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SOUTHERN DISCOURSE *in the* CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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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 Georgia Institute of Technology. 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 manuscipts to SDC@iwca-swca.org.

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. For longer articles, please send an email inquiry.

"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.

Contents

From the Editor

Karen Head

Last summer I was standing in a field near Hadrian's Wall in the north of England. Despite the season, I was huddled into the nook of a cottage wall, taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi connection. A quick glance at the email list brought attention to only one—from SWCA President Rusty Carpenter. He apologized for interrupting my vacation, which he had been following on Facebook, but he wanted to know if I would consider taking on the editorship of *Southern Discourse from the Center*. I was, as the English say, chuffed.

The opportunity was especially exciting because of the journal's legacy. First it seemed appropriate to bring it back to Atlanta. Christine Cozzens, our founding editor, oversaw the journal from Agnes Scott College. Georgia Tech and Agnes Scott have been connected for many decades—we even have mythical students, George P. Burdell and Ramona Cartwright who will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary this year. While Sara Littlejohn, our previous editor, was only able to serve for one year, her work updating the format and converting the journal to peer-review is extremely important to our history. We are much indebted to her for her work. I feel honored to follow in these women's footsteps.

The relocation of a journal is always a bit traumatic. Our staff (after hurriedly forming to be a staff) has endeavored to work as quickly as possible to move us forward. There have been many joys and many stumbling blocks, and we are thankful for all the support we have received from the SWCA Board and from you, our writers and readers.

We hope you will admit one indulgence—we are featuring the Communication Center at Georgia Tech for our "Back to the Center" feature. We wanted to take this opportunity to introduce you to our home, which now also serves as the home of your journal.

Despite some unexpected delays, I am pleased to present this issue to you—one that focuses on Policy in the Center. You will find articles that challenge our notions of where we are headed in our field and how the "idea of the writing center" is changing. From Romney and Kitalong's consideration of multiliteracy centers to Burmester's "manifesto" about becoming policy makers to Lang's discussion of assessment practices to Whiddon and Carpenter's examination of faculty narratives regarding embedded tutoring, allof which offers us much to contemplate about the way we represent our work to others.

Burton's "Consultant Column" quickly reminds us that our field's future is bright indeed, as she negotiates the political tensions of working with international students who can be marginalized by Western academic discourse conventions.

I encourage each of you to respond to what you read here by submitting your own work to us. We are eager to expand beyond our regional and sub-disciplinary boundaries—inviting colleagues from outside the southeast and from disciplines like communication and digital media to consider what they have to offer to our larger conversations about theory and practice.

Extra thanks to Caitlin Kelly, Sarah O'Brien, and Jennifer Forsthoefel for their editorial assistance.

"A Broad Spectrum of Multiliteracies: Toward an Integrated Approach to Multimodality and Multilingualism in Writing Centers"

Abraham Romney
Karla Kitalong

Introduction

The multiliteracies turn in writing center studies has tended to focus on multimodal literacy in a digital age, neglecting multilingualism as an original component of the concept. However, when John Trimbur predicted that writing centers would increasingly "define themselves as multiliteracy centers," in addition to the increased presence of digital technologies, he had in mind shifting the focus toward multilingualism. He suggested that the de facto English Only orientation of writing centers was "one of the most glaring oversights in writing center practice" (89-90). Although multilingualism is frequently

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overlooked in discussions of multiliteracy in writing centers (Sheridan and Inman; Lee and Carpenter), this broader definition of multiliteracy was central to the New London Group's sense of the term as well. The New London Group (NLG), in their widely anthologized article, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," introduced multiliteracies as a term intended to supplement the pedagogy of "mere literacy." Accordingly, they address "textual multiplicity" along two major literacy trends in Western colleges and universities: a multiplication of channels of media and an increase in linguistic diversity (64). Although multimodal design remains relevant to writing center work, we argue that as writing centers move forward they should look to the productive work that emerges around a broader definition of multiliteracies. Otherwise, a turn to multiliteracy does little (or perhaps nothing) to address the English-only orientation Trimbur criticized; in fact, a center could claim multiliteracy status while ignoring one of the central features of the NLG's original concept of multiliteracy—multilingualism.

Multiliteracies, then, can point to seemingly divergent concepts and efforts in both scholarship and practice if we employ this broader definition. We approach this topic from the perspective of administrators who have worked with the term on a daily basis since the name of our Writing Center was changed to the Multiliteracies Center six years ago under a previous administrator. The experience of literally defining our center in terms of multiliteracies because of its renaming can provide helpful insights for writing centers as they begin to conceptualize themselves in terms of multiliteracy and formulate policy about their services. Writing centers are sites where the boundaries of language and modes of representation are being redesigned in

ways that make both the multimodal and multilingual aspects of multiliteracy crucial in today's academic landscape. In this context, multiliteracies can embody a multimodal/multilingual framework (Fraiberg 101). This article provides a discussion of how these theoretical perspectives should influence and shape practices in the writing center. We begin by taking a closer look at some scholarly arguments for the intersection of multimodal and multilingual approaches to language. The discussion then moves to our center's experience changing its name from the Writing Center to the Multiliteracies Center, where the term and the center operate around different institutional and conceptual boundaries that require negotiation and translation for constituents. Because of this, the name change has served as an impetus for expanding our services and training and has led to negotiating partnerships with other programs on campus with services that may fall under multiliteracy, defined broadly. The conclusion offers some questions that could serve as a starting point for centers considering a shift toward a multiliteracies framework.

Boundaries of Multiliteracy

Although emphasizing the multilingual aspects of multiliteracy is relatively rare, some scholars have at least recognized the fact that popular conceptions of multiliteracy have lost touch with the social justice aspect of the New London Group's vision. Liliana Naydan suggests that, given the prevalence of multimodal technologies, writing centers are always already multimodal, whether or not they embody the "sleek, technological world" often imagined in connection with the term (1). Nancy Grimm observed that multiliteracies is also about "access, about difference, about learning how texts of all kinds function in

systems of power" (5). Arguing, with Naydan and Grimm, for a more expansive understanding of multiliteracy in the field, Timothy Ballingall believes multiliteracies in writing centers should be discussed in connection with identity politics (1). More generally, Stephen Fraiberg advocates for a multimodal-multilingual perspective on literacy that is "capable of understanding the teaching of English writing within the context of other languages and globalization" (100).

But is an emphasis on identity politics or a proliferation of portable, digital technologies, or even an increasingly globalized workplace, sufficient to justify calling the work that we do multiliterate? An expanded framework for multiliteracies would support both multimodal practices and multilingualism in addition to traditional written and spoken literacy practices. Like all writing centers and multiliteracy centers, ours is a bounded space—demarcated spatially, functionally, theoretically, and institutionally. But boundaries are not simple lines of demarcation. As educational researchers Akkerman and Bakker suggest, they mark places where "sociocultural differences… give rise to discontinuities in interaction and action" and where, therefore, identity and practice are constantly being negotiated (139). The people and objects that occupy boundaries—which Akkerman and Bakker, following Star and Griesemer, term boundary objects—"have different meanings in different social worlds," and yet their structures are "common enough to make them recognizable across these worlds" (140-141). In our institutional case, the writing center has been around for three decades in one form or another (Grimm 12), and is well known both on and off campus; but it signifies different meanings and practices to different people, making it a boundary object by Akkerman and Bakker's definition.

Given the diverse interpretations of the term "multiliteracy," even in writing center studies, it is not surprising that the term is not well understood by all stakeholders in the center's immediate institutional environment; arguably, in our case, this is at least in part because the name change did not follow a "user-centered" process—the decision was made and implemented inside the Center with limited constituent input. Moreover, the name itself is not particularly "usable" or understandable to people outside of writing studies and is somewhat contested even within the field, as Trimbur, Sheridan, and others suggest. As a result, the center's name itself functions as a boundary object that calls for continuous acts of translation of theory and practice. But the process of negotiating these definitions shows that boundaries aren't only for keeping insiders in and outsiders out. Instead, boundaries can serve as "potential learning resources" (137) in that, instead of being strictly demarcated, they can foster "new understandings, identity development, change of practices, and institutional development" by means of specific "mechanisms" that Akkerman and Bakker term "identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation" (142). In fact, as Susan Leigh Star clarifies, the term "boundary object" was specifically coined in order to discuss the interpretative flexibility that occurs in shared spaces, in arrangements that allow people "to work together without consensus" (602). In this way, by functioning as a boundary object, the Multiliteracies Center acts as a site for transformation with a pragmatic bent, continuing to operate even without perfect consensus.

This pragmatic, allowable ambiguity comes as an unintended result of changing the center's name. When the administrators of the center changed the name in 2010, they meant for the new

name to reflect current practice, which had evolved beyond a focus on the written word to include spoken, visual, and multimodal texts. However, the new name, in significant ways, didn't simply acknowledge an expansive definition of texts, but both highlighted and disrupted the boundaries we—and our constituents—might associate with a traditional writing center. Since 2010, administrators have often found themselves in conversation with colleagues about the center's services and have, on more than one occasion, had colleagues suggest that the center needed to change in some way to "live up to its [new] name," implying that "multiliteracies" can be interpreted as an aspirational term in addition to being descriptive of work already being done in the center, as the previous director had asserted. Given the ambiguity of the name in the minds of its user base and the changing of the guard as new center administrators stepped in beginning in 2013, the name not only describes but pushes the boundaries of our center and its work.

Multiliteracies and Anxiety

The term "multiliteracies" in connection with writing centers has come to have narrower implications than it did in the New London Group's articulation of this type of pedagogy. But this narrower, technology-based definition of multiliteracies is still a broader view of literacy than the traditional print-based one. David Sheridan argues persuasively that writing centers need to function as multiliteracy centers, moving away from a narrow focus on the written word. Sheridan defines a multiliteracies center as a "technology-rich space staffed by consultants who have sophisticated understandings of peer-consulting pedagogy, multimodal rhetoric, and composing technologies"

(341). Sheridan's most persuasive point is that rhetorical and technical aspects of writing should be treated together, suggesting that if writing centers do not provide consulting for media-rich, multimodal work, then writers who view this type of communication as a "purely technical challenge" will miss out on vital rhetorical instruction (338). In his discussion of a digital, multimodal composition center, multilingualism is absent. The term "Multiliteracies" conceived broadly, however, stands to reshape traditional literacy. This expanded view would encompass not only the rhetorical aspects of digital design but also cross-cultural rhetoric in the context of increasing multilingualism.

Perhaps one reason why these two aims of multiliteracies have diverged is that it seems too daunting to handle them together. As first suggested by the New London Group, the narrower definition of multiliteracies is described largely as a technological problem, which perhaps produces enough anxiety on its own (61). Reticence to adopt new technologies and practices may come because administrators in writing centers are often teachers of English– a discipline strongly associated with traditional alphabetical literacy rather than technological literacy. Though this characterization may rely on stereotype, it certainly is the case that technological work from digital rhetoric to the digital humanities exists at the bleeding edge, rather than the center, of the humanities. In an article on six different multiliteracies centers published in Praxis, Sheridan describes anxiety as one of the key differences between working in a multiliteracies center and working in a center set up to deal strictly with media. He includes a chart that describes these differences in terms of the "anxieties" that writing centers feel "about multiliteracy work." To summarize his chart, these anxieties increase when the focus

shifts away from writing to new media; when composers work silently instead of engaging in conversation with tutors; when conversations focus on technical rather than rhetorical concerns; when technologies appear removed from writing in their focus on other modes of composition (such as audio production); and when consultants are recruited for their technical know-how rather than for writing expertise. Sheridan is right about the need to relinquish these anxieties as writing centers "embrace twenty-first century composing practices." But the issue can be pushed further. Getting comfortable in a multimodal and digital approach could ignore ways in which multilingualism may produce parallel anxieties.

Translingual Practice and Multilingualism

Some might feel that grouping multimodal and multilingual activities together in writing center work is an arbitrary choice, even though those first advocating multiliteracies were thinking of these areas of concern together. After all, centers could be conceived as spaces that serve only one or the other of these aspects of multiliteracy. The technological side of writing centers can easily be seen as one of constant innovation and progress. As Sue Mendelsohn argues in her dissertation, as they pursue multiliteracy, "centers will continue to tackle the responsibility of training consultants in visual rhetoric and oral communication and digital media and whatever else lies beyond those" (107). Chasing the technological wheel of multiliteracy as it churns forward into the novelty of new forms of media, however, shouldn't be done without recognizing that the proliferation of technologies and markets, increasingly brings new languages into contact with English. And in addition to theoretical reasons, including both of these elements in tutor training is also practical. Multilingual

writers will be doing multimodal work: as in the case of an international graduate student looking for help with an article that uses graphs and images extensively or an undergraduate international student working on writing and recording a podcast script for a multimodal composition assignment. Even if some sessions don't combine these activities, a tutor may be working with someone on a multimodal project in one session and with a multilingual writer in the next. The rhetorical skills needed to negotiate both of these sessions come from training in multiliteracies. As technology and globalization continue to influence literacies, a campus where students do not engage in with multimodal and multilingual work in some way would be the exception rather than the rule.

A broad view of multiliteracies aims at a different perspective on literacy in general, a perspective that looks beyond the boundaries of traditional literacy norms. If this perspective seems to exceed the stated mission of a writing center in an institution where some multimodal or multilingual literacies are addressed in other centers on campus, thinking of multiliteracies broadly can still shift toward understandings of multilingualism. To this end, centers can adopt a perspective on language competence that values cross-cultural and translingual practice. With a translingual stance, a center can avoid privileging a monolingual perspective on the English language, as translingualism calls for "perceiving English not as a language held together by a commonly shared systematized grammar, but perceiving communication as involving heterogeneous and changing norms" (Canagarajah 14). In making this suggestion, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between more recent translingual conceptions of

language and longstanding research in second-language (L2) acquisition. As some scholars recently pointed out in an open letter in College English, second language research is a broad field, not to be conflated with or replaced by the theoretical heft of a move toward translingual theories (Atkinson et al). These scholars, viewing L2 research as the broader term, observe that this field is ideologically neutral, whereas, translingual scholarship tends to challenge the "static view of language and writing" and privileges the "view of multiple languages as resources" for writing. We are sympathetic to the ideology behind a translingual approach because it resists the de facto monolingualism of most writing centers. However, writing centers will need to negotiate this distinction, depending on where services for ESL students are located on a given campus.

Although translingual and multimodal perspectives are not always considered together, recent scholarship in writing studies continues to see a relationship between multimodal, multilingual, and translingual writing. One benefit of a translingual approach is the possibility of a synergistic relationship with multimodal or transmodal perspectives on language. Arguing from historical examples of the relationship of oral languages to various and sometimes overlapping scripts, Joseph Lo Bianco suggests that "a Multiliteracies pedagogy cannot but be multilingual" (105). Like those advocating a translingual perspective, he argues that the pedagogy must adopt a vision of linguistic pluralism in contrast to the monolingualism that supports "ideas of naturalness and inevitability of worldview" that are destabilized by studying other languages (100). Bruce Horner, Cynthia Selfe, and

Tim Lockridge have recently suggested that despite "common points of origination, discussions of modality have remained largely separate from discussions of translinguality, to the impoverishment of both." Echoing Lo Bianco's argument, these scholars suggest that the combining of both approaches affords a stronger challenge to what they call Standard Language/Modality Norms or SL/MN. They warn that there is a potential "danger" in the tendency for these two aspects of language to become "bifurcated" and to be viewed as "discrete areas of concern." Our experience, discussed in the following section, suggests that the term "multiliteracies" can turn attention to both multimodal and translingual practice in productive ways.

Multiliteracies, Stretching the Center's Mission

Given all of the foregoing arguments for a multimodal/multilingual framework of multiliteracies, it is perhaps not surprising that changing the name of our center led us to view the boundaries of the center differently. As we discussed directions for the Multiliteracies Center during its shifts in administrative leadership, our attention was drawn to the fact that colleagues more than once said that it would be nice if the center could "live up to its name." Initially, for the director at the time, changing the name of our writing center meant following the "impetus to take the plunge and embrace a term that more aptly describes what we do" (Balester et al.). Over the last 5 years, however, the name change has served subtly to destabilize the work being done in the center, even when the name was changed. In addition to inviting questions from students and faculty looking for services not housed in our center (like modern language tutoring), the change has invited us to think about our practices differently and has

played a role in our policy discussions. Shouldn't we be working more closely with the ESL program or International Student Services if we're a multiliteracies center? What about the fact that some of the technological work that falls within the spectrum of multiliteracies is actually done in another location? Shouldn't we be in conversation with that area of campus regarding shared goals?

