 2008 article by Barbara Lynn Gordon provides an excellent representative example of the studies in Rendleman's bibliography. Gordon describes a research experiment designed by her tutors that changed her from an opponent to a supporter of required appointments. When she began her first writing center directorship in 1978, she actually encouraged instructors to require their students to come in for tutoring, largely because she wanted to increase usage of the center and because she felt faculty requirements "bestowed credibility on our fledgling center." A few years later, however, after seeing that required sessions "could detract from and dilute writing center services," she came to agree with North and began asking instructors not to require writing center visits.

Despite her requests, some instructors continued to require their students to visit the writing center. When some of Gordon's tutors became frustrated after working with these students, they developed a research survey in an attempt to prove to these scofflaw instructors that these kinds of sessions damaged the students' perceptions of the writing center. The survey asked three questions of students who had been required to visit the writing center. The first was "What was your initial reaction to being required to visit the writing center?" Possible answers ranged from "annoyed" to "excited/happy." Of the 32 students who responded, 47% said they were "annoyed" by the requirement. The third question asked the students how likely they were to return to the writing center. To this question, 44% said they "definitely" planned to return, 47% responded with "maybe," and 9% were "unsure."

Considering the fact that almost half of the students felt "annoyed" by the requirement, it is remarkable that zero students checked the "not likely," "only for extra credit," or "absolutely not" boxes. Clearly, being required to visit the writing center did not damage these students' perceptions of the benefits they might receive from a writing center appointment. If

anything, these results show that a mandatory visit actually improved these students' overall perceptions of the writing center and likely prompted many of them to come in voluntarily for additional tutoring.

With only 32 respondents to this survey, Gordon's study is obviously not definitive, as she admits. However, she correctly points out that her results are in line with previous attempts to address the issue of required appointments. She cites studies by Irene Clark at the University of Southern California, Wendy Bishop at the University of Alaska, and Julie Bauer Morrison and Jean-Paul Nadeau at Bryant College. These studies take slightly different approaches, but they reach similar conclusions: there is no evidence that requiring students to visit the writing center damages their perceptions of the writing center, their satisfaction with the tutoring they receive, or their likelihood of returning to the writing center for future visits.

In a short meta-analysis of the research in this area from their 2012 book, *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice*, Rebecca Day Babcock and Terese Thonus conclude that the research is almost universally positive in its appraisal of the effects of mandatory tutoring. Based on the available evidence in the literature, they recommend that writing center directors "[r]ethink the stricture against required appointments" (85). Babcock and Thonus state that studies have documented positive attitudes toward the writing center among students who are required to visit and that these students tend to have positive attitudes about future required visits (70). They go on to conclude that required appointments seem to be especially helpful for developmental or basic writers—the very writers who stand the most to gain from a writing center tutorial—because such sessions have been shown to boost student confidence and because students who visit the writing center multiple times tend to shift from extrinsic motivations to intrinsic (87-88).

In short, the available evidence in the literature at this point demonstrates multiple positive effects of required visits and offers very little evidence that such sessions are counterproductive. Thus, in response to a poster on the WCenter listserv who proposed a ban of mandatory appointments, Babcock wrote, "I hate to burst your bubble, but the research actually shows the opposite: that required visits are on the whole, positive!"

The Next Step: Demonstrating Improvement

The studies that have been published up to this point primarily document the fact that students who are required to visit the writing center come away with positive overall perceptions of the center. While these kinds of results are among the desired effects of any writing center appointment, they don't specifically address the key issue of whether and how much required appointments lead to improvement in students' writing. Students' attitudes toward the writing center could improve after mandatory tutoring sessions without their writing improving at all. The closest that Babcock and Thonus' meta-analysis comes to documenting actual improvement in writing is their finding that students who are required to visit the writing center write more drafts than those who are not required. For supporters of required appointments, documenting actual writing improvement quantitatively is the obvious next step.

I recently coordinated a study that I believe takes an important step toward a quantitative demonstration of the positive effects of required appointments. In the fall of 2012, my center conducted a study funded by a small internal grant. The study was intended as a way to document the amount of improvement students see after visiting the writing center. It was not initially designed to evaluate the effect of mandatory tutoring. However, the data included some surprising results that lend additional support to the idea that required appointments can be a valuable tool for helping student writers improve their writing skills.

Study Methodology

The study evaluated both draft and revised versions of papers in six first-year writing courses. Three of these classes were required to visit the center, and three were not. The plan called for collection of both draft and final versions of research papers from all students in these six course sections. Each of the three instructors involved in the study was to have one intervention section (i.e., a section of students that was required to visit the writing center after preparing a draft but before turning in the final paper) and one non-intervention group (i.e., a section of students that was not required to visit the writing center at any time during the process of writing the paper). However, due to a miscommunication, one of the instructors required both of her sections to visit the writing center. Draft versions of papers in both the intervention and non-intervention group were collected by the instructors in their classes on a day set aside for peer-review of those drafts approximately one week before the final versions were due. Final versions were collected by the instructors on the day the papers were due.

After the papers were collected, they were read and rated by a panel of readers composed of English Department faculty members. Identifying information was removed from each paper so that the members of the panel would not know the identity of any student or of the student's instructor or whether any given paper was a draft or final version. Also, during the process of distributing the papers, no rater was given both the draft and final version of the same paper.

The panel was led by a faculty member who had had several years' worth of experience as a rater of Advanced Placement essays. This faculty member served as a "table leader" who trained the other readers in holistic scoring methods and facilitated a "norming" session during which "benchmark papers" not from the group of papers in the study

served as important training tools. Each paper in the study was rated holistically according to a nine-point scale, with one being the lowest and nine being the highest rating. To help the raters reach consensus on these nine rating levels, the table leader distributed and reviewed a detailed rubric describing each level. Then during a “norming session,” the panel read nine benchmark papers, with one paper chosen by the table leader to represent each level on the holistic scale. After reading and rating this set of benchmark papers, the panel revealed and discussed their ratings. The table leader facilitated the development of consensus in the panel members’ ratings.

The panel was also asked to rate each paper according to a set of specific traits on a scale of one to five for each trait, with one being the lowest rating and five being the highest. The six traits examined in this study were thesis, organization, development, style, surface, and presentation. The thesis trait rated the writer’s ability to state and maintain a clear main idea. The organization trait rated the writer’s ability to divide the paper into logically ordered sections and make transitions and connections between those sections. The development trait rated the amount and quality of development with relevant specifics, examples, data, and other material from the writer’s personal experience and/or outside sources. The style trait looked at the writer’s skills with using varied and appropriate sentence structures throughout the paper. The surface trait rated the “correctness” of the paper (i.e., how well the writer maintained the standards of Edited American English with regard to spelling, grammar, and punctuation). The presentation trait evaluated the writer’s ability to format, cite, and document in the academic style required for each paper (MLA in all cases). Again, the table leader distributed both a rubric describing each rating level for each trait and benchmark papers. After the panel reached consensus on these rating levels in another norming session, the raters took a brief break and then began rating the papers in the study.

Results and Discussion

A total of 85 draft-/final-version paper pairs were collected for this study—50 from the “intervention group” (those required to visit the writing center) and 35 from the “non-intervention group.” While there were approximately 120 students in the 6 class sections involved in this study, the total number of paper pairs entered into the study database was lower than 120 for three reasons. One, some students failed to bring either a draft or final version (or both) to class on the required days. Two, the intervention group’s total number of paper pairs is somewhat higher than those in the non-intervention group’s total because one instructor mistakenly required students in both of her sections to make writing center appointments. Three, a few students in the non-intervention group came to the writing center voluntarily during the process of writing the paper, and these students’ papers were excluded from the study.

When the panel’s ratings of the 85 papers in the study were compiled, the data confirmed the value of required appointments. While the general conclusions that can be drawn from the data were predicted by previous research in this area, the results of this study are nonetheless somewhat surprising. The table below gives the averages on the holistic rating for papers in both the intervention and non-intervention groups:

Group	Draft	Final	Diff
Intervention (n=50)	4.53	4.73	+.2
Non-intervention (n=35)	3.32	4.11	+.79

Table 1.

The 50 students in the intervention group clearly outperformed the 35 students in the non-intervention group, and that result was expected. The unexpected result was that the students in the intervention group outperformed those in the non-intervention group by a wide margin on

the ratings for their drafts. What these results seem to indicate is that students do a better job on their drafts if they are required to visit the writing center to work on those drafts. Interestingly, the non-intervention group's final paper average is well below not only the final average for the intervention group but their draft average as well.

And these outcomes were not limited to the holistic scores, but were reproduced in the ratings for specific traits, as shown in the table below:

	Non-Intervention Group		Intervention Group	
	Draft	Final	Draft	Final
Thesis	2.20	2.55	2.85	2.91
Organization	2.35	2.67	2.86	3.04
Development	2.27	2.79	2.86	2.95
Style	2.27	2.76	2.84	3.37
Surface	2.72	3.02	3.12	3.18
Presentation	2.41	3.11	2.73	3.19

Table 2.

For every trait, the intervention group outperformed the non-intervention group. Not only are the intervention group's final draft averages higher in all cases than the non-intervention group's final average, but in all but one case—presentation—the intervention group's draft average is actually higher than the non-intervention group's final paper average. In this study, then, the intervention group—students who were required to visit the writing center—did better work on their drafts and their final papers than the non-intervention group did. The very clear differences in the draft averages for the two groups may be a result of the very fact that these students knew their drafts would be reviewed by a tutor. In the same way that these students might be likely to clean their dorm rooms

more thoroughly when they know a new roommate will soon be joining them, these students may have simply been trying to impress a “visitor.” It could also be that the instructors did a better job of preparing students in their intervention groups for their drafts because, either consciously or unconsciously, they predicted that the intervention group should outperform the non-intervention group. Or this surprising result may be the result of both of the above causes—or of some other factor or facts that cannot be determined by these results. Whatever the cause or causes of these results, though, it is clear that in this study, students who visited the writing center consistently outperformed their counterparts who did not.

Data showing that students who come in for tutoring write better papers on average than those who do not should come as welcome news for supporters of the writing center’s mission. What is troubling, however, is that these results show that the non-intervention group actually improved more between their draft and final versions than the intervention group did. The table below shows the mean (average) improvements of both groups in all areas from draft to final version:

Quantity	Non-intervention Mean (average)	Intervention Mean (average)	p-value (two-sided)
Holistic	0.790	0.220	0.046
Thesis	0.353	0.040	0.125
Org.	0.324	0.180	0.234
Dev.	0.515	0.090	0.013
Style	0.485	0.527	0.752
Surface	0.309	0.060	0.118
Presentation	0.706	0.500	0.235
Overall	0.449	0.233	0.062

Table 3.

The non-intervention group's average improvement scores were actually higher than the same average for the intervention group in all cases except one, the style trait. If the writing center's success is to be judged by how much the students improved after a single tutoring session, these results do little to document the writing center's effectiveness.

These results are so counterintuitive that it is tempting to suspect that the numbers don't mean what they at first seem to, and in fact, statistical analysis gives reason to doubt that there is any real difference between the two groups' rates of improvement. Statistical significance is defined as a p-value of below .05, and by that standard, the data demonstrate a statistically significant difference between the improvement rates for the two groups in only two of the seven categories: holistic and development. In the holistic category, the p-value is very close to the .05 threshold for significance, so only in the development category is the difference between the two groups' improvement averages clearly significant.

