



SOUTHERN DISCOURSE in the CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

From the 2020 SWCA Conference

- Hosting a Conference: The Ultimate Team-Building Activity
--Jaclyn Wells (Conference Chair)
- Come Here, and You will Grow: Connecting Writing Development with Writing Center Practices
--Dana Driscoll (Keynote Speaker)

Articles

- Leveling the Playing Field in Composition? Findings from a Writing Fellow Pilot
--Candis Bond
- Expanding Your Boundary: Improving Writing Services to LGBTQ+ and Black Students through Satellite Locations
--Erika Nelson
- When Writing Centers Collaborate with Athletics: The CAMSA Program at Francis Marion University
--Lindsey Banister and Meredith Reynolds

Consultant Insight

- Course Embedded Tutoring, New Genres, and the Small College Environment: An Exploration and Reflection
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Back to the Center

- Extending a Helping Hand: Increasing Visibility for The University Writing Center at the University of West Georgia
--Duane Theobald

Book Review

- *Theories and Methods of Writing Center Studies: A Practical Guide*, reviewed by James Hamby



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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 twice per year by the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA). 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 doubleblind review. To honor the journal'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.

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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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Article Submission Guidelines

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*, 8th 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” Submission Guidelines

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, goals, and hopes for improvement. By incorporating visual images, each “Back to the Center” piece should give readers an authentic sense of the ethos of the center and of the work done there. Each “Back to the Center” submission should 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?

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Book Review Guidelines

Each issue will usually include at least one review of a book relevant to the focus of SDC. Book reviews should be approximately 750-1,500 words in length. Please contact the editors if you are interested in submitting a book review.

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Call for Submissions

From the Editors

Scott Pleasant
Devon Ralston



We are always happy to be able to present each new issue of *Southern Discourse in the Center*, but this issue comes during an especially difficult time for all of us who work in education, so we are particularly proud of everyone who has contributed to it. Before we move on to the specifics of this issue, we want to offer our sincere thanks to the authors and reviewers who devoted their time and expertise to its creation. All of us who work in the writing center field faced some unprecedented challenges this year. Any of them could have been forgiven for choosing not to focus exclusively on more immediate issues, including the complicated logistics of transitioning our centers to online operations and training tutors at a distance. However, everyone involved in the production of this issue saw that continuing our work means not only keeping our centers open in the immediate present but constantly working toward the future, and research/scholarship is a vital part of that process.

This issue grows out of and continues conversations that began at the February 2020 Southeastern Writing Center Association conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The theme of the conference was “Growing Our Centers,” and each of the articles in this issue focuses on strategies for broadening the reach of our writing centers in various ways. With the ongoing Covid-19 crisis continuing to challenge all of us to explore new ideas for reaching out to and connecting with writers, this is an especially appropriate time to focus on expanding and modifying the services we offer to students and faculty. We are confident that *SDC* readers will find much excellent advice and thoughtful commentary in this issue and that

what you find here will help you consider ways to manage and grow your centers.

The issue begins with a thoughtful conference-retrospective piece by our 2020 SWCA Conference Chair, Jaclyn Wells. She describes the process of planning and hosting the conference as a “bonding” experience that helped her to become better connected to her tutoring staff and to the wider writing center community. Wells notes that organizing the conference reaffirmed for her that “[w]hen we do something new together, we learn together, fail together, and try again together.” There is perhaps no better way to describe the collaborative and recursive approach that writing centers foster as we work toward growth (for ourselves as well as the writers we work with).

Dana Lynn Driscoll continues that focus on growth in a conference keynote address that uses seeds as a central metaphor. She reminds us that every type of seed requires special conditions in order to sprout and grow. As writing center professionals, we need to begin with the assumption that every writer we work with can grow and mature under the right conditions, but helping writers is difficult precisely because, in Driscoll’s words, “we have to examine a variety of converging influences, some of which may be fairly obvious, and some of which are hidden deep beneath the surface.” Our job, then, is to try to build that ideal set of conditions.

How can we build that set of conditions? The answer depends on the writers we work with, and the next four articles in the issue provide three possible answers. In her Cozzens Award-winning article, Candis Bond provides encouraging quantitative and qualitative data from a study of a writing fellows programs in which tutors were “embedded” in specific courses. Erika Nelson argues that satellite centers designed to serve LGTBQ+ and Black students can provide a more welcoming environment than a “one-size-fits-all” center for minoritized students. Lindsey Bannister and Meredith Reynolds show how writing centers can work with athletic programs to provide effective and responsive tutoring for athletes, including those who are second language learners. Finally, in an excellent “Consultant Insight” article, Emma Masur echoes Bond’s support for writing fellows programs by advocating for “course-embedded tutoring” that puts writing tutors in direct contact with

students and faculty. The collective point of these three articles is that we should all consider new ideas to connect with writers on our campuses, especially those whose needs are not currently being fully met by the models we are currently employing.

Rounding out the issue are two pieces that continue the “growth” theme. In a “Back to the Center” profile of the University of West Georgia Writing Center, Duane Theobald describes his center’s attempts to grow by connecting with students in new ways and serve new programs on his campus. After noting a number of ongoing challenges, he ends on a positive note, writing that he feels confident that the UWC center can “make the writing center experience meaningful and purposeful for the writers we serve.” James Hamby closes out the issue with a review of *Theories and Methods of Writing Center Studies: A Practical Guide*, by Jo Mackiewicz and Rebecca Day Babcock. The review focuses on an important way writing center research has grown in recent years from qualitative approaches to embrace quantitative and empirical methods.

We hope this issue helps you consider how you can foster and manage growth of various types in your writing center.

--Scott and Devon

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Hosting a Conference: The Ultimate Team-Building Activity

Jaclyn Wells

I am lucky. My writing center has such a strong sense of community that students, faculty, and staff regularly comment on our team's obvious camaraderie. Our end-of-semester potlucks evoke jealousy among passersby, and not just because of the massive cheeseball that always forms the centerpiece. Our contributions to homecoming decoration contests are the stuff of legends (at least in my mind). Our breakroom—physical under normal circumstances, virtual in our new reality—routinely buzzes with tutors cheering each other up after difficult sessions and cheering each other on after good ones.

Because we were already such a tight group, I was surprised at the bonding that happened while planning and hosting the SWCA conference. The experience proved that even a close community can be further strengthened when collaborating on a new experience. One day shortly before the conference, I felt proud to see several of our tutors practicing their presentations in the classroom next to our center. They were nervous because none of them were old hats at conference presenting, but they shared with me that they felt extra pressure as the conference hosts. In one of my favorite moments from the conference, I watched this group present for an audience filled with several other staff members. They turned the pressure they felt into a positive by preparing together and showing up for each other. I was reminded of the nerves leading up to tutoring, when new tutors share coffee and worries in the breakroom and come out stronger for it.

Reflecting now, I realize that building a community is more than a nice by-product of sharing a new experience like hosting a conference,

presenting research for the first time, or starting a tutoring job. Rather, developing a community is central to sharing a new experience. When we do something new together, we learn together, fail together, and try again together. We rely on one another's skills and knowledge, and we work together to solve problems. We develop our own abilities while we help others develop theirs. We play different roles, acting during the collaboration as learners, experts, coaches, commentators, counselors, and allies (Ryan and Zimmerelli 4-7). In other words, we do what writing center people do every day.

The SWCA conference also gave me a chance to develop a skill I traditionally lack: the skill of delegating. I feel guilty asking for help, and I feel like I should know everything, even while I constantly remind tutors they need not have all the answers in order to help our students. While planning and hosting the SWCA conference, I delegated out of necessity, as I simply did not have the time or knowledge to host the conference all on my own. In perhaps my favorite example, I needed major help planning the graduate student mixer. After spending a solid hour Googling "Birmingham entertainment" alone in my office, I walked into the writing center's breakroom and blurted out, "Where do...where do the youngsters hang out?" After they finished laughing at me, the three tutors eating lunch offered dozens of suggestions, including one spot they agreed would be perfect for the graduate student mixer. (And it was.) Once I asked for help, the decision I had been struggling to make alone became infinitely easier. We see this play out time and again during tutoring sessions in the writing center, but the conference reminded me that collaboration matters for writing center tutors and directors as well.

The writing center team offered far more than ideas for the graduate student mixer, valuable as that was. They also helped me see the conference through the eyes of tutors who would be attending SWCA, which for many of them would be their first conference. For their part, planning SWCA helped tutors understand what a conference really is: an event where people in a disciplinary community come together to talk, listen, and share. The work helped them more easily envision a conference in community terms. Our small writing center community

was inviting in the broader writing center community or, as one tutor put it, “we’re hosting Thanksgiving dinner this year.” Further, putting the conference in community terms helped the tutors feel less intimidated by academic conferences in general. It is harder to feel intimidated once you know the “real deal,” that behind what could seem like a scary professional event are many folks who are also learning and feeling overwhelmed by all that goes into planning the experience. (Perhaps more to the point, can you really feel threatened by conferences once you know how much time organizers spend worrying about whether there will be enough cheese cubes at the opening reception or if we ordered the right size of those little plastic nametag holders?)

Additionally, writing centers embrace the personal and academic, as well as the ever-shifting nature of the roles we all play, in a way that allows for real community. Another favorite memory from SWCA was bringing my eight-month-old daughter, Vivian, for a couple of hours on the conference’s second day when childcare fell through. First-time mom worries and first-time conference chair worries collided, and I felt concerned that people would find me unprofessional or distracted for toting around my baby. I should not have worried: I will tell my daughter for years to come that during her first academic conference, she was enthusiastically held by every writing center director from the Southeastern United States, as well as the keynote speaker and the organization’s president. The writing center community allowed me to comfortably occupy the roles of mother *and* conference chair, rather than forcing me to remain in one or the other. But this was more than a meaningful experience just for me, I think. Ultimately, I am glad that I brought my daughter, and not just because she’s really cute (though she *really* is). I am proud that newcomers to our field, including many of my writing center’s tutors, saw someone being a person and a professional at once and saw others in our community responding so kindly.

I handed Vivi off to her dad shortly before the keynote lunch, which brings me to a final favorite memory: introducing the keynote speaker, Dana Driscoll. I invited Dr. Driscoll to speak at the conference months before I had even drafted the proposal to host. Dana is one of our field’s outstanding scholars, but she is also a dear friend of mine from graduate

school. Dana and I worked together in Linda Bergmann's Writing Lab, where we produced content for the Purdue OWL, tutored students, and learned to become writing center researchers and directors. Introducing Dana at a conference I had organized and then listening to her share her research felt like coming full circle, especially while looking out at the audience filled with graduate students learning with and from each other in the ways that Dana and I did in our graduate school's writing center. During my brief introduction, I let myself reminisce a bit on those graduate school days, hoping to underscore for students in the audience that the communities they developed while learning and teaching together in the writing center would last long after graduation. Years after graduation, Dana and I and other members of our cohort still learn from and with each other. We are still a team, and that began in our writing center.

Hosting the Southeastern Writing Center Association conference was a totally new experience for me and my center. I am thrilled that we had the opportunity, anxieties and all, because collaborating on the new experience strengthened our community in ways I could not have imagined. Hosting the SWCA conference left me thinking about the importance of sharing new experiences to build our local writing center teams and our broader team of writing centers in the Southeast. While a writing center cannot host a conference every year, we can all incorporate new experiences into our tutor training to strengthen our communities of co-learners and co-teachers and to reframe new challenges as opportunities to build community. As many writing centers have undoubtedly experienced, the Covid-19 pandemic has offered one such opportunity, as my team has learned together how to continue our work in this new reality. Likewise, while the SWCA organization may not be able to create a wholly new conference model every year, we can continue to offer new experiences that allow members to build teams through shared learning. The upcoming SWCA virtual conference certainly offers one such experience. As we gather virtually, we will figure out together how to meet and share in this new format, and we may find that this opportunity for co-learning provides an even greater team-building experience than the conference does under usual circumstances. I, for one, can't wait.