At the time of the name change, center administrators clearly argued in public and departmental documents that the work that the center had already been doing could be described with the term "multiliteracies." Announcing the name change as reflective of current practice could have been intended to counter institutional resistance to the unfamiliar by framing the change as less ideologically charged than it really was. But whatever the intent, once a name was in place and taken up by other individuals, defined, redefined, and explained, the boundaries of the center's practice were open to be permeated in ways that suggested the need for additional services. In one document announcing the name change, we read that students on our campus "in all disciplines, are already communicating with multimedia texts, designing new genres of texts, and adjusting to the complexities of communication in global environments. The name change recognizes these changes, and calls attention to the research possibilities suggested by them." Between this formal announcement and the internal notes used to draft it, we find some evidence that administrators recognized the intersection of the multilingual and multimodal potential of multiliteracies as it "Moves beyond... Westernized texts to incorporate other languages...which are rich in imagery and mix modalities, genres and voices." However, such notions were presented more

innocuously in the formal document announcing the name change. While the document lists some of the multimodal work done in the center and the cultural value of "exchanges with students who use English as a second language," it does not draw explicit attention to multilingual concerns. As time went on, it became apparent that some policies, especially those related to the exclusion of students in the intensive ESL program and the delays in integrating technology into the center, actually precluded our supporting the full spectrum of multiliteracies. More on this in a moment.

In discussing ways in which our center should continue to transform, we found inspiration in the core values on which our center's procedures manual and the peer tutor training regimen had been based, one of which was "openness to transformation." In the section of the manual describing openness to transformation, coaches are told that working in the center and with a diverse group of individuals on a diverse range of projects tends to have the effect of opening their minds to new ideas and ways of seeing the world. They are told, rather poetically, that "Transformative learning can sometimes feel uncomfortable or even overwhelming because familiar modes of operation are challenged by what is unfamiliar. Life becomes more complex with more shades of ambiguity." Yet, as we reflected on the nature of the center, it became apparent that the center itself was not open to transformation and had operated with a sometimes rigid set of boundaries around what would and would not be done, policies that, no doubt, were logical and important at the time they were implemented but then became reified and were steadfastly relied upon to the detriment of keeping the center's mission relevant to the current situation. This inquiry revealed that others

outside of the center were interested in rethinking some of these relationships.

For example, historical circumstances left ESL tutoring to be handled by the Intensive ESL (IESL) program and not by our center. Rethinking our center's mission and relevance has led, over the last two years, to reintegrating ESL tutoring into the center. It has become an important part of the work that our coaches do. This effort has also been mutually beneficial as it helped the IESL program achieve national accreditation last year. On another note, our center, housed in a humanities department, is across the hall from a state-of-the art computer and media lab, the Humanities Digital Media Zone (HDMZ), which, like the Multiliteracies Center, also falls under the direction of the Humanities Department. Although the Multiliteracies Center houses several computers and has been improving support for the digital projects being taught in the composition program, we find value in discussing the ways that these facilities can work together, with the Multiliteracies Center primarily focused on rhetoric and message and the HDMZ offering technical support for using tools to enact a rhetorically engaging message. Administrators of the two centers have, over the last year, jointly received an internal grant that allowed for the acquisition of additional digital equipment and training for graduate instructors in composition. Some of the equipment will be shared by both the Multiliteracies Center and HDMZ lab, and perhaps most importantly, the Multiliteracies Center leadership has become directly involved in the conversation surrounding multimodality in our general education composition course, contributing to the way that multiliteracies are understood and supported both in and outside of the center.

Tutor Training in Multiliteracies

One important way to show the center's commitment to a broad spectrum multiliteracies pedagogy was to make sure that we revised our tutor (or coach, in our terminology) training to match. In addition to taking a training course in their first semester of employment, all coaches at our center participate in a weekly one-hour training session/staff meeting during their employment. This meeting includes training activities and discussion as well as assigned readings that coaches tackle during their prep time. As part of conceptualizing multiliteracies broadly, we made both multimodal and multilingual training part of our curriculum for this meeting during the last year. Coaches read and discussed articles on multimodality as well as articles that addressed tutoring for multilingual writers. We found in doing so that other stakeholders had an interest in addressing these issues. Accordingly we invited the director of composition to explain the program's goals with regard to multimodal assignments in first-year writing; we also invited the directors of the Intensive English as a Second Language program to describe IESL students' trajectory through the program and their needs at different stages until they transition to a full academic course schedule. These presentations, in particular, gave coaches an understanding of curricular connections in relation to the spectrum of multiliteracy on campus.

Not all of our coaches have a high level of comfort with digital technology, or feel confident in their ability to support students in a multiliteracies approach. We have accordingly

revised our long-standing priority of hiring a diverse staff to include not only social diversity but also linguistic and technological diversity. As a result, we have hired coaches who are international students from various countries, including one student who advanced through the department's IESL program. With regard to technology, we have been fortunate to recruit students with an interest in media. In order to generalize this expertise within our staff, we have included digital/multimodal training in our weekly staff meetings, approaching such training from a hands-on perspective, not just from a theoretical one. In subsequent sessions, coaches worked on producing blog posts, screencasts, and audio recordings. The audio recording instruction was handled by one of our undergraduate coaches, an Audio Production major. For these activities, we used not only the computers in our own space, but also the more extensive resources available in the Humanities Digital Media Zone. More work is certainly needed to train our students in a multiliteracies approach as we continue to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of multiliteracies into our work.

Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy is a productive way of working through the intersections of multimodal and multilingual work. These two generative areas need not remain strangers in the night with an understanding of multiliteracies on a broad spectrum, as intended by the NLG. Every campus has different needs, political orientations, and personalities, all of which must be interrogated and negotiated; we call this process a "user

centered design" approach. To us, that means acknowledging that the center is part of our campus, and therefore decisions about services and even naming devices are best made in concert with the campus as a whole. With careful planning and an openness to transformation, the center—whether it is named "writing center" or "multiliteracies center"—can be a catalyst for a broad, campus-wide multiliteracies emphasis. Centers looking to adopt a multiliteracies approach can start by asking a number questions designed to situate the writing center in relation to the availability of multiliteracies resources and services on their specific campus.

- Does the campus have an organized ESL program? Where is it housed? Who handles L2 instruction? Where do second-language writers go for support? What services prepare international students for the communication expectations of English academic discourse?
- Where can students find support (rhetorical and/or technical) for digital, multimodal design?
- What academic departments teach courses that fall within the multiliteracies spectrum? For example, are there educational multimedia courses for pre-service teachers, audio production courses for theatre majors, game design and animation courses in the computer science department, or internet journalism courses in the school of communication? In what ways should tutor curriculum be designed or adjusted to embrace—and take advantage of—these broader perspectives on literacy?

- What visual literacy expectations exist in different disciplines? For example, how do STEM students learn to design graphs and charts to illustrate their lab reports? What sensibilities do photography students bring to their work? How are scientific posters designed rhetorically?

We argue that the interest in multiliteracies will continue to grow in writing centers as they respond to diverse and burgeoning multimodal and multilingual needs. The proliferation of technologies, increasing globalization, and the cross-cultural currents of universities that continue to seek out international students call for a multiliteracies framework that addresses both multimodality and multilingualism.

Should all centers change their name to some variation of Multiliteracies Center? Not necessarily. As mentioned, the name has potential drawbacks from a usability standpoint. The word "multiliteracies" is not likely to be on the tip of faculty members'—let alone first-year students'—tongues. New faculty, longtime faculty, staff, even our own coaches and administrators, have had to be educated on what multiliteracies means to us, which can be difficult without turning to jargon. But in retrospect, the center has benefited from the way the name has opened it up to important changes in practice. Continuing to define what multiliteracies means for writing studies will be an important part of our discipline's intellectual work. We have argued that our center, marked by its name, functions as a boundary object, understood differently by people in varying perspectives, functioning

even without perfect consensus. And, as we have suggested, the boundaries of our center have also been productively stretched and permeated in our effort to define ourselves. One thing this experience shows is that changing a center's name is not enough without also changing its approach. Our Multiliteracies Center can function as one integrative model. But it may also serve as a cautionary tale: multiliteracy does not fit neatly within standard literacy norms, and a center that pursues this approach opens itself to move in new directions. Ideally, a writing center conceived of as a multiliteracies center would provide support for design and media from a rhetorical and technical perspective while at the same time supporting multilingual writers at various stages of their academic pursuits. These activities would function in tandem to addresses issues of access, difference, and power, challenging monolingual and monomodal norms. Although uniting all of this under one term or one roof may prove difficult or, in some cases impractical, we hope that future discussions in the field will acknowledge the possibilities inherent in a spectrum of multiliteracies.

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"On the State of the Future of Writing Center Policy: A Manifesto for Change"

Beth Burmester

manifesto, "a public declaration of policy and aims"

–The Oxford Dictionary

In September 2010, when I read the headline in *The Writing Lab Newsletter* "Whose Idea of a Writing Center Is This, Anyway?" I was filled with hope. Feeling exhausted from having to be everyone and everything to everybody when it came to writing center policy, I thought finally, I might have some scholarly back-up for defining and defending autonomy for writing center directors. I needed an argument supporting directors setting their own policies. Having recently re-watched my DVD of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, I had completely related to King Théoden of Rohan, with his eyes glazed and speech incomprehensible, unable to see the future or speak his thoughts

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because he was under a strong spell cast by the wizard Saruman. Saruman controlled Rohan by proxy, so even though the King was there, sitting on the throne in the appearance of being in charge, and Saruman was far away, it was Saruman who determined what happened in Rohan. That was how I was feeling, as if those outside the writing center had constricted what I could actually do. Everyone spoke as if I were in charge of the destiny of the Writing Studio, but their actions suggested they believed they were in charge, and I was supposed to follow their edicts.

However, I was more than bewildered as I continued reading Jeanne Simpson's article, which suggested that the experience and training of writing center directors—their doctoral degrees in Rhetoric and Composition, their previous and ongoing experience with writing program administration, their research specializations in writing center studies—meant less than everyone else's perceptions, because, as the article asserted, all of us had "legitimate experiences and reference points," and "concrete knowledge, outdated or not" (1-2). Ellen Schendel reiterated that point in 2012, in the final chapter of *Building Writing Assessments that Matter*, stating "We have specialized, disciplinary expertise that informs how we can realize that role [as directors], but, as Jeanne Simpson reminds us, we must be open to hearing how others think about our work" (161). I'm troubled by the "but" in Schendel's sentence. It suggests that even though writing center directors do possess expertise, our expertise is neither valuable to others, nor a particular asset—or at least, our expertise is not respected outside writing centers. The line of argument also seems to prohibit writing center administrators from exerting efforts to undo misperceptions and broaden the views of others, by introducing them to our field and its research, and by

demonstrating strong leadership on campus. Instead, it seems to set a policy that writing center directors be "porous," accepting into their mission and policy-making any ideas from others,"outdated or not." It seems to set a precedent for putting feedback and perceptions toward writing center work beyond the immediate control and scope of the one person hired to create policy: the writing center director.

Based on our casual conversations on the listserv wcenter, and in the pages of our scholarship, both writing center insiders and those outside our spaces are trying to convince us to accept a state of "porosity," whereby the writing center, and its administrators, should simply absorb whatever goals or programs or ideas are received, rather than creating our own policy and standing by it to function and grow. In the manifesto that follows—a public declaration of policy and aims—I argue that it is time to let go of received traditions of "policy" that have fossilized our attitudes and actions. We need to be more skeptical toward why we keep these histories, metaphors, and perceptions going, and we need to be more expansive in imagining and sustaining writing center policy—within our centers, within our profession, and far beyond either—so that we can grow to be leaders. If we focus on leadership, on policy-making, rather than carrying out someone else's policy, we will create the solid foundation we need to promote our image and visions into the future.

If we turn the same policy of "porosity" traditionally expected of us toward the roles of other administrators or faculty on campus, we end up with outrageous examples. Imagine if the director of a science laboratory sent around a group email seeking input from non-scientists about what the scope of his lab's research should be,

or how lab assistants in chemistry should be hired or trained? How about a faculty member in psychology adjusting a course syllabus based on what humanities faculty think psychology students need to know, perhaps drawing on their personal experience having taken an undergraduate psychology course long in the past? It's hard to fathom either of those scenarios, but what would we really think of those requests? What kind of image do they project? Or, what kind of academic boundaries do they suggest? How are they leading?

Agency comes from having a strong sense of self and self-determined identity. Rather than defending our work, or our boundaries, writing center directors need to situate it more solidly within larger institutional and social contexts. We need a sense of policy-making that permits us to project what we value and who we want to be, and why our values and identity add value. Within the business realm, image is everything. Journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, who spent a year immersed in the job search and professional coaching industry in order to write a book about it, went to see an Image Consultant early in her project. And the first lesson she was taught was this: "You need to understand that you are in total control of the images others form of you" (97). Writing Center Administrators do have agency, and we need to be freed to claim it. But how exactly can writing center directors control their image? One approach is to move past our institutional past, which has become fossilized in terms of imagining who we are.

CRAFTING POLICY TO ESCAPE FOSSILIZATION

Two troubling issues occur with following this historic notion of the director as merely a reflection of what everyone else wants them to be. First is the danger posed by a model of being "porous" (Simpson 3), which presumes a position of powerlessness or indecisiveness,

as much as it may project flexibility or cooperation. When the power dynamics are such that the writing center is perceived to have less power (or prestige) than other academic units, writing centers will not be seen as equal partners, and they stand to be exploited by others. Accepting everything suggested, and adjusting one's own views based on pleasing and including others, creates a subservient relationship. Those with less power are constantly having to accommodate those with more power. Those who say "No" are judged to be strong and confident. Becoming only what everyone else sees or wants is a form of the feminization of the field that Sue Ellen Holbrook, Susan Miller, and Eileen Schell warned us about in the 1990s. We don't want to be the "good wives" (Schuster) or the "nice girls" (Simmons) of academe, "whose contributions and work go unrecognized and unrewarded" (Schuster 85); instead, we want to both be– and be perceived as– leaders, and researchers, and teachers. Let's imagine something more compelling than elasticity as the basis that drives our work motives and sets our policies.

Under the "always say yes" paradigm, directors must silence their own voices and only be ears—listening to others, but never being heard. A vivid metaphor for authors is that of driving—if authors do not control their characters and plot, it's like the car has no driver. And this is what is happening to writing centers: who exactly is driving the car? Why do we accept this received history of writing center administrators as doing whatever they are told, only asking what others want, all while keeping their own views to themselves? And why do we reject the feasible conclusion that it is unreasonable, even irrational, to do everything for everyone right now all at the same time and always? In this fossilized role of the writing center director, if they are driving the car, it's a taxi—and they can only go where their passengers request they go.

So what happens when no one is guiding the long-term goals and no one is in control? What happens if instead of doing a great job in a niche, we try to get by—doing everything? Here's an obvious example of disastrous consequences from the business arena:

> Enron was diversifying into business after business with no unifying strategy. By 1998, it was operating pipelines and international power plants. It was trading gas and electricity. It was managing energy needs of commercial customers and providing electricity to small consumers through retail. It was starting to dabble in the water business. Portland was building its internet network, while London was secretly constructing an automated energy-trading system. Houston was creating and trading financial derivatives to protect customers from the business effects of bad weather. Enron was *becoming anything and everything*. (Eichenwald 169; emphasis mine)

And everyone knows what happened to Enron: three years later it filed for bankruptcy, billions of dollars in debt, and mired in scandal. But writing center lore wants to also turn us into "anything and everything." We may have needed to do this in the past, but that doesn't mean we have to keep on doing it; we can set a new course for the future.

One piece of Enron did survive: gas and oil pipelines. Enron was begun as a pipeline business, but the pipelines business was neglected as all the new businesses were added and the company expanded. Rich Kinder, former President of Enron, repeatedly told his peers they were overlooking the value of the pipelines, but they scoffed at his view. Kinder left Enron in 1996, and bought

the pipeline business. Kinder built on the strength of that network, increasing its reach and output, without expanding it into any other business sector. In 2011, Kinder was worth over $9 billion. He found success by excelling within a single niche, maintaining a highly recognizable identity—and by saying no to anything that conflicted with those goals. He figured out what he wanted to do, did it very, very well, and it is still going strong. Likewise, individual writing centers need to find their own strengths or niche and devote time, energy, and resources toward making that strength into an asset that can be sustained.