After considering the statistical analysis, one might be tempted to disregard the data showing lower average rates of improvement for the intervention group. However, these results are at once too consistent and too counterintuitive to reject without some further thought and discussion, even if they do not meet the standard for statistical significance. Failing a test for statistical significance merely means that a researcher can't say with a 95% certainty that there is a real difference between two sets of numbers that is not explainable by chance. Data that do not pass a significance test, then, is not immediately considered meaningless, and in this case, it seems likely that there is a real difference between the two groups' improvement averages.

If we assume that that difference is not simply the result of chance, two related explanations for that difference come to mind. First, it could

be that, with more room for improvement after their drafts, the non-intervention group felt a greater sense of urgency to make positive changes to their papers. Second, it could be that the intervention group, having worked harder on their first drafts and presumably having received relatively positive responses to their drafts during their writing center sessions and in their in-class peer reviews, felt comparatively little urgency to change their drafts.

Conclusions

Whatever the best explanation for the somewhat counterintuitive data on improvement rates may be, it cannot overshadow the important conclusions writing center practitioners can draw from this study and from the literature on mandatory writing center visits. By documenting a clear difference between the performance of the group that was required to visit the writing center and the group that was not, the present study lends support to previously published work arguing that writing center professionals should strongly consider embracing required visits and abandoning policies disallowing them. This study's primary contribution to the literature on the topic is that it shows that student writers appear to view a required writing center session as an inducement to do better work on both their draft and final version of papers than they would without such a requirement. Some directors and tutors may find it difficult to accept that much of the positive effects of a writing center tutorial happen before the tutorial has even begun. However, if we accept the idea that our primary mission is to help students improve as writers, we should probably be less concerned with when that improvement happens than with the fact that evidence shows it does, in fact, occur. Further empirical research studies based on the intervention vs. non-intervention model in this would be a welcome addition to the relatively small amount of literature on this important topic.

Notes

1. The original research data on required vs. non-required appointments were generated as part of a larger assessment study of writing center effectiveness. The larger study was not intended primarily as a tool to compare required and non-required appointments. However, when the results of that study were compiled, they led to the conclusions presented here.
2. Statistical analysis provided by Dr. Keshav Jagannathan, an associate professor who teaches statistics in the Coastal Carolina University Department of Math.
3. This research was made possible in part by a Christine Cozzens Research Grant and Initiative program award from the SWCA.

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Writing Center Training Through the Lens of Human Resource Management

BONNIE DEVET

As a long-term director (over twenty years and counting), I have conducted more training sessions than I can remember, using numerous tutor training books (Capossela; Gillespie and Lerner; Meyer and Smith; Murphy and Sherwood; Ryan and Zimmerelli; Soven). And, of course, I have been guided by the thoughtful, thorough collections of essays about training like those found in *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book* (Murphy and Stay) and the venerable *Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (Barnett and Blumner). Over the years, these books—what truly can be called the “foundational scholarship” of the writing center field—have admirably explained the philosophy, practices, and procedures for developing tutors.

But as I have read outside the discipline to see how other fields train, I have come to realize this scholarship needs to be supplemented. There are some deficiencies about training, with some concepts central to managing and developing tutors not present in the scholarship. Omitted, for example, is the vital concept of how training and development differ.

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The scholarship also needs to offer a rationale for why directors should stress writing center philosophy instead of just daily details for surviving in the trenches. In addition, directors should have a way to codify training goals and to delineate different training methodologies. Directors also lack the theories that explain how to motivate tutors. Finally, the foundational scholarship supplies no means to determine if training is, indeed, transferred into centers. In short, the writing center world needs a bit more information on the theory of training itself. To help fill in the missing links and to envision even better training for the future, directors can look to other disciplines for how they perceive training. As Thomas Ferrel, Rebecca Babcock, and Moira Ozias argue, "Much can be gained by listening to and learning from scholarship from disciplines outside of our own. Academics are quick to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of our postmodern condition, but we are slow to incorporate this knowledge into our twenty-first century professional communication practices and academic culture."

So, to what field can writing center studies turn in order to make up for the deficiencies in training? While writing center directors prefer to see centers as bastions of the academy separate from but equal to the outside business world, we must admit that our centers do exhibit features of a business organization. At its most basic level, a business organization is "a social unity of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals" ("Organization"). Writing centers embody a "social unity" of tutors aiming for the success of their writers and striving to support their colleges or universities. A business organization also "[has] a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members, and subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks" ("Organization"). So, too, do centers have directors (managers) who train tutors and help them develop as employees. With the concepts of "social

unity of people” and “training” central to a business organization, it is easy to see, then, that centers fit into this conception of an organization.

Given that centers are organizations that naturally necessitate dealing with people, I believe writing center administrators can look to a business discipline that specializes in managing people to supply these missing concepts in tutor training: Human Resource Management (HRM).

Though the need to manage workers has existed since the Industrial Revolution, corporate HRM itself began to flower only in the early twentieth century, most likely at B. F. Goodrich and National Cash Register, when these companies formed departments to handle wages, complaints, and record-keeping (Losey). Although usually known for handling paperwork on employment, taxes, and retirement, HRM is now also concerned with motivating employees through various behavioral philosophies so that workers are no longer cogs in a machine but valuable resources to be inspired and encouraged (Losey; Mathis and Jackson; Bohlander and Snell). In fact, today, HRM “is charged with optimizing employee skills, matching people to jobs and maximizing the potential of employees as valuable resources” (Losey).

Because centers are “social” organizations with people (tutors) to be trained and managed, it behooves the writing center world to look at HRM’s concepts. This paper examines how HRM’S ideas supplement and clarify writing center knowledge, especially definitions about seminal training concepts; it also offers insight into motivating tutors, how directors can set a center’s goals, the terminology directors can use when talking to administrators, and suggests a way to see if training has transferred into the center’s daily practices. Analyzing training through HRM’s lens can supply some of the vital missing links in writing center scholarship, enriching what directors do as they prepare tutors, whether the directors offer courses for academic credit or hold paid trainings.

Training vs. Development

Training sounds simple enough. As a director, I thought I knew what the word meant, carrying around in my head an unofficial definition, something like “teaching tutors techniques that they can use in various situations so that they can assist clients.” Reading in HRM materials, however, reveals that such a definition is, at best, naive and possibly misleading because HRM distinguishes between training and development. Robert L. Mathis and John H. Jackson, in their widely used textbook *Human Resource Management*, explain: “It is possible to train people to answer customer service questions, drive a truck, enter data in a computer system, set up a drill press, or assemble a television. However, development in areas, such as judgment, responsible decision making, and communication presents a bigger challenge” (303, emphasis added). Training, then, concentrates on the needs of the current job, while development helps workers prepare for any new ideas that the job requires (Noe et al. 401) and for all new types of customers (writing center students) who seek out the center’s services.

Distinguishing between training and development can be helpful to directors as they consider their tutors’ needs. Training helps tutors “learn . . . specific behaviors and actions” and “demonstrate techniques and process” (Mathis and Jackson 303) in the immediate context of working with crying students or assisting with a literary analysis of *Oedipus Rex*, for example. But directors’ long-term goals should include the development of consultants who, according to HRM, “[are] gaining new capabilities useful for both present and future jobs” (Mathis and Jackson 251), such as dealing with all kinds of interpersonal relationships arising in centers and handling different types of writing across the disciplines.

No matter whether their tutors are paid by the hour or whether the tutors are enrolled in an academic credit course, directors should be sure that

their training contains both types of elements: “training” in a specific problem (e.g., how to organize a Biology lab report) and “development” in more general writing concerns (e.g., the difference between writing in Biology and in History). As Dana Lynn Driscoll and Sarah Harcourt argue in “Training vs. Learning: Transfer of Learning in a Peer Tutoring Course and Beyond,” tutors need to build transferable writing knowledge, “knowledge that tutors can use to help students and themselves understand and adapt to diverse writing situations” (4). HRM, then, provides a better insight into a director’s role in fostering tutors’ abilities.

It is useful to note that in the writing center world, a distinction between training and development is just starting to emerge. In a recent posting to the WCenter listserv, Coe College’s writing center director Robert Marrs explains his perception of the differences:

For me, staff ‘development’ (I have never felt comfortable with the word ‘training’ in this context) boils down to three issues: (1) the staff constantly interacting with each other, particularly in sharing their own writing with each other. . . ; (2) the staff becoming self-reflective practitioners, reflecting on and writing about and sharing their observations with each other in conversation and in diverse modes of writing; [and] (3) the staff understanding that professional development is an on-going, never-ending process. (“Advice”)

In their recent Writing Lab Newsletter article, Driscoll and Harcourt—like Coe—also shy away from the word training, preferring to use “tutor learning” (1) or what HRM might call “development.” Even while most directors truly engage in the more subtle process of tutor development, writing center scholarship continues to use “training” to cover both specific job details and general philosophical growth, which can contribute to a less nuanced understanding of what writing center directors ask of and expect from tutors.

After directors rightly distinguish between training and development, they are ready to focus on the process of training itself. Specifically, they can look at HRM's types of training, the setting of objectives, the methodology to be used, the role of motivation, and the means of transfer to see how HRM characterizes these qualities, which all directors can recognize as key factors for creating successful tutors.

Types of Training

HRM theory provides insight into types of training that directors can conduct, so that they approach training and development thoughtfully. According to HRM, training falls into two kinds: "sequencing" (Charles and Clarke-Epstein 85) and "high-leverage" (Noe et al. 267). In the first, trainees doggedly follow set procedures for every action, like mechanically carrying out the plays laid out in a football coach's play book. In a center, the "sequencing" training would be that of handling routine operations, such as how to sign up clients for appointments. But the real "business" (if you will) of a center is its tutorials, and because every tutorial is unique, not reducible to a series of positions on a one-hundred yard football field, sequencing training beyond basic record-keeping is usually not prominent in directors' "play books."

Directors, then, should be offering a second type of HRM training: "high-leverage" (Noe et al. 267). Such training goes beyond mere repetitive skills. High-leverage training involves tutors' comprehending the philosophy of a center, reading and reporting back to their fellow tutors about incorporating composition theories into tutorials, and tutors' learning by conducting staff meetings—or if they are taking an academic course, by presenting to their classmates. In short, through high-leverage training, tutors gain a big picture—an "understand[ing of] the entire work process and . . . acquire new skills, apply them on the job, and share what they have learned with other employees" (Noe et al. 267). High-leverage

is the prime kind of training, then, as directors formulate their work with their tutors.

Setting Goals for Training

There is no question that all training should set goals. But directors, like early aviation's barnstorming pilots, fly mostly out of instinct, primarily because they have little time to detail for themselves what their training goals may be, other than the general one of preparing students to help other students. To gain insight into the goals of training, HRM offers three objectives that should occur in all training, goals that are applicable to a center's work.

One objective is to be sure to cover what HRM labels as the "attitudes of workers." In other words, directors need to "create interest in and awareness of the importance of something" (Mathis and Jackson 262). In centers, this HRM concept means that tutors need a *raison d'être* for studying, for example, Turabian or Chicago style documentation. When directors show tutors how to do such documentation, they should explain how many History students visiting the center ask about footnotes and endnotes. A context is established, and so tutors can then see the applicability of the knowledge they are acquiring. Next, HRM stresses that trainers should have a second objective: to impart "skills" (Mathis and Jackson 262) like learning new ways to define a topic sentence in order to help writers or five easy steps for inspiring a reluctant client. For centers, this HRM goal helps tutors carry out the details of their jobs even better, offering strategies to common concerns or issues arising in sessions. The last objective, as named by HRM and applicable to centers, is the "dispensing of knowledge" (Mathis and Jackson 262)—or what could be more accurately called "providing theory and wisdom" (Mathis and Jackson 262). Directors should explain the philosophy or theory, such as the overall mission of a center or how a center fits into the academy.