Works Cited

Ryan, Leigh and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 6th ed., Bedford, 2016.

About the Author



Jaclyn Wells is an Associate Professor of English and writing center director at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. With Allen Brizee, she is author of *Partners in Literacy: A Writing Center Model for Civic Engagement* (2016). Her work has also appeared in edited collections and journals including *College Composition and Communication*, *The Writing Center Journal*, the *Community Literacy Journal*, and *Pedagogy*. Aside from writing a book, hosting the SWCA conference in 2019 was the most challenging and most rewarding experience of Jaclyn's academic career.

Come Here, and You will Grow: Connecting Writing Development with Writing Center Practices (SWCA 2020 Keynote Address)

Dana Lynn Driscoll

Growth. The term is used in a myriad of ways within our writing centers. When I think of growth, the first thing I think about is a seed being planted and fostered. At the Oakland University Writing Center in Rochester, MI, the Writing Center has a mural on one of its walls, playing on the “seed” idea (see *fig. 1*). In the mural, students are shown planting seeds, and from those seeds, they watch papers grow. Here, as the mural suggests, students come to the writing center to plant ideas and from those ideas, words and writing grow. The mural is prominently displayed in the writing center such that each student who comes to the center sees it as they enter. The message is clear: *come here and you will grow*.



Figure 1: Oakland University’s Seed Mural

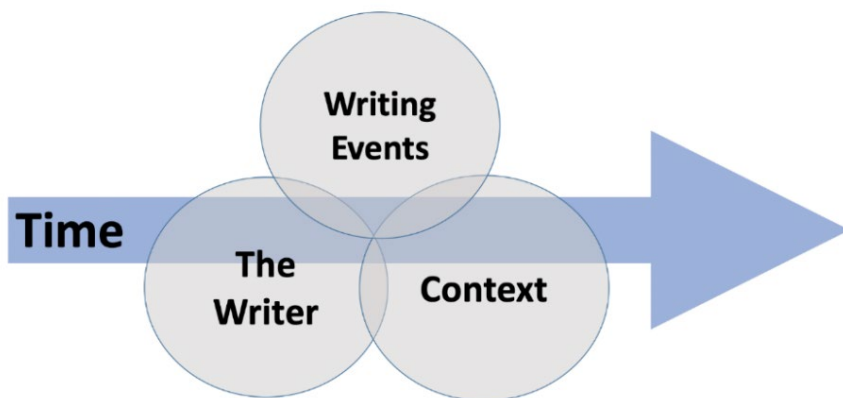
For a moment, let's step back from the idea of writing centers growing writers and think about the seed in a literal sense—because understanding how real seeds work can help us better understand how we might help writers grow. Seeds are really quite amazing. A seed contains an embryonic plant, tucked up inside a protective shell, ready to burst forth when the conditions are right. And that's the key to it all—the seed is able to grow when the conditions are right. A seed begins in a period of dormancy. Different conditions are needed to encourage the seed out of dormancy and into growth. In colder climates, like where I live in Western Pennsylvania, a seed may need a period of at least 90 days below freezing before it can grow. In fire-dependent climates, in the western part of the United States, the seed may have had to have been subjected to fire or very high temperatures. Some tiny seeds require light to grow. If they are buried in the earth, they will remain dormant until they are exposed to light, which is why you often see so many “weeds” pop up after the ground has been disturbed at a construction site. Some seeds need to be eaten first, or moved by ants, or depend on birds for being scattered. As you might be starting to imagine, getting a single seed to grow can be a fairly complicated process, with different seeds having fairly distinct requirements. As we'll see soon, seeds and writers aren't all that different when it comes to growth. Now that we understand some of the requirements of a seed to grow in a literal sense, we can use this knowledge to understand how we might help student writers grow, just as the mural at Oakland University suggests: *come here and you will grow*.

Growing writers is one of the core things we advertise as writing centers. But what are the things that help writers to grow? And what do we mean by growth? How does the writing center facilitate growth? In the rest of this article, I'll attempt to offer some answers to these questions and the kinds of conversations we might want initiate to explore the theme of growth. Specifically, I'll be discussing the idea of growth from a learning development perspective through the consideration of two questions: 1. What factors influence writing growth over time? 2. How can writing centers intervene and support that writing growth? These are the central questions that can shape and frame our discussions and practices in our centers.

Just like our seeds needing a variety of favorable conditions for growth that are distinct based on the type of seed, these are actually fairly complex questions to answer. Like a seed, writers require many things to grow. To sort some of this out, we can turn to theories of learning development to offer us a set of best practices to help support writers growth.

Just as different seeds have different needs if they are to grow and thrive, writers are no different. We obviously can't treat all writers and their needs in the same way—because the conditions for one writer's growth may not be the same as for another writer. When we ask what makes a writer grow, we have to examine a variety of converging influences, some of which may be fairly obvious, and some of which are hidden deep beneath the surface. We have to think about how different factors may be present for different writers, in terms of the writers as people, both in the writing they are producing as well as the broader contexts in which they write.

This specific model (see *fig. 2*) I'm going to share today and use to explore these questions of growth, which my co-author Jing Zhang and I adapted from Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological developmental theories, uses four major features to help us understand how growth happens: They are: **1) a writer** and all that they bring to a situation, including experiences, prior knowledge, and individual learning qualities; **2) contexts** that may support or detract from their learning, including home, school, and work; with **3) writing events** that happen over **4) time**. While this model seems simple in principle, we'll explore the layers of complexity in each of these areas. In many ways, the writer themselves is the most complex, and yet most under-explored, part of this equation.



*Driscoll and Zheng, under review

Figure 2: Growth Model

The Writer

First, there is the writer themselves—the human being that walks into our writing centers. Humans are complicated, and as we know from tutoring, there is a *lot going on* within us. Within a writer is a wide set of knowledge, experiences, dispositions, and identities that shape the way they encounter and work with each writing assignment or writing event. Some of the qualities they bring to the writing situation have been identified by researchers. The most common that we think about is a writer’s previous experiences and prior knowledge about writing (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak). But writers have many other aspects within them that directly impact writing, such as a set of beliefs about the world, their ability to write, and their own understanding of learning, such as epistemologies (Driscoll and Powell) and mindsets (Dweck), a set of individual qualities that are subconscious but deeply influence how they approach learning called dispositions (Driscoll and Wells; Wardle; Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg), a set of emotions about writing (Driscoll and Powell, Driscoll and Wells), and who they are as people and how they identify with writing and the topic (Ivanic). All of these are part of this equation.

Not all of these personal aspects may be salient for each writing moment or writer, but they are all present within a writer at all times. How these personal qualities manifest depends on the specific writing assignment, instructor, tutor, or other contextual features. Some of these qualities

may only become salient in certain situations and remain dormant in other situations. For example, a student who feels well supported by their faculty member may not struggle with writing assignments in one course and therefore not procrastinate, but in a course where a student feels less supported, the student may battle with low self-efficacy (Bandura) or the ability to believe that they can succeed, thus leading to procrastinating on the assignment. In this case, the student may always have low self-efficacy about writing, which can lead to procrastination, but it's feeling less supported that forces that quality to the forefront (in fact, what I just described was a common occurrence in some of my research participants). This is part of why tutoring is so effective. Skilled tutors can adapt not only to specific genres and writing assignments that writers bring, but also to all of these factors to offer unique interactions that help specific writers grow.

Unfortunately, in writing center settings, we have a tendency to see this writer "stuff" (e.g. emotions, dispositions, beliefs about writing) as somehow less central or important than the writing itself. As my co-author Jennifer Wells and I recently explored, some of these personal characteristics might be viewed by writing center practitioners as very detrimental to writing. Noreen Lape, in her *Writing Lab Newsletter* article, analyzes popular tutor training manuals and finds that manuals often present emotions and other personal characteristics that students bring to sessions in negative terms. She finds that emotionally charged sessions are seen as as "threatening to sabotage both the tutor's and the writer's efforts" (2). Lape reports that tutoring manuals offer tutors suggestions and strategies for dealing with such emotions but from the perspective of getting writers' emotions out of the way as soon as possible to get to the real work of the session: the writing.

But developmental theories about learning suggest otherwise: the writers' emotions, beliefs, perspectives, dispositions and backgrounds can be either developmentally generative (meaning they help produce growth) or disruptive (meaning they harm growth). Generative characteristics within people are so central to long-term writing development that Urie Bronfenbrenner and Pamela Morris say that these characteristics are the "precursors and producers of later development." Thus, we fail to support writers in developing these personal qualities that support their writing—and in helping them overcome these

challenging and disruptive personal qualities—it is likely that writers will not grow long term. You might see it like trying to plant a seed without the right kinds of soil or water—a seed without these things, even if sprouted, will wither and die.

So, in order to consider a more growth-oriented tutoring approach, we might explore the toolbox metaphor. This metaphor was given to me by Nora, one of the participants in my longitudinal study spanning 10 years and studying writers' growth over time. The metaphor is this: Each student has a toolbox that they are always carrying with them. Some students come to college prepared with many tools and they know how to use them. Other students may have relatively empty toolboxes or tools long unused that are gathering dust at the bottom of their toolboxes. Other students may have tools that they think are only useful for one purpose (like say, an English class), when in fact, they may be useful for many purposes. Some students don't even realize there is a toolbox or that they can put tools in it. Other students don't have the faith in themselves to pick up their past tools and struggle. What is in their toolbox aren't just skills like understanding how to outline or write a thesis, but also these other tools like emotional management, time management, self-efficacy, curiosity, and other dispositions that can help them successfully navigate challenging writing situations. These are tools that help them stay focused, stay on track, and accomplish their writing goals. This metaphor is really useful for writers to hear about. This metaphor, then, helps them shift their own beliefs about learning and what learning to write is all about and helps them grow as writers over time.

I'll share two examples of this from my own 10-year study of learners' growth to illustrate just how important this idea of the toolbox and personal qualities of writers is. In this study, I followed 13 writers from first-year composition to one year past graduation. I am still following my final two writers after a decade. I interviewed them at least once a year, collected writing samples, and got to know them as writers and as people.

In her first year, Nora is a generation 1.5 immigrant learner coming from a household who speaks Russian at home. She is the first person in her family to go to college. She is writing her first college paper ever for her

introductory composition course. Because of her background and experiences, Nora does not have many prior writing experiences to draw upon. Because she has experienced a lifetime of financial struggles with her family, she possesses a strong sense of determination and persistence and is determined to work as hard as she needs to succeed. These qualities are very “generative” to her as a writer. Even so, she recognizes that she has a bit of an “empty toolbox” (which were her specific words) with regard to her own previous knowledge, writing strategies, and especially her time management. She comes to the writing center for nearly every writing assignment because she knows the writing center helps her grow. In this case, the writing center helps her fill her toolbox with appropriate writing skills and writing adjacent skills that she can employ in diverse writing experiences. Nora’s persistent help-seeking behaviors worked well with the individualized writing support that writing center tutors offered.

In his first year, Derek is a native English-speaking student, whose father is a history professor and whose mother is a high school English teacher. His parents carefully helped him apply for college and supported his educational journey long before he got to his first-year composition course. He is writing his first college paper, and he is familiar with the genre and process because he has completed multiple AP English courses in high school. Because of his background and experiences, Derek has a wealth of prior knowledge to draw upon, high self-efficacy, a positive view of himself as a writer, as well as a supportive family structure that can offer him regular feedback on his academic choices and writing. This offers Derek a sense of self-confidence and offers him many “tools” to draw upon, like time management and goal setting. Derek doesn’t come to the writing center for this assignment, and he tells me that is because he doesn’t need it.

Obviously, Nora and Derek are very different as learners. Each of them is the sum of what they carry with them—not only their own previous writing experiences, but also their beliefs about themselves as writers and the kinds of resources and support structures they have to draw upon. They also have privileges—or lack thereof—from certain identities or backgrounds.