Second, if we are merely mirrors (or sponges), we have no self-identity– we continue to either reflect (or store) others' values and images– we consume without producing. Writing centers generally have tended to adhere to models of extreme flexibility: it's built into our institutional history and lore. Flexibility, helpfulness, and being accommodating are expectations that are difficult to resist, both individually and systemically. The metaphors and models that shape our work and our perceptions of identity are tightly woven with flexibility and pleasing and satisfying the needs of others. Together, metaphors, models, and lore have built a "writing center grand narrative," itself "woven from strands and strings" of the individual narratives and story-telling we do as a community (McKinney 7). But, as Jackie Grutsch McKinney has argued in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* (2013), "every time writing center professionals have an opportunity to tell a writing center story, we have the opportunity to (re)invent writing center work" (8). Moreover, "Though rewriting community narratives is difficult," it is possible to "change stories to change vision" (8). Our history is trapping us into identities that we've outgrown,

or that no longer benefit us, yet continue to rule us. We remain focused on where we are *now*, rather than on where we want to be *in the future*, and how we can change the future before us. The line of thinking that condemns "clinging to a fixed idea of a writing center, whatever each of us thinks that idea is" (Simpson 3), actually holds us back from crafting an identity and a niche on our campuses.

CRAFTING POLICY FOR MISSION: FROM SERVICE TO INTELLECTUAL WORK

Yet another consequence of a fossilized view of our history is the unchallenged assumptions underlying our relationship to "service." The metaphor of service is almost ubiquitous across our field, as writing centers are also literally connected to service on multiple levels, and Simpson's article is standing in thick company with other pieces of scholarship that use it. But continuing to rely on service imperils our future. As Cathy Davidson bluntly expresses it, "Enacting the drudgery of service (including doing the work left undone by irresponsible others) is exactly the opposite of contributing to the vitality of an institution or a profession" (A80). Worse than being unrecognized, actions that are classified as service may detract from one's status. Davidson continues, "We may not intend it, but by naming such contributions 'service' we are reinforcing exactly the wrong values. 'Service' is typically treated almost as an afterthought and is fraught with contempt. Worse, it carries in its etymology a history of homage and servitude" (A80).

Jennifer Beech and Derek Owens, in two separate chapters in *Marginal Words, Marginal Work? Tutoring the Academy in the Work*

of Writing Centers (2007), also address the impact of the service conundrum. Beech comments on how "daily interactions" she encountered as a new writing center, "reveal others' perceptions of us as tedious chore performers and as subordinates" (203). While Derek Owens reminds us,

> service is not all it's cracked up to be. At its most benign it can introduce an element of sameness and monotony into Writing Center work, creating "customer based" atmospheres in which the needs of clients are continually emphasized over those of our tutors; at its worst our dedication to service implicates us in supporting policies inspired by corporate practices of downsizing, hyper-professionalization, and counter-productive assessment practices. (152)

To address his concerns, Owens uses his chapter to explore how "Writing Center activities focus just as much on cultivating a culture in which critical and creative student work proliferates independently of assigned writing tasks. A center that tries to resemble a salon as much as a tutorial service, a coffeehouse more than a lab. An art gallery, a performance site, a screening room" (152).

Owens criticizes how "for too long Writing Centers have allowed the surrounding curriculum and pedagogical habits of faculty to shape their mission" (153). He concludes by arguing that the service metaphor be metamorphosed into cultural work, "where students are 'served through the offering of a wider variety of activities and events directly and indirectly connected to our evolving contemporary concept of writing" (166). Not all writing

centers were born as service centers, and these newer conceptions of writing centers show signature identities and images, expanded in the ways Owens sought. A vivid example is the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity at Eastern Kentucky University, established through an endowment in 2010, and resulting from an interdisciplinary "taskforce of dedicated faculty members from the Department of English & Theatre, the Department of Communications," and the Dean of Libraries, resulting in "replacing the traditional writing center with a studio approach integrating writing, research, and communication" ("History).

The Noel Studio "began offering consultations, workshops, and interactive sessions on subjects ranging from integrating creativity into the classroom to writing for the web and conducting academic research," and five years later, its expanded offerings include "a Minor in ACT (Applied Creative Thinking), the OUR (Office of Undergraduate Research) and the TLC (Teaching and Learning Center)" ("History"). The Noel Studio shows us a clear model completely separate from service—still recognizable yet highly innovative in its practices, policy, and production of research that will also move the field forward. The Noel Studio reminds us that our primary work is instructional, not "helping." On websites and promotional materials, what would happen if we did global replacements for each instance of "helping" or "serving" students, and replaced each of those words with "teaching"?

For more ideas on how to cast our discourse in terms that align our work and writing centers more with what our institutions value, in terms of upper administration, Joyce Kinkead and Jeanne Simpson offer a primer on gauging audience expectations

in their article in the *WPA Journal*, "The Administrative Audience: A Rhetorical Problem" (Spring 2000). Their suggestions remain highly relevant. Both the study by Kinkead and Simpson, and the example of the website of the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity reveal the crucial connection between exporting our identity and knowledge to audiences outside ourselves, and how our discourse creates impressions; changing the way we talk about ourselves (and represent ourselves) will create more space, and status, for writing center work.

One additional example comes from the chapter "Makers of Knowledge in Writing Centers: Practitioners, Scholars, and Researchers at Work," by Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan and Steve Price, included in the volume that reconsiders Steven North's 1987 ground-breaking work for Composition Studies: *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field.* Liggett, Jordan and Price present not only an examination of how knowledge in writing center studies has expanded, but also explores new modes of inquiry that we are using and lists charts of texts that fall into North's categories: critics, scholars, philosophers, historians, researchers, and experimentalists. This book chapter is immensely important for its presentation of knowledge-making evidence (between 1987 and 2011), discussion of new modes of inquiry, and for its examination of research as a subject. Even more, Liggett, Jordan and Price position writing center studies as a field that produces knowledge that is useful for the broader discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. Writing centers are sites of research and producers of knowledge. So how do we convey our contribution to research rather than service? How do we change our language and what rhetorical strategies can we use to persuade others to change their perceptions?

CRAFTING POLICY FOR CHANGING OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND FOSTERING SCEPTICISM

Simpson and Schendel are on to something when they tell us of the importance of listening to what others think about our writing centers, but I'd like to suggest a different interpretation to why that is important, and how to use it. The only way to convince others of the identity we embody is through teaching: not lecturing, not preparing written texts, but hands-on demonstrations. We need to teach others new information, but unless we know what the original attitudes and information is, we won't be successful. Listening to others' descriptions of what they think we do, or what they want us to do for them, reveals their intuitive beliefs. "Intuitive beliefs and conceptions" are the beliefs, previous knowledge, and perceptions that any learner brings to a new situation. Intuitive beliefs, perceptions, preconceptions, alternative conceptions, or misconceptions all describe the phenomenon of thinking we know something that has not been proven true or false (Mazur; Muller; Hanford; Burmester). Intuition and beliefs fall into the realm of cognitive psychology—"how the brain processes and retains information"—but may also be philosophical (Hanford; Torff/Sternberg; Burmester, "Understanding"). How intuitive beliefs play into education has become an area of inquiry particularly visible within Physics, and science disciplines. Skepticism can usefully work to help students (and administrators or colleagues) release intuitive beliefs.

According to the blog "Skeptic's Play," created by a physics graduate student and teacher, "Skepticism is a method of thought based on the scientific method. Skeptics are aware of the many biases that affect us, and carefully practice critical thinking to

avoid them. Skeptics oppose ideas built on distorting science or reason." Moreover, "Skepticism is all about the strange things people believe, where they come from, and how to deal with them. Skepticism is a lot like teaching. … The difference is that the subjects of skepticism are often hostile to it, and skeptics are not in any position of authority." Which sounds rather like many writing center administrators.

How do people come to hold these intuitive beliefs? They can be innate (ones held based on our personal experience and convictions) and external (ones based in our culture that we learn or that influence us because they are held by others and have popularity and tradition). And, more significantly, how do we get people to release these intuitive beliefs so they are receptive to learning new information? Physics professors, like Eric Mazur at Harvard University, Joe Redish at the University of Maryland, and Derek Muller, at the University of Sydney, discovered that teaching the right concept and using examples to prove it *did not* result in changing students' ways of thinking. Students did not learn the concepts. Students held on to the intuitive belief even in the face of evidence that proved the opposite. In order to change their minds—to open their minds—it was necessary for the teacher to demonstrate the intuition, first, letting the students see for themselves exactly how it didn't work, showing it was false. Once the intuitive belief was disproved, and witnessed by the students, then—and only then—the students became receptive to learning the principle, and—even better—retained that knowledge beyond the initial lesson or assessment.

In adapting this model to writing center administration, then, we need to get more creative in how we communicate, both

content and media, with colleagues outside the writing center. One example of how this could work in practice comes from Cole Bennett, Director of the Writing Center at Abilene Christian University. Bennett holds workshops for faculty under the title, "Responding to Student Writing," that get them first engaged in a conversation of shared interests, and then allows him to prepare a context to discuss the work done in the writing center. Also, in addition to the direct connection between teaching in classrooms and teaching in writing center settings, Bennett also attaches writing center work to disciplinary content: specifically, the history of rhetoric and composition, but especially highlights from the history of teaching composition in the United States (7). The faculty respect each other's disciplinary knowledge, so connecting writing centers to academic disciplines is yet another way to get around the service bias and past misconceptions.

CRAFTING POLICY FOR LEADING: HOW TO IMPROVE STATUS

But making these approaches part of our policy to change our perceptions still doesn't quite address the ethos of writing center directors, and how their ethos may effect whether they even have the opportunity to address faculty in a workshop. And that issue has to do with job titles and status. Business language and structures may actually help writing center administrators redefine and describe their roles, in terms higher administration speaks fluently. We currently still debate what the preferable job title is for the leader of a writing center: Director or Coordinator? Is one superior to the other? Are they perceived to be the same or different? Do the titles create separate duties or responsibilities or qualifications?

My examination of posted job ads (collected from *The Writing Lab Newsletter* between 1978 and 2014) shows that the confusion we express on professional listservs is both widespread and reflected in a lack of consistency in how the titles describe position openings. In the job ads, sometimes the titles are inter-changeable and sometimes Coordinators have higher salaries or are attached to faculty lines, and Directors are academic professionals—and sometimes it's the reverse. One way to change this impasse would be to create either new titles or a new analogy to help those outside writing centers better understand what we do, the scope of our work, and to see us from a fresh perspective that untangles past (mis)perceptions. For example, writing center leadership is seen as having a managerial function, and very rarely, as a leader akin to an executive; and we've usually resisted parallels with business (see Henkelman; Barnett/Kleinedler). I'm undecided in this debate, but because so much of university administration has now embraced corporatization, we need to contend with it, but skeptically.

The writing center may be seen by some of our campus colleagues as similar to a retail store, such as The Gap; each provides people a commodity during particular hours at a particular place. We might actually work with this misperception to imagine a new comparison with which to explain to outsiders the position of writing center administrators. Under this configuration, the Coordinator or Director is analogous to the Store Manager. Store Managers are typically onsite during open hours, supervising staff, dealing with complaints, working on schedules, payroll, ordering supplies, dealing with hiring, forecasting then balancing the budget, tracking expenses,

creating reports, and participating in meetings. This manager, especially if a staff member is absent, may jump in and wait on customers, but they usually don't do what the employees do. They can't, otherwise they won't be able to accomplish all their other responsibilities. Managers often were employees who learned about the organization and practices first, and then were promoted. Successful managers are also promoted, usually after several years of experience. The Gap offers its managers a defined path to advancement, with incentives, and is considered one of the top 10 retail companies for best pay. So, the store manager at a Gap outlet may be in a better situation to move their career ahead than writing center administrators. Why? Because they have clear junctures that allow them to apply or be recommended for promotions, and they have levels they can aspire to; specifically, they can be promoted to Executives.

The Director or Coordinator of the Writing Center may indeed have managerial duties, but they actually have far more overlap with Executives. They are responsible for PR, strategic planning, training, assessing, creating and maintaining relationships with faculty and upper administrators across campus, as they not only focus on tutoring or the writing center itself, but how their work creates a writing life on campus, how it contributes to student retention and engagement, how it fosters a collaborative learning environment, outreach with off-campus communities, and they maintain a research agenda that provides for their keeping up with scholarship in the field, seeing the writing center as a site for research inquiry, and presenting their findings—and promoting the reputation of their college or university—at conferences, or through print and digital publication.

When we see the position in this light, it makes visible a part of the job that is often unsupported or overlooked. It brings to the foreground the reasons the Director or Coordinator does not hang out in the center space, but requires an office from which to conduct these larger duties, an office that will require tools and resources (like associates or assistants) that generate research activity (including potential grants), and that requires a portion of their time be devoted to meetings outside the center, in order to foster collaborations across departments and programs. The research activity has multiple benefits, such as involving undergraduate students in research, and creating faculty-student collaborations and mentoring, as well as faculty-faculty collaborations, or cross-institutional partnerships and grants. With the model of Writing Center Director as Executive, or even CEO, we also shift from job searches for "an employee," to a search for Talent. We shift toward recruiting experienced candidates and retaining them by offering attractive salaries and perks. We recognize how institutions and the profession greatly benefit from having specialists committing to a career in writing center work and writing program administration, instead of using the position as a stepping stone to something else, or doing it grudgingly because they've been told they must endure it for two or three years.

In order to dislodge prejudices about the value of writing center work and the professionals who do it, another analogy may be persuasive, continuing to draw comparisons with workload and other industries. Imagine a mid-size law office where one of the lawyers, rather than working with clients or going to court as the others do, has been assigned to greet clients as they walk in, as

well as scheduling client appointments, answering the phone, billing and making sure the other lawyers all have everything they need to do their jobs—working with clients and going to court. Now imagine that same lawyer at the end of the year being evaluated using identical criteria as her fellow lawyers. The other lawyers had no additional responsibilities, so being rated as making less contribution to the firm than her colleagues, because her hours in court or meeting with clients was less than her colleagues is not only unfair, it makes invisible the work that is required to keep the office open and successful. If all the lawyers are only working with clients and in court, no one is monitoring or thinking about how effective their work actually is, how they could improve any of their processes, or what changes would benefit their clients and their work environment, and no one is looking ahead to imagine or plan or execute plans to grow the business and make sure its sustainable. And, equally important: why would that lawyer stay with that firm? She would either seek to shift away from those extra duties as soon as possible, or simply seek out a new firm that would offer her better working conditions and career potential.

A different option exists, a much better one than the two above: What if the law firm hired a manager to do those extra duties that one lawyer was trying to do along with her regular duties, and gave the manager evaluations and compensation that fully recognized and rewarded overall contributions to the firm? Then, what if the lawyer was promoted to an Executive level rank, with a raise and a position to put to advantage the new expertise and insights gained into the firm's business by the lawyer having filled the managerial function. The Executive

level position offers the lawyer time and resources to work with clients and go to court, but also time and resources to research and create policy that will make the firm better over time, and that will have longer range benefits for everyone who works in the firm, as well as their clients. The Lawyer-as-Executive, and the full-time Manager also can become collaborative partners, sharing knowledge and testing policy, working together, from two different perspectives, one focused more in the everyday details, and the other more on the future and strategic planning. In some law firms (and architecture and design firms), the lawyer's position would be called "Managing Director" or "Vice President of Strategic Planning and Operations." In an Academic context, one precedent could be found in Valerie Balester's job title at Texas A&M University. She is "Executive Director of the University Writing Center" and "Professor of English." Her "brief bio" on the website for the University Writing Center, reveals her career trajectory:

> Balester first worked in a writing center in 1978 at The Pennsylvania State University and was a Graduate Assistant Director at the University of Texas Writing Center in 1986-87. She worked with English graduate students to start a center at Texas A&M in 1990. She also served as the Director of Writing Programs in the Department of English at A&M, training and supervising writing teachers for FY composition, technical writing, and writing about literature. In 2001-02, she served as Interim Director of the newly created University Writing Center and became its Executive Director in 2002. ("Valerie")

In addition to the Executive Director, the Texas A&M University Writing Center also lists among its staff an Associate Director, Administrative Assistant, Senior Office Assistant, and Video Coordinator, showing an infrastructure that allows for collaborative administration and supports delegation of responsibilities for research and scholarly work and strategic planning.

Besides Executives, we could also draw on the characteristics of Consultants, Analysts, and Lobbyists. Many of us have embraced the use of the term "Writing Consultant" for our tutors, but don't necessarily think of ourselves as consultants or advisors in an official kind of capacity—even when we are frequently asked to participate or contribute to college and university committees or departmental projects, which all fall under the "service" heading. Perhaps if Writing Center Directors were seen more as "Writing Consultants," or even "Writing Policy Analysts," or "Writing Policy Reviewer," roles similar to those conducted by external reviewers for academic accreditation program evaluations, or off-campus, consultants and analysts are experts in politics, marketing, finance, and many other industries. Changing public perceptions with job titles and descriptions could enhance the influence and reach of Writing Center Studies beyond the walls of individual writing centers or the page of our journals. We could promote a vision of Writing Center Director as Analyst, Reviewer, Expert, and Consultant on not just writing and writing policy, but also Literacy, Academic Program Review, the Scholarship of Teaching, Quality of Instruction, Student Engagement, Critical Thinking, Research methods and methodology, Pedagogy—and other specialties and areas that draw the individual interests of writing center directors and their institutions.