Acquiring a perspective means tutors have knowledge about the broader issues guiding their work, which then informs all their decision making within sessions. These three goals of “attitudes,” “skills,” and “knowledge” help directors by providing a lens to classify each part of the training to reflect one of these goals. They can discover, for instance, where more “knowledge” but fewer “skills” are needed. The HRM objectives serve, then, to codify directors’ work.

Classifying Types of Training Sessions

With objectives classified, directors must implement their training using various methods, what HRM calls “instructional strategies” (Mathis and Jackson 263). It does appear that HRM systematizes what seems like commonsense and gives names to training methods directors may already use. However, directors who think about their methodology in HRM terms can craft their training with more surety so that what they do is, indeed, effective.

With its emphasis on classification, HRM presents five instructional strategies useful to directors. In the “active practice” type of training, workers immediately perform a job-related task. For instance, after tutors learn about handling difficult clients like the criers or the divas, they should practice with other tutors role-playing clients. Another HRM strategy is “spaced practice”: over several sessions, tutors execute the same technique, such as writing progress reports or greeting clients. A third HRM instructional strategy refers to tutors’ development. When experienced tutors conduct a training session for newly hired tutors or when directors conduct a session where tutors chime in with suggestions for dealing with various types of clients, the center is using the HRM strategy of “massed practice” (Mathis and Jackson 265). Tutors pool all they have learned about working with clients so each tutor learns from the collective wisdom of the group. A fourth technique valuable for designing

training is HRM's "behavior modeling" (Mathis and Jackson 265). Experienced workers role-play with others or serve as mentors to answer new tutors' questions (Mathis and Jackson 265), a technique especially useful for developing ways to handle interpersonal relationships (Devet and Barbiero). Finally, a last HRM method used by directors, even without knowing they are doing so, occurs when they show DVDs of sessions or hold mock tutorials to help tutors see what can go amiss in tutorials. HRM labels the discussions of what has gone wrong as "error-based examples" (Mathis and Jackson 265), which can be used as a way to discern what to avoid in a tutorial. So, with instructional strategies of active, spaced, and managed practice as well as behavior models and error-based examples, HRM again offers a means to codify and classify various writing center training methods, giving directors a deeper understanding of effective tutor training.

Justifying Writing Center Blogs and Wikis

For years, the business world has employed blogs and wikis as a means to share knowledge and to collaborate among workers. Centers have already started to use such social networks, such blogs written by tutors about their daily work or wikis that include tutor contributions, all central to creating a community among tutors. How can directors, though, be sure their centers' blogs or wikis are effective discussion channels, not merely gossipy chat rooms? HRM has developed key ways to be sure this training method is effective, including ideas directors can adopt to improve their own communities of tutors.

In *Managing Human Resources*, George Bohlander and Scott Snell describe the most important roles that blogs and wikis can play, approaches that are vital to writing center directors, too. Blogs and wikis, according to HRM, are useful for "solving problems, requesting information, seeking experience, discussing developments, mapping

knowledge, and identifying gaps” (326). These functions, then, can inform the ways directors train tutors to use these electronic networks. Tutors could, for example, describe a difficult consultation in order to get help from fellow bloggers, could ask for tips to explain the concept of *ibid* as used in the Turabian documentation system, could send handouts to fellow consultants to use in upcoming tutorials, could ask fellow tutors how one’s client is progressing when working with another tutor, or could seek help with the best way for explaining a comma splice. Using HRM’s ideas for blogs and wikis helps directors ensure that tutors are engaging in “reflective practice” (Bell 90) about their roles as tutors, thus fostering the tutors’ development and setting up a shared community, a vital part of any business or center.

Motivating as Part of Training

While the setting of objectives, the kinds of training, and the range of methodologies are significant topics, directors know another major part of developing tutors is motivation. Here, too, HRM describes what should be done to inspire staff, thereby providing directors with terminology to characterize what they are trying to accomplish.

In *Human Resource Management: Gaining a Competitive Advantage*, Raymond Noe, John R. Hollenbeck, Barry Gerhart, and Patrick M. Wright explain such inspiration by arguing that every manager (or, in this case, director) should use “self-efficacy”: workers must believe they can learn the task at hand (280). Self-efficacy manifests itself in centers when experienced tutors talk to newly hired ones about the center’s work so that returning tutors show new tutors “the training success of their peers who are now in similar jobs” (280). HRM’s “self-efficacy” also appears in centers when directors give pep talks so that tutors realize they have both the responsibility and ability to overcome any difficulties they encounter when learning to be tutors. By seeing the success of the veteran tutors

and by being encouraged in their work, tutors sense, according to HRM theory, how training does not necessarily correct a deficiency but helps to improve their performance.

After such encouragement of self-efficacy, HRM also suggests that personnel managers cast the training in terms of workers' career goals. Directors can follow this advice by demonstrating that training helps tutors far beyond their writing center days, as Bradley Hughes, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail have done in their now famous Peer Writing Tutors Alumni Research Project. One method would be to invite former tutors to return to the center in order to speak to the current staff about how working in the center has helped them (Devet). As a result, tutors experience what the HRM world calls "knowledge gain, behavior change, or skill acquisition" (Noe et al. 280), all applicable to future careers.

Inherent to any workplace will be difficulties, so trainers should motivate workers to be able to handle all problems. HRM offers a valuable insight into motivating workers to deal with difficulties: it frames problems not as hindrances but as a means to help employees acquire new skills. To enact this philosophy, HRM classifies problems as either "situational" or "social constraints" (Noe et al. 280). Unpacking this HRM jargon (and certainly, like any field, HRM does have its special vocabulary) reveals tutors, like all workers, should realize that limitations arise in any job. Some are merely "situational," such as pesky computers going down or students needing more copies of popular handouts. According to HRM, directors should point out to tutors how their training prepares them to handle these minor conditions.

The other type of problems seems more difficult: problems called "social constraints" (Noe et al. 282) involve relationships of clients to professors (clients who speak negatively about their instructors) or clients' misconceptions (clients who do not understand the writing process).

HRM suggests that trainers (directors) can motivate their workers by pointing out how training readies them for such vital social concerns, reassuring tutors that they are ready for anything that may arise in the center. When directors take time to show that tutors are, indeed, dealing with such vital social problems, they demonstrate to tutors how much they are developing. So, the best HRM practices for motivation afford a sense of how tutors are progressing or growing.

Bringing about Transfer

Every director wonders, "Is what I'm teaching in the training sessions being applied to the center's daily work?" In fact, HRM scholars Mathis and Jackson report that only 40% of employees use what they have learned in their jobs immediately after training (266). Such a percentage should give directors pause. But seeing training through HRM's lens permits directors to foster more transfer from training to the center.

HRM suggests, first, that trainers (directors) look for any gaps in the personnel where learning has ceased. In writing center terms, directors might ask themselves, "Are the returning or veteran tutors continuing to learn?" If not, directors must engage returning tutors by having them conduct sessions or by having them be mentors to other tutors. HRM also proposes that trainers ask, "Do workers understand before the training how the work links to the strategies of the company?" or in WC terms, for instance, "How does a training session on handling difficult clients pertain to the center's daily work?" Directors need constantly to relate their materials to the larger needs of their centers. A third HRM recommendation for improving transfer is to be sure the training itself, like a mirror, directly reflects the work environment (Mathis and Jackson 266). For centers, directors should use practice sessions that replicate as closely as possible real experiences with clients. Recently, in my center, four veteran tutors conducted for their fellow tutors, both new and

returning, a session entitled “What If: Handling Difficult Clients.” The tutors described troublesome sessions, like the client who threw his paper and stomped out of the center, or the client who refused to read his paper aloud. The veterans, then, asked the group for strategies to deal with such clients. Although no two tutorials are ever the same, tutors felt these real-life incidents made the training immediate and transferable. Directors should be sure transfer is taking place by keeping in mind HRM’s three transfer strategies.

Conclusion

Some could argue that directors using HRM for insight into training seems counter-intuitive. After all, HRM’s business world presupposes an agenda, a curriculum, a pre-determined goal where trainees measure up to a list of objectives—a world in stark contrast with that of centers, which glory in their status as sites with no pre-established curricula, as places without grades, as free-form locales helping student writers no matter where they are in their writing. Nonetheless, it is important to step back from a center’s environment in order to break out of the familiar (Geller et al.) Or, as Mark S. LeTourneau explains, in another context, “The idea is that one cannot undertake a serious study of a subject if it is too familiar because familiarity breeds, not contempt, but rather near invisibility. To study something, we must first see it as outside of ourselves” (408). Having terminology to describe training, motivation, methodology, and transfer, for example, helps directors talk to other administrators, encoding into HRM terms what directors do in order to make centers viable and effective. In addition, the codification and systematic approach of HRM for organizing training, such as having objectives and using various methods, lets directors improve training by devising efficient (may it even be called “businesslike”?) procedures for their programs.

In writing center scholarship, training has been fittingly summed up by Muriel Harris, who characterizes it as being “a mix of (1) on-the-job experience, (2) reflection and discussions of that experience, and (3) class activities that promote effective tutoring practices” (201). All true. But looking outside the writing center field to the business practices found in HRM theory enhances directors’ notions of training, giving a more effective understanding of what they can execute when designing and implementing their programs. HRM, then, gives directors a sense of what it means “to train,” and to do so thoughtfully and effectively.

Notes

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“The Walking Definition of an Apprehensive Writer”: Redefining Tutors’ Writing Apprehension

JANE BOWMAN SMITH

Within the first two weeks of my three-credit tutor-training class at Winthrop University, I assign a paper in which the students (called “interns”) describe and explain their attitude toward academic writing. Last fall, one wrote:

I am the walking definition of an apprehensive writer. Nervously chewing my nails, I watch the professor as she begins to hand out the papers explaining our first essay. As my professor walks closer, negative thoughts begin to flood my mind. When the paper hits my hands, more terror floods into my body. I read the topic and am immediately stumped.

Reading papers like this one is painful, particularly when the interns in question are bright, articulate, and very able to understand themselves and others. She was not alone. During class discussions, many of the interns stress their fear and anxiety about writing, and this surprises me: how can students who write so well and are committed to helping others with their writing have such serious concerns about it?

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In her 1989 article “We’re All Basic Writers: Tutors Talking About Writing Apprehension,” Wendy Bishop explains writing apprehension and its connection to tutor-training. She describes her class of high-achieving students, many of whom plan to teach, then observes that “all of the students suffered from writing apprehension to a certain extent and found the subject an important one as reflected in their class journals” (32). She includes herself—and each of us—when she writes: “We all have writing tasks that make us apprehensive, tentative, reluctant, and so on. Successful writers have learned how to conquer their writing apprehension, and less successful, often basic, writers have not” (34). This leads to important questions: how do successful students circumvent their apprehension? Have they learned strategies that they can use in a writing center tutorial?

I now begin my training class with a focus on writing apprehension. Even before we analyze the potential effects of writing apprehension on our student clients, the interns first reflect on the ways it affects them personally. The interns read and discuss several articles on writing apprehension; they are also asked to keep careful notes on any signs of writing anxiety as they observe the students who make use of the center. Then, the interns take the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension test, which is available online. After they score their results, they do a directed freewriting. This preparation culminates in a paper on their attitude toward academic writing.

What I noticed over the past several years was a contradiction between class discussion and the interns’ papers (as the earlier excerpt demonstrates) when compared to their actual test scores. This contradiction led me to carefully analyze the work of 22 interns, all of whom were English majors enrolled in the training class, and who gave me permission to use their materials.