Thus, for a tutorial, even if they are bringing the same assignment to the writing center from the same class, what Nora needs to support her writing growth vs. what Derek needs is very different. Nora needs help with filling in the gaps in her own knowledge due to her lack of previous writing experiences and support to help her build her self-efficacy, while Derek may want to talk about the “big ideas” in his paper to generate an outline of where he wants to go next. This is why the “seed” metaphor is apt here as we think about growing writers. What is needed for one writer, based on their background and tools, is not what may help another writer. Being able to identify the personal qualities that writers bring that critically impact writing can help us be much better tutors. As we all know, no two writers are the same—and the more we know about how these personal qualities work, the more prepared we are to help diverse writers.

From a learning development perspective, these personal qualities that make up writers are extraordinarily influential on what happens to not only the writing they produce in the short term, but also, the growth that they have as writers in the long term. In fact, in much of the research I’ve done on writers, these personal qualities are the most central to long-term success as writers—even beyond specific writing assignments.

Based on this discussion, I offer some growth-oriented suggestions for tutoring. First, a goal of writing center tutoring can be to help increase the number of tools students have access to and the range of specific uses of tools students (tutoring for transfer); to give them this metaphor is one useful approach. Second, Growth-oriented tutoring focuses not only on the immediate assignment but also “growing” the writer over time by supporting personal characteristics that encourage growth. This may include bringing to the surface many underlying beliefs about writing that may harm long term development. There are many such ones, including the idea of “giftedness” first identified by Palmquist and Young. Giftedness is feeling that you are either born a good writer or not. If a writer believes this, it offers little room to grow. Third, realizing that non-writing “stuff” (emotions, dispositions, writing beliefs) is not just “junk on the table” but rather, can be as developmentally important as writing skills and knowledge and thus, understanding these features and attending to them in our tutorials and training is critical. Finally, for writing center administrators, offering

tutor education in these “person” qualities so tutors can recognize them and directly intervene to support long term growth.

The Context

A discussion of the family histories and living circumstances for our two learners leads to our second growth factor—context. Context is a term we often hear tied to the rhetorical situation—writers are always situated within specific contexts, with audiences, genres, and purposes (Bitzer). When we think about context from a growth perspective, it offers us a bit of a different angle. Early in my study, Nora and Derek are writing a similar rhetorical analysis assignment, and there are many aspects about their context that are the same: they have the same curriculum that is standard for the writing program, taught by two long-term instructors, both of whom have won teaching awards. They have access to the same university resources including the university writing center. They are embedded in the same institutional culture. Thus, their current educational context is the same.

And yet, their home contexts are radically divergent. Nora works 20 hours a week at a part-time job, lives at home with her extended family, has childcare responsibilities for her younger siblings while her parents are at work, and struggles to find quiet time for her to focus and get her work done. Derek also lives at home but does not need to work a part time job due to his parents’ support. He is able to do his homework in a quiet setting and ask questions of his parents when needed, both of whom have academic mastery of English. One of the questions you might ask after hearing these two students’ stories is, is one home context or another more conducive to growth?

Statistically, we know that it’s easier for people like Derek to succeed in school (and grow as writers) than it is for people like Nora—we can see this from national rates on graduation and completion based on socioeconomic status and first language (Battle and Lewis; Kanno and Cromley). We also know, from Lori Salem’s work focusing on who chooses to come to the writing center, that Nora is statistically much more likely to use the writing center than Derek because she is a woman, has low previous educational achievement, has parents who did not go to college, and has a non-English linguistic background. In this case, the context of the writing center, combined with Nora’s strong help-seeking

and persistence, allows her to get the help she needs to succeed, despite her being underprepared for college in a multitude of ways.

While it is the tutor's job is to help every writer to continue to grow, we might also recognize that the most growth may be seen among those who need it the most; they have more room to grow, so to speak. Regardless of the differences between educational, linguistic, and personal background characteristics, all learners have a chance at success if they get the right support structures—something a writing center provides.

Given this, here are research supported suggestions from learning theory that can help support writers' growth from a context perspective. First, time management for students like Nora is really important. Nora has to be able to navigate multiple contexts and learn how to be efficient with her time because of family, work, and school obligations. But because of her lack of tools, she gets overwhelmed. This is yet another way a writing center can support writers' growth—provide them with specific information on time management, goal setting, and models of student success in explicit ways and directly train tutors in these strategies. Another piece of this puzzle is what Reiff and Bawarshi call “boundary crossing.” Coming into a new context is a boundary; successfully navigating that boundary is challenging. Writing center tutors can help students identify the rules and expectations and successfully cross these boundaries. Helping students identify new and divergent genres, and helping them recognize points of similarity and difference, are helpful strategies here. Finally, as Tinto argues, belonging is critical for students like Nora, and this is one of the reasons that writing centers strive to be welcoming and open places for students. For students in their initial stages of growth as college writers, hearing the phrase, “you belong here” can help them persist.

Writing Events

The third aspect of our model is the role of writing events—the specific assignments, activities, and writing tasks that students do throughout their college career. I think we often focus on these as the center of development, but in reality, they are but one piece in a larger puzzle. In some cases, across the course of their college careers, students do hundreds of different assignments and writing activities in diverse genres (as Dan Metzger's work suggests). Students are exposed to and have to

navigate the conventions of multiple genres (Metzer) and academic discourse communities (as Beaufort's work explores). What's interesting about these writing experiences from a growth perspective is that not all are created equal. Some key experiences have deep impact on students' long-term growth, while, unfortunately, most of the others are simply things that students write because they need to pass. Once these papers are written, they are quickly forgotten. How can we tell if a writing assignment is conducive to growth or not? You can't always tell the difference in the moment.

Let's return to Derek and look at the role that different assignments play in his growth as a writer. Derek didn't experience many writing challenges in his first few years—because he had AP classes in high school, he used a fairly standard process that he learned in middle school for college writing. His assignments were enjoyable to him, but did not challenge him and did not contribute in any meaningful way to his long-term growth. Then, in his third year of college, Derek took an early Irish history class. The assignment required him to write in the style of a 9th century Irish monk. This assignment was extremely stressful for Derek while he was writing it. Thus, he finally visited the writing center for support to help him through the assignment. The tutor didn't just help him with the writing but talked through his anxiety and stress about the assignment. Derek was able to successfully manage these issues and completes the assignment with an A and the hearty praise of his professor. This assignment changed Derek permanently as a writer—to write it, he had to deeply engage with the texts, navigate multiple texts at once, draft small sections, and engage in what he called “micro-editing” at the sentence level. Four years later and well beyond his college experience, Derek still talked about the importance of that assignment on his overall growth as a writer.

What was so special about this particular writing event? What might a writing center do to intervene successfully? The assignment pushed him in new ways as a writer, pushed him out of his comfort zone, and asked him to write in a new genre. The assignments that often cause such growth look a lot like Derek's. But this assignment, because of its new demands, caused Derek no small amount of anxiety and frustration—the tools he had were not sufficient, so he had to devise new tools and new ways of using his tools. The writing center tutorial was instrumental in

helping him overcome his frustration, helping him shift his process, and leaving him with a sense of accomplishment and pride. This assignment was meaningful to him because he was able to triumph over the difficulty.

As my co-author Roger Powell and I found in investigating the role of emotions in long-term learning: whether or not a writer “grows” has a lot to do not only with the kinds of writing they do but with how they manage their emotions like anxiety and frustration when faced with difficult assignments. In other words, if Derek hadn’t been able to have support with his frustration about the assignment, that emotion might negatively “color” the entire experience for him, meaning that it is much less likely that he’ll grow as a writer long term from it or transfer that experience elsewhere. I saw this time and time again in my longitudinal study—so many opportunities for growth that were lost. In Derek’s case, we see the synthesis of developmental factors that contributed to Derek’s growth: his ability to manage his emotions, writing center support, and the opportunity that a challenging writing assignment provides.

Thus, a critical role in the writing center in growing writers is helping them manage and work through negative emotions about challenging writing assignments. Some tutoring suggestions include the following. First, as Carol Dweck’s work suggests, when faced with challenge and struggle, some students shut down; this shutting down has developmentally stifling effects. Helping to encourage writers to understand that challenges and struggle are opportunities to grow is key. Second, we can work to help students build what Eodice, Learner, and Geller talk about as *meaningful* writing experiences, specifically, help them find the meaning in projects and build engagement and motivation. Meaningful writing also has more potential for growth. Third, we can help students who are struggling with difficult assignments manage their emotions and plan for success. Finally, we can recognize that the ability to overcome these difficult emotions can be the difference between an assignment that allows them to grow and one that they push away and do not learn from (Driscoll and Powell).

Time

Now we get into the final aspect of our model that helps us better understand the idea of “growth” – and that is time. The concept of time

is inherent in growth. If I plant a seed, it doesn't grow instantaneously. But if I come back to that soil in a few days, I will see a small sprout coming forth. Each day I visit the sprout, it will get larger and larger—and in this way, growth and time are interwoven.

Sometimes in a writing center, we can clearly see this across tutorials. Nora is a student who frequently visits the writing center, and she often works with the same tutor. Her regular tutor, Jenn, can see Nora's progress—how Nora remembers things from one session to the next, how her newfound knowledge is employed in future writing assignments, and the general level of confidence, and her growing grasp of time management. But not all students are like Nora, returning to the writing center time and time again and working with the same tutor. Sometimes, we see a student only once, like Derek. And that's where the questions might set in. Once that student walks out the door, we really don't always know what happened. Did the student get an A? Did we make a difference? Did they grow?

Because Derek was a research participant, I know how valuable that one writing session was for him. It had momentous impact on his growth as a writer years past the study. But I doubt that the tutor has any idea what that session did for his growth.

The writing center is in a unique position to help students with long-term growth even if we can't always see it. Unlike a single 14-week class, we see students like Nora over a period of years. In this way, the writing center may be directly responsible for facilitating a good portion of her growth. Scholars who study transfer of learning, like Heather Hill and Bonnie Devet, have recognized the ability of the writing center to intervene and support writers' long-term growth in ways that classes cannot.

On the one hand, with 30- to 45-minute tutorials, we are almost always focused on immediate and short-term writing needs. But growth is a long-term phenomenon. How do we consider the long term? To tutor for growth, we can't just think about tutoring a piece of writing. You might say that writing growth is an end product of cultivating a writer and helping them navigate their many writing experiences over time, just as a mature tomato is the result of careful cultivation in rich soil. As the

graphic in *fig. 2* suggests, it's the integration of these experiences with writing into a writer's toolbox and into a writer's self that is really where the deep writerly growth happens.

Thus, the most important work we do, from a growth perspective, is to tutor with the understanding that we are growing writers who can then engage in specific writing experiences more successfully, and learn from those experiences over time. Classic writing center lore puts the writing and the writer in opposition, saying that we should only focus on tutoring papers and helping the writing in the immediate situation or we should only focus on tutoring writers. These older debates suggest that we have to choose one side. But from a learning development perspective, we need to recognize that this tutoring writers vs. writing debate is a false binary. To be effective to support growth, we need to do both. It's not either/or, it's both/and. Writers grow through specific writing experiences, which they then generalize or "abstract" into tools they can use and adapt in the future. Growth-oriented tutoring is about tutoring with an understanding that we are helping a writer grow, we help them with every specific assignment thereafter. It reminds us to stay big picture while also focusing on the details.

My final set of suggestions, then, draws upon longitudinal research to help us think about our own centers as growth-oriented places where we can focus not only on immediate writing support but also on helping grow writers over time in very specific ways. At the administrative level, focus on strategies and supports for returning students: the students who are frequently using the writing center represent a very different population than those who come only once or twice in their college career. Focus not only on writing support but training tutors to navigate between the specific details of one assignment and the "bigger picture" of growth. For example, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in our Writing Center this year, we are focusing on learning about student retention, what underprepared students struggle with, and developing resources that help them with writing adjacent skills like time management, goal setting, and more. These are all growth-oriented skills and once mastered will serve students for many years.