Worth considering for another way to expand writing center

administration identity and scope are Lobbyists and Advocacy. Both connect us to the world of politics, as well as non-profit causes and corporate social responsibility (CSR). We are already advocates for writing, and often for students, so this move would direct our advocacy efforts onto ourselves and our profession. We have reached a point where we must get our knowledge and the results of our work disseminated to larger and more diverse audiences, rather than continuing to only talk to each other and share our work within our community. In a film that explores the career of a lobbyist for the Tobacco industry, Thank You for Smoking includes a scene we can be inspired by.

Lobbyist Nick Naylor, who has educated himself for this job, and is highly successful, is trying to explain to his 12-year-old son, Joey, what it is he actually does as part of his job.

> Nick Naylor: OK, let's say that you're defending chocolate, and I'm defending vanilla. Now if I were to say to you: 'Vanilla is the best flavor ice-cream', you'd say...
>
> Joey Naylor: No, chocolate is.
>
> Nick Naylor: Exactly, but you can't win that argument... so, I'll ask you: so you think chocolate is the end all and be all of ice-cream, do you?
>
> Joey Naylor: It's the best ice-cream, I wouldn't order any other.
>
> Nick Naylor: Oh! So it's all chocolate for you, is it?
>
> Joey Naylor: Yes, chocolate is all I need.

> Nick Naylor: Well, I need more than chocolate, and for that matter I need more than vanilla. I believe that we need freedom. And choice when it comes to our ice-cream, and that Joey Naylor, that is the definition of liberty.
>
> Joey Naylor: But that's not what we're talking about.
>
> Nick Naylor: Ah! But that's what I'm talking about.
>
> Joey Naylor: ...but you didn't prove that vanilla was the best...
>
> Nick Naylor: I didn't have to. I proved that you're wrong, and if you're wrong, I'm right.
>
> Joey Naylor: But you still didn't convince me
>
> Nick Naylor: I'm not after you. I'm after them. [points into the crowd]

This conversation demonstrates how intuitive belief comes into play (vanilla and chocolate are preferences that are resistant to argument), as well showing us how we can be more rhetorical when we find ourselves in situations where we are defending the writing center or writing center policy or writing center work. We can shift the conversation toward the aspects and arguments that we want to promote and that can change the tenor of discussion to our advantage. The end of the conversation points out the other area we need to attend to: exporting our scholarship into other fields, for other audiences. Our status will be elevated if we produce research and scholarship that is read and cited by those outside our field, and who can become partners and advocates for us.

Keeping in mind Cathy Davidson's warning that "in this competitive environment …the person who excels at 'service' is not the one more esteemed" (A80), we should be seeking out identities, names, and perceptions that raise our status. Davidson, talking to academics generally, promotes a view to "make the three pillars of our academic reward system Scholarship, Teaching, and Institutional Leadership," both renaming and reconceiving the category of "Service." She continues, "This is not just a change in name, but a genuine rethinking of how we should recognize contributions to the democratic process informing leadership within institutions and our profession" (A80). Davidson is not thinking writing centers here, but her proposal holds great potential for us to explore and push forward, translating our service into leadership, for our institutions and across our field. "Leadership" can take shape and identity with roles like Managers, Executives, Lobbyists, Consultants, or Advocates, or we can create new roles that describe leadership in ways that best convey our value and excellence.

CRAFTING POLICY FOR ASSESSMENT: NEW VISIONS FOR MEASURING OUR VALUE

Writing Center Directors pay attention to practical concerns. We are very much grabbed by the present tense. We don't typically get semester breaks or sabbaticals to reflect on how we can improve or to conduct or process research that could guide our future actions. The pattern of attention is called "dailiness," or "being caught up in rhythms and systems" and routines "that defy stematic reflection and analysis of that reflection (Wideen and Andrews 34). Dailiness often pushes us to measure the

wrong things, or to see assessment in a very narrow context. We typically measure how many total tutorials we have, how many hours are "booked," or the percentage of students we serve. We focus on effectiveness as productivity or capacity, and efficiency—how much we do with our budget and size of staff. But, like the stock market, that system means our numbers must always be going up—success in that model is more tutorials or more appointments, and what happens if those numbers stay the same—or drop? How else can we approach measuring and rating success? According to best-selling writer Gretchen Rubin, of *The Happiness Project*,

> If you don't measure something, it's easy to ignore it. And that can be a problem. …If I want something to count in my life, it helps to figure out a way, literally, to count it. … Measurement allows me to make sure that what matters most to me doesn't get pushed aside. …I manage what I measure. (Rubin)

What then, should we be measuring?

At the start of the school year in 1997, *The Writing Lab Newsletter* published an article by Neal Lerner on assessment that has influenced generations of scholarship on assessment, and made all of us talk about assessment in new ways. "Counting Beans and Making Beans Count" advises caution, because empirical reporting "does reduce those complex human beings who come to our writing centers into manageable integers" (2), yet it also inspires us to use a new media to view the results of our work. Four years later, Lerner himself revisited and critiqued his original method, with a follow-up study, "Choosing beans

wisely." Following Lerner closely were two studies by Luke Niiler, also published in the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, in 2003 and 2005, "The Numbers Speak" and "The Numbers Speak Again." Both Lerner and Niiler were seeking to answer a version of the question of our impact: does student writing improve?

In the spring of 2015, editor Muriel Harris asked for responses from readers to Lerner's original article, and in June, *the Writing Lab Newsletter* published four "Responses," including one by Lerner. Scott Pleasant presented his own research study and findings, based on Lerner and Niiler. Both Pleasant and Niiler are focused on Pre- and Post- "interventions" that can be measured. They used student papers rated by objective outside reviewers, determining whether going to the writing center "improves" the score of a paper. Lerner's first study measured grade increases. While these set up a great starting point, they narrow assessment of writing center impact to not only "student writers" but "student papers." While the studies provide meaningful data, and models for method, they keep invisible much larger aspects of the reach and impact of writing center work beyond tutoring.

Studies of student writing may also distract us from a larger purpose or better way of determining our impact through measuring. For example, are other journals, like *Journal of Writing Program Administration* or *CCC*, regularly publishing articles that measure a post-secondary classroom teacher's "effectiveness" in a composition course by measuring student writing via a text produced on the first day of class (without the teacher intervention), and again two weeks later when the students turn in their first essays? Or, at the end of the semester with the student's final paper? Neither approach seems to fairly or wholly

evaluate the role that a teacher has had on her students' writing. Part of the problem is that whether the intervention is a single teacher in a single semester, or a tutor across a semester, the "impact" can't truly be captured on a single paper and a short period of time. The studies that are engaging composition scholars include those that look at long-term impact of writing instruction, and especially responses about students' attitudes about themselves as writers, authors, critical thinkers, and communicators. Measuring impact also looks at student success through retention, how they write within their chosen majors, and what they go on to do after graduation—thereby measuring to some extent how their writing is preparing them for post-college careers and life—periods of time long after their initial "intervention." These longitudinal studies have drawn large grants and resulted in journal articles, videos, conference presentations and books (Sommers at Harvard; Lunsford at Standford). Writing Center Studies can definitely adapt longitudinal studies for future research agendas. Writing Center Studies has made significant progress toward finding wider frameworks to assess (and define) writing center work, notably in the books by Schendel and Macauley, Assessments that Matter; Mauriello and Macauley, Before and After the Tutorial, and the emphasis on RAD research in The Writing Center Journal under editors Michelle Eodice, Kerri Jordan and Steve Price. Though we have yet to produce scholarship defining leadership or measuring leadership impact achieved by writing center directors.

> Traditionally, our assessments have largely focused in one direction, on the student writers and the products

> of their writing. Let's continue to put equal emphasis on the tutor, and study tutors as objects of research—and as producers of knowledge. We have an excellent model in the Peer Tutor Alumni Research Project, developed and overseen by Paula Gillespie, Harvey Kail and Brad Hughes since 2002. Harvey Kail presented on this project at the 2006 CCCC's conference, and one article and two book chapters have been printed with findings. A website has been created, with eight contributors adding their stories. So far, none of those are empirical studies, so the door is wide open for more formal publications drawing on their research data, and additional studies with data gathered by other researchers, at a wide range of institutions, that would provide an ongoing picture of how and to what degree tutoring continues to benefit students as they progress through their majors, graduate and enter the workforce. The Tutor Alumni Research Project presents an alternative form to traditional assessment, as does the "Institutional Curriculum Vita," which captures the accomplishments of tutors and student writers in a genre and language that is immediately recognizable to higher administrators, and allows us to track tutor's achievements before they graduate (Burmester, "New").

What both of those projects have in common is an alternative to measuring outputs. Although we use "outcomes" in our scholarship, we are usually talking about "outputs." Listening to the tail end of a BBC Newshour segment on NPR, I finally found the language I had been searching for to express the new method and approach to assessment. The story was about whether international aid was improving conditions in Afghanistan. Specifically, whether drug addiction had been reduced in Kabul. The answer was eye-opening to

me because it suddenly clarified a problem I had been wrangling with over policy and assessment in writing center work, and individual writing center efficiency, efficacy, and effectiveness. While the story on the surface had nothing in common with writing centers, it actually exposed me to key terms that clicked. The interviewee replied that if output was measured, then yes, it appeared as if conditions were improved. The outputs in this case were the clinics built, training for a narcotics police force, hiring and training prosecutors. All of these things were highly visible and easy to "count" and total as results. However, the outputs were separate from the outcome. The desired outcome was fewer individuals who are addicts. Measuring by the outcomes showed that no, conditions had not improved. Despite the physical clinic building and their personnel, the actual number of addicts in the city has risen. So the problem—drug addiction—looked "solved" under one measure and far from being achieved in the other. This kind of distinction can be extremely useful for writing center administrators for conceptualizing what our problems are, and how well the solution may or may not be leading toward resolution; also, this kind of discourse helps us communicate when initiative look successful but aren't entirely, thus giving us evidence to argue for continued funding or additional resources to truly reach our goal. For me, this created a vivid example of how to rewrite policy for assessing writing center work to shift our attention from outputs and to concentrate on genuine outcomes. In reviewing our literature on assessment, I couldn't find discussion of the difference between the terms, but seeing them as separate will push us toward more innovative approaches to measuring our worth and reach.

Steve Delfin, a professional in the Non-profit sector, defines the

distinction of each of these terms in a way that relates more to our actual work. Outputs "measures how much of something occurs and by when." For us, that would typically be total number of tutorials or conferences, numbers of students visiting the writing center, the number and variety of workshops in a given semester, or, using Lerner's metaphor—outputs are the "beans." On the other hand, Outcomes "measure behavior and systemic change" (Delfin). Using Scott Pleasant's metaphor of "bread and butter" which accompany the beans, measuring improvement in student writing by tracking grades or changes in student writing as rated by outside readers comes closer to outcomes, but they also look a bit more like outputs, if student writing is an "output." What we really want to start counting are the ways that writing centers make bigger changes: on student and faculty attitudes about writing, on changes to curriculum and assessment that go far outside our walls. The Alumni Peer Tutor Research Project and the Institutional CV can both be called "outcomes" because they create an assessment that attempts to measure things like student success arising from tutor training and tutor work applied to new contexts, like conference presentations and job placement.

Deborah Mills-Scofield, writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, also explores how the terms differ and why those differences are important, insisting that it is not "just semantics." According to her, again within a context of nonprofit organizations, "outputs are programs, training, and workshops; outcomes are knowledge transferred and behaviors changed." Additionally, outputs are the "what" and outcomes the "why." Under her rubric, our outputs could include not just tutorials, but

publications, conference presentations; and outcomes could show how the publications and conference presentations are evidence of knowledge transfer or how they represent changed behaviors through the creation of new policy or attitudes that lead to other actions and systemic and institutional changes that could be measured. A chart can help make the distinctions clear, so that administrators can adjust their own assessment models.

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
WHAT **Activities** (what we do) **Stuff we Produce**	WHY **Impact;** The Difference our Stuff makes in the world; Benefit received by users
Participation (who we reach) Who uses our Stuff	**Short term results** • Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes **Midterm results** • Behavior, Policy **Long-term or Ultimate Results** • Conditions; • Systemic change; • Institutional change; • Innovation; Disciplinary knowledge

(Source: adapted from Mills-Scofield; Delfin, and University of Wisconsin Extension, cited in Delfin)

Accepting both outputs and outcomes enhances our discourse and our practices for setting assessment policy, as well as for using our assessments as a tool of discovery, and identity-building, as well as to measure what we've already done.

FINAL THOUGHTS: POLICY FOR LEADERSHIP TO CONTROL OUR DESTINY

Outputs and outcomes can help us plan and project our future. Mario Morino, author of *Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity* (2011), emphasizes the necessity of designing our own models for assessment and leadership, because "if we don't manage to outcomes, we greatly diminish our collective impact" (qtd. in Delfin). The future of individual writing centers, as well as all writing centers within the landscape of higher education, both rely heavily on a better utilization of collective impact and visibility.

Policy has been embedded in writing center lore, and it's time we move it into brighter lights, and under a higher resolution of clarity and examination by making policy (and talk about policy) the subject of empirical research studies and scholarly criticism. When we see policy as "natural," or just the way it is and has always been, we forget to question it, we forget to see how it can be set aside for something else, we forget to be skeptical. Or, as Roland Barthes puts it, myths can be confronted by being destroyed, or being unmasked, or by being "naturalized" (128-129). When a myth is naturalized, it becomes not merely meaning, but ideology. So as researchers and policy-makers we can position ourselves as "mythologists," who examine which pieces of our history and lore have in fact turned into rituals or policies

that we take for granted and accept blindly, when we could productively question whether they still match or promote what we value and seek to accomplish in the future. As writing center directors, we need to craft our own policies, and lead by example.

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"All Together Now: Towards a Mosaic of Writing Center Assessment"

Robert Lang

Understanding the writing center's contribution (cause) to students' development as writers (effect) could well be explored through quasi-experimental means. Having engaged in this kind of research [. . .], I can offer that once you try to control the many factors that might have an effect on what students learn, you are often left with a conclusion along the lines of "uh, maybe."

- Neal Lerner, "Of Numbers and Stories"

After conducting a thorough review of the literature published about writing center research until 2001, Casey Jones declares assessing the extent to which writing centers improve students' ability to write "an elusive goal" and that "concrete evidence" of this sort can be daunting, if possible at all. Rather, more "indirect" modes (e.g. surveys measuring satisfaction or confidence) of examining the benefits of the "non-hierarchical" interaction that has become an inherent practice in writing studios are more easily managed and available (Jones 3). While the question of writing center efficacy in directly improving students' writing ability continues to go unanswered, the years since Jones's review have seen an increase in the implementation of RAD

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research (replicable, aggregable, and data-supported—as popularized by Richard Hazwell) as well as a general awareness of its significance and utility in writing center research and, particularly, assessment. Dana Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue helped to legitimize the use of RAD research in writing center research practices, having noted the general lack of this approach among writing center administrators (WCAs) as well as the various perceived barriers that explain this lack (in *WCJ* articles published in 2012 and 2014, respectively). This article will situate Driscoll and Perdue's call for more RAD research in our field—particularly towards "multi-institutional" projects—with recent studies and trends, and examples of how such projects might be carried out will be presented. By expanding their engagement in these more methodologically rigorous and consistent research models, WCAs may begin to chip away at the efficacy issue using more direct methods than those cited by Jones above.

Driscoll and Perdue, in their recent article "RAD Research as a Framework for Writing Center Inquiry," describe what they term the "uniqueness problem"—that is, because there exist so many differences, small and large, among individual writing studios and institutions, the localization of assessment practices would seem to—as perceived by a plurality of survey respondents—preclude a rationale for a more generalized, shared research (121). There are writing centers and studios, learning centers and studios, communication resource centers, and even makerspaces (see MSU's Make Central)—each with its own unique staff, pedagogies, and client demographics. Ellen Schendel and William Macauley, Jr. ask in *Building Writing Center Assessments That Matter* how they could even begin to produce a text that purports to address assessment concerns for other institutions when the centers themselves "*are* so many different things" (xviii, emphasis mine), much less *offer* different services and *function* in various capacities. Indeed, the authors' use of the word "are" in this context denotes disparate ontologies, each center with its own *raison d'etre* and with a singular teleology. Writing fellows

programs (or, embedded tutors programs), for instance, and their myriad iterations across a number of institutions may provide for a possible variable to study, a particular kind of service with a standard philosophy and logistic, yet even these programs—due to certain budgetary and administrative constraints and philosophical differences—differ markedly from campus to campus, from classroom to classroom, from program to program. There may be one Fellow per class, or there may be two. Each student may be required to conference with the Fellow per paper or per semester or not at all. The professor may emphasize critical thought over proper paragraph structure and other aspects of form or vice versa, two aspects of the writing process that are not necessarily comparable due to the more fluid nature of the former and the more systematic quality of the latter (i.e., it may be easier for students to meet rubric standards of the latter). It becomes difficult, then, to imagine a standard, universal instrument for assessing the impact of such a variable (the embedded tutor) on student learning across multiple programs.