Class discussion and the interns’ written material suggested high levels of writing apprehension, but their test scores did not. Using the work

of John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller, Mark Stoner, a professor of Communication Studies at California State University-Sacramento, provides an explanation of test scoring on his website. A low writing apprehension score ranges from 97-130. Twelve of the sample interns' scores ranged from 97 to 120. While a low level of apprehension sounds positive, Stoner suggests that it can, in fact, have negative consequences if students' confidence in their writing and positive expectations for evaluation result in their not working very hard as they fulfill assignments. The other ten of the 22 interns scored between 60 and 96, which suggests they do not experience an unusual level of apprehension: according to Stoner's website, these students can manifest writing anxiety in some situations or for some audiences, such as an in-class writing, but generally feel confident when writing a paper. None of the 22 interns in the sample had a score which exhibited high apprehension.

In order to understand the discrepancy between their scores and their expressed opinions, I analyzed each student's responses on the Daly-Miller Test, categorizing them among the three factors that comprise writing apprehension: evaluation apprehension, stress apprehension, and product apprehension. According to Stoner, "evaluation apprehension" means that students expect that they will do poorly in a class that requires writing and that they dread being graded; they believe they cannot express themselves clearly and will get a poor grade as a result. "Stress apprehension" comes early in the writing process: writers with stress apprehension procrastinate and "do not look forward to beginning a piece of writing" (Stoner); they may have difficulty organizing their thoughts. Stoner suggests that students with "product apprehension" may claim that "expressing their ideas through writing is a waste of time"; they have difficulty with envisioning a purpose for their writing as well as imagining their audience. I suspect that students who have a high "product apprehension" score would be unlikely to visit the center at all; students

with high scores for either “evaluation” or “stress” apprehension might come into the writing center late, perhaps even the day the paper is due.

In terms of the 22 interns in my study, product apprehension was not a problem; stress apprehension was slightly more significant, in that eight of the 22 agreed that “[their minds] seem to go blank when [they] begin a paper.” But the real problem for the interns was their fear of the evaluation of their work, as the tables below illustrate. (The numbers correspond to the statements on the Daly-Miller test.) Stoner suggests these statements, which I sorted into two categories, reveal “evaluation apprehension.” Only those interns whose scores display apprehension are noted:

Questions That Deal Directly with Evaluation/Grading (Total Number of 22 Students):	
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.	15 disagreed/strongly disagreed
5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.	7 agreed/strongly agreed
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing for evaluation and publication.	2 disagreed; 2 unsure
13. I'm nervous about writing.	9 agreed/strongly agreed; 1 unsure
18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them.	1 strongly agreed; 2 unsure
22. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly.	1 unsure
24. I don't think I write as well as most other people.	4 agreed/strongly agreed; 5 unsure
25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated.	7 agreed/strongly agreed

Table 1. Evaluation Apprehension

Questions That Deal with Sharing One’s Writing with Peers (Total Number of 22 Students):	
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	5 disagreed; 3 unsure
14. People seem to enjoy what I write.	5 unsure
20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.	3 disagreed; 10 unsure

Table 1, con’t. Evaluation Apprehension

The fact that 15 of the 22 students admitted that they feared the act of evaluation (#2) identifies the main reason for their writing apprehension; other responses confirm this, particularly questions 13 and 25. However, five of these students were uncomfortable sharing their writing with friends and three did not find discussing their writing enjoyable, and these responses concerned me. I found that form of apprehension—which suggests a fear of collaboration—worrisome because of its implications for tutoring in the writing center. But that will have to be another study.

When I examined the Daly-Miller test closely, I identified eight of 26 questions that dealt explicitly with self-confidence and pleasure in the act of writing itself. Neither Daly and Miller in their article nor Stoner identify these questions as a group; Stoner categorized some as evaluation, some as stress, and some as product apprehension. When I examined the interns’ responses to these questions, however, the results were intriguing:

Questions that Identify Self-Confidence and Pleasure in the Act of Writing as Categorized for this Study	
4. I look forward to writing down my ideas.	20 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed
10. I like to write down my ideas.	20 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed

Table 2.

Questions that Identify Self-Confidence and Pleasure in the Act of Writing as Categorized for this Study	
11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.	17 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed
15. I enjoy writing.	20 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed
17. Writing is a lot of fun.	20 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.	19 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed
23. It is easy for me to write good compositions.	15 of 22 agreed/strongly agreed

Table 2, con't.

The majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy writing and like to see their thoughts on paper. This, I think, is an important difference between students who want to be tutors and students in general. Unfortunately, I have not administered the writing apprehension test to a control group of students to test this supposition. But the interns' enjoyment explains, at least in part, why their writing apprehension scores tend to be low. Despite many interns' anxiety about being evaluated, the act of writing itself is pleasurable to them. Apparently, they have achieved a level of self-motivation which overcomes their anxiety about grades. Of course, it is also significant that all 22 of the sample group are English majors; writing is literally an everyday occurrence, and constant practice would tend to make them more comfortable with writing than are students who write less.

In conducting this study, I hoped to determine if the interns did in fact learn that writing apprehension could lead to procrastination, and if understanding that connection negated to some extent their frustration with "procrastinators." The final writing assignment in this section of the class asked the interns to reflect on and analyze the effect their present

attitude toward academic writing could have not only on their own writing but also on their future tutorials. Most interns chose to conclude their papers with what they had learned about their own apprehension and self-doubt, the strategies they used to counter these concerns, and how these fears and strategies could be used positively in the center as a means to connect with student writers.

When the interns discussed their own writing apprehension in their papers, their responses could be roughly sorted into three categories—“roughly” because several wrote about more than one of the following. The interns believed they could alleviate their apprehension by 1) understanding or changing an ineffective or even potentially destructive composing process; 2) getting engaged in the act of writing or in one’s subject; and 3) understanding the authority and ownership that results from academic writing, and in a few cases, seeing academic writing as creative, even as play. The following excerpts from the interns’ papers demonstrate their exploration of these ideas. (The interns gave me permission to use excerpts from their papers but asked that their names be changed.)

Difficulties with the composing process itself led to writing apprehension for several of the interns. John, for example, confessed that, as a creative writer, he “often [views] academic writing as a chore to be completed rather than an opportunity for discovery” and thus engages in “rebellious procrastination.” But over the several weeks in which the class researched and discussed writing apprehension and procrastination, he learned that writing an entire academic paper in one sitting— hours of agonizing work that transform a discovery draft into a final draft—is what has overwhelmed him:

I can see that changing my process is actually manageable.

Emphasizing prewriting, abandoning the idea of hyper-focus, and

writing less recursively may change how I feel about academic writing. And this more structured, organized approach will aid me as a tutor when I help students apply it to their own writing.

Nikki, like John, realized that her concept of composing a paper was in fact her difficulty; she writes that she has substituted a more organic process that engages her interest in academic papers through “building them”: “papers are grown, not written, and the process involves slowly developing a finished product directly from a collection of notes and scratch-work.” Interns whose writing processes had led to writing apprehension often wrote out of a distorted view of composing—they may have been operating, as Mike Rose’s “blocked” students did, “either with writing rules or with planning strategies that impeded rather than enhanced their composing process” (149). Learning that it was possible to adapt or change one’s composing process—that there is no “one right way”—alleviated much of their stress.

As was stated earlier, engagement with the writing task is one of the primary reasons for the interns’ low writing apprehension scores; several of the interns wrote compellingly about their pleasure in the act of writing when engaged. Amy is the best example of this:

Whenever I receive a writing assignment now, my initial feeling is almost always one of excitement. I cannot wait to get started and watch the final product unfold before my eyes. That feeling may not stay throughout the entire process, but it certainly makes me anticipate starting.

Other interns differentiated between an academic paper in which they had been able to choose their own subjects and ones in which the papers were assigned. The interns were well aware that they write more effectively when they are interested in what they have to say: the

interest pushes them to explore concepts more deeply than they might otherwise choose to do. Engagement appears to be an effective antidote to evaluation apprehension.

The third group of interns stressed that authority and ownership of their writing led to an enjoyment of the process. Important to some of these students was the concept that even academic writing could be self-expression. Brian argues that

Writing gives me and every student the chance to embrace our individuality and produce unique works. It is a personal experience, and we must understand this on some (not necessarily conscious) level. The thoughts and words placed on the page are exclusively the student's.

Brian's ability to see his academic writing as self-expression was not shared by all the interns; some expressed the idea that creative writing allowed them to write primarily for themselves, but defining their academic writing as essentially creative was more challenging for them. Perhaps some of the interns still see the research paper as the "professor's property," something done primarily to show what they have learned. Brian, however, is able to see the importance of both individuality and uniqueness—the sense of a revealed identity within his writing.

Terrence goes still farther with the connection between creativity and academic writing and delights in writing as play:

If I had one writing goal, it would be to persuade everyone that writing can be fun. When I was younger, learning how to write was an exciting time. My teachers in elementary school made me write daily journals; these were written in those fancy black-and-white composition notebooks that made me feel that I was on a higher

level—with older kids in a higher grade. My enjoyment of writing at that age has helped me to continue to enjoy it.

In the training class, I encourage students to share their own writing experiences with their students within tutorials: Terrence might use this story to draw out his client's own memories, perhaps forging a connection to a time when all writing was creative play.

All 22 interns reported that they would make use of their reading and reflecting about writing apprehension in their future tutorials. Their responses again fell into three interrelated categories. They realized that 1) their apprehension might negatively affect students; 2) what they had learned about their own processes could be shared with student writers; and 3) their own writing apprehension or evaluation anxiety could serve as a bridge to the student writer's experience. Ruth articulates the potential damage her anxiety could have within a tutorial:

The hesitation and anxiety that I sometimes feel about academic writing can very much affect my tutoring. My level of confidence in my own writing could potentially lead to a hesitation, an inability to assist someone. I may feel that the suggestions I have are wrong or not helpful, that I am not knowledgeable enough to guide someone in the right direction. However, I think that the act of tutoring can improve not only the attitude of the student towards writing, but my attitude as well. When I see that I am, in fact, able to help a student with writing, and I see that I have had a positive effect on the student, this can increase my level of confidence in my own writing.

Ruth's fears stem from her own understanding of and confidence in herself as a writer; she does not trust her own command of writing—the strategies she uses, how she drafts or uses research techniques—as information she can tap into during a tutorial. Fortunately, Ruth sees the

possibility of a positive self-fulfilling prophecy: as she tutors successfully, her confidence will grow.

A second group of interns emphasized the connection between writing apprehension and their composing processes and how they planned to use this knowledge in tutorials. Ashley, whose fear of evaluation echoes through her essay, concludes that she will be more able to empathize with her student writers:

My experiences, especially my fear of using the wrong word or of not getting my point across effectively, will help me understand students' errors or poor phrasing; my fear will drive me to help a student find a better way to express herself. I need to address my fear of writing, since tutoring students about the writing process assumes the tutor can do so on his or her own. As long as I develop a stronger sense of self-discipline and become more able to write, I think I will be able to help others and through them, myself.

Ashley's self-reflection has increased her ability to empathize with student-writers, and like Ruth, Ashley sees the possibility that in helping the students, she is helping herself.

Mike's revelations about his own internalized composing process led him to imagine future discussions with students about the many ways to write a paper:

I have learned through these reflections that spending weeks of planning a paper is actually prewriting; I never stopped to think that thinking is part of the writing process. If I can help every student discover his or her own writing process, then I will find this to be a rewarding job. No student should feel that waiting until the last minute to begin drafting makes them lazy. Using my own negative

past experiences, I want to restore confidence in every student that I encounter.