At the tutorial level, encourage tutors to tutor developmentally. This includes tutoring for learning transfer (e.g. how can I take what I'm

learning now and apply it in the future) (Devet, Driscoll, Hill). It also includes tutoring to help students understand threshold concepts, concepts that apply to many different writing events (e.g. rhetorical situations, genres, etc.) (Adler-Kassner and Wardle). Finally, it includes tutoring beyond the writing to support the development of positive personal characteristics that make writing more successful.

Conclusion

Thanks, in large part, to writing center tutorials, Nora was able to fill her toolbox and grow as a writer over her time in college. I'm happy to report that Nora's sheer amount of determination did have her finally graduate after eight years as a full-time undergraduate. She's now successfully employed as a nurse in a hospital in a major metropolitan area. Derek, too, graduated in five years and is currently employed as a French teacher in that same metro area. Both of them grew, and both of them succeeded, and their successes was in no small part to the support that the writing center offered them at key moments. For Nora, that support was ongoing and long term. For Derek, that support happened very infrequently, but when it occurred, it was critical in helping him grow permanently as a writer.

To conclude, I want to return to our seed metaphor and the mural on the wall of Oakland University. Growth isn't about how many students we serve, or necessarily how we can grow our budgets (although our deans and upper administrators may not agree). Ultimately, growth is about how well we serve students, how we help them grow, and how we might engage in specific practices to support their growth over time. Growth is about helping them grow not only in writing skills, but with writing adjacent skills as well as human beings. I urge you to consider the many different ways we might think about growth: How can you grow in your own understanding of tutoring practice? How can you grow as a writer yourself? How can you develop practices to help others grow? Think about the power of that one tutorial that Derek had. Without the intervention of the tutor, he might never have grown at all. That's the power that is in within each of you, to help writers grow and impact them over time. This is the promise, but also the challenge, of writing center work.

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Leveling the Playing Field in Composition? Findings from a Writing Fellow Pilot¹

Candis Bond

Writing fellow programs (WFPs) have supported faculty, consultants, and writers for more than four decades (Hughes and Hall). Studies have shown these types of programs support consultants and faculty through opportunities for collaboration, professional development, increased self-awareness, and scholarship (Bleakney et al.; Carpenter et al.; Corroy; Gentile; Haring-Smith; Hughes and Hall; Mullin et al.; Severino and Knight; Spiegelman and Grobman). For students, these programs have been found to improve performance and confidence (Corroy; Dvorak et al.; Regaingnon and Bromley; Vance). In a cross-institutional study, Lara Vance found these benefits to be most pronounced for “at-risk” students.² Students at greater risk for failing writing courses or who feel marginalized on campus may benefit more from WFPs than peers because, as Laurie Gorbman suggests, these programs “bridge” the gap between basic and advanced academic writing. Additionally, writing fellows (WFs) provide social acclimation, mentorship, and content knowledge alongside consulting in writing, which adds to students’ social capital, confidence, and sense of agency in college settings (Dvorak et al.; Henry et al.). These programs can also “promote more

¹ I would like to thank the Southeastern Writing Center Association for awarding funding for this project through the Christine Cozzens Research Grant and Initiative. Without this support, my writing center could not have afforded to staff a writing fellow pilot.

² Vance focuses specifically on students identifying as low-income, first generation, and minorities. For more on how embedded tutoring programs support marginalized students, see studies by Boylan; Fowler and Boylan; Hodges and White; Henry et al.; and Solórzano et al.

democratic pedagogies” by destabilizing classroom hierarchies to promote equitable partnerships (Spiegelman and Grobman 6).

The embedded nature of WFPs is central to their value for at-risk and marginalized students since many studies have found these students are often less likely than their peers to use external support in college (Boylan; Engle et al.; Hodges and White; Solórzano et al.).³ An exception is Lori Salem’s study investigating students’ choices to use or not use writing centers. She found students who were historically excluded from higher education, including women, people of color, and multilingual writers, were actually more likely to use writing support. However, she also notes these students’ “choices” result from both personal decisions and social conditions that may simultaneously lead them to view such writing support as remedial and, thus, stigmatizing. In other words, even if marginalized students do visit writing centers, they may perceive such support to be a sign of their exclusion rather than a normal part of higher education. Significantly, however, studies report that all students are more likely to use tutoring long-term when they participate in WFPs (Corroy; DeLoach et al.; Gentile; Hannum et al.; Pagnac et al.; Spiegelman and Grobman; Titus et al.). In this respect, WFPs can be a way for institutions to create more equitable learning environments for both marginalized and mainstream students. These programs can normalize writing support in ways that reduce stigma and increase access for all (Dvorak et al.).

Promoting Equitable Outcomes at Augusta University: A WFP Pilot in Context

With equity in mind, our writing center piloted a WFP in fall 2019 at Augusta University (AU), a mid-sized public research university in the Southeast. The program was part of a university core curriculum redesign initiative called Gateways to Completion (G2C). G2C was developed by the Gardner Institute, a non-profit organization committed to improving underrepresented students’ retention and completion rates, equity, social justice, and mobility. The G2C initiative supports faculty-developed course redesign within the core curriculum to improve DFWI (drop, fail, withheld, and incomplete) rates and student success. As the director of the writing center, I was made co-chair of the G2C redesign committee for English 1102, the second course in AU’s first-year composition sequence. Our subcommittee was tasked with developing and piloting

interventions to improve student success in this course. DFWI data over the last several years showed nontraditional and minority students were at greater risk of failing. Consequently, we hypothesized that piloting a WFP could create a more equitable playing field for students. Linking WFPs to WAC-initiatives, Spigelman and Grobman point out these programs do “not specifically or intentionally target ‘weaker’ students in a particular class but consider writing instruction [as] crucial to all students” (5). We envisioned our WFP as doing this work; a WFP program could promote educational access, agency, and equity without stigmatizing students in composition.

Prior to implementing our WFP, a WF was selected who had already completed the three-credit Writing Center training course and worked for two years in the writing center. This WF completed five additional, specialized training modules that focused on: student learning outcomes for English 1102; resources for teaching skills integral to English 1102 outcomes; readings related to WFPs, differences between writing center and classroom-based tutoring, and power dynamics within the classroom; and role-play scenarios specific to WFP work. I also drafted a WFP mission statement and learning outcomes and shared these with the WF and faculty partner. The faculty partner added the WF to his course learning management system (LMS) so she could see his materials, and they met prior to the start of the semester and several times after to determine how the WF would participate during class time. The WF attended most class sessions and assisted with presenting course materials, leading class discussions, and facilitating peer review. Within and outside of class, she also met with students individually and in small groups to work on their writing.

In order to assess our WFP pilot, I conducted a mixed-methods study³ focused on students’ perceptions. While the direct measures used in initiatives like G2C are helpful, this study aimed to prioritize students’ experiences, voices, and narratives. I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the presence of a WF make students feel more confident when writing for English 1102?

³ This study was approved by the Augusta University Internal Review Board (study # 1444240-2).

2. Does the presence of WF contribute to students' perceptions of improved writing ability in English 1102?
3. Does the presence of a WF increase the likelihood that students will seek external writing support for future courses?

Students' responses to pre- and post-surveys support conclusions from previous studies: WFPs benefit student writers. Survey responses revealed four major findings:

1. There are positive correlations between WFs and improved student perceptions of writing ability, confidence, and writing support;
2. Positive emotional affect connected to writing was more common for students working with a WF;
3. Students were aware of the WF's ability to destabilize classroom hierarchies;
4. Students most frequently associated the WF's guidance with "decoding," which has implications for how WFPs imagine the WF's role and WFP pedagogy.

Study Design and Methods

This study was a mixed-methods, quasi-experimental design that compared two sections of English 1102 taught by the same faculty member. Section "A" was taught normally without a WF while section "B" was taught normally but with the addition of a WF. Although the study is not truly experimental in design, I call these sections "control" and "experimental" for ease of reference. Sections A and B were chosen based on the availability of the faculty partner and WF; however, although the sample was not randomly selected, students in both sections were demographically comparable and representative of the larger 2020 freshman class at AU.⁴ All students in both sections were given the opportunity to take identical pre-surveys on their perceptions of writing

⁴ Gender, race, first-generation status, freshman index, and Pell recipient status were similar in both sections and were within 15% of freshman-wide statistics. The only major distinction across sections was military identification. While 15% of the 2020 freshman class and the experimental section identified as military, 40% of the control section were military. Although the sample was representative of the 2023 freshman class at AU, this university's demographics limit the generalizability of the data beyond local contexts. Cross-institutional data would be needed to make findings generalizable to other institutions.

ability, confidence, and writing supports in the first two weeks of classes during the fall 2019 semester. In the final two weeks of the semester, all students in both sections were given the opportunity to take a post-survey about their experiences in English 1102 and how they correlated with shifts in perceptions of writing confidence, ability, and writing supports. The post-surveys differed by section, with the experimental section's surveys including additional questions related to students' experiences with the WF.

A total of fifteen students from each section (N=30) responded to the pre-survey. A total of nine students from the control section and ten students from the experimental section responded to the post-survey (N=19). Surveys included a mix of closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were recorded and analyzed. Qualitative survey responses were analyzed using a mix of predetermined coding categories and a grounded theory approach: the three research questions focusing on perceptions of writing ability, confidence, and writing supports informed coding, but I also remained open to emergent themes in the data. The NVivo software package was used to code data and group themes.

As a pilot, limitations of this study include its small sample size, lack of full participation in pre- and post-surveys, the faculty partner's affiliation with the Writing Center (he has worked in the center and incentivizes visits, which could impact students' perceptions and behaviors), and the quasi-experimental design. Comparing two sections is reductive, as students' perceptions and behaviors are multifactorial and causation cannot be proven—only possible correlations can be found in the data.

Despite these limitations, I chose this design to learn more about students' perceptions at the start and end of English 1102 more generally. It was an added bonus to learn how the addition of a WF influenced some students' views. This study is also limited to indirect measures: feelings and perceptions. Although a possible limitation, perceptions can offer important insights because composition scholars have noted the importance of emotions, feeling, and perception in learning and transfer (Driscoll and Powell).

“I never have gotten clear feedback”: Shared Traits and Perceptions on Pre-Surveys

I conducted pre-surveys in order to develop a better understanding of students' perceptions of college writing, ability, confidence, and support coming into English 1102. Pre-surveys also helped me establish whether both sections of English 1102 shared traits and perceptions, supporting comparison across groups post-intervention. Pre-surveys did show that students across sections shared similar perceptions of past writing experience and preparation. Another key finding was that prior “experience” with writing, genre, or composing skills did not translate into perceptions of high confidence or strong ability. As demonstrated in *fig. 1.1*, in spite of reporting prior experience and preparation with research writing, only about half of respondents viewed themselves as strong writers at the start of the semester, suggesting low confidence levels, and two-thirds of respondents felt they needed help with writing to do well. Qualitative pre-survey responses, which were grouped into five themes, including perceptions of writing confidence, ability, external supports, former experience, and emotional affect, mirrored closed-ended responses. Almost all respondents reported prior experience with research writing coming from high school English and AP courses, but many expressed worry that this preparation was inadequate for college research writing, making statements such as, “I prepared and wrote scientific research papers in high school, but I have yet to compare that to the level of writing required in college.”

Students reported varying levels of perceived ability dependent upon the genre, purpose, and audience, with academic writing being preferable to a few and creative, non-academic writing being preferred by the majority. When writing about past experiences and perceptions of confidence and ability, students expressed emotional affect connected to writing: they “enjoyed” writing creatively and for non-academic audiences, but most expressed feelings of “stress” and “anxiety” when writing in academic settings for a grade, although some found this writing “easy.” One student explained, “Writing assignments give me stress and anxiety. The idea of expressing my feelings and vulnerabilities in a word document that I will hand in to a stranger who will then grade me on those vulnerabilities is scary. The repeated process of trial and ultimate failure that is revision and editing enhances my fears.” In addition to discussing genre, many used process-oriented language to

express why they had or lacked confidence when writing. For example, one student wrote, “I love doing research based writing because I feel like I’m educating myself and because I’m an independent person I feel like that’s what I like about it most. I’m able to do the research on my own time and process the information the way I would want to.”