Driscoll and Perdue, however, offer that while there are disparities between institutions, there are also many similarities that would allow for common assessment (121). For example, many centers—whether they are housed at large public research universities or small liberal arts colleges—utilize observations in tutor training, administer surveys measuring the client's confidence in writing ability, and employ a mix of peer and professional consultants. These common variables together with the uncommon variables actually make for compelling research projects; the effects of observations in tutor training (for instance) on tutors of differing demographics and backgrounds or on differing tutoring styles can prove useful in controlling for certain variables associated with the training process. For example, if one center finds that observations produce a certain effect that another center's study does not find, these disparate results may lead to the identification of reasons for this disparity, thereby gaining a better understanding of how observations can impact

the growth of a tutor. In other words, when multiple centers are conducting studies with similar variables—even if just one of the variables are similar—the results of these studies, when combined, can add to each individual center's knowledge of their own practices. A common analytical technique for combining results to obtain higher statistical power is a meta-analysis. As Driscoll and Perdue point out, however, the field of writing center research is a long way from producing enough data-driven studies to make this technique viable (124). The discussion that follows will examine previously published case studies (and one proposed study of my own) to explain where we are now and how we can get to the point of being able to use tools like meta-analysis to arrive at a greater awareness of the complexities present in the dynamic between writing center theory and practice.

Let us return to the example of embedded tutor services in order to examine an assessment model currently in use at a number of institutions. The preliminary data previewed by such programs in the recent *Praxis* special issue (12.1) devoted to the embedded tutor model, as well as by Nova Southeastern University, Transylvania University, and others at the 2015 Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference in Nashville, are all very positive and certainly present a strong case for the program's continuance. One assessment model similar to the ones adopted by the aforementioned institutions was implemented in a study by Hoyt and Peterson (2010) at Western Carolina University. Their study sought to compare writing outcomes of students who received the aid of a Writing Fellow (the experimental group) and those who did not (the control group). They found that the students who worked with a writing Fellow scored approximately 6% higher on average for the areas of "depth" and "focus" (but not mechanics) over a control group of students that did not receive the aid of a Fellow when evaluated by an independent reader. These numbers support the fact that the Fellows, who were trained specifically to target what the

professor defined as "depth" and "focus," did in fact have a positive impact on the papers produced for the class (and these results were indeed consistent with a preponderance of the associated survey responses). These findings substantiate those of other Fellows programs using similar assessment models (qualitative surveys paired with quantitative essay scores and grades): papers that were reviewed in consultation with a Fellow trained and oriented towards the professor's outcomes received higher evaluations in general than those that did not.

These data are undoubtedly encouraging. Nevertheless, the statistical rigor required of the above study in order for it to be incorporated into a meta-analysis of other such studies is somewhat lacking. Primarily, it is difficult to determine the statistical significance of a certain percent increase in scores without ensuring whether a certain percent higher median value represents an actual increase in performance due to the independent variable (the presence of a Fellow), an analysis which considers sample size, margin of error, confidence level, and standard deviation. When specific research questions and variables are generated, researchers must also strive to identify the best way to analyze their prospective data, and they must ensure that the data is collected and stored in a way that will facilitate such an analysis. Without a measure of variance, researchers cannot be sufficiently confident of any kind of causal relationship they are hoping to prove. These are important considerations to take into account not just when assessing the efficacy of a certain intervention, but also in producing aggregable data—data that can be added to other sets of data to gain a clearer portrait of what works in specific circumstances.

WCDs need not be anxious over such rigorous experimental practices. Most colleges and universities have an office of institutional research completely devoted to such design setups and would most likely be delighted to have any such work sourced to their department. In the absence of such an office,

faculty from other departments who are more familiar with these kinds of analysis, such as mathematics or the social sciences, may be excited at the possibility for collaborative research. Moreover, turning one's writing center research project into a joint effort across departments increases the center's importance in the greater community of the institution, and emphasizes the idea that everyone, not just the center's staff and the upper administration to which they answer, plays a role in the center's own outcomes, which should already align with institutional priorities (Macauley 58-60). There are two clear benefits arising from using statistics-driven research practices that relate particularly to the assessment of student writing (and therefore of the programs that affect the performance thereof). The first relates to a perceived problem in utilizing such quantitative methodologies to assessing something so personal as writing. Because there are likely myriad variables that influence student writing performance—reading material, prior and current writing instructors, friends, online sources, and writing center tutor feedback among them—a more established and defined approach to assessment models can allow other institutions to help fill in the gaps. In other words, if we had different institutions using the same measures of statistical analysis with clearly defined independent, dependent, and control variables (anything that could affect student learning outcomes), then through techniques such as meta-analysis, we can better understand the interaction of these variables despite the small sample sizes that often accompany these types of human studies.

The second benefit of using clearly defined variables relates to the statistical power of relationships between variables particular to writing that typically would not yield such power. That is, again, due to the highly subjective and variable nature of student writing performance, the change due to any particular variable is likely very small. One advantage

of a meta-analysis is that data sets from multiple institutions can be analyzed together, given that the researchers of these various institutions are defining and measuring variables in a standardized manner, allowing for issues such as small sample sizes, poorly estimated effect sizes, and different manipulated variables to not cloud valuable relationships between variables of interest. In other words, a meta-analysis would allow writing center researchers to examine the forest above the trees. The standardization of variables measured is key for allowing such a statistical paradigm to be effective: with lower statistical power (due to small sample size), the chance of accepting the null hypothesis when in fact the experimental hypothesis should be chosen (i.e. making a statistical Type II error) increases. The probability of this error decreases with a larger sample size—and so researches must strive to design experiments with an understanding of an appropriate sample size for a particular study. Therefore, researchers should be encouraged to collaborate with other institutions interested in the same research question in order to dilute the effect of individual variability. To illustrate, if a researcher was interested in the interaction of the presence of a Writing Fellow with student writing outcomes on a portfolio, having a relatively small sample size with which to work (and, therefore, low statistical power) may increase the chance of the researcher accepting the null hypothesis—that no real relationship exists—when in fact there very well may be a relationship, even a causal one, between the presence of a Writing Fellow and greater student writing performance. The participation of other institutions working with a similar population would increase the chance of finding the true effect of the Writing Fellows program, and this is of particular value for those researchers fearful of obtaining non-significant data (and therefore inviting stakeholders to question the effectiveness of the center). Working collaboratively in this fashion—and identifying and defining variables, including non-manipulated independent variables such as race, SES, and other

potential variables that should be measured because they could affect the results—would allow centers and writing programs more generally to weed out specific variables that do not for all intents and purposes *do* anything, and maintain those that do. WPAs and WCDs will then be able to translate basic, descriptive data into real changes that may lead to a positive impact on students' ability to communicate effectively in writing.

One particularly illustrative example of a writing center research study that adopts such a rigorous design was performed by Barbara Fritzsche and Beth Rapp Young in 2002. In this study, the authors chiefly examined the relationship between writing center feedback and procrastinatory habits, but also made room for investigating the possible effect of other variables as well, including writing anxiety. The authors very clearly defined their population and reported several demographic attributes of their participants, including ethnicity, gender, education level, and age. The participants' tendency for procrastination was measured using a validity-tested instrument, the Procrastination Assessment Scale—Students (PASS) developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984). Young and Fritzsche's project is noteworthy in this discussion for three main reasons: 1) the breadth of their inquiry lead them to discoveries they did not even expect to make, such as the delaying tendency of those required to come to the writing center, suggesting a possible relationship between being required to come to the writing center and procrastination; 2) the sheer amount of variables examined creates room to follow up on any potential interaction between these variables, making it easier to pinpoint possible determinants of change; and 3) their research design and methodology provides a framework and point of reference upon which other studies can be designed—i.e. replicable and aggregable.

Young and Fritzsche's study is particularly helpful considering the tools they leave prospective researchers to work with going forward from particular lines of inquiry established in the study,

specifically those presented in the discussion section of the paper. The authors even take the time to explain an otherwise foreign (to most writing center staff) quantitative concept—variance :

[T]wo pieces of information, writing procrastination tendency and writing center attendance, had remarkable predictive power. This ability to predict behavior is ordinarily expressed through a concept called "amount of variance," a familiar concept to anyone who buys car insurance. For example, insurance companies will charge you more if you are a 20-year-old male who drives a Mustang, because those factors predict that you will be prone to accidents. The complexity of most behaviors means that only 9% of variance is typically accounted for [. . .] By contrast, in our study, writing procrastination tendency and writing center attendance accounted for 20% of the variance. In other words, knowing those two factors alone allows us to correctly predict writing behavior one in five times. Ordinarily, we would expect to correctly predict such a complex behavior fewer than one in ten times. (52)

Using the space in the "*What We Think It All Means*" section of the paper to explain the concept of variance and its importance to the findings of their study allow the researchers to communicate this valuable information in a way that is simultaneously palatable for other WCDs and compelling for upper administration, satisfying both audiences.

Furthermore, as noted above, the specificity of these results will allow other researchers from other institutions to piggyback off of the data, thereby peeling away one more layer of the onion that is the source of student procrastination and writing anxiety. Indeed the authors invite others to do just that, and they indicate their intentions to follow up on their own data in a rather ingenious way that circumvents IRB ethics restrictions in order to get at the question of causality (that is, to produce

truly randomized experimental and control groups without withholding a potentially beneficial intervention to all students):

> In order to be ethical, that study will use laboratory tasks with no real-world implications. The advantage of our present study over a laboratory experiment is that the present study deals with real-world situations, using real writing assignments, real peer consultations, and real consequences. Thus, participants in our present study were more likely to be engaged in the writing tasks, and these results may be more easily applied to real-world writing contexts. (54)

This study, nonetheless, has never been carried out by Young and Fritzsche or any other researcher. Perhaps the study demanded certain logistical elements not fundable at the time (such an investigation would have called for an interruption in normal classroom instruction in order to provide the "laboratory conditions" that would make the randomized study feasible). Whatever the reason, continuity of research in this way is integral to the establishment of writing center research as a global field of study comparable to the social sciences. This issue is particularly concerning in writing center scholarship, as William McCauley, at the 2015 IWCA conference in Pittsburgh, acknowledged in a workshop about RAD research in writing centers that there have not been any published writing center studies either replicating—or directly using data from—another study.

It should be reiterated that in order to produce truly meaningful data that can be translated to applied practice, WCDs must act in concert with others performing similar research, just as the scientific community all over the world carefully fits the pieces together in a constantly growing mosaic of knowledge. Miriam Gofine, in her extensive review of the published writing center assessment literature in 2012, finds that writing centers as a collective institution would benefit from collaborating more on common concerns so as to direct "isolated

lines of research" to a more cross-institutional, and therefore more powerful, analysis (46-7). These standardized assessment models would also, Gofine notes, leave more time for actual assessment given that this time would not be needed for developing new methods of assessment (47). Perdue and Driscoll found in their review of RAD research published in the *WCJ* that "Limitations and Future Work" were the lowest items scored on their RAD rubric (mean of .34 on a scale from 0-2) (27)—discussions of future, potentially follow-up research is crucial to building a collaborative, foundational body of research. Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg, seeing the need for more collaborative research, investigated possible sites of convergence (demographic and otherwise) for exit survey results between writing centers at three very different institutions: a "large, public land-grant university, a medium-sized private university, and a small liberal arts college" (14). They found that despite their respective institutional differences, there were remarkably similar results on the standard exit survey in terms of "student demographics, motivation, and satisfaction" (13). Studies like these definitively show that not only is collaborative research, even among seemingly disparate institutions, possible, but it can yield extremely valuable insights about the commonalities among writing students as a national and even global population. One of the more striking facts for me in Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg's paper is that the authors were unaware of any other such cross-institutional study having been performed—as recently as 2013. The North Carolina HBCU Writing Center Consortium—whose members include Livingstone University, Fayetteville State University, Elizabeth City State University, Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina Central University, St. Augustine's University, North Carolina A&T University, Shaw University, Winston-Salem State University, and Bennett College—has begun a similar project, drafting a standard exit survey encompassing the values of each respective institution to be used at all of them. Collaborative endeavors like these open the door to more quantitative assessment projects down the line, particularly in light of the

similar population—students at HBCUs—that enrolls in these institutions.

The assessment practices at the writing center I direct may provide another model for engaging in the more data-supported practices espoused in this article. Our center, in addition to serving as a typical writing center with face-to-face consultations, also functions as a lab component intervention into the first-year developmental English course, ENG 110. We use specific lesson plans developed by the writing center administration in conjunction with the ENG 110 faculty, and we use a pre/post-test model of assessment in addition to portfolios and student, faculty, and staff surveys. We code the qualitative survey data, as is becoming a more standard practice in most qualitative studies, and we score the written tests (timed essays) using a normed rubric instrument. We collaborated with our office of institutional research in order to develop a valid scoring process whereby each essay is scored by two trained scorers. Below is a sample of the cross-tabulation function the director of institutional research used to measure inter-rater reliability among scorers (from the SPSS printout):

Team D * Controlling Idea

Crosstab

			Controlling Idea				Total
			4	3	2	1	
Team Assignment Number	D1-Leathers	Count	7	7	19	7	40
		% within Team Assignment Number	17.5%	17.5%	47.5%	17.5%	100.0%
		% within Controlling Idea	53.8%	43.8%	45.2%	77.8%	50.0%
		% of Total	8.8%	8.8%	23.8%	8.8%	50.0%
	D2-Crump	Count	6	9	23	2	40
		% within Team Assignment Number	15.0%	22.5%	57.5%	5.0%	100.0%
		% within Controlling Idea	46.2%	56.3%	54.8%	22.2%	50.0%
		% of Total	7.5%	11.3%	28.8%	2.5%	50.0%
Total		Count	13	16	42	9	80
		% within Team Assignment Number	16.3%	20.0%	52.5%	11.3%	100.0%
		% within Controlling Idea	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	16.3%	20.0%	52.5%	11.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.486	3	.323
Likelihood Ratio	3.651	3	.302
Linear-by-Linear Association	.389	1	.533
N of Valid Cases	80		

Figure 1. Cross tabulation of two scorers along with chi-square test to determine independence. No significant interaction observed for Controlling Idea.

The fact that there is "no significant interaction observed" for the parameter measured indicates that there is no significant relationship between the scorer and the score given, which means that the scores issued by one scorer did not significantly differ from the scores issued by the other scorer. From here, hypothesis tests can be developed for the relationship between the intervention and the change from pretest to post-test. It would also be possible to establish a control group with sections of ENG 110 that, due to scheduling conflicts, do not participate in the intervention. This is the kind of study that can be compared to, and aggregated with, other institutions that use a pre/post-test model of assessment, and variables in the lesson plans, for instance, can be identified as possible determinants in certain outcomes. Again, the communicable nature of writing center data is key to discovering what we can know about what aspects of our pedagogies actually contribute to better writing.

I would like now to address a possible criticism to the more quantitative approaches to writing center assessment endorsed thus far. The prospect of the types of collaborative studies discussed above does not necessarily point to the destruction of each center's sense of individuality, as some WCAs may be weary of. Quite the contrary, I am advocating for centers across the country to more thoroughly examine their own philosophies and practices and delve deep into the specific, the Blakean particular, to unpack what it is precisely that helps students become better

writers. The only real way to truly uncover the mysteries of the writing center universe is to examine every possible avenue of impact, the subtleties and nuances, on students that the center may support, and examine them thoroughly. The types of assessment WPAs and teachers conduct on our students may indeed have a direct impact on the product being critiqued, just as Oscar Wilde mused that the art critic, by dint of the business of critiquing, informs and creates the very art it seeks to critique. As Huot notes, though assessment—consistent, regular assessment—is necessary, there has always been hesitation due to the potential deleterious impact such assessment may have on the students and writing programs themselves (59). Therefore, we should also seek to broaden the scope of what we measure when we assess writing.