Like many of the other interns, Mike had been taught that the composing process was lock-step, and deviations from that model were, at best, laziness. His realization that composing processes are unique to the individual will help him to motivate students who are struggling with “rules” that actually harm their ability to write.

The final group of interns envisioned using their own anxieties as a means to build rapport between themselves and their student-writers. Kayla reports that “apprehension will actually enhance the relationship between the writer and me”:

Honesty about having apprehension can move the tutoring session past the student’s not wanting to write to understanding where this apprehension is coming from and getting past these issues. It is not a therapy session, but if writers understand their feelings, they can get past them and see their drafts as articulating their ideas. Ultimately, the difficulties I faced in the past are now positives while working in the Writing Center.

Leigh develops this same idea:

My experiences in high school with failure and my subsequent fear of failure puts me in an apt position to understand the anxiety students face. Anxiety affects both the student’s attitude toward writing and the writing they produce. Some students are overly critical of their writing early on; I can, and will, encourage these students to alter their perceptions not only of the assignments but of their work. If the student can learn to view writing as a work in progress, I believe he or she will be less likely to judge the work harshly and will have an

easier time throughout the writing process.

Both interns imagine discussions in which they can reassure students who struggle to write, students who do not realize that their fear of writing prevents them from moving forward. And this discussion is essential in many instances. Gary Olson argues that tutors must confront and attempt to change students' negative attitudes toward writing:

Ultimately, the center staff is most concerned with proper student attitude, because it determines whether or not the center is truly effective. Some directors claim that almost half of the tutor's job involves counseling students so that they can begin to learn to write. (159)

The interns in this study obviously understood the importance of the writer's attitude and how apprehension can negate most, if not all, of their attempts to work with the student.

This final commentary, a description of an actual tutorial conversation about apprehension, comes from the student who had the highest apprehension score in the sample—73 (although still within the moderate range):

My self-doubt is present when I tutor, but I'm beginning to see how my insecurities about writing can benefit my tutoring. I have personally experienced most of the feelings students have when they come to the center whether it is despair, frustration, disgust, or disinterest. Last week, a junior met with me whose paper was a mess, literally. Midway through our session, she blurted out that she hated writing. At that moment, I'm surprised the student didn't hear the "Ah Hah!" in my head. I stepped out of my own anxieties to assuage her fears. I told her that writing could be a learning experience for

her, that she should embrace it, that she can't let writing defeat her. When she left, she was relaxed and focused on what she had to do. I had made a difference.

I read that our brains process every thought as fact. Every time I have said "I am a horrible writer" my brain files this as fact. My brain doesn't filter for frustration or hyperbole or insecurity. When I think of how many times I've said something negative about writing, it's no wonder that I believe I'm horrible at it. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. I may never be a great writer, but now I feel confident about my progress. And this confidence and hopefulness can be shared with the students in the writing center.

As a result of these exercises and class discussion, the interns learned that writing apprehension is very complex. They began to differentiate between a fear of being graded and a more generalized fear of the act of writing itself. Most of the interns and their peers who tutor in the writing center can say, honestly, that they enjoy the act of writing and look forward to what they can create. Our discussions, however, led the interns to understand at a deeper level that many of the students who come to the center do not and cannot look forward to what their writing will reveal to them. Like Olson, Bishop says that students who visit the center "must have their anxiety level lowered before they can become successful writers" (33). These exercises make it more likely that our tutors will understand why one's attitude toward writing is so important, and they will use their own experiences when talking with students in order to make a difference.

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Back to the Center

The Communication Assessment Learning Lab at Arizona State University's West Campus

BONNIE WENTZEL

The Communication Assessment Learning Lab (CALL) on Arizona State University's West Campus provides a dedicated space for undergraduates to develop their oral communication abilities.

Housed in the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences' School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, CALL supports classroom instruction and offers the following services:

topic research, speech organization, outline development, presentation practice and feedback, visual aid/technology assistance, non-verbal communication coaching, and assistance with managing speech anxiety. CALL is the only center of its kind in Arizona.

In 2003, the founding CALL faculty director secured initial funding for the lab through a five-year, statewide grant allowing

Bonnie Wentzel, M.A., is a lecturer and faculty director of the Communication Assessment Learn Lab at Arizona State University's west campus. Her primary academic interest focuses on building partnerships to promote college degree attainment for marginalized populations across the lifespan. She is a native of Phoenix, Arizona, and secretly considers herself more southern than western.

CALL
graduate
studentdirector,
Ken, teaches
the leadership
lesson for the
weekly CALL
class.



substantial opportunities to provide public speaking services to all students, faculty members, community leaders, and non-profit organizations. Once the funding period expired in 2008, CALL began receiving funding through course fees assessed on selected introductory and skill-based communication courses.

This new funding model shifted mentoring access from the entire campus to only those students enrolled in fee-based courses. This caused many CALL campus and community activities to be downsized. There was no regular CALL mentor class time and the

center's hours were based on when consultations were scheduled. The center was underutilized and fading under the new funding structure.

Like many communication centers around the country, the lab's ethos was strongly tied to the founding director. This comes as no surprise when building and maintaining a communication center takes a dedicated, prolonged effort. But as long-term center directors retire, as was our case, new directors are being tasked with re-imagining what centers can be. In 2011, as a brand new faculty member, I found myself in exactly this place.

My assignment was clear: “make CALL a gem on our campus.”

Untangling the Past

As one would expect, there were the normal trials associated with this new assignment. While my colleagues were entirely supportive, they were not able to provide much insight into CALL’s day-to-day operations. New programs had to be learned such as the appointment scheduling system and website editing software. New procedures had to be discovered from ordering supplies to enrolling students into the mentoring program.

Technological advances spanning

from 2003 to 2011 created quite an interesting inventory of equipment, instruction manuals and hundreds of homeless cords. Countless student and mentor presentations were recorded and housed on a multitude of VHS tapes and CDs. Inventorying and discarding obsolete equipment, updating computers, and determining future recording and storage needs was in itself a huge task. It seemed that my first year was a series of two steps forward, one step back moments.

If You Build It, They Will Come

In order to move forward, I knew

CENTER inSIGHT

Arizona State University has 53,150 undergraduates attending classes across four campuses. CALL provides services for 3,460 students in the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences on the west campus.

- Director: Bonnie Wentzel, M.A. (since 2011)
 - Staff: Faculty Director, 4 Graduate Assistant Directors, and 23 undergraduate consultants
 - Hours Open Per Week: 35
 - Number of Consultants Working Per Shift: 3-4
 - Number of Speakers Reached in 2013-2014: 1453
 - Number of Speakers Reached in 2014-2015: 1853
-

Hongbo Xu (Rick), CALL mentor, provides feedback to a publicspeaking student.



it was vital to build a strong center foundation. If we could accomplish this, I knew our services would become more sought after by our students and surrounding community. By far, the greatest challenge I faced was how to create a sustainable communication center culture. While I could find individual students who were willing to coach their fellow students toward improved public speaking, there was no “glue” to hold them together as one unit. Creating a cohesive culture that embraced excellence, innovation,

teamwork, and service became my greatest goal for our center. For the first two semesters, mentors and graduate student directors worked together toward creating a CALL mission. Our team generated the following two-part statement that addressed what we were going to do, and how we were going to do it: “The Communication Assessment and Learning Lab (CALL) provides a creative space, for a diverse student population, to develop and improve their oral communication and presentation abilities. Our mentors offer

genuine feedback and guidance in a risk-free, respectful, and professional environment." Because we were handed an acronym as our lab identity, it was also important to define how our name, CALL, reflected our mission and guided our actions. We identified ways in which we wanted to communicate and provide feedback. We explored ways to provide an environment that encouraged creative, collaborative, and critical thinking. Finally, we wanted to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to incorporating emerging communication technologies.

In addition to creating our internal mission, connecting with the National Association of Communication Centers (commcenters.org) was very helpful. Attending the annual Excellence at the Center conference gave me an overview of what other centers were doing and how they operated. It was there that I also learned of the opportunity to apply for NACC certification of our tutor training

program. Pursuing this certification was a valuable endeavor as it nationally committed us to excellent mentor training, policies, and procedures.

The final step in building our CALL culture was to change the physical space of our lab. In addition to our existing four recording offices, we were fortunate to secure one classroom and converted it into a collaborative space. With a modest budget we transformed the space by adding white board walls, wall-mounted monitors, seating arrangements that encouraged conversation, and colors that inspired. We created a space that was completely unique to our campus.

Creating Connections

If we wanted to provide more services on our campus and in the community, we had to be more visible. In working with our college partners, mentors began representing CALL at campus events. Soon, each member of the team took great pride in showing

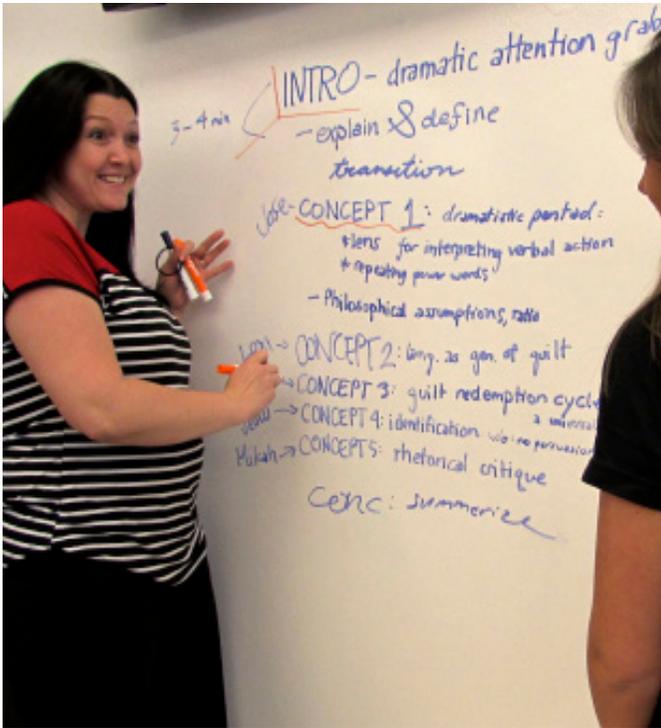
off the lab and explaining our services. The CALL shirts (which I was initially resistant to purchase) were worn with pride and the mentors loved being recognized by the faculty as a part of the CALL team. Soon we had a greater interest from students on becoming CALL mentors. Our team became more diverse and reflective of the students we were serving including international students, community college transfer students, veterans, and re-careering students all from a variety of majors.

The CALL mentors' enthusiasm spread beyond our campus and out into the community. Like most undergraduate tutors, those who work in communication centers are generally service-minded and want to help as many people as possible. As a means to allow mentors to expand their services, and stay within our funding parameters, we developed social media, project-based assignments such as creating blogs, Facebook posts, and videos. This layer of experiential learning

not only helped mentors develop sought after job skills, but it also allowed our lab to reach audiences beyond the university. Soon we were providing public speaking workshops for at-risk students reaching 1,100 eighth graders in one spring semester. Our efforts have also grown to work with other community organizations including the Boys and Girls Club. Our "Speak like Sparky" program has enabled us to promote positive public speaking behaviors to 8th-12th graders through bookmarks and instructional videos. We've even launched an annual high school team speaking event inviting students to our campus for two days of mentoring and competition.

