



Southern Discourse in the Center

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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From the Editors

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The full process of producing an individual issue of this (or any) academic journal starts with (and crucially depends on) gathering high-quality submissions that consider important questions in the field and which contribute to ongoing scholarly and practical conversations that scholars and practitioners are having at any given moment. As the editors of this publication, we read and consider all submissions and then send out for peer review only those submissions that clearly meet this high standard. Only at that point does the real work begin, and the ensuing journey from submission to publication can take a long time—often a year or more.

During the production of this issue, we exchanged quite a few e-mail messages with the authors collected here. Many of the messages we sent out included some sort of apology for the lengthy process, but none of them properly thanked the authors for their work in and commitment to our field of study. Looking back at those messages now, a pattern emerges. We would thank the authors for their patience (often employing a metaphor like “the gears of the scholarly publication machine turn slowly” or some similar phrasing) but not for their work and their commitment to the field at large.

Now that the issue is ready for publication, we want to correct that oversight by sincerely thanking all of the authors and reviewers not only for their patience but for the many hours of hard work that it takes to turn an idea into a publication. We think *SDC* readers will agree that all of that collective and collaborative hard work has resulted in an issue that can make a positive impact on our field.

The three peer-reviewed articles in this issue are all excellent examples of scholarship, of course, but they have more than that in common. Each one considers a different research question, but all of them work toward

the same goal: contributing to conversations that help all of us in this field understand and improve the work we do in our writing and communication centers.

The common thematic thread running through this issue is our shared commitment to active engagement and collaboration with both individuals and groups on the campuses we serve. In this first article, Prabin Lama presents results from a research study that demonstrates the collaborative nature of tutoring sessions. Lama's work shows that writing center consultations tend to be "more collaborative than hierarchical" and that collaboration can take a number of forms during a consultation. He notes that students usually view tutors as experts but without deferring entirely to the tutor. Thus, in effective tutoring sessions, the student writer usually works with the tutor rather than simply accepting advice and directions from the tutor.

Jeffrey Howard's article focuses on the generative power of various kinds of exhibits in writing center spaces. Howard argues that art, multimedia, and other kinds of exhibits can "promote engaging perspectives on language, communication, literacies, and many other topics related to the work of the center and its relationships with diverse student populations." For Howard, the ultimate purpose of providing these kinds of displays in a writing center is to foster an environment where collaboration and active engagement are not only possible but encouraged.

While both of those articles concentrate on the positive power of collaborative work, the third article is itself a product of the very kind of collaboration that Howard and Lama seek to promote. Team-written by five authors from different campuses, "The Centrality of the Center (Early Covid Edition)" identifies ten best practices that writing centers should follow when challenges such as the recent (and ongoing) COVID-19 situation require centers to move away from traditional in-person operations and toward online/distance modalities. Most of the best practices discussed in the article are designed to ensure that collaborative work is still possible—perhaps even emphasized and made easier—when centers move online.

The two features that close out this issue continue this focus on collaboration and engagement. The “Consultant Insight” piece by Nyah Mattison and Taylor Keilman, both of the Transylvania University Writing Center, explain what they learned and experienced as course-embedded consultants (CECs). The takeaway message of the piece is that, by working closely with students in CEC-designated sections of a course, writing center tutors can help to “demystify writing center practices” and “provide benefits of mentorship that extend beyond academic support.”

In the “Back to the Center” piece that closes out this issue, Jenny Koster shows how one center provides opportunities for multiple types of collaborative work, including the same kind of course-embedded tutoring that Mattison and Keilman write about. For Koster, the goal of all of these attempts to promote engagement is for the center to be a “motivator of change” that “reflects the dynamic community of the college as a whole.”

There is perhaps no better way to sum up our role as writing center professional than Koster’s phrase “motivator of change.” Whether that “change” refers to one student becoming a stronger writer or to departments, units, or even whole campuses valuing and promoting effective communication, our collective goal should always be to facilitate various kinds of positive change—and always in a spirit of collaboration that can be found throughout this issue.

We hope and believe that the articles and features collected here—all of which are the end result of a long process of healthy collaboration among authors, reviewers, and editors—help you and your centers contribute to an environment of healthy cooperation and active engagement on your campuses.

--Scott and Devon

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