According to Huot, most teachers of composition do not evaluate student writing in terms of its rhetorical strategies, but rather more clear-cut indicators of correctness, such as mechanics, and this fuels what concerns students of composition during their own revision process (68-9). While the latter indicators make for easily communicative assessment, and therefore easier from an administrative standpoint, there may be ways to better appraise more complex qualities of student work that may, as Huot's discussion implies, force students to think about their own writing process in more critical, dynamic modes. Broad (2003), famous for his invention of what he terms Dynamic Criteria Mapping (or DCM), takes this notion of assessing what we want students to be writing to near theoretical extremes. Let us take for instance the contextual indicator of significance, which Broad defines as an "epistemic" quality (that is, having the attribute of making knowledge in the student's text):

> Significance is something more than just creative or critical thinking . . . It is fundamentally about learning-by-writing. For one can think without learning; one can arrange one's arguments in logical and persuasive ways without considering other points of view or chang-

> ing one's own views. By contrast, significance focuses on the particular, hard-to-define performance by which writers demonstrate that they are learning something by being "engaged" with their material, by "exploring" it, by "discovering" and "elaborating" within their topics, by showing their moral or intellectual "movement" over the course of the text. (41)

Complex indicators such as these would force both teachers and students to approach composition in a way that more fundamentally involves critical thinking, exploration, and creative thought and expression. Johanek (2000), much like Broad in his promotion of DCM, suggests that assessment and research should be driven by context and the answers derived from questions thereof, as opposed to the application of constraining, preconceived methods (27). Garrison and Donnelli (2003) apply Johanek's contextual research paradigm to their own institution to examine the effects of gender on their consultants and clients. The main point they make is the ability of assessment to transcend one particular mode and to examine a specific issue from multiple vantage points in order to derive a more comprehensive, and therefore accurate, picture of this dynamic as it exists in their center, allowing them to satisfy administrators' need for quantitative results while simultaneously advancing their own exploratory research. This is precisely the type of assessment that may enable examination of specific variables from multiple angles in order to isolate what matters, to echo the rhetoric of Schendel and Macauley (2012), and, perhaps equally important, what does not matter. Macauley (2012) notes that there still exists a lack of a standard method of assessment for WCDs, though the cry for the need of such a method has been heard since at least three decades ago (Neulieb, 1). Collaborative, RAD-based assessment is the way forward. Even fields like biology start with quantitative, descriptive projects—different species of plants had to be identified before delving into the process by which they evolve and differentiate. Writing center research must follow the same protocol if it is to grow and evolve.

Notes

1. A meta-analysis is a statistical analysis conducted on data gathered from multiple studies with a common statistical measure in order to more closely derive an unknown truth clouded by a certain error within each individual study. The rationale behind this approach involves aggregating data to obtain a more accurate picture of the relationship—or the strength thereof—between variables.
2. The study also compared results of a survey collecting student responses measuring their satisfaction with the fellows program with the students' actual performance on their papers, yet this aspect of the study is not relevant
3. . . . if Shaw University's office of institutional research is any indication (the unit coordinator's email signature reads "A day without data is like a day without sunshine")
4. St. Cloud State University's writing center solicited the assistance of their institution's analytics director—who is also a professor of statistics—in a recent cross-disciplinary collaborative research project.
5. As Driscoll and Perdue emphasize, RAD research is not exclusive to quantitative analyses. Nonetheless, this article supports the more quantitative, statistical component of both qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis for the sake of leveraging a more common assessment language across programs.
6. That is, the degree to which a hypothesis test may ascertain an effect if one does indeed exist.
7. One problem with small sample sizes is that the effect of individual differences on the average of the student performance outcomes is greater. When one of one hundred, the effect of poor performance due to a student pulling an all-nighter for another class is diluted. When one of ten, that individual variability can cloud the true effect of the manipulation.
8. Non-manipulated independent variables are variables that are measured because the researcher cannot (or does not wish to) manipulate them but that may still have an effect on the outcome.
9. It is also worth noting that Young is an English professor while Fritzsche is a psychology professor—an excellent example of the kind of cross-disciplinary research emphasized earlier.
10. There are two types of variance in statistical analysis: that referring to the distribution of data around a mean and that referring to factors that contribute to the existence of that distribution. Young and Fritzsche are clarifying the second type here.
11. Historically Black Colleges and Universities
12. The scorers represent multiple departments across disciplines, again adhering to the importance of bringing in different members of the university community to participate in assessment.
13. *The Writing Center Journal*'s new website's "Submissions" page states, in part, "We are particularly interested in RAD research (replicable, aggregable, data-driven) and empirical studies that go beyond conjecture and hypothesis. Authors should submit studies that offer practical applications and transportable instruments

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"'The Art of Storytelling': Examining Faculty Narratives from Two Course-Embedded Peer-to-Peer Writing Support Pilots"

Russell Carpenter
Scott Whiddon

"The largest difference was that students in this class chose to revise more often than my students in my other classes."

"And so the sessions were just so productive, because they could write on their commenting letter 'I'm trying to do this, does that make sense? And how can I incorporate a text, or how can I make this idea more clear?' And so we were able to have a conversation . . ."

"I call writing fellows my healthy addiction."

Introduction: Setting up the stories.

In many ways, course-embedded peer-to-peer writing support--often referred to as "writing fellows" or "writing associates" programs (hereafter referred to in this article as "course-embedded tutors" or CETs)--have become part of the lingua franca of writing center discourse. Since the 1980s, with roots

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at Brown University, Carleton College, Swarthmore College, the University of Wisconsin, and many other institutions around the country, such work has been discussed as not only grooming "ambassadors of the writing center" (Severino and Knight 27) but also as creating space for assessment (see Bromley and Regaignon; Dvorak, Bruce, and Lutkewitte), larger WAC/WID initiatives (see Soliday), and even as a way to "situate writing as a literacy necessary for engaged citizenship" (DeCiccio 189). Recent scholarship has also shown how course-embedded programs might even serve as sites of critical resistance and institutional critique (see Shelton and Howson).

What is sometimes lost in this discussion are the narratives of faculty members who, for a variety of reasons, take on the work and responsibility of collaborating with CETs. Although many programs offer testimonials from participants on their own websites and promotional materials, such work should be more visible and systematically collected for both current writing center directors as well as campus administrators and, in particular, those who are considering creating new course-embedded programs--especially if such work is theorized through the collection of data, ongoing scholarship, and intentional reflection.

While writing center conversations are turning--productively and with good reason--toward research that is replicable, aggregable, and data-driven (RAD) (see Driscoll and Wynn), narratives from day-to-day participants provide writing centers, potential new faculty collaborators, and upper-level university administrators alike with both the context and complications of program design and, in particular, "the specifics of their implementation" (Hughes and Hall). Compositionists have long been attracted to stories as ways of making sense of the world. Despite our need to show quantitative data as proof of effectiveness, "teacher stories" (and, in this case, "teacher stories about peer-to-peer tutoring") allow us to get to the fine grain--the details that allow us to see things as others might see them. Although we, as a field, have

told important stories about our shared work for decades as part of our own self-representation (as in such collections such as Richard Haswell and Min-Zhan Lu's *Comp Tales: An Introduction to College Composition Through its Stories* or *Lynn Briggs and Meg Wolbright's Stories from the Center: Connecting Narrative and Theory in the Writing Center*), we rarely see the stories told by faculty members about writing center staff members "on location"--"within complex, hierarchical, contested classroom spaces" (Spigelman and Grobman 1)--as a valuable form of data. And yet faculty in course-embedded tutoring programs represent a key part of the programming itself in comparison to traditional peer-to-peer consultation (in which faculty are rarely involved and perhaps even unaware of such work). Furthermore, the narratives we've collected and examined in this study factor importantly into larger considerations of where writing is taught, who is responsible for teaching writing, and how such teachers and writers are supported institutionally.

In Fall 2014, our respective writing centers--the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) and the Transylvania University (TU) Writing Center--implemented pilot course-embedded writing support programs. In this article, we examine findings from guided interviews with select participating faculty. Sharing an explicit and purposeful research agenda between the two sites allowed us to examine how initial faculty impressions and experiences of course-embedded programming might connect and translate across radically different institutional and writing teaching contexts. This study, then, helps us to identify the larger trends, challenges, and opportunities for considering and developing course-embedded programs that follow models focused on WID, first-year writing, or other combinations in their implementation.

As we began to envision and draft our pilots, we considered the following questions:

1. What are the institutional rationales for developing CET-style programs that stem from already existing writing centers, given costs and additional labor concerns? How might our pilots look alike? How might our pilots look different, given our differences in student population, classroom sites, and institutional missions? Why might locality and motivation matter?

2. How might the changing nature of our campuses influence the success and potential sustainability of our programs?

3. How might the work of these two pilots connect, and complicate, the larger story of course-embedded peer-to-peer work?

This article, our method of examination, and our programmatic approaches advocate for both the legitimacy of interview-based work and the need for stronger connections between writing centers and classroom spaces. Numerous articles and book chapters (such as Severino and Knight) offer guidance (and potential pitfalls) in initiating a course-embedded style program; for example, Hall and Hughes cite over ten pieces that share frameworks and procedures that use CET work to "energize and enrich WAC and WID initiatives" (22). However, our article brings these teachers' impressions and experiences in writing and teaching writing in collaboration with CETs to the forefront. Situating these interviews with current and classic research not only gives a snapshot of two different programs in process but also further advocates for the need to forge connections between classrooms and writing centers. In so doing, we first explain the institutional contexts of each writing center and course-embedded program. We then consider our initial questions in regard to major themes that emerged from the interviews:

- Developing *student strategies for revision*
- Developing *writer confidence*, and
- Developing *faculty pedagogy*.

Finally, we reflect on how the material from two concurrent pilots extends both local and larger conversations about peer-to-peer writing support across institutions.

By focusing on the stories that our faculty participants shared concerning their day-to-day pilot experiences, we were granted an opportunity for reflection at both the programmatic and personal level--one that shaped the art and craft of program design. In this article, with its focus on faculty perspectives, we attempt to open a space for not only more course-embedded program research, but also for more narratives from writing centers that actively seek out ways to connect with faculty who might not normally establish formalized, systematic relationships with their respective writing centers.

SECTION 2: The settings for the stories.

As long-term directors, we realized that new programing needed to be located within already-existing scholarship as well as our own local contexts. Our pilots represent a wide range of institutional situations and resources that connect to larger conversations about the changing nature of both small liberal arts colleges and regional comprehensive institutions. In this section, we offer "the settings for our shared stories" by describing how our connected yet distinctly different local landscapes shaped the initial planning process.

Our campuses are about as different as they can be. EKU is a regional comprehensive institution, of approximately 16,000 students, located in Richmond, Kentucky; TU is a historic small liberal arts college of approximately 1,100 students in downtown Lexington, Kentucky. Founded in 1980 by Professor Martha Gehringer, the TU writing center employs 11-16 undergraduate staffers each year and focuses on writing consultation for 350-400 students per semester. Although the center is deeply connected to first-year seminar programing, ESL initiatives, and a relatively new major in Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication, TU's

Writing Center is institutionally situated in comparable ways to many small residential colleges. In contrast, EKU's Noel Studio for Academic Creativity is a young program that now has approximately 55 graduate and undergraduate student staff members, including the ten in the course-embedded program. Like TU, Noel Studio student staff members span disciplines. Located centrally both physically and administratively, the Noel Studio serves students from across the disciplines, conducting 5,000-6,000 one-on-one and small-group consultations annually and over 300 class workshops. With close ties to the first-year writing program, the Noel Studio's course-embedded program serves students early in their careers at EKU.

However, despite differences in size and scope, both programs are deeply involved with organizations such as SWCA-Kentucky, the larger Southeastern Writing Center Association, and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). Our initial interest in course-embedded peer-to-peer learning began via the people and programs involved in such organizations. More importantly, though, both programs and pilots are anchored to campus concerns such as institutional research and faculty development. EKU's course-embedded initiative developed out of a renewed interest in supporting first-year writers enrolled in ENG 101. In fall 2014, Kentucky's Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) also funded an additional three CETs to embed in pilot ENG 101R (reading-intensive) courses, an initiative that has led to larger planning and programming at the university.

TU's pilot, on the other hand, grew "from the ground up" out of faculty desires (voiced in informal conversations as well as via a faculty survey designed by the writing center and campus assessment coordinator) for more pedagogical development despite a fairly heavy course and service load. Although TU does not have an entrenched WAC or WID program in place, faculty members regularly take part in campus-sponsored workshops (such as a summer seminar on teaching first-year seminars or in

smaller initiatives such as ½ day discussions on feedback or a reading group on developing prompts organized by a faculty-driven writing advisory committee). With support from the dean, an internal faculty grant, and an SWCA Christine Cozzens Research Grant and Initiative award, TU embedded CETs in three classes across disciplines aimed at students who have already taken their required two semester first-year seminars: an introduction to literature course, a mid-level sociology course, and a upper-level exercise science class. In TU's pilot, two of the three staffers were placed in courses outside their own academic discipline as a way of exploring conversations about genre/disciplinary writing and thinking (see Macauley for a summary of this extended discussion).

In EKU's version of the pilot, each CET was scheduled for 15 hours per week. They attended each class and served as an additional writing ally in class. During class time, they contributed to discussions, guided breakout drafting and revision sessions, and facilitated workshops designed to help students understand and consider complex writing experiences. CETs were also available for consultations enrolled in their sections. In TU's version, because of funding, CETs worked with their faculty partners during a pre-semester training session (and via regularly scheduled meetings) to offer feedback about written assignments and to determine which specific days might be best for them to attend class sessions (for example: explaining a prompt, leading a review section, attending a guest speaker, etc). Each CET was allotted 75 hours throughout the term to serve in the pilot, while also working weekly shifts in the writing center. The program embedded 10 undergraduate CETs during the fall and spring semesters, an initiative funded by the Office of the Provost.

In both pilots, course-embedded staffers read required drafts of paper submissions in advance during their consultation time, and then offered written commentary to help guide revision

plans. Soon after, depending on assignment scheduling, each CET held individual consultations with course participants. Such practices, as described by Severino, DeCiccio, and others, serve as a cornerstone to course-embedded work: Collaboration and peer feedback was more than just a single, one-time requirement to the course; instead, like other already existing programs, working with peers was a key element to the course architecture itself. EKU's pilot served approximately 220 first-year writing students; TU's pilot served 47 students from a range of majors.

Although taking the time to fully narrate and describe the institutional situation of either the Noel Studio or the TU Writing Center is outside the scope of this essay, we would be remiss to ignore key kairotic elements that, in complicated and nuanced ways, played into the larger story of these two pilots. In the five years prior to TU's pilot, both the writing center and the first-year seminar program (perhaps the most visible writing instruction component on our campus) grew in both staffing and stability. The WC director became a tenurable position in 2011 as part of a growing major (WRC), and the writing center began to actively develop a professional identity via conferences and organizations--building on the long term localized work of the former director. Within this same time 4-5 year time frame, the long time faculty director of FYS became an academic dean--adding even more strength to a successful and popular program. Small but focused faculty pedagogy workshops sponsored by the campus writing advisory committee (as part of our Curriculum Planning Committee, in partnership with the writing center) further added to the culture of writing on campus. Webster and Hanson, in their investigation of their own course-embedded program at the University of Montana, remind us that "Sometimes in concert with and often in the absence of formal WAC and WID programs, writing centers have long taken on de facto WAC and WID roles, embarking upon the deeply satisfying and inescapably fraught work of institutional change" (52).

However, difficult transitions in campus administration and

enrollment patterns during this same rhetorical moment--in the years leading up to and following the pilot study--added to the day-to-day work of the campus as a whole. Although they did not affect the specific work of the writing center, these challenges--although hardly unique--drew attention and energy away from many campus initiatives, including this pilot. At the same time, EKU reinvested in faculty development initiatives, now administered through the Noel Studio. The university named a new president while the pilot program was underway and has implemented additional support and resources for faculty teaching in the first-year writing program and faculty teaching writing courses. In part, the Writing Fellows program at EKU was implemented to enhance teaching and learning experiences and encourage writing and revision processes on campus. The Noel Studio has undergone significant growth, from the addition of full-time staff members to Graduate Assistant (GA) positions to serve the EKU community and to support student communication initiatives across all disciplines. As a university focused on teaching, EKU develops a culture of highly effective pedagogy and classroom support for faculty and students through university-wide initiatives that facilitate programs and enable peer-to-peer forms of teaching.