Meaningful Measurements

As a group, we were anxious to see if we were meeting the standards that we set for ourselves. For that reason, we set up a system of continuous feedback. At the completion of each mentoring session, every visiting student



Kendra, CALL mentor, leads a planning session for an upcoming group presentation.

completes a five-question survey administered through Survey Monkey. This survey progresses three times during the semester in an effort to first measure friendliness/anxiety management, then helpfulness/feedback quality, and finally expertise/value. These results are shared regularly with the entire team throughout the semester. Also, because the Graduate Student Directors are critical in maintaining the overall

professional tone of the lab, they also receive regular feedback from both the undergraduate mentors and me as the faculty director. From the center's inception, CALL was not only envisioned as a speaking support center but also one of experiential and service learning for mentors from the communication studies program. Proactively building CALL through an organizational lens has provided a sustainable

foundation for both mentoring services and community outreach. Today, our undergraduate CALL mentors, with professor recommendation, enroll in Mentoring and Communication courses. Classroom instruction, assignments, and training are rigorous and consistent with other upper division courses within our communication program. Undergraduate mentors attend class once a week, work six hours per week in the lab providing mentoring services, complete approximately 1.5 hours per week of online/team project work, and participate in eight hours of community service per semester.

About half of each semester's mentors (mostly Communication majors) return for additional semesters. Graduate Student Directorships are paid positions responsible for the day-to-day operations of the lab and for providing guidance to each mentor regarding performance, homework,

and special projects. Appropriate candidates are selected from our M.A. Communication Studies students based on their public speaking, leadership, and supervisory experience in addition to their future academic goals.

In all, our communication lab has become a campus "gem." Our usage has increased dramatically over the last three years. It is a regular stop for campus visitors and is becoming a community resource for middle and high school students. The faces of our mentors and graduate student directors may change from semester to semester, but the organization does not. Our campus and community partnerships have provided opportunities for further growth. Our mission statement provides the roadmap and our instructional design supplies the structure. We are well on our way to becoming the innovative, sustainable center that I hoped it would become.

Just Multiliteracy for Basic Writers: Teaching and Tutoring Genre, Audience, and Agency Using E-Portfolios

LILIANA M. NAYDAN

Introduction

As writing centers revise their missions to address the needs of twenty-first century students, many of them push on the bounds of what counts as a writing center and as writing center work. On the one hand, writing center practitioners have come increasingly to engage in conversations involving digital-age multiliteracy, defined by the New London Group as a phenomenon that “account[s] for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies” and also “account[s] for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (61). As Jackie Grutsch McKinney suggests, “writing center[s] can evolve [their] identit[ies] [into multiliteracy centers] by pursuing four paths: (1) staff (re)education, (2) physical redesign, (3) user (re)education or rebranding, and (4) name change” (“(R)evolution” 218, Balester et al.). They can prepare to

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engage in social and digital media themselves and work with writers on social- and digital-media-based texts, for instance those that appear on Facebook, Twitter, WordPress, Blogger, Prezi, or YouTube. On the other hand, writing centers likewise have developed by coming to transcend the classroom teaching/writing center tutoring binary. They are establishing relationships with classrooms or engaging in their own sort of classroom work.¹ In the “Scaling It Up” section of “The Idea of a Multiliteracy Center: Six Responses,” Naomi Silver describes this sort of work, considering “what happens when writing centers themselves start teaching new media writing classes” (Balester et al.). She shows interest in “thinking about how writing centers elsewhere can take up this new challenge” of teaching as well as tutoring new media writing, and she thereby shows interest in what a writing center of the future might look like (Balester et al.).

This article emerges out of the New London Group’s and Silver’s considerations, and it argues that e-portfolio assignments assigned in digital-media oriented writing center courses as well as the conversations writing center practitioners and writers have about them can empower writers to reframe their identities and to work toward social justice, and, in turn, they can render social justice as a relevant framework for multiliteracy. I define e-portfolios as digital and sometimes online compilations of student work that can function as multimodal incarnations of portfolios as rhetoric and composition scholars initially envisioned them,² and I suggest that assignments that basic writers write for them can enable these writers to interrogate audience and genre in relation to their own social identities and questions of social justice. These students might post to their e-portfolios “mutt genre” assignments that tend to exist in mono-modal forms—assignments theorized by Elizabeth Wardle in “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” These assignments,

despite Wardle's criticism of them, might create opportunities for basic writers to investigate genre knowledge as a type of multiliteracy and to engage in genre production as a process of creating social change. By contrast, basic writers might post assignments that engage students with "real" audiences through non-mutt, or more "real," genres, for instance movie or restaurant reviews, that frequently appear in multimodal forms online.³ In ways akin to mutt-genre assignments, these assignments can invite basic writers to interrogate the opportunities and barriers that their social identities create for them. These assignments can also invite writers to see their positions in relation to external, non-academic forces and audiences. As basic writing students come to see themselves as possible agents of change via their experiences in academia and the digital world, I posit that they attain a heightened understanding of their potential as change agents in a broader context. As a result, these basic writers may experience shifts in their identities and their self-perceived agencies that may well help to not only shape the twenty-first century writing center as the sort of "activis[t]" that scholars in the profession have recently imagined it as being (Denny 26), but also as a multiliterate activist and as an advocate for a just multiliteracy that promotes social participation for those who otherwise might lack opportunities for such participation.

Possibilities for Mutt Genres and Real Genres Through Multiliteracy

The problem of effectively teaching and tutoring writers who work to attain knowledge of genres and audiences in part emerges because of the kinds of assignments that many teachers of writing assign to first-year as well as basic writing students in courses that perhaps avoid robust engagement with multiliteracy. Although basic writing sustains itself as somewhat distinct from first-year composition, George Otte and Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk observe that "first-year composition is the course to which basic writing has had the closest connection" (41).

And, as basic writing as a field has matured, it has done so to become “something ever harder to distinguish (and to keep separate) from first-year composition” (Otte and Mlynarczyk 42). Essay assignments for both courses have in many ways come to resemble one another, and they have in some cases even stagnated in their form. To use a term coined by Elizabeth Wardle, many of the assignments can be characterized as “mutt genres,” or genres that exist specifically within the framework of basic and introductory-level writing courses. To use Wardle’s words, these mutt genres, be they five-page analytical essays or evaluations, proposals or definitions, “mimic genres that mediate activities in other activity systems, but within the FYC system their purposes and audiences are vague or even contradictory” (774). Indeed, as Wardle seems to imagine them, mutt genres exist as mono-modal and ubiquitous: they exist as those classic paper things that students imagine when they imagine themselves as writing and submitting college papers; they exist as those ever-tangible things that teachers write on in red and hand back with comments and a grade at the end.

Assigning tried-and-true mutt genre assignments in digital-age basic writing courses comes with an array of risks. First and foremost, I suggest, to extend Wardle’s argument, that these genres do not inherently invite writers to engage with multiple modes as idealistic proponents of digital-age multiliteracy might want them to. Students writing these assignments perhaps come to see the ways in which academic discourse exists, in its still dominant form, as streamlined, patriarchal, and, in certain disciplines, mono-modal. In other words, students might see the assignments as oppressive tools of pedagogical systems that have failed to provide them with the sort of support that they needed to have entered into college prepared for first-year writing courses. Likewise, students writing them may come to understand genre as “form or text type,” to use Amy J. Devitt’s words, not as the sort of “dynamic patterning of human

experience” that both creates and is created by rhetorical situations and discourse communities (573). This counter-dynamic presentation of genre as a bucket to be filled may inhibit student understanding of the ways in which mutt-genre knowledge can and should transfer, to cite Wardle’s discussion of the phenomenon.⁴ Put another way, students might not understand the relevance of mutt genre knowledge to their future disciplinary, professional, and increasingly multimodal writing experiences—experiences in which they compose in what they perceive to be real genres for real audiences.

Yet, in my view, mutt genres have value for an array of reasons because of their peculiar relationship with multiliteracy. On the one hand, writers of mutt genres who may have lacked insider knowledge about academic discourse can emerge as multiliterate in terms of their genre knowledge, a type of multiliteracy that builds on discussions of the New London Group’s original definition of it as essentially involving only multilingualism and new media. These writers can build confidence—what they seem to most lack⁵—and they can come to understand the rhetorical adjustments that they must make in employing their academic arguments for academic audiences that they encounter as they move into participation in scholarly discourse communities. They can even engage in questions of social justice by gaining perspective on the circumstances that may have led them to lack academic discourse literacy in the first place. In writing centers, these writers can talk about their life circumstances with their consultants, teachers, and peers, and they can thereby transcend the confining limits that a basic writer identity may place on them. To appropriate Linda Adler-Kassner’s words, they can “contest, and, ideally [...], overcome their status as basic writers” as per “the implied goal of most basic writing courses” (71). And as a result, they can move into new social identities via an awareness of genre, multiliteracy, and the means by which both—in dynamic interplay with

one another or individually—sustain the capacity to define, limit, and empower individuals.

On the other hand, writers of mutt genres can develop a sense of themselves as change agents in academic discourse communities by giving mutt genres a multimodal shape that advances their often de facto mono-modal one. To begin the process of achieving this end, instructors and consultants might invite basic writers to conceptualize standardized academic expectations and formats as products of rhetorical choices of the sort that Anne Frances Wysocki discusses.⁶ In turn, they might invite basic writers to revise the traditional mono-modal form as multimodal and more appropriate to digital-age audiences. Instructors and consultants can and should invite writers to adapt the genre in ways that it fits with the digital-age and multimodal spirit of the e-portfolio as a genre in and of itself.

As a genre, the e-portfolio certainly does not exist as inherently multimodal even though it incorporates the kinds of emerging new media technologies toward which the New London Group gestures. The e-portfolio does not inherently have to exhibit the most cutting-edge stuff of digital-age multiliteracy, but the genre can emerge as part and parcel of conversations about multiliteracy if teachers of writing use e-portfolios to scaffold students toward multiliteracy. To use Kathleen Blake Yancey terms, teachers of writing can prepare their students to render e-portfolios and individual assignments housed in them in accord with the “[w]eb sensible” model, which uses “text boxes, hyperlinking, visuals, audio texts, and design elements” to “[exploit] the [online] medium” (745-46). In engaging in this sort of multiliterate vision of an e-portfolio as a genre that might exist, for instance, on WordPress or on Google Sites, and in engaging in this sort of genre revision, basic writers not only reinvigorate the mutt genre visually, but they also refashion its rhetorical purpose as

a more meaningful one: if posted to online e-portfolios for an audience beyond just the teacher, the ideas about which basic writers write have the potential to engage with questions of social justice in ways that matter and to create social change in communities.

To build on the rhetorical work that basic writers of mutt genres might do by thinking about, talking about, and pushing on the bounds of mutt genres in a basic writing course by way of e-portfolios, teachers of writing and writing consultants might invite writers to write in real, online genres and engage them in dialogue about the relationship between real online genres and mutt genres. What's the rhetorical difference between a mutt genre they encounter in academia and online genres they encounter in their everyday experiences? Why does one genre type lend itself more readily to multiliteracy than another? What systems of power privilege genres in their respective contexts? How might mutt and other academic genres change to account for digital-age developments? These, among other questions, might guide discussion as students begin composing movie reviews, restaurant reviews, or open letters and posting their compositions online to e-portfolios that can and do exist as relatively independent from academic communities. Moreover, composing in real, online genres provides students with opportunities for the sort of engagement that the National Survey of Student Engagement says they seek,⁷ and it thereby helps writers to build confidence: it helps students continue the process of envisioning themselves as capable of creating tangible change.