Although some students focused on process when discussing ability and confidence, others reported frustration at “missing the mark” in terms of grades. Of this latter group, several students felt a disconnect between their perceived level of ability and the grades received, and many were skeptical of the “subjectivity” of grading writing. One student, for instance, vented, “I have always been an average writer. I never have gotten clear feedback that helps me to understand what I could do better when writing.”

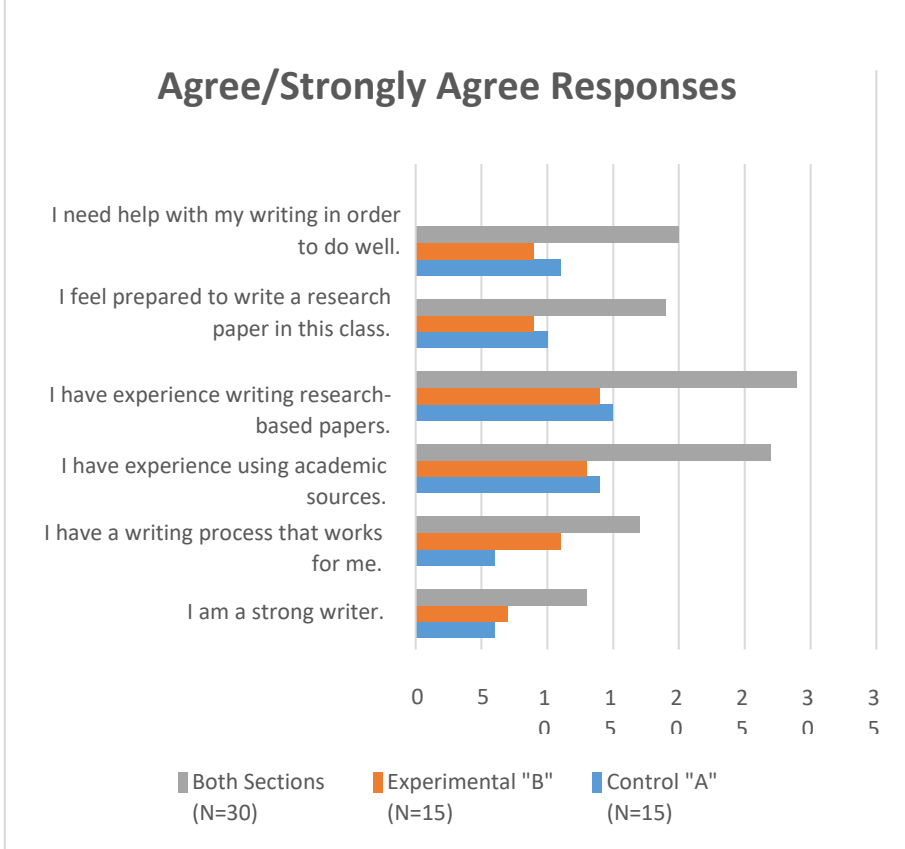


Figure 1.1: Positive Perceptions of Writing Preparation, Confidence, and Ability

Both sections also demonstrated knowledge of writing support but a failure to use such support in the past. Based on pre-surveys, most students knew where to go to get help with writing (see *fig. 1.2* on the next page), and they listed viable options, including the Writing Center, their professor, the library, and the multi-subject tutoring center on campus. Two-thirds stated they would be likely to use these resources, even though only 20% had used such services in the past. Most students reported not using writing tutoring in the past because they “didn’t need to” or they could “do it [them]sel[ves].” Others cited barriers with time and scheduling. Still others feared it might “do more harm than good” if a tutor did not understand their teacher’s preferences. The pre-surveys suggest a level of optimism—knowledge that seeking writing support is a good thing to do—yet most students had not followed through on seeking writing support before in spite of their knowledge and perceptions. Based on Salem’s research, if they haven’t had direct exposure to these resources prior to starting college, it is unlikely they’ll change their mind once they arrive. Thus, based on pre-surveys, there is reason to be skeptical that these students will really use these services if they remain accessible on a strictly voluntary basis. Those who used writing support in the past several benefits, including improved organization, process, and audience awareness. These students listed a wide range of writing supports, including family, friends, classmates, former teachers, professors, the internet, and the Writing Center or Multi-Subject Tutoring Center.

“She was able to guide me”: Post Surveys Show Positive WF Impact

Nine students in the control group and ten in the WF group completed post-surveys. The same themes identified on the pre-surveys were used to group qualitative responses in post-surveys. In addition to these four themes of perceptions of writing ability, confidence, support and emotional affect, an additional theme emerged in the post-survey WF section data: perceptions of professor authority and the WF’s role. This theme connected directly to perceptions of growth in ability and overall success, so it was combined in the discussion of WF-section students’ perceptions of writing ability. In this section, these themes are discussed alongside students’ quantitative post-survey responses.

Perceptions of Writing Ability, the WF Role, and Classroom Authority

Across sections, the majority of students felt they improved in writing ability and gained experience (see table 1.1). When speaking of their ability, students from both groups most often referred to specific skills connected to the course objectives, including analysis, attention to detail, process and scaffolding, research skills, and rhetorical knowledge. Respondents across sections commented most frequently on improved research ability (n=8). They expressed increased skill in finding and evaluating sources, scaffolding research, integrating research, analyzing sources, paraphrasing and quoting, and citing sources.

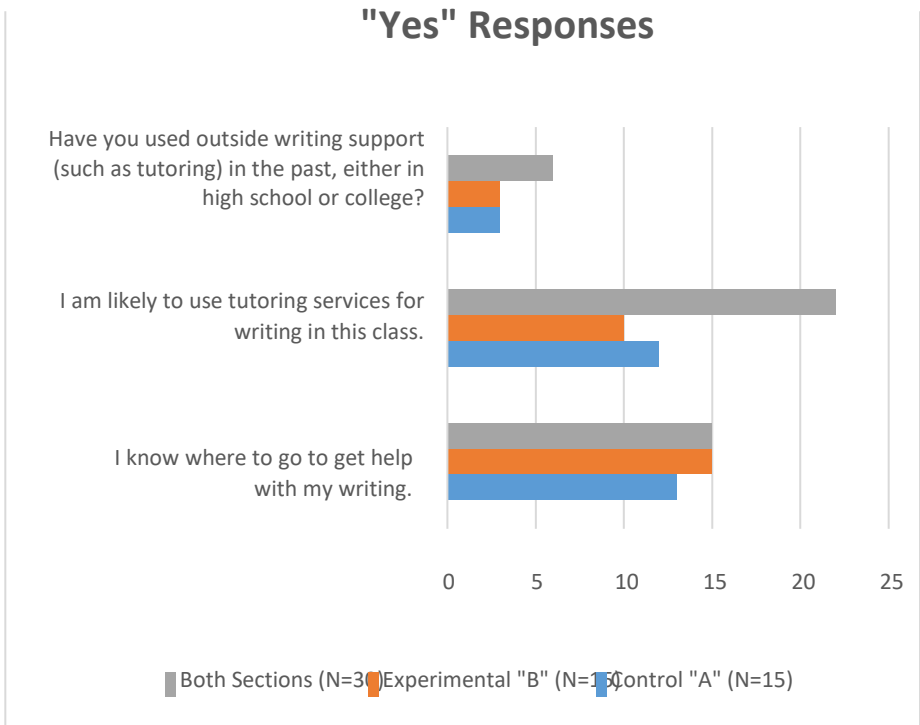


Figure 1.2: Student Knowledge and Perceptions of Writing Support

Table 1.1

Post-Survey Student Perceptions of Writing Ability and Confidence
 (“strongly agree” or “agree” responses)

| Post-Survey Question | Experimental “B” (N=10) | Control “A” (N=9) | Both Sections (N=19) |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| In this course, I felt prepared to write the required research paper | 8 | 8 | 16 |
| In this course, I gained experience using academic sources. | 10 | 8 | 18 |
| In this course, I gained experience with research-based writing. | 8 | 8 | 16 |
| In this course, I became more confident about my ability to write well. | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| In this course, I developed and/or honed a writing process that works for me. | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| In this course, I became a stronger writer. | 9 | 7 | 16 |

Beyond improving research skills, both sections noted growth related to writing process and rhetorical awareness, but these skills were emphasized more in the WF group and were connected directly to the WF (see table 1.2). When asked if the WF influenced writing process, a student wrote, “She was able to guide me through portions of writing in an easy way for me to understand.” Another student wrote, “She certainly helped a lot. She taught me that it wasn't so important to have your thesis set in stone at the very beginning. So, instead of using my thesis as my outline for my writing, let my writing be an outline for my thesis. This helped a lot, especially in the stressful times of me trying to figure out how to match my paragraphs up to make it flow with my thesis without having to adjust it.” Many students in the WF group mentioned increased ability to scaffold. These students talked about breaking up their research projects into smaller steps, and several noted the WF helped them differentiate between drafting, revising, and editing.

Table 1.2

Post-Survey Perceptions of Writing Fellow Impact (*“strongly agree” or “agree” responses*)

| Post-Survey Question | Experimental “B” (N=10) |
|---|-------------------------|
| Having a Writing Fellow was helpful in this course. | 8 |
| I enjoyed working with the Writing Fellow. | 7 |
| The Writing Fellow provided me with the help I needed in order to do well in this course. | 7 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me feel prepared to write the required research paper. | 5 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me gain experience using academic sources. | 5 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me gain experience in research-based writing. | 5 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me become more confident about my ability to write well. | 6 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me develop and/or hone my writing process. | 7 |
| The Writing Fellow helped me become a stronger writer. | 9 |

Additionally, while only one student in the control noted increased awareness of rhetoric and audience, writing “I did learn how to structure my paragraphs better and how to make an essay clearer to the reader,” three students discussed rhetorical awareness in the WF group. When speaking of rhetorical awareness, however, students in the WF section repeatedly emphasized the teacher as audience, rather than a general or disciplinary readership. One student wrote, “I had to quickly relearn to write to my teacher’s approval”; another stated, “It was mostly just accommodating what the professor was teaching and incorporating it into my current method of writing”; and finally, the third student wrote the course “was pretty challenging due to that every professor has different styles of writing and grading.” Students in the WF section overwhelmingly cited the WF’s role as “decoder” as most helpful when developing rhetorical awareness, reinforcing the idea of the professor as audience. For example, a student wrote, “I was able to understand the comments made on my paper and use her recommendations to better my writing.” Another wrote, “I was able to go to her and ask questions and address concerns with her.” Several students mentioned how helpful it

was to be able to use the WF to “ask questions.” “Clarify,” “understand,” and “figure out” featured in their comments frequently in association with the WF. Many also used the word “tips” in association with the WF, and these “tips” about writing made them perceive tasks to be “easier.” Put more simply, it seemed students valued the WF’s ability to “teach to the test,” so to speak; they found her presence helpful for demystifying instructor expectations and how to succeed on assignments.

It is not surprising that students found value in the WF’s role as “decoder.” Decoding is directive, and writing center scholars recognized the value of directive approaches more than forty years ago (Clark and Healy; Corbett). Many WCPs have linked directive approaches specifically to the WFP context, pointing out that WFPs impose time constraints and conditions upon consulting work that make nondirective strategies, Socratic dialogue, and attending to higher order concerns before lower concerns impractical and undesirable (Corbett; Little Liu and Mandes; Spigelman and Grobman). Viewing the WF as a directive “decoder” may also support more equitable classrooms and outcomes by providing marginalized and less prepared students with support they need to navigate academic discourse. In a recent study by Harry Denny and his colleagues, it was found that working-class and first-generation college students especially valued directive consulting strategies and found them integral to performing well in their writing courses. Yet, in this study, the WF’s decoding work simultaneously reinforced instructor authority in ways that may undermine another asset of WFPs: their ability to create more democratic classrooms by destabilizing professor authority and promoting student agency. In other words, when linked with rhetorical awareness, in particular, viewing the WF as “decoder” creates a challenging pedagogical double-bind that warrants further study in the context of WFPs and WF training.