We provide these campus-specific contours to not only give a more complete picture of the pilots but also to consider why programs similar to ours--again, a small liberal arts college and a growing regional comprehensive--might investigate course-embedded pedagogy. As we note in the conclusion of this article, one of the impediments of initiating and sustaining a CET program is faculty time commitment. With some key exceptions, EKU faculty members teach a 4-4 load; TU faculty members teach a 3-3 with a May Term component. Both campuses are service heavy. The additional time commitments of planning collaborative work with a student who will need mentoring and guidance as a CET adds yet another layer of allocation. Initiating and sustaining high-impact CETs requires a full commitment from faculty and administration.

While most of TU's participants were from "outside" disciplines traditionally associated with teaching writing, EKU's pilot, on a different tack, placed course-embedded tutors in courses taught by adjuncts and instructors. Thus, the pilots also offer two different forms of faculty development that focus on writing. Scholars such have Webster and Hanson have theorized the additional labor and overall potential for messiness that plays into course-embedded work. As noted earlier, course-embedded programs are fairly widespread across all types of institutions; however, these instructors (along with their students and embedded staffers) were exploring new territory by bringing the writing center to the forefront of course planning and practice. At both sites, participating instructors chose to take part in the pilot for a variety of reasons but agreed that such a program would aid in faculty and student development alike. Despite differences in location and institutional centrality, participating instructors in both pilots saw value in previous writing center-supported initiatives and wanted a strong voice in these important initial stages of a new program.

The interviews we collected over the course of the pilot hold a different type of rhetorical power and perspective than grades, retention numbers, or surveys. Although hardly a panacea, narratives from fellow practitioners, when systematically collected, should help shape programs. By bringing these instructor voices to the forefront, we can highlight and examine the strengths and challenges of two similar pilots with different institutional contexts.

Section 3: The art of storytelling

With guidance from our respective institutional review boards as well as other scholars in the field via conversations at conferences such as SWCA, NCPTW, and IWCA, we developed the following interview questions to help generate conversations with three faculty participants from TU and three from EKU:

1) In what ways did the presence of a CET affect the development of your students' essays?

1a) Can you provide any examples, details, etc., based on your CET interactions or the interactions you observed between CETs and students?

2) In your opinion, did students employ CET-generated commentary through revision choices? To what degree? Examples?

3) Did you notice any differences between final products and drafts? What were some of the major differences between draft and final product?

4) What were some dominant characteristics that your CET noted in the working drafts? Based on what you can determine from the interactions this semester, what types of activities did your CET employ the most in conferences?

These questions generated reflections that dig deep into the core of writing-teaching experiences across disciplinary lines and institutional missions.

Stories About Revision

Hall and Hughes note that course-embedded programs "on the most local level, lead to improved student writing and the inclusion of meaningful revision in classes that might otherwise not do so" (36). Haring-Smith, recalling Sperling and Freedman, reminds us that students often misunderstand teacher-driven feedback on written texts and that such misunderstandings are rooted in issues of authority; revision based on peer-feedback, before a grade is assigned, allows students to see revisiting their own work as part of the act of writing rather than "a response to failure" (124). In our focused interviews, we were curious as to how our faculty participants discussed ways in which the presence of an embedded staffer aided students in the act of revising various texts throughout the term. For example, an

instructor in the EKU pilot discussed the differences perceived when teaching with a CET:

> The largest difference was that students in this class chose to revise more often than my students in my other classes. And then those that did choose to revise usually . . . revised higher order concerns when there were some, and . . . There was a very noticeable difference between this class and other classes. And then of course when they resubmitted their essays, uh, more times than not, by far, their grades definitely improved . . . because their essays had been changed so drastically.

By comparison, an instructor in the TU version of the pilot noted the focus on the drafting and revision process, stating "I think that the drafting process throughout the term really helped them improve on their final drafts as a whole, regardless of decisions they may have made for an individual thing, or for time constraints, or priorities during that time. Overall, the last essay had the highest grade of all the essays."

As we analyzed the transcripts collected during the pilot program study, with assistance from a senior writing center staffer at TU, we saw many statements that focused on revision. These statements could easily serve as bumper stickers for course-embedded work; that is, they highlighted, in simple terms, an emphasis on teaching writing via process and collaboration. Participating students, with the help of seasoned, trained writing center staffers, took the time to re-see their writing in stages. The addition of the CET--and the habits of successful writers--allows for tutors to model habits of a full recursive process. CETs, in short, are positioned to see how writers write. Instead of the mere play-by-play, they can--and often do--offer color commentary in real time. Seeing revision in-class and outside of class also demystifies a process approach to writing college texts. By seeing and working through the process in both classroom and out-of-class environments, students see writing– *even with the presence of*

others, as argued by Titus et al. – as a complicated and necessarily messy process.

Experienced instructors from both pilots noted how students in their classes saw value in their CETs--in terms of overall buy-in, process, and revision. Even with the exhaustion that comes with a lengthy semester, faculty members reported that working with CETs allows for students to connect consistently to course goals:

> I really think, by and large, the final versions were substantively improved, and there are always exceptions, are students who don't buy in. But one of the reasons why we picked—well, I probably picked it, but we talked about—doing the third assignment was not just to have things spaced effectively, but because I've noticed—and this is only the end of my second year—that sometimes third assignments can drop off a bit, that students can be showing improvement and can sometimes have a stronger second paper than a third, maybe because it's more complex, but also that third paper, they're likely to have so much else going on that they're going to have to be organizing their time a lot more effectively in ways that maybe the second paper doesn't bump up against, because normally, the timing of it doesn't hit [until] midterms. So I was hoping that by having those extra steps, having to work with Victoria, there wouldn't be that kind of drop-off, or stagnation, in the third paper, and I think that that happened. It didn't happen for every single student, and every class is different, and I hesitate to make generalizations, but I really think that issue that sometimes happens with the third paper, where you can almost feel like they were running out of time.

Similarly, a faculty member in EKU's program reported seeing a difference in the writing as the student worked with a CET:

I definitely think it made a huge difference because we were

doing writing in the class and looking at drafts, I would see the quality of idea development—voice, sentence fluency, word choice, all those writing traits that are important to producing a great product. And I would realize that our particular class that we worked with needed some help. Some of them had not been in school for a while. Some of them hated English, which is a common feeling. And so you know all of that creates an atmosphere of "oh, I just got to do this to get through it", and both [the CET] and I share this feeling that, you know that this is such an important thing, communicating well especially on paper that you just don't want students to get through it, you want them to feel accomplishment, satisfaction, their ability to share their voice, their ideas.

Another participating faculty member--one who rarely assigned writing tasks in his classes-- added this moment concerning the role of a CET and the ways that revision played into a sequence of assignments. While both of us are hesitant to use words such as conversion, CETs bring value to and reinforce the teaching of writing in the disciplines:

I think as Alicia was saying, this worked toward precision, concision, and stating whatever the major finding was clearly, and early in the piece was what we were looking for. But showing a good understanding, and then the ability to communicate it. I was pleasantly surprised. A couple of them I read and said: "Wow, this could be in the newspaper." It was literally almost perfect.

Stories About Confidence

As argued by Haring-Smith, "Writing fellows programs have the added virtue of providing writing instruction that is divorced from evaluation, and making that instruction available to all" (130). As programs develop and become part of the campus culture, she notes that student participants begin "to think of revision and consultation with peers as a natural part of the writing process" (130). In a similar manner, Gentile's discussion

of course-embedded work in a first-year writing program shows that "Students appreciate the 'personal relationships' and 'intimate connections' they form with tutors in the process of reviewing and revising their work. They find that the tutors 'make it feel like you're not talking to a teacher, but to a friend' and that the Center provides 'a safe, helpful environment where students don't feel judged'" (35). Such reflections recall writing center work writ large. As we designed and developed our pilots, we were curious if our own faculty participants noticed such elements in play--all of which connect to developing writer confidence. In the EKU pilot, for example, the instructor noted the productive bridge between the writing center and classroom spaces:

> I think the development of student essays was positively affected by the presence of the writing fellow because the writing fellow is a peer. So, I think that it helps students feel comfortable in the writing process, and it allowed them to interact with somebody who was a qualified writer without the intimidation factor. So, they felt like they were writing and brainstorming with a friend, but at the same time somebody who was more than a friend, who has a certain expertise that they could offer in a consultation/discussion…
>
> So, each time they met, they had the opportunity to meet with [the CET], they came out of that consultation with more confidence. I think that's partly because there's two people that they can access. You know, they can contact me. They can set up a meeting with me. They can also come by here, and see if they could find you [the CET] in a spontaneous way, or set up an appointment with you. Even if they came in, wandered in and looked for you in the Noel Studio they would see other consultants around, and that kind of I think gives them access to the Noel Studio. Just having a representative of the Noel Studio in the classroom makes the Noel Studio seem like a really friendly place… [Y]ou made it clear to them that it's a place for everyone,

> at every stage/level of writing development, and that's a good thing, I think. So, it's a bridge between the Noel Studio and the classroom.

In addition, the faculty member noted that the CET made positive contributions to the classroom environment, understanding course goals and extending the feedback provided in consultations and collaborative learning from workshops to the classroom space.

> I think that [the CET] affected my students' essays because she was a much needed second person that they could go to that knew the class and most importantly knew my expectations that of course goes beyond what the studio generally provides because the consultants don't contact the instructors. So, uh, my students I think felt really confident when they went to her knowing that what she said was going to match with what was expected of them in the course. So I think that obviously this positively affected the development of their essays and their involvement in the course because they felt really supported in their projects.

In a similar fashion, TU faculty participants noted the importance of having that "second person"--an empathetic yet authoritative peer--as a prime factor in student willingness to try new approaches to assigned writing tasks. Writing center scholarship has noted how such programming, at its best, helps to break down the complicated relationship and potential division between instructor and student. The interviews presented here highlight the effectiveness of well-situated, institutionally supported course-embedded work.

Stories About Faculty Development

Like others who have developed such programs, Hall and Hughes note the complicated yet convincing ways that course-embedded work can support reflective teaching. They recall

a telling moment from a faculty participant that, "While she initially requested Writing Fellows in the hopes that they would 'clean up' her student papers and save time from her busy assistant professor schedule, her work with Fellows prompted this professor to think more carefully and critically about her goals for teaching writing and how her assignments fit with her course content" (35). Although both of our programs faced anticipated challenges expected of any new initiative, our pre-pilot faculty/CET workshops and our scheduled check-ins with faculty/CET pairs throughout the semester allowed us to troubleshoot and solve problems systematically. For example, at EKU, professional development programming reinforced how CETs were separate from essay and project assessment. At TU, at that same time, faculty members had to rethink course architectures and schedules so that student participants had ample time to incorporate CET written and spoken feedback. Many of the scholars we drew from as we developed and revised our pilot configurations, ranging from Haring-Smith to Titus et al., have explored how course-embedded programs can help instructors develop their pedagogical skill sets. Holly-Wells, Jamieson, and Sanyal offer these insights:

> Faculty from across the curriculum are often committed to incorporating writing instruction into their classes, but are unsure of their ability to do so. Having trained WFs attending class and working with their assignments can alleviate faculty members' concerns; after experiencing the class from the student perspective, WAC-WFs can offer feedback and suggestions grounded in writing theory and practice. (87)

As we began our connected pilot programs, we were interested in how faculty participants might voice such development--especially given their institutional positioning (a range of disciplines on one hand; a set of adjuncts and non-tenure track instructors on the other). For example, one TU faculty member reflected: "In fact, I

think every time we met before [the CET] got them—the papers—and then again after. So I would tell her the things I was looking for, and she would tell me the things that she noticed, which then made me sort of more aware of issues to look for in the final drafts, which I think it worked out pretty well."

Importantly, a faculty member also explained the significance of having a CET embedded in the course when considering the role of writing in the curriculum, a new experience for the faculty member in this particular case:

> And I think even the assignments that we had you do were probably appropriate. Thinking back to before the semester, it was difficult for me because I don't often assign writing assignments, I give exams. So especially a whole series of writing assignments throughout a course, so even just conceiving of that and how it should look was foreign to me. So Alicia was very helpful in that, because she has lots of experience in it. So I think that's another good thing, planning. Planning the course with the writing resident was helpful.

Similarly, an EKU instructor reflected on ways in which the CET promotes engaging pedagogy, including through interactions with students: ". . . [O]ne of the good teaching practices is contact, and so you know here we are two by two. You know, instead of one person doing it, you got two people. You know, and two are always better than one if you're trying to move energy and go along. So, you know, the more the merrier. Can I have two [CETs] . . . and then we can subdivide the group?"

The interviews examined in this study also highlight the messy nature of course-embedded programming--especially ways in which faculty mentoring and course planning are key to successful initiatives. One cannot merely drop a staffer in the classroom space; instead, productive course-embedded work involves careful initial planning with all voices involved. As noted by a TU faculty participant, reflecting on our pre-semester

planning workshops:

> I think that one of the things that we did really well was, we met early in the term, we figured out how to organize the semester down to the date, picking the times for conferences, setting up the amount of days between the working draft and the final draft. So we didn't really have to meet aside from the things that were on the sheet that you gave us. We front-loaded all the stuff, and that just sort of worked with both of our styles.

Faculty and CET collaboration highlights the importance of developing a process-centered, writing-oriented pedagogy. Working side-by-side with CETs and planning interactive opportunities to co-facilitate classroom writing and revision experiences refocuses attention on important course goals and ways in which programs can help students become successful writers while also envisioning what these initiatives can become in the future.

Future Tense: Where this story can go.

We do not wish to imply that this is an easy story – that developing and tending to a CET program does not involve frustration or resistance. As we noted already, both of our respective sites are teaching and service-heavy. Although many TU faculty members were excited about this pilot, for example, many also responded by encouraging us along but passing on the opportunity to take on a CET, as it would understandably be just one more plate to spin during a difficult campus transition, and faculty members recognized the time required for sustained mentoring and collaborative planning. Furthermore, both EKU and TU had questions about scalability and expense. For example, EKU considered the cost for providing access to CETs per student. In both instances, however, the programs also considered the wide range of ways to examine potential challenges, including identifying the cost per student participating in the CET program. The narratives allowed

us to understand the complexity of program development while also continuing to focus on the individual students and faculty involved. In addition, the narratives help us assemble perspectives from within that were relatable to other faculty members and administrators and encouraged us to consider the importance of the work and how we would continue to develop it.

In Winter 2016, TU's writing center--with support from the associate dean and an internal faculty grant--will place 6-12 embedded staffers in 5-6 sections of the required first-year seminar, working with faculty selected from across disciplines and programs. Given that liberal arts colleges often draw faculty from a range of academic programs to serve first-year seminar programming (see Gladstein and Regaignon), this move supports faculty development in significant ways. EKU developed a new relationship with the Eastern Bridge program, a transitional program for conditionally admitted first-year students, focusing attention on both students and faculty during the crucial first semester of college work. Program attention has also turned to ways in which course-embedded tutoring can also enhance faculty development initiatives and support for those teaching writing in the program, making the connection more focused.

To be sure, course-embedded programming is no panacea, and the labor required from directors, faculty participants, and CETs alike can be complicated and intimidating. Hughes and Hall argue that, "Within the Writing Fellows literature, then, there's a gap between the impressive potential that Fellows have to be agents of change in WAC and the cautionary tales from the complex realities of Fellows actually working with faculty and student-writers" (22). Although interview-based research offers only part of the total picture, such narratives add names and faces to the pedagogical landscape of a college; they humanize the process and recall some of the original intent of writing center work with a focus on the individual writer – consider

the student and faculty member's concern -- in that specific moment.

As the narratives from this study suggest, well trained and thoughtfully placed CETs, even with the costs in labor and time, help students connect their writing experiences to their larger university experiences. Given the importance of retention on one hand and developing faculty pedagogy on the other, planning and implementing course-embedded programming allows for writing centers to connect to the complex lives that students live, experience, and compose during critical moments in their university experience. Examining course-embedded programs across institutional borders reveals important disciplinary implications that connect and complicate the narratives we tell in our field, between and among student writers and as institutional colleagues working toward better experiences for our campus communities. These faculty narratives are critical, as CET programs cannot succeed without faculty input and buy in.

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Notes

1. Like Haring-Smith and others, I (Scott) found the term "fellows" to be "regrettably gender-specific" (124). After discussions with writing center staffers, we chose the term "residents" to help further suggest the embedded aspect of this pilot -- as well as hopefully connect to our college's strong pre-medical career programs. For the purposes of clarity, however, we use "CET" in this article.