From Writing Basically to Writing for Social Change: Tutoring and Teaching Agency Through E-Portfolio Writing Center Assignments and Conversations

Change, especially as it can work toward realizing social justice, functions as the theoretical centerpiece in my thinking about my own basic writing

courses as I have taught them through the University of Michigan's Sweetland Center for Writing. These courses in many ways change the field: they create unique learning experiences for students because, in accord with the Center's design of them, they blend together one-to-one conversations that have come to define writing centers with the small- and large-group interaction typical of classroom pedagogy. They resemble courses that have a writing fellow or a consultant attached, but in the case of these courses, the fellow or consultant is also the teacher. These courses likewise change the scope of the traditional mutt-genre-based basic writing course. I have worked to create unique experiences for students in that I have designed these courses to incorporate a combination of mutt genre assignments as well as real, online genre assignments, all of which get posted to multimodal, often WordPress-based e-portfolios as per departmental requirements. My assignments, be they mutt genres or not, invite students to think about how they can create change in and through the digital-age platforms in which they must engage and therefore through multiliteracy as they acquire it. In essence, then, my assignments shape genre knowledge and activity as engagement with an audience as a prospective change agent, not a disempowered basic writer, and situated within our classroom conversations about multiliteracy. To begin a conversation with other writing center practitioners who seek to design similar courses, to design similar assignment sequences, or to have conversations about genre, audience, multiliteracy, and social justice in their consultations, I discuss my assignment design and teaching practices here.

In the first major e-portfolio essay I assign and in the one-to-one conversations I have with students about it, I invite students to write a consumer review akin to real ones they have read online as they have sought to function as informed consumers. The assignment prompts students to reflect on the distinction between essays they've written in

their prior academic experiences and essays that I will ask them to write in my course. Unlike the evidence-based, directed self-placement essay that students write prior to enrolling in the course—an essay that students write predominantly for an audience of themselves, their advisors, and their eventual basic or first-year writing instructors—the consumer review assignment invites students to connect with a broad community of readers via a digital media platform. Like other features of their e-portfolio, the consumer review will appear illustrated and online, perhaps with embedded videos or sound files that play; hence it will appear as virtually indistinguishable from real incarnations of the genre. As they compose their reviews, my students consider other reviews they've recently read, for instance of different possible colleges or universities they were recently investigating, and they read more reviews with an eye for genre conventions. They develop a sense of tone and style as consumer reviewers establish and sustain them, and in talking about genre conventions, they realize the vast differences between traditional academic essays written predominantly for the audience of a teacher and consumer review as a genre written for a broader audience.

Moreover, the assignment invites students to at least temporarily escape the confines of their roles as students by teaching their readers something about a product, performance, place, or consumer experience—by working as change agents in their rhetorical situations. With support from me in the one-to-one conversation component of the course, students see the social purpose of writing and the agency that writing—especially in digital contexts—affords, and they attain a sense of social responsibility for their compositions. As their tutor and their teacher, I help them think about their potential readers in concrete terms: I certainly function as their reader, but they have to also imagine their reader as anyone who might encounter their writing by way of a Google search. For instance, those interested in the quality of products sold for inflated prices to

community members at a local Urban Outfitters store might stumble upon a student's review but not perceive the assignment as student writing per se. Likewise, a student interested in eating at a campus dining hall might not recognize a student's piece of writing about that dining hall's questionable treatment of international student customers as student writing. In the webbed world that houses e-portfolios—a world that writing teachers and tutors help writers fashion as multiliterate—ethos emerges at times in confusing and convoluted ways, as numerous textbooks attest via their ongoing warnings to student writers about unreliable sources they might encounter.⁸ Yet the ambiguous world of the web in turn affords students with opportunities to transcend their student status as they address questions of social justice and ethics in the reviews they write. Their compositions can emerge as reliable ones on which readers rely.

I follow this consumer review assignment with a mutt genre assignment: a rhetorical analysis essay of an advertising campaign that invites students to address issues involving social identity and to apply what they have learned from their review about digital-age composition to give new shape to traditional academic discourse. My basic writing students conduct rhetorical analyses of other mono-modal rhetorical analyses to understand controlled humanities essay conventions: they look, for instance, at introductions, body paragraph structure, evidence employed, conclusions, tone, style, and citation. They learn to see patterns of conventions of insider academic discourse that has previously eluded them with Othering and perhaps demoralizing results as opposed to confidence-building ones. Students attempt to reproduce the genre conventions as they have encountered them in analyzing issues involving racism and sexism in their own advertisements, but then they challenge the genre by thinking critically about the values of the online community members who will read their work. They develop a multiliterate vision for their arguments by

employing an array of modes and media to complement their alphabetic compositions. They become change agents in a discourse community by creating multimodal texts that push on the bounds of what it means to write an academic essay, and I draw attention, via our conversations, to the fact that genres, including our seemingly stagnant academic ones, are always changing, especially alongside emerging technologies and especially when members of discourse communities question them and work to change them for compelling rhetorical purposes.

My students further push the bounds of academic discourse by presenting their rhetorical analyses at an in-class conference that works to further complicate genre, audience, and multiliteracy for them. This real genre of an academic conference informs the rhetorical actions of insiders of academic discourse communities. It sets the terms for how insiders opt to write because it presents a clear venue and a known audience, but basic writers almost certainly do not know that reality when they first come to college. In engaging in class conference presentations, students come to understand the secret audiences and purposes for academic writing. They remix their ideas via a multimodal Prezi or a PowerPoint presentation that differs in its multimodality from their e-portfolio, and they think rhetorically about the ways in which academic discourse exists in dynamic interplay with multiliteracy as both evolve alongside one another. Multiliteracy, like academic discourse or the genres on which members of academic discourse communities rely, has texture and variety. It can never exist as some simple, one-size-fits-all phenomenon—even though many conversations about multiliteracy may flatten it as a concept. By engaging with multiliteracy in multifaceted ways with different audiences, my students engage in inevitably messy work—work that resembles, in its complexity and messiness, the work of seeing socially just possibilities and working toward social justice amid a matrix of human values that counter that work. Basic writers

as rhetoricians can thereby push beyond the sleek and easy solution of simply incorporating technology or incorporating images or videos into alphabetic compositions. They can think about who has and who lacks access to technology or access to power to see the ideas that they showcase via their multiliteracies. They can likewise think about the degree to which multiliteracies that they showcase influence or fail to influence audience members with social identities that resemble or differ from their own.

Much like the first major essay assignment of my course, the final real genre that I teach and the capstone to my course—an online open letter posted to the e-portfolio—invites students to think beyond the confines of academic essay genres. It pushes them to recognize the everyday relevance of multiliteracy and its role in creating social change toward more socially just ends, and the assignment invites them to complicate notions of audience. As students analyze genre conventions, most notably the means by which open letters address a dual audience, I draw attention to ways in which open letters as a genre have evolved. We look at Martin Luther King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” which was printed in periodicals including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *The Christian Century* and which functioned to create social change in the Civil Rights Movement. We also look at contemporary incarnations, such as Sinéad O’Connor’s 2013 open letter critiquing Miley Cyrus’s self-exploitation in her “Wrecking Ball” video or Ralph Nader’s 2013 open letter asking Mark Duke of Walmart to raise wages for his company’s workers. Although writers of contemporary open letters certainly might find print-news-media publishers, the means by which these letters tend to go viral is digital. Contemporary examples of online open letters help students realize that multiliteracy and the writing centers that develop to incorporate it into their everyday work shape the future of rhetorical thinking. Indeed, as Laura J. Gurak and Smiljana Antonijevic suggest,

we have already “reached a time when the phrase ‘digital rhetoric’ is redundant” because no rhetoric is “beyond the realm of the digital” (497).

As basic writing students compose their own open letters, they reify as well as push on existing genre conventions in accord with the sort of dynamic conception of genre that Devitt presents, and they are able to engage in what is often socially conscious work toward social justice in local and global contexts. Students decide on topics in consultation with me, and their letters critique everyday injustices as they feel them. For instance, one student’s letter, written to Mike Jeffries, the CEO of Abercrombie and Fitch, critiques Jeffries for the degree to which his purposefully small clothing sizes propagate body image problems among healthy women. Other students take a more satirical approach to the assignment and attempt to appeal to their broader online readership via humor while still presenting a social critique. For instance, one student’s letter to Irene Rosenfeld, the CEO of Nabisco, critiques Nabisco for false advertising of Double Stuf Oreos—cookies that don’t actually contain double the stuff. Other letters address, for example, the salaries of Rolex executives who employ their parents, the cost of busing on campus, and other issues that students feel in personal ways. Ultimately, these letters live online lives not inherently as student writing per se, even though pieces were obviously written in response to classroom assignments. Instead, they live online lives as the sort of real writing that students say they want to produce: writing that seeks to, and does, make a difference in the ways in which readers think and act.

Conclusion: Identity Development, Social Justice, and the Writing Center of the Future through Multiliteracy

What other possibilities exist for basic writing students to transcend the limits of a basic writer identity and engage as change agents via their compositions? How else might teachers and tutors of writing

incorporate identity development and conversations about social justice issues as central to contemporary writing center practice? How else might digital media platforms foster the sort of engagement that students and writing center practitioners alike seek? How else might writing center practitioners scaffold for the sort of “full social participation” that the New London Group sees as being available through multiliteracy (61)? These among other questions might get writing center practitioners thinking in productive ways about possibilities for the identities of their inhabitants, the identities of the institutions that those inhabitants comprise, and, therefore, the future of writing centers as multiliteracy centers in a broader sense.

In engaging in the hybrid sort of writing center work I have described—work that involves both classroom teaching and one-to-one conversation and work that engages students in multimodal writing for digital platforms—writing center practitioners have an opportunity to invite students, especially those enrolled in basic writing courses, to represent themselves in new and exciting ways. As Yancey suggests in her consideration of pedagogy involving e-portfolios and student writer identity, teachers of writing must consider “the representations of students that [they...] invite or permit,” and, I argue, writing center practitioners must do the same (739). Especially by inviting students to re-conceptualize academic genres that have functioned as oppressive to them and to write in real online genres that speak to real audiences, writing center practitioners can help foster student identity development as empowered. They can help students develop as multiliterate, socially concerned, and the sorts of influential writers that they say they want to be.

In turn, writing centers, too, can and do continue to develop their own identities as hybrid, socially conscious, and socially influential sites. They

can transcend existing and perhaps confining master narratives of what they are and do—master narratives that McKinney theorizes in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*⁹—and they can also transcend their identities as spaces for “utopian thinking” about the possibilities that technology might afford (Sheridan, “Introduction” 6). Instead, they can get further into the messy everyday work of striving for social justice through multiliteracy and putting multiliteracy into dialogue with questions of social justice in necessary yet never easy ways. They can become distinctively multiliterate incarnations of the type of “sites for activism and social change” that Harry C. Denny imagines them as being and becoming (26). Ultimately, it is this kind of peculiar and hybrid writing center that can establish itself as the connective tissue between disparate academic departments as well as between academic and non-academic, mono-modal print and digital-age multimodal circles through which writers move. It is this kind of multiliterate and activist writing center that can transcend conventional conversations about just, as in only, multiliteracy and thereby begin the process of theorizing just, as in socially just, multiliteracy in the digital age.

Notes

1. For example, see Barbara Lynn Gordon’s “Requiring First-Year Writing Classes to Visit the Writing Center: Bad Attitudes or Positive Results?”
2. For instance, see Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff’s “Portfolios as a Substitute for Proficiency Examinations” for a description of an early model for a portfolio system: that which the State University at Stony Brook employed.
3. The term “real” is certainly problematic according to some twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorists, for instance Jacques Lacan’s, who defines as “the impossible” in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (167). Yet the term “real” resonates with composition students who, time and again, have told me that they seek to write real writing like real writers write. They use that word, and so I use it, too—to

describe these genres and audiences.