In spite of this double bind, students in the WF section still noted and felt they benefited from the democratic effects of the WF’s presence. Professor authority and writing for the teacher were not mentioned in the control group, but four students in the WF group explicitly mentioned the professor’s authority, describing a de-centering of traditional classroom hierarchy. For example, one student wrote, “It’s really helpful having [a WF] in English classes, to help get a better point-of-view from a different authority that isn’t your professor,” while another explained it was helpful “having someone who felt like a mediator between student

and professor.” Some students viewed the WF as a peer, offering comments such as, “she interacted with me as a knowledgeable and candid peer.” On the other end of the spectrum, some viewed the WF as closer to a teacher or “expert,” making comments such as, “the Fellow was able to provide a professionalized peer review serving as a more competent “spell/grammar check” ensuring my essays made sense prior to submission.” Still others commented on the ambiguity of the WF’s role, stating, “I was unsure as to how I should refer to them. By that I mean they aren’t one of my peers, but they aren’t exactly a professor either.” However they viewed the WF’s role, respondents found collaborating effective, using words such as “helped,” “guided,” “figured out,” and “understanding” in association with the WF’s advice during consultations and coursework.

Another distinction of WF respondents was an emphasis on holistic growth, which was not mentioned by students in the control group. For example, one wrote, “I have learned many valuable tips to improve my writing and overall feel that I have advanced my writing abilities,” while another stated, “I believe my writing has become better as a whole.” They also explicitly mentioned the importance of receiving process-oriented feedback from both the professor and the writing fellow and overall improvement in areas such as time management. Additionally, students in the WF group noted changes in perceptions of writing. For example, one wrote, “My perception of writing during this course has improved.” While no respondents in the experimental group expressed dissatisfaction with the course, three respondents in the control group felt they did not make any substantial improvements in ability. All three noted they gained content knowledge, such as the definition of analysis, how to paraphrase, and how to structure a persuasive essay, but they also stated that, in spite of absorbing content, their writing did not improve upon application. One, for example, said, “Before this class, I was terrified by the idea of writing a research paper and the process for it: finding sources, checking them for functionality, and integrating them into the paper in a way that makes sense. During this class, I did not have any practice looking for sources to write about because all of the possible sources for the topic were provided to me as assigned reading, and I didn’t get much feedback from my source integration in order to improve. I did learn a lot about proper paraphrasing that I didn’t know before.”

Responses from the control group citing a lack of targeted feedback as the source of perceptions of lack of growth suggests that more personalized feedback throughout English 1102 could improve students' perceptions of ability and improvement, supporting the use of WFs within writing courses. This observation was affirmed by students in the WF group when they were asked directly about the WF's influence on their perceptions of changes in writing ability. These students used the word "improved" frequently in their responses, associating "improvement" with grades, meeting the professor's expectations, and mastery of writing process, especially gaining "tips" for revision and editing. Throughout comments related to enhanced performance, students stated it would have been "harder" to be successful without the WF, claiming she made it "easier" to clarify professor expectations and understand course material.

Perceptions of Writing Confidence and Emotional Affect

As with the pre-surveys, perceived growth in ability did not translate into boosts in perceptions of writing confidence. Students reported much less change in confidence as compared to ability, with half reporting improvement and half reporting no change. Thus, one finding of this study is that experience and practice—so often used as the measure for improving student success in composition and writing center pedagogy—may not impact confidence levels. Based on this finding, writing centers may need to reassess methods in the center and the classroom for boosting students' perceptions of confidence. Students in the WF section did report a correlation between the WF's presence and increased writing confidence, which raises an important question: what are WFs offering students beyond increased opportunities to practice skills that results in greater confidence? While peer support, mentorship, and sociality all likely play a role, future studies might attempt to isolate specific strategies and roles used by WFs that most correlate with boosts in writing confidence in order to maximize the positive impact of WFPs.

While confidence levels didn't change much across sections, confidence was discussed in different terms by each section, with the control group emphasizing comfort and the experimental group emphasizing agency and ability. Four respondents from the control section expressed perceptions of increased confidence by using words such as

“comfortable” and “confidence” to describe changes in their writing. One, for example, wrote, “This course helped me feel comfortable with the research,” while another wrote, “This course increased my confidence in writing a research paper.” Whereas the control group stressed increasing “comfort” with skills, the WF group focused on agency and personal growth, using phrases such as “I have grown,” “I was able to change,” “I felt fully capable,” and “more confident” to describe their altered perceptions of the course, writing, and their skillset. For example, a student in the WF section wrote, “This course emphasized the rules of citation and quotation at levels I have not been introduced to in the past. It makes me feel more confident in my ability to properly quote text without threat of plagiarizing.” Those who reported changes in confidence in the WF group linked increased confidence to the WF’s ability to clarify the professor’s expectations and comments on drafts. For example, a student wrote, “My confidence improved a little because I was able to understand the comments made on my paper and use her recommendations to better my writing.” Others linked confidence to improved process, writing statement such as, “She helped me revise and edit my essays and taught me tips for editing that helped me feel more confident.”

Similar to perceptions of confidence, perceptions of negative emotional affect related to academic writing did not change significantly in either section according to post-surveys. Only one student in the control group expressed positive affect, writing, “I enjoyed the research based writing since the sources were easy to use and access. Although writing all of it was sometimes difficult, overall it was enjoyable.” On the other hand, two students expressed negative emotions related to writing in English 1102, focusing on research-based tasks that were “hard” or “terrified” them. Similarly, only one student in the experimental group noted positive emotions connected to academic writing for the course, stating English 1102 made some aspects of writing more “entertaining.” The same respondent, however, said they “did not enjoy” the writing required in the course, while another expressed meeting professor expectations was “challenging.” Across sections, but more so in the control group, students expressing negative emotions noted the importance of feedback and outside help for easing their fears and completing tasks. The WF students’ responses tended to qualify negative emotions with gains in confidence and ability related to specific skills, engaging in what Dana Lynn Driscoll and Roger Powell, in the study of the connection between

emotion and writing transfer, call emotional monitoring and regulation. By facilitating emotional monitoring and regulation, WFs could have long-term impact on students' retention and application of writing skills. WFs also add opportunities for receiving feedback, which both groups noted as important for overcoming negative emotional affect related to academic writing.

In addition to helping students manage and regulate negative emotional affect, WFs have the potential to introduce positive emotions into environments and tasks usually associated with negative affect simply by being present as a support system. All students in the WF group (n=10) reported positive views of the WF and the program and used emotionally salient language to describe their experience. One wrote the WF was “a joy to work with.” Another wrote, “I loved this program and fee that it is super useful!!” While several students noted increased confidence, one additionally noted a growth in personal pride: “[the WF] always offered great criticism and how I should improve it, and with her advice, I was able to produce writings I was really proud of. Even though I did not hit it right on the nose, her help with my second essay and made me actually proud of the writing I turned in.” None of the students in the WF group had recommendations for improvement or negative comments. Thus, WFs can mitigate negative emotional affect and introduce positive emotions into the writing process, potentially improving transfer long-term.

Perceptions of Writing Support

Most students across sections still felt they needed help with writing to do well in composition (see *fig. 2*), just as they had said on the pre-survey, but only six students (30%) in the control used these services for a total of 23 consultations. Comparatively, all twenty students in the WF course interacted with the WF in some capacity during course activities such as peer review, small group meetings, and presentations, while 9/20 of these students (45%) met individually or in small groups with the WF outside of class for a total of 31 appointments. This increases to ten students (50%) and 37 appointments if Writing Center meetings with other consultants are included. Seven, or 70% of post-survey respondents in the WF course said they were very likely to use writing tutoring for future courses, as compared to five, or 62% in the control section. Significantly, three out of the survey respondents (30%) in the WF

section changed their mind about writing support. Originally, these students said they would not seek writing support for this class or future courses, but their post-surveys showed a change in attitude. No students in the control section changed their attitudes about using writing support.

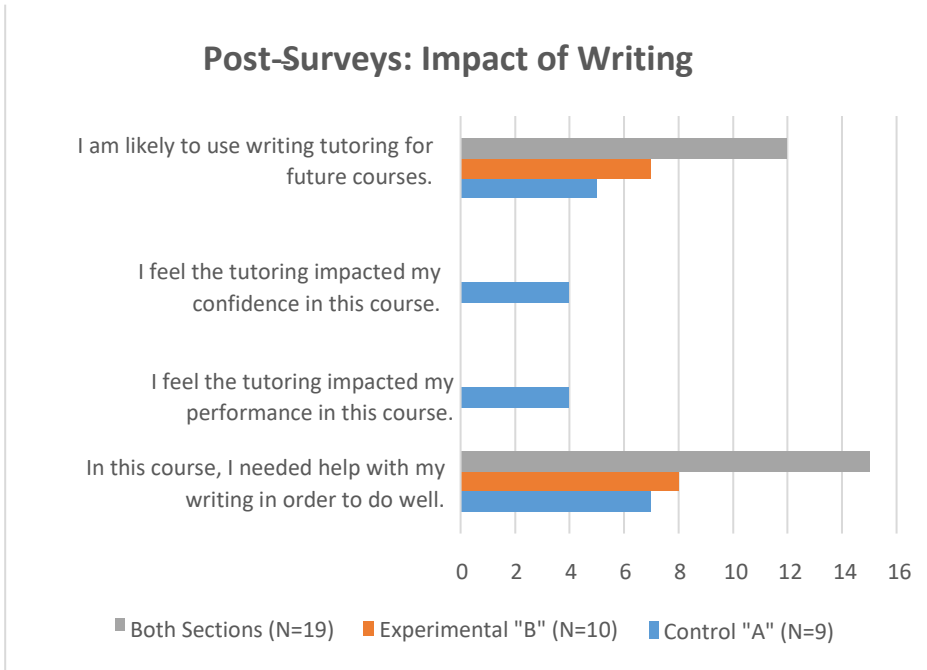


Figure 2: Post-Survey Student Perceptions of Writing Support

Students in the control group who used writing support commented positively about its impact, while those who did not cited barriers influencing their behavior, including lack of accessibility and perceived need. For example, one student explained that “feedback on my writing was enough to answer any questions or concerns I had.” Another wrote, “I could have gone to the Writing Center, but the hours are very limited because walk-ins are not accepted and the appointments are often booked.” In contrast to the control group, students in the experimental group reported accessibility and additional feedback beyond the professor as key strengths of the WFP and the primary reasons they sought out WF and/or external writing support. One wrote, “It was nice to have a set person to be able to go to, and someone who was available during class time, too. That is usually a big problem in getting help is having to find time outside of class to do it, but having her here during

class made it easy.” Similarly, another wrote, “It made it super easy to reach out for help. To students who maybe wouldn't have reached out for help because they didn't know how to or where to start having an Embedded Course Tutor helped with that. [The WF] was easy to contact and she could probably learn your writing style after a little to help you the most.”

The rationale for seeking or not seeking writing support across groups suggests the value of a WF for increasing students' help-seeking behaviors. If a writing fellow is assigned to a course, they can contextualize the importance of seeking feedback from as many sources as possible, even if writing is already strong and the professor provides substantial feedback, thereby supporting a growth mindset; the WF can also configure scheduling so that all students have access to writing support both within the classroom and outside of it, decreasing barriers to access. Although WFs have the potential to improve students' perceptions of writing support and increase their help-seeking behaviors, post-surveys also showed comparable numbers of students across sections who did not plan to seek writing support for future courses ($n=4$ in the control section and $n=3$ in the experimental section). Furthermore, since completing English 1102, no students have returned to the Writing Center from either section. This fact suggests that, while a WF may positively impact students' perceptions of writing support, they may not significantly impact students' long-term behavior, despite students' expressed good intentions. More longitudinal studies are needed to better understand how WFPs influence students' help-seeking behaviors throughout their academic careers.