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Back to the Center

"The Communication Center at the Georgia Institute of Technology"

Peter Fontaine

The Communication Center will be celebrating its fifth year of operation in 2016 after first opening its doors to the student body at the Georgia Institute of Technology in September of 2011. It's a landmark we've been working toward since the center was first conceived, and it's been five years marked by innovation, growth, and change. Previously, there had never been a centralized writing center at Georgia Tech. The growing expectation for student support prompted its development as part of the new Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, which also opened in 2011. The Communication Center (or CommLab, as the students call it), has become a central site for academic support on our campus. CommLab serves all Georgia Tech students--both undergraduate and graduate, regardless of discipline. While CommLab initially started out serving only students, we have since received funding and support to provide tutoring service, as well as design and conduct workshops, for postdoctoral fellows and faculty. This is just one of the many stories of growth and change in CommLab's short history.

Peter Fontaine, Ph.D. is an academic professional and Associate Director of the Communication Center at Georgia Tech.

CommLab's 2014-15 professional tutors gather for weekly meeting.

Peer tutors Sam Healy and Narita Nandy collaborate on a CommLab project.

Service

As part of our mission statement, we provide support for a wide range of multimodal and multiliteracy projects. CommLab includes space, resources, and materials that we devote to assisting students with presentations, public speaking, and visual design, in addition to the more traditional tutoring for writing assignments. At Tech the most common reasons students visit CommLab include working on multimodal composition assignments (including, visual, verbal, and electronic components as well as writing), resumes and cover letters, class and capstone presentations, and mock interviews. Therefore, our staff works with students not only on projects and assignments for their classes and programs of study, but on professional development needs, creative writing including novels and poetry, and a host of other communication activities. CommLab partners with a number of services and units on campus to provide consistent assistance alongside professional development, content tutoring, advising, and diversity education. Our collaborations with various service units on campus have been essential to providing a consistent message of support and expertise for the students as well as reaching out to various students to inform them of our services and how we can help them. In five years we've seen the number of our associations increase across schools and programs, including most recently embedded tutoring in particular courses.

Staff

The Communication Center staff is made up of a combination of approximately 30 professional and peer tutors, administrators, and student support, though that number can fluctuate from semester to semester. Our director, Dr. Karen Head, has held the position since CommLab first opened. She was also involved in the center's planning before applying for the directorship. Dr. Head is a tenure track faculty member in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication (LMC), and in my position as Associate Director (the only full-time position in the center besides that of director), I am an academic professional with faculty standing in LMC. As one of the few writing centers in the country to employ professional tutors, we are fortunate to draw ours from the Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. The Brittain Fellows also have faculty status while working as professional tutors in the center, teaching two courses in composition while working in the center 13 hours a week, or in the case of fulfilling one of several administrative roles in the center they will teach one composition course while performing a combination of 26 hours a week of tutoring and administrative duties. In addition to professional tutoring, positions for postdoctoral

CENTER *in*SIGHT

Georgia Tech enrolled 14,682 undergraduate students and 8,427 graduate students for a total of 23,109 students the Communication Center provided services for the 2014-2015 academic year.
tutoring sessions

- Director: Karen Head, Ph.D. (since 2011)
- Staff: Faculty Director, 1 Associate Director, 1 Assistant Director, 1 Research Coordinator, 1 Postdoctoral/Faculty Coordinator, 8 Professional Tutors, 3 Language Institute Consultants, 7 undergraduate Peer Tutors, 8 undergraduate Desk Assistants, 2 Research Assistants, 1 Technical Assistant
- Hours Open Per Week: 54
- Number of Consultants Working Per Shift: 2-5
- Number of Students Reached in 2014-2015: 1109 students for 2451 tutoring sessions

Sarah O'Brien, research coordinator, and Kiran Rampersad, peer tutor, work in the CommLab's computer space.

fellows include Assistant Director, Research Coordinator, and Postdoctoral/ Faculty Tutoring Coordinator. The Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship only lasts three years, and many fellows find permanent jobs at other institutions sooner than that. So, while we permanently employ seven Brittain Fellows at a time as professional tutors, the actual tutors themselves turn over regularly every one to three years.

CommLab also employs three to seven peer tutors each semester based on students' interest and qualifications. With a consistent but rotating professional staff, the need for peer tutors is important for many reasons. Students sometimes feel more comfortable working with a peer, and peer tutors also relate well to students because they have experienced classes, assignments, and understanding the high expectations from particular professors and disciplines. For example, a student in our biomedical engineering program may find the "science of their work" easy to understand, but very difficult to communicate. Having peer-tutors from the various colleges means that students seeking discipline-specific help with a presentation or a lab report can work with one of our exceptional peer tutors who can provide specialized support based on the content area.

In addition to peer tutoring, CommLab also employs students as desk assistants, research assistants, and technical assistants. Our desk assistants greet visitors and manage the day-to-day scheduling of student appointments while also handling any number of clerical and office tasks. Our research assistants work with the Research Coordinator on student-driven projects for the center, such as the annual regional peer tutor symposium and also participation at the Southeastern Writing Center Association annual conference. Our technical assistant manages the various resources we employ to work with students, while also keeping track of our supply manifest and requisitions. Finally, the Language Institute at Georgia Tech generously donates time from three faculty members who specialize in English Language Learning to tutor and to develop resources for the large number of international students enrolled at Tech.

Space

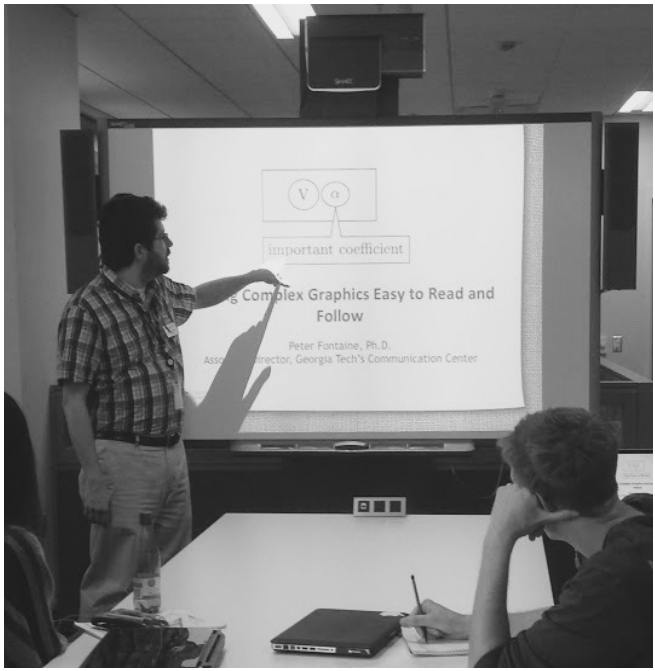
CommLab is located on the fourth floor of the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, which is connected to the first floor of Georgia Tech Library. We enjoy being positioned in the center of campus, and also in the middle of the daily student experience, as thousands of students make their way in and out of the Commons for classes, studying, coffee-drinking, and, sometimes, sleeping. The building is a 24/7 facility. The western wall of the Center is dominated by large landscape windows that have a beautiful view of Tech Green and the surrounding quad. Our main tutoring space is made up of areas for brainstorming (complete with risers and bean bag chairs), a conventional open tutoring space with tables and chairs, and a presentation area with conference table and SmartBoard for digital touchscreen displays. In the back portion of the center, there is a computer lab area with 3D printer and scanner, industrial size document scanner, and printer. On the eastern wall is the director's office and the shared office of the associate and assistant director. As part of the design of the space for students, these offices are interior spaces so that the main tutoring and lab area are brightly lit. There also two breakout rooms on the eastern wall to provide more privacy from the common tutoring space, and these also

double as presentation recording rooms. Additional support space for the center includes a storage room and a resource room that houses a computer station, plotter printer, and second SmartBoard presentation station for conducting workshops and other meetings. CommLab also manages four presentation rehearsal rooms designed on different corporate boardroom models from four businesses across four decades. These include a model of IBM from the 1980s, Mackenzie from the 1990s, Ben & Jerry's from the 2000s, and Google from the 2010s. Each room provides a distinctly different presentation environment and comes equipped with wall mounted cameras and video capture software to allow students to record their rehearsals for later reference and practice--one room even has green screen technology. Students can reserve the rooms individually or in groups to develop their presentation and public speaking skills on their own or reserve the rooms in conjunction with a tutoring session.

Growth

Our director frequently explains that we have many of the toys and gadgets that writing center directors often desire, but at the end of the day our work comes down to people talking about process. This has been true for CommLab from the day we opened, and it will continue to be true as we move forward into our sixth year and beyond. Our growth has followed along similar philosophical lines– connecting with people to reach more students and serve them better than we have in the past. It's taken five years to make all our students aware of CommLab and our services: that we exist, that we provide process tutoring on writing and multimodal forms of communication, and that we provide a host of additional and increasing services to meet their writing and communication needs. We've employed a number of marketing strategies to achieve this goal, such as an informational video the peer tutors and student assistants developed: http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/about-us.

Each year we have seen the number of students who seek us out grow substantially from the previous year. Five years is a benchmark, the first time when there isn't a student enrolled



Peter Fontaine, associate director, presents on the CommLab SmartBoard to Georgia Tech engineering students as part of a workshop for senior capstone presentations.

who was at Georgia Tech before the center opened. Our next benchmark will include doing more with what we have and for more people. We've expanded our services to include postdoctoral fellows and faculty, we've created new support programs for graduate students writing their dissertations and theses, and we're moving our support directly into the classroom through embedded tutoring. In five years the Communication Center at Georgia Tech has grown into a successful and essential student service. As we continue to innovate and reach out to the students the next five years, we will strive to be even more successful.

Consultant Insight

"Facing Harry Denny: Or, Facing Nationality in the Small College Writing Center"

Elizabeth Burton

"…even before we get to writing, before we get to the product, L2 students possess historical and cultural capital substantially different than our own" (Denny 126).

Since it started streaming on NPR's website in October, I have been listening to Joanna Newsom's new album Divers on loop. On one track, "Waltz of the 101st Lightborne," there is a particular phrase that has stuck with me: "the war between us and our ghosts." One ghost that I have been warring with was a session I had with a student writing an analysis of Natasha Trethewey's Pulitzer Prize-winning book of poems Native Guard –a collection that deals with both an all-black squadron of soldiers in the American Civil War and Trethewey's own mother, a woman engaged in an interracial marriage in the American South. It's a beautiful collection that is steeped in American history and compassionately portrays the complicated intersection between love of the American South and knowledge of the South's issues dealing with race. The difficulty of this text was exacerbated by the fact that the student I was working with was not from America.

Elizabeth Burton is a senior English major at Transylvania University and currently pursuing a graduate degree with the hope of doing writing center work professionally. She is also a published poet, an avid music listener, and currently has purple hair.

Transylvania University is small, with only around 1100 students, occupying a mere four city blocks in Lexington, Kentucky's north side. There have been changes to Transy's ethnic landscape over recent years, particularly with the rise in matriculation of international students. International students made up approximately 1.3% of the graduating class of 2015, having risen 1% in the last five years. First-year writers and international writers tend to comprise the bulk of our appointments, with international students accounting for 27% of the sessions that occurred last year.

Because of this climate, my meeting with this student was not an exceptional instance, and yet it sticks with me. The student, a young woman from China, had written incredible prose, incorporating lush imagery with creative turns of phrase, as well as other figurative language that I was delighted to see in a piece of academic writing. The trouble was, despite having gorgeous, articulate language, the piece had little to no actual analysis of the text and thus had not actually fulfilled the requirements of the assignment. That being said, she had already reached the maximum page limit: a hefty nine pages, which is no small order for an undergraduate writer of any linguistic background.

And so I was faced with a question: while her prose was wonderfully refreshing, should I have encouraged her to trim it down to make space for more typical, Western-style analysis? After all, the student was noticeably nervous about her overall grade. The ethics of my helping to squeegee her writing of any linguistic difference was of little concern to her aside from whether or not that would make her paper sound "better."

What was I to do? Ultimately, I did what the student wanted me to do: we got rid of much of the imagery and language that had caused me to be so enthralled with her writing in the first place, and made space for explication. She left the session thrilled. Yet this instance has never sat quite right in my mind.

Only when encountering Harry Denny's book Facing the Center, which explores how various marginalized groups

interact with writing centers, was I able to articulate what it was precisely about this session that bothered me: "What obligations do we have to educate students in the politics of their language use? Is it appropriate or fair to enable a student's false sense of correctness or ability, even with the best of intentions?" (121) Encouraging this student to fit her writing into a box more familiar to Western academia did not sit well with me politically. However, I would have felt no better for her to turn in a paper that would not be well-received by her professor. It would seem that this situation was a catch-22. Denny, however sees a way out. While acknowledging that the "drive [of international students] to 'fit-in' and write in a 'standard' code of English…is completely understandable," he also "[advocates] an awareness of resistant or subversive relationships to multilingual identity that writing center practitioners and others can offer to learners" (Denny 128).

First things first: what is this "standard' code of English" to which these students are aspiring? Laura Greenfield defines "Standard English" as something that is necessarily without definition. Rather than being able to immediately recognize writing as Standard English, for Greenfield,

> …the language of white people collectively [is] called "Standard English", and when "Standard English" is imagined as a tool necessary for participation in mainstream society, people of color are put in the oppressive position not of having to speak or learn to speak a particular language…but of ridding themselves of all linguistic features that may identify them with communities of color. (Greenfield 46)

In short, this student (with good reason) was attempting to both sound colorless and perform as an academic in a white, Western setting despite the challenge of writing in a new language, in order to access real, material rewards: a good grade. The student's primary issue was difficulty understanding the expectations of the assignment. Denny would agree with Greenfield and take it one step further to

claim that it is not just that this student was a person of color, but that she was from China that made our session so fraught. Denny claims that we ("we" being, presumably, Americans, and more specifically, writing center practitioners) are more forgiving of the complications that occur when transferring from one language to English when the speaker/writer in question is European: "L2 [those who come to English as a secondary language] use of English—and Americans' tolerance of it—shifts depending on the subject and her or his perceived country of origin" (Denny 124).

While this kind of philosophical theorizing is useful to us from a pedagogical standpoint, it is ultimately not the main concern of many international students, and it definitely was not the concern of the student I worked with. The stakes for these students are incredibly high: "Multilingual writers face real material consequences for failing to gain facility with the dominant code" (Denny 128). While these material concerns are, to a certain degree, common to all students, this link between undergraduate success and future stability is even stronger, and even more urgent, for international students: "even before we get to writing, before we get to the product, L2 students possess historical and cultural capital substantially different than our own" (Denny 126). This cultural capital varies between international students, but for the student I met with on her poetry assignment, her cultural capital preceded her and inevitably overshadowed any actual work we did on her paper. Even now, I am writing about her as an international student, focusing on her status as "other" rather than on her as a writer.

However, I was not the only one who was working across cultural boundaries; the student was also attempting to write in a discourse that was not native to her, and it was this act of interpretation—on her part by interpreting the assignment, and on mine by interpreting her writing—that made our session so difficult. While we may seek painless resolution to this discussion, Valentine and Torres insist that "interacting across cultural differences…will not necessarily be easy,

comfortable, or neat, but these very challenges may also serve a fundamental mission of higher education—the cognitive and social development of its student population" (193-4). But it is precisely this messiness that makes interactions like these so important, particularly in the writing center. As writing center practitioners already denaturalize the system of power that allows an institution like academia to run by being between the positions of student and professor; we are also in a place to denaturalize other such institutionally held systems of power.

Although the question Denny proposes at the beginning of "Facing Nationality in the Writing Center" sounds as if it is suggesting a dichotomy between political awareness and practical assistance, there is space for compromise. Rather than promoting a wholly assimilationist or a wholly separatist politic in working with students like the one I worked with, the wisest course of action at the moment may be to help them to negotiate between indulging the powers that be and letting one's political opinions alienate you. Rather than focusing solely on making this student's writing sound as "standard" as possible, or going off on a political diatribe she may or may not care about, our role is to help students with their concerns while maintaining a mindfulness of the forces at play that shape their writing and our responses to it. While this solution sounds unsatisfyingly tentative to my own somewhat radical politics, Denny wisely focuses on gradual change rather than out-and-out revolution: "tipping points happen at unexpected moments and can't be predicted, per se, but they build from something, from some spur" (Denny 26). Joanna Newsom warns in "Waltz of the 101st Lightborne" that ultimate failure is "eternal return and repeat" of our current ways. With this in mind, examining our own prejudices and mistakes may be the smallest step we take toward change, it will be the first of many, and ultimately will be the one that allows us to move forward.

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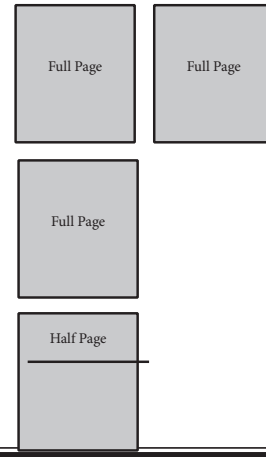

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