4. According to Wardle, “[w]e cannot say with certainty why transfer does not occur.” However, “if students are taught decontextualized ‘skills’ or rigid formulas rather than general and flexible principles about writing, and if instructors in all classes do not explicitly discuss similarities between new and previous writing assignments, it stands to reason students will not see similarities between disparate writing situations or will apply rigid rules inappropriately. In other words, one reason for lack of transfer is instruction that does not encourage it” (770).

5. According to a study by Anne Ruggles Gere et al., basic writers appear to lack confidence in their writing abilities, and they see a basic writing course as effective in college if it helps them build the confidence they lack. As Anne Ruggles Gere et al. explain, “a significant majority of students who took [a basic writing course at the University of Michigan] found it helpful in enhancing their confidence as writers” (169-70).

6. As Wysocki suggests, “[e]ffective visual rhetoric requires trying to understand and work with (or sometimes against) the expectations and assumptions and values of one’s audience concerning ALL the visual aspects of a text” (183).

7. As the “NSSE 2011 Annual Results” suggest, “[a] 21st century vision of undergraduate education demands an integrated, comprehensive approach to learning that is responsive to the whole student. Educators must actively collaborate about the experience of their students, talk about what students know and can do, and design new approaches to engaging students at high levels. Student engagement results provide educators across a variety of campus programs and departments information to consider in their efforts to understand the student experience and to collaborate in the design of educationally productive activities and programs” (National Survey of Student Engagement 10).

8. For example, see Lester Faigley and Jack Selzer, who, in *Good Reasons: Researching and Writing Effective Arguments*, suggest that “[s]earches using Google or Yahoo! turn up thousands of items, many of which are often not useful for research” (227).

9. As McKinney suggests, writing centers are “comfortable, yet iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing” (3). This vision of a writing center, according to McKinney, constitutes the master narrative that writing center practitioners have developed about their work.

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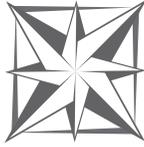
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Consultant Insight

The Blog as a Community Facilitator: Creating Community and Identity in the Writing Center

BROOKE MORGAN WILNER

Often, discourse focused on building a writing center community, and helping consultants find their individual identity within that community, is written by those in positions of authority and administration. While this level of discourse is obviously important and helpful, discussion arising from the consultants themselves is equally so. As an undergraduate writing center consultant, I have taken the time throughout my tenure to reflect on what methods for community creation work, and which ones do not. One particularly intriguing method that can be used to facilitate the creation of a writing center community, and assist consultants with finding their identity, is a blog. While this method is not foolproof, using it appropriately could contribute immensely in helping each consultant find his or her individual voice within a larger, cohesive community.

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First, it is necessary to address a common misconception about the background of many undergraduate consultants and tutors. The assumption exists that many, if not all, current undergraduate consultants and tutors have grown up heavily involved with the regular practice of blogging, and creating consistent updates about their lives. In fact, the 2015 SWCA Conference Call for Presenters included the query “What is the evolving function of a writing center to a generation of students who have spent their lives reading and blogging with their peers around the world?” (<http://www.iwca-swca.org/2015-Conference-CFP.html>). While this assumption is true to the extent that the current generation of undergraduate consultants is inevitably familiar with using the Internet to express themselves, I would challenge the notion that undergraduate students regularly blog with their peers around the world. In fact, the majority of undergraduate students and consultants with whom I have spoken have never used a blog in their life, and certainly do not spend much of their personal time discussing their personal lives in an online blog format.

The falsehood of the idea that undergraduate students are inherently comfortable with blogging became even more clear to me after I assumed the position of Blog Development Consultant in the fall of last year. My job was to improve the utilization of the writing center blog, and encourage conversation through that medium of online communication. Our blog is a closed one, meaning that only those involved with the writing center have reading and writing access; the thought behind this was that a closed blog would facilitate conversation, since privacy would be maintained. However, it immediately became clear that most of our consultants, undergraduate and graduate, do not find it second nature, or often even comfortable, to discuss their sessions on a blog, even a closed blog like the one we have at the center. This reluctance could possibly stem from their wish to retain privacy for themselves and for each

student that comes in, or just from the fact that they've never blogged before, and are not familiar with it in general.

Overcoming this reluctance became an immediate priority. Our challenge as a writing center became about creating a blog space that would help contribute to the sense of community that we consistently try to cultivate in the center. By creating a blog that consultants were interested in, and excited to post to, the center could become more inclusive and welcoming of every individual point of view each consultant brings, while also working as a catalyst for community within the center.

With this goal in mind, I, in conjunction with the writing center director, developed a two-fold process for improving the usage of and involvement with the blog. First, a decision was made to ensure that we were posting consistently about relevant content, and ending each one of these posts with a call for a response. By posting regularly, consultants could anticipate the update of the blog, and check in for this week's content; this facilitated regular interaction with the blog. Further, by placing a call for response at the end of each post, the consultants felt as if their contributions were warranted and expected, rather than expecting them to post of their own accord. This first change garnered almost immediate collaboration between and among centers, as consultants from both our undergraduate and graduate writing centers began to comment on posts, and discuss the impact of each post with one another.

To build upon this small momentum, the writing center director and I decided to have one week each semester where every consultant is expected to respond to the same source material as part of their annual training requirements. We called this event the "blog carnival," and presented it as a new addition to our regular staff training that would be repeated in the future. Our first material discussed the suggested dress code of those who work in the center; every consultant was asked to write

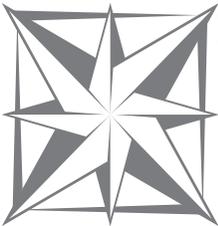
their own blog post based on their response to the material. This topic was inherently interesting to our consultants, both undergraduate and graduate, and we saw a wide range of responses. Further, since everyone was required to respond, they also saw the opportunity to discuss their personal point of view on another consultant's post, as a comment. Because of this, the conversation, and hence the interaction and collaboration, was extended beyond just the initial required post.

The success of both of these updates to our blog policy was encouraging. As a center, we expect to continue both policies, by having a blog carnival each semester, and posting content regularly in the future. As we move forward, we will keep our minds open to finding new methods that might continue to improve the usage of and interaction with the writing center blog, and incorporate those into the programming we already do. Hopefully, we can keep the current momentum going, and continue to use the blog as a medium that inspires the collaboration of centers, encourages individual consultants to express themselves and discuss their opinions with others in the center, and creates one writing center community.

So why do any of this in the first place? A blog seems like something so small and insignificant in the grand scheme of administering and managing a writing center, especially in a large university like ours. However, even though it is a small change in current programming, it can have a large impact on the feeling of community as a whole. Not all consultants are working at the same time, and some consultants might never see one another on a day-to-day basis. This leads to a decrease in the sense of involvement and community. A blog is a way to connect everyone electronically, without having to be gathered in the same physical place at the same time. Further, it is also a place where consultants can feel safe sharing their concerns or questions about a

session, as the blog is closed, and only available to be seen by those who are affiliated with the center.

Creating a permanent sense of community is crucial for a writing center, to ensure low consultant attrition rates, as well as helping with consultant satisfaction. Both of these can lead to more effective and productive sessions, because when consultants like their jobs and feel comfortable with others in the center, they also feel more comfortable with themselves as tutors and consultants. Creating a blog may seem unimportant at first, but it's about much more than just writing posts on an internet forum. It's about allowing consultants to share their thoughts with one another, making them feel comfortable at work, and creating a lasting writing center community.



**SOUTHERN
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A Journal of Multiliteracy
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<p>\$200.00 Two full pages (one issue)</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 8px;">Full Page</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 8px;">Full Page</div>	<p>All ads are printed in black and white and appear on interior pages of the journal. Contact SDC. editors@gmail.com for more information.</p>
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<p>\$75.00 One half page (one issue)</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 8px;">Half Page</div>		

Call for Papers

The SDC Fall 2015 Call for Proposals:

We are pleased to announce the third issue of Southern Discourse in the Center, to be published in Fall 2015, focused on the theme of "Policy and the Center." Submit your manuscript that addresses the intersections between public policy, whether at the state, national, or institutional level, and the writing center. Possibilities include:

- Cost/benefit analyses of Centers and different methods within them (e.g. length of sessions, hard copy v. digital sessions, etc.)
- Evaluation of foundational scholarship in light of new trends and practices
- Blending new scholarship and foundational articles in center training
- Using foundational center scholarship to build cross-disciplinary collaborations
- The place of theoretical discourse in defending the distinctive mission of the Center
- Discussions/comparisons of verbal literacy, digital literacy, multiliteracy, literacy in multiple languages.

This list, however, is not meant to be prescriptive—we also welcome queries, ideas, and proposals.

Please submit all questions to SDC@iwca-swca.org.

INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS
ASSOCIATION 2015 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 8TH-10TH 2015



(R)EVOLUTIONS

We invite you to consider writing center (r)evolutions: the ways in which we create our writing center pedagogies, practices, spaces, and programs through artistic and technological innovations. We will meet at the Wyndham Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA to explore writing center (r)evolutions and the ways that these

(r)evolutions move writing centers forward.

www.writingcenters.org | [@IWCA_NCTE](https://twitter.com/IWCA_NCTE)

Program Chair: Russell Carpenter . russell.carpenter@eku.edu

**Southeastern Writing
Center Association**
2016 CONFERENCE



Writing Center Inclusivity



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler warns, "The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed 'etc.' at the end of the list" (143). Characteristics such as the ones Butler lists, and more, are also found in writing center work. In writing center professionals' conversations about inclusivity, we often find ourselves categorizing students, such as the "anxious" student, the "overconfident" student, and student with disabilities, to name a few labels. We can find this practice of categorization in our training manuals and during our role playing. While categorizing may support us as we search for established approaches to working with particular types of student writers, this process may also limit us as we try to discover the strategies that relate to students with varied backgrounds and roles.

How can we avoid the embarrassing "etc." in writing center work? What ways can writing center professionals avoid dependence on categorization as a frame for tutoring approaches? How do writing center professionals define inclusivity?

For the 2016 conference, we invite presentations that explore inclusivity and related issues, including but not limited to:

- ✦ Tutor recruitment, training & development
- ✦ Administration and assessment
- ✦ Outreach at your institutions
- ✦ Outreach efforts in the community
- ✦ Space layout and design
- ✦ Technology
- ✦ Linguistics and literacy
- ✦ Research activities & training

Critical Focus

As a critical focus, presenters may want to explore the ways in which we can apply the concept of universal design to our kairotic spaces (See Price "Defining Kairotic Space"). Universal design seeks to create and revise physical, intellectual, and social spaces to accommodate and include all types of learners and writers. Kairotic space, as Margaret Price defines it in *Mad at School*, includes "all or most" of the following:

- ✦ Real-time unfolding of events
- ✦ Impromptu communication that is required or encouraged
- ✦ In-person contact
- ✦ A strong social element
- ✦ High stakes [spaces and contexts related to grades, enrollment, future academic success] (46)

Writing centers, studios, and labs are certainly kairotic spaces. And once we have analyzed our spaces, what do we do with the results? We encourage presentations that explore, engage, interrogate, and apply these concepts to the conference theme of inclusivity.

DATES

February 18-20, 2016

PROPOSAL

DEADLINE

October 19, 2015

LOCATION

Convention & Trade
Center @ Columbus
State's RiverPark
Campus

conventiontradecenter.com

columbusstate.edu

KEYNOTE

Margaret Price, PhD
Spelman College

Author of *Mad at
School: Rhetorics of
Mental Disability and
Academic Life*

PRESENTATION

TYPES

Individual Presentations
Roundtables /
Workshops
ignite Presentations
Pecha Kuchas
Poster presentations
Multimedia installations

Register & Submit Proposals @

www.iwca-swca.org/Conferences.html