Conclusion

Although this study cannot offer conclusive statements about the correlation between WFPs and equitable outcomes in English composition, its findings do suggest these programs can support all students by normalizing writing support and making it accessible. Despite its limitations, this WF pilot study affirms previous study findings that show WFPs improve students' perceptions of writing ability, confidence, and support. Additionally, this study suggests centers may need to think more about the ways WFs simultaneously promote equitable student outcomes and perpetuate traditional hierarchies of

power when they act as “decoders” for students, especially in areas such as rhetorical awareness.

Directive approaches offer needed writing support that can benefit students, especially those who feel marginalized or underprepared for college, but they can also undermine centers’ mission to teach students how to write for wider, disciplinary or public audiences. This contradiction needn’t be a deal-breaker, but training for WFs and the mission of WFPs may need to be framed to embrace such contradictions as inherent to this distinct kind of writing support. It may be that embracing these paradoxes can lead to innovative pedagogy in WFPs; by being transparent and welcoming contradictions, WFPs could generate new pedagogy for promoting equitable writing instruction.

This study also hints at the need to reexamine connections between contextualized, skill-based writing instruction and transfer. Writing Centers are grounded in the idea of writing as a skill, emphasizing the importance of practice and repetition in context. Research on writing has also found that students’ emotions are integral to transfer and long-term growth in writing. This pilot suggests, however, that increased practice doesn’t necessarily translate into increases in perceptions of writing confidence and positive emotion. Thus, beyond integrating practice and process, writing centers may need to explore strategies for increasing student perceptions of writing confidence, perhaps through teaching emotional monitoring and regulation as recommended by Driscoll and Powell. Future studies could also focus on correlations between WFs and student confidence in order to determine which practices most impact confidence levels and emotion in the WFP classroom and beyond. Finally, although some students in this pilot did change their mind about seeking writing support based on their experience with a WF, one year out, no students have followed up on their decision in subsequent semesters. Other WFP studies have shown similar changes in perception of writing support, but few have followed students long-term to see if perceptions translate into changed behaviors. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine how other WFPs and other factors continue to influence students’ decision-making in the long-term.

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About the Author



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Expanding Your Boundary: Improving Writing Services to LGBTQ+ and Black Students through Satellite Locations

Erika Nelson

Asking for writing help is already hard. There is a vulnerability in letting someone else read your writing. You open yourself up to potential critique. You could fear being judged for your writing style or content. While we tutors do our best to mitigate those fears, there are a multitude of emotional and intellectual barriers that prevent people from seeking writing help. However, there are some groups of students who have additional barriers, based on their racial or sexual/gender identities. In addition to emotional barriers many students face, students with minoritized identities also need to be concerned about discrimination when they ask for help. A non-binary student might be worried about a tutor using their correct pronouns. A Black student might be worried about being the only person of color in the center. But what can writing centers do to decrease those barriers and serve minority students? Part of the answer is to take the help to the students through satellite locations.

The 2020 Southeastern Writing Center Association conference theme was “Growing Our Centers.” Growth can mean any number of things, but this work falls under the category of growing the student population you serve. However, in this instance growth is not just in terms of numbers and outreach. Certainly, it is important that writing centers work to reach as many students as possible, both for our own benefit and for our students. But true growth is about understanding the institutional and social structures at play which prevent certain populations of students from seeking our services. This type of growth involves an exploration into the perceptions of your space and systemic inequalities that minority students face.

This paper is a further exploration of my presentation at the SWCA conference titled “Expanding Your Boundary: Improving Services to LGBTQ+ Students.” In the presentation, I discussed the ways that a satellite location at the LGBTQ+ identity office on campus allowed greater engagement with queer students at Vanderbilt University. This paper expands upon that research by exploring the Writing Studio satellite location at the Black Cultural Center as well as the LGBTQ+ Life Center. (This work could easily translate to different minority communities. The reason this paper is limited to queer and Black students is simply the presence of these two identity offices on Vanderbilt’s campus.) Using internal consultation data, a survey given to students from both centers, and secondary literature relating to minority students and higher education, I argue that satellite locations are an effective way to grow your client populations to better include Black and queer students.

Why is consideration of these communities necessary?

To understand the need for specific consideration of students with minoritized identities, the first thing one must understand is minority stress. Minority students face increased stress on college campuses, and that stress negatively affects academic performance. This is discussed in the scholarship as “minority stress.” In their work on the experiences of minority students on college campuses, Jones, Castellano, and Cole posit “that a minority status bestows an additional burden of stress on ethnic minority students,” and is “associated with an increased risk for negative outcomes beyond that which is attributable to the stresses of being a student at a highly competitive academic institution” (Jones et al. 23). Although this paper dealt with ethnic minority students specifically, there is similar stress on queer students. All minority students combat macroaggressions, harassment, and class content which don’t speak to their life experience. This minority stress affects all areas of a student’s campus life, but most relevant to writing centers is the negative effect on their academic performance, which happens for a variety of reasons: professors who are not understanding (or, worse, are outright racist or homophobic), a smaller support network of peers from their identity group, or the feeling of responsibility to represent their minority group in all areas on campus. Minority stress is not only something that writing center staff need to be aware of when tutoring these students; it carries further implications regarding the use of writing services.

One such implication is a reluctance on the part of minority students to seek academic support services due to insular social grouping. Black and queer students form tight-knit communities based on their identity groups. Jones, Castello, and Cole argue that these groups are essential for minority students because they are an important way to combat minority stress (Jones et al. 20). However, an outcome of that insular community is the reluctance to look outside one's community for help. When other areas of the university are potentially harmful or prejudiced, it reduces minority stress to stay inside one's community. This means that if your writing center does not have a direct connection to the Black or queer communities, you are foreign and outside. You are not part of a minoritized student's community network. Therefore, students are less likely to make that first trip because the center is an unknown entity. This reluctance does not mean that your writing center is racist or homophobic, it just means that the student has to take the time to confirm that it is not. That places the onus on the student to confirm their safety and comfort, where it should be on the writing center.

You may be asking if a student's safety and comfort are really at risk. Harry Denny, in his seminal work "Queering the Writing Center" explores the ways that minoritized students in a university setting are constantly combatting the way that their bodies are read by others. Every part of their university experience is impacted by other people's assumptions. Denny writes that Black and queer students "are marked by social cleaving," and their "bodies speak before spoken (Denny 55). What he means is that people make assumptions about Black and queer bodies whenever they enter a space. Before the student even has a chance to speak, they must work against the way that society has made their body speak for them. Thus when entering a writing studio, a student who does not appear to conform to a gender cannot just work on their writing, they must combat the way that tutors or staff inevitably attempt to sort them into "acceptable" categories of gender. When a Black student comes into the writing studio, they have to work against the ways that a tutor might make assumptions about their education level or language use. Denny states it succinctly when he says that these students "must always occupy a calculated relation to public space," (Denny 54). The writing center is a public space on campus. There minoritized students come into the space already straddled with the burden of society's expectations or assumptions of their identities.

While Denny articulates the theory behind queer and black students' marginalization, he does not speak about the real-life way it manifests in student's everyday experiences. For this, I turned to Roberta Nelson (they/them), the Assistant Director of the Office of LGBTQI+ Life at Vanderbilt. In an interview with Nelson, they said that queer students specifically have a reluctance to seek new places that is rooted in a deep fear of trauma related to their names and pronouns. These students get into strict campus routines; they know where they are safe and they don't stray from those places (Nelson). There is fear associated with new places, especially those which require appointments. This is because queer students cannot be assured of proper pronoun or name use. For example, a trans man could make an appointment at the writing center, but due to many university policies his name could appear to be female. This is called a deadname, meaning the name of a trans person prior to transition. (I encourage you to seek out the policy at your university regarding the ease of changing one's name. Often, students are only allowed to use their legal name, and in many states it is nigh impossible for trans students to legally change their name.) Nelson could not overstate the trauma of being deadnamed for trans people. Additionally, non-binary people will automatically feel deeply uncomfortable if gender-neutral pronouns are not frequently used in your space. That is a difficult thing to know unless the student ventures into your space. This first exploratory visit sets them up for potential trauma and thus does not often happen. It is easy to see how trans and non-binary students would be reluctant to seek services where they are unsure if their name will be respected.

What all of this adds up to is a negative perception of the writing center as a stressful or unsafe place. This doesn't mean that our spaces are inherently harmful, especially if we've taken the necessary steps to educate our tutors about minority issues and are intentional about hiring a diverse staff. But, we must still recognize that the barriers minority students face in university life mean that they might never even walk through our doors. Minority stress means that students face greater academic stress across campus. The attempt to combat that stress leads to insular communities which are hesitant to seek outside sources of help. When they do seek outside sources of help, minoritized students must deal with the way that public spaces make assumptions about them before they can even speak for themselves. Finally, for queer students

specifically, the importance of names and pronouns in a space means that unknown places have the potential for trauma. Writing center professionals need to be aware of how students perceive their space in order to truly grow their student population. To truly serve more students we need to think about which students are not coming in the door, and why. The overall outcome of all of these factors is that unless we go to them, Black and queer students may be unlikely to come to us.

However, operating under the construct of true growth, we need to be familiar with systems embedded in the fabric of the center which prevent these groups from truly being themselves, even if they do come in the door. Harry Denny discusses the ways that “writing centers are places overflowing with structural binaries,” and among these he mentions white/people of color and gay/straight (Denny 41). He argues that a negotiation of these binaries is constantly happening in writing consultations. As with more commonly understood binaries, like expert/novice or professional/peer, this negotiation often leads to one identity being privileged over the other. This is not an overt process, but that is part of what makes it so difficult to root out. While Denny does not articulate satellite locations as a potential solution to this problem, it fits with his ideology. Satellite locations at identity centers disrupt those binaries by uplifting the identity that is often passed over or ignored.

Why are satellite locations the best solution to these problems?

As minority students form routines and insular social groups, the identity center is the locus of their experiences. Identity centers serve as the physical manifestation of the minority subgroup. These centers are not merely places for social interaction, they play a crucial role in the academic development of minority students. In their work on the minority student social behavior, Wong and Nagasawa state that:

[Minority student] subculture serves as a subunit or enclave to reduce the social and physical size of the campus. It also serves as a support system that helps sustain students in college. Hence, if the subculture provides a suitable niche or enclave on campus and helps its members meet the social and academic demands of college, then it will enhance the survival of its members. That is, the degree and

quality of contact with other members of the subculture are critical for success in college. (Nagasawa and Wong 82)

In other words, when students can be with other students who share their identity, they are more likely to succeed in a wide array of college situations. As the physical place on campus where these subgroups gather, identity centers are the hub of minority student success. These centers become the physical “niche or enclave” in which minority students gather and share community.

Not only is the identity center a space of comfort and community, it is a place to unlearn harmful messages. As minority students face harassment and stereotyping in other parts of the university, the identity center becomes a place to heal and decompress after facing the rest of the campus. Therefore, Yosso and Benavides Lopez discuss the identity center as a “counterspace,” especially in a PWI (Yosso and Benavides Lopez 84). These centers foster positive identity development, often in direct contrast to messages that students receive in other places on campus. The idea of counterspace is especially important when considering true growth. When reaching for true growth we must be aware of the systemic inequalities that minority students face. The concept of counterspace helps frame the campus experience of minority students. It shows how the university at large is a place of potential and actual harm. The identity center becomes the safety net that minority students can count on when they want to escape that harmful environment.

So, if identity centers are the counterspace where students feel safe and supported, it only follows that those spaces are where we must go to offer writing help. Students will be more likely to come into those spaces because they are sure they will be accepted and comfortable. They are also more likely to have productive educational experiences because of the comfort of their environment. Although I will address the bulk of the survey data later, a student quote is useful here. When asked if they would feel more comfortable going to the main location or the LGBTQI+ Life location (which is called the K.C. Potter Center or KCPC), one student said the “KCPC...I honestly just feel better and more at home there. Because I feel more comfortable, I’m able to get a bit more work done.” Many other students expressed this sentiment as well. If we know that minority students are more comfortable in identity centers, and thus are able to focus more productively on their academic work, that means

a writing tutor needs to be present in these spaces in order to truly cater to these students.

Furthermore, understanding writing center work in this way not only helps the students, but changes the writing studio itself to become more open and collaborative. Nancy Grimm, in her chapter in *Writing Centers and the New Racism* speaks of the ways that writing centers can become closed-circuit communities and end up reifying “stratification, disconnectedness, dogmatism, narcissism, marginality, factionalism, and imperialism,” (Grimm 91). Without actively reaching out to different communities, writing centers risk the trap of continually self-affirming discourse which, as Grimm notes, has disastrous consequences if gone uncorrected. Therefore if writing centers understood themselves “as places where the academic community actively recruits new members, welcomes the creativity of those with multi-memberships, and studies the reconciliation work that occurs on the boundaries of communities, then their scope of practice and their function within the university changes in significant ways,” (Grimm 91). These words ultimately speak to the power of diverse voices in creating more accurate, powerful, and relevant academic discourse within writing centers. Opening satellite locations in identity offices is a perfect way to “actively recruit new members” into the writing center community. Satellite locations show minoritized students that their voices are not only heard, but that they are absolutely crucial to the discourse of the writing center.

For our own writing center practice at Vanderbilt, the rationale for starting satellite locations was fairly simple. The assistant director of the Black Cultural Center (BCC) reached out to the Writing Studio director in June of 2018. The BCC had recently launched a resource room in their center and hoping the Writing Studio would offer academic support in the space. Bradley agreed for many reasons: the usefulness of drop-in hours in a space which is already frequented by students, the mutual benefit for both the Writing Studio and the BCC, and the high competition for appointments at the main location. Ultimately, our director saw the partnership with the BCC as an opportunity to show recognition of and support for Black students on campus. The decision was not based on hard data, but rather an overarching understanding (on the part of the both the BCC and the Writing Studio) that support for Black students on Vanderbilt’s campus was not as robust as it needed to be.

The KCPC program came about less than a year later, for similar reasons. In Fall of 2018, I was an excited incoming graduate consultant. As I learned about the place of the Writing Studio on campus, I began to wonder why there was a satellite location at the BCC and not at the KCPC. As a queer person myself, I knew all too well the ways that queer students often fell through the cracks of university academic support. Knowing the BCC program was so successful, I approached my director to ask for a similar satellite location at the KCPC. I wanted to show the queer students on campus that the Writing Studio was a place for them. I wanted them to see that the Writing Studio staff recognized the struggles they go through when entering a new place on campus. Having seen both the need for and success of the BCC satellite, our director immediately agreed. Thus our satellite program grew out of an understanding of the broad ways which academic support on campus privileges white and straight students. Our center understood that the onus was on us, as a center, to show that we were a place for Black and queer students. The way we did that was by going to them, rather than asking them to come to us.

Satellite Location Data from Vanderbilt's Writing Studio

The LGBTQI+ Life satellite on Vanderbilt's campus, despite the fact that it is a young program, has been highly successful at growing our student population. The program has been active for three semesters and consists of two hours a week. The appointments are primarily walk-ins, but the option to make an appointment ahead of time is available on WC Online. Combining the data for the first two semesters, 37.5% of appointments were with new clients. Such a high rate of new clients, especially considering the naturally lower numbers of appointments at the satellite location, shows how effective the program was in terms of catering to new students. And not only did we serve new students, but we created a space where non-binary students specifically felt more welcome and sought our services at a higher rate. More than 12% of appointments were with clients who used they/them pronouns, whereas at the main location only 0.48% of appointment were with students who used non-binary pronouns. While this isn't a direct comparison due to the significantly larger number of appointments at the main location, the

numbers still show that non-binary or genderqueer students feel more comfortable seeking writing help at the satellite location.

Additionally, this program grew significantly over time. The number of clients at the satellite almost doubled from the first to the second semester. This is important to note, both because it shows the success of the program but also because it serves as a caution for any centers who wish to engage in this work. The first semester might not seem successful; we only had just under 10 appointments. But once the students in the identity center became more familiar with the tutor and the services provided, that number dramatically increased, and only continues to do so. So, if your writing center successfully starts a satellite location, then I encourage patience. This is a long-term investment in the success of minority students. For the reasons noted above, many of these students will be hesitant to trust new people. But once they do, the program will grow in productive and important ways.

Another key point in our program at Vanderbilt is that the tutor at LGBTQI+ Life was both a member of the queer community and was trained by the staff at the center. It might not always be possible to have a queer tutor, especially if you have a small center, but the training is of key importance. The training I received, as the tutor of the space, covered the norms of the center (most importantly to not disclose publicly who uses the center), use and understanding of diverse pronouns, and some of the issues faced by the LGBTQI+ students at Vanderbilt specifically. This training will presumably look different depending on the situation at different universities, but it is important that the tutors receive some kind of training in order to best cater to the students.

The satellite at the Black Cultural Center is equally successful, but regrettably we have less data on that center due to the different structure of appointments. Working with the BCC, our office determined that hours offered at the BCC should not be available on WC Online. A sign-up for the available hours is circulated via the BCC listserv. This is in order to preserve the appointments as spaces for Black students, and not as merely another writing center location open to all. Due to this, we have different data regarding this satellite. But we can still see the ways that the program has grown. The number of appointments offered increased due to demand. For the 2018-2019 year, only five appointments were offered. During Fall 2019, that number increased to

seven. It decreased to six in Spring 2020, but that was accompanied by an overall decrease in the number of appointments in the spring on our campus. Overall in the 2019-2020 year, 93 appointments were made. Finally the qualitative post-session comments were all positive and spoke to comfort and an allaying of anxieties. What both of these satellite locations at Vanderbilt show us is that the administrative configuration can vary drastically. There is no “one size fits all” approach. But regardless of the way the appointments are carried out, students utilized the program and found it highly useful.

Survey Results from BCC and LGBTQ+ Life Students

In order to capture more student input regarding the effectiveness of these centers, I circulated a survey to both the students of the Black Cultural Center and the LGBTQI+ Life Center. This quick survey asked students their comfort levels going to both the main location and the satellite location at their identity center, using a Likert scale of 1-7. 1 correlated to “very uncomfortable” and 7 to “very comfortable.” The survey also asked how their experiences have been at the satellite location, if they had gone. Finally, it asked overall which location the students would be more likely to go to in the future. The survey circulated among the students of the BCC received 57 responses and the LGBTQI+ Life survey received 49. These surveys were circulated by the listservs maintained by both offices and asked students to participate regardless of whether they had visited the Writing Studio.

Overall, the data show that students preferred the satellite locations for their writing studio appointments. If needed, they would go to the main locations (for scheduling reasons for example), but given the option, the majority of students would choose their identity office for writing tutoring. One survey question asked students to choose which location they preferred. For the queer students, 50% of respondents were more likely to visit the KCPC location, 36% the main, and 14% had no preference. For the Black students, 51% preferred the BCC location, 42% the main, and 7% had no preference. These data, perhaps more than any of the other points, show the need for writing centers to engage diverse student populations at their identity centers. Students are simply more likely to seek writing help at their identity centers. In terms of comfort level, for the Black students the most frequent answer was 5 out of 7 in terms of student comfort at the main location, whereas it rose to

7 out of 7 for comfort at the BCC. For the KCPC survey, although 7 was the most frequent answer for both locations, the concentration of 7s was higher in terms of comfort at the LGBTQI+ office. Students seemed to be comfortable in both locations, but they would prefer to go to would go to their identity office if they were able. Overall, the statistics do not show a dramatic preference for identity offices, it is clear that the satellite locations provide an important and appreciated service. Moreover, the qualitative reasons that students prefer the satellite locations show the important issues at stake in this work.

The most common reasons that students preferred their identity office is a desire for a tutor who understands the issues faced by their community and a concern that the main location would not offer that. In the KCPC survey two students mentioned that their writing is queer-focused and they expressed worry that at the main location their work would be perceived as “too political.” They felt more comfortable at the KCPC because they knew the tutor would focus on their writing, rather than taking objection to the content. This sentiment was echoed in the BCC survey when one student, who rated increased comfort at the BCC, said “I would feel more comfortable talking to someone who understood that I was approaching the topic from a Black perspective.” Another Black student said that they felt the BCC tutor would be less likely to change their voice. Queer people are often accused of politicizing an issue when it is actually a question of their human rights. Black people are often forced to change their academic voice to sound more white in order to succeed in college. All of these comments show that students expected a deeper understanding of their material from a tutor at the identity center in terms of some of the deep-seated issues both communities face. Keep in mind, the reality of what these students may find at the writing center is not what is in question here. They could very well find understanding tutors at the main location, but the point is that student perceptions of the main location are such that they hinder them from going entirely. Satellite locations at identity centers allay the fears of those students and give them a space to be truly themselves.

Another part of growing your population is being aware of one’s space on campus, and how that space affects people of different identity groups. In the survey, the most common response from both groups was a concern about how far away the main location of the Writing Studio is from main campus. A center’s location can create a number of barriers

for different student populations. Most often people consider differently abled students when speaking of accessibility. Though an important identity group, that student population is not the focus of this piece. The survey revealed how the location was additionally a barrier to access for Black students. Several Black students mentioned not feeling comfortable going to the main location at night because it entailed a long walk across busy streets, and they felt unsafe. Black people constantly need to consider how they will be perceived in a space because of the increased harassment they face from both police and racist civilians. So, walking somewhere at night is something many Black people avoid. The concern is not even the writing center itself but the means by which students arrive at the center. This issue is not one that will always be solved by the satellite office, depending on the layout of your campus. In general, however, identity offices are situated such that students of that identity group will feel safe going there when needed and this is not always the case with the main location of a writing center.

Although it might not sound as important as safety, the idea of comfort is also of key importance because it leads to increased capacity to engage in academic work. The overall feeling of comfort and security was the second most common answer among students of both groups, specifically with the queer students. Four students from the LGBTQI+ Life survey mentioned that they feel secure at the KCPC. These students also discussed the ways that comfort led them to do more schoolwork in the KCPC than in other spaces. The comfortable location and familiar community decreased minority stress. In the other survey, two people mentioned the hominess of the BCC. And several students in both surveys stated that their familiarity with the identity center meant they were more comfortable attending a writing session there. This feeling expressed by students echoes the scholarship of identity center as counterspace. In an identity center, students are able to fully be themselves and escape from the campus culture in a safe and homey environment. As several of the students noted, being more comfortable in one's environment leads to increased ability to focus on schoolwork. This is why, in order to cater better to minority students, writing centers must go where the students are most comfortable.

Ultimately the majority of students prefer their identity office because it is a home for them. One student summed it up well: "I would be more likely to visit the KCPC location because I feel more comfortable and

safe there than anywhere else.” Identity centers are often the hub of a minority student’s campus life. They are most at home there. Therefore, if writing centers are committed to growing the population that they serve, they must meet students where they are. This survey shows that their identity center is the place where we need to meet these students.

Conclusion

Academia privileges white and heteronormative students in countless ways. Writing centers often unknowingly reify that privilege. It is of utmost importance that writing centers become aware of their place in upholding that privilege. They can then be better equipped to combat it. There are many ways we can serve minority students, mostly in the content of our sessions. We can show our clients the white underpinnings of “proper” grammar, be allies for queer students crafting personal statements about their coming out, or countless other examples. But we cannot do that work if minority students do not even walk in our doors.

Satellite locations at identity centers are only one of many ways that we can show minority students that we care. The premise of true growth is exploration of systemic inequalities, not a “one size fits all” solution. I challenge you at your own centers to reach out to campus partners who engage with minority students daily. What challenges do those students face? What type of support would be most helpful for them? Then come up with a plan for how your writing center plays a part in the academic success of minority students on your campus. Truly growing your student population is a process of uncovering student experience, and then doing what you can to make that experience better.

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About the Author



Erika Nelson is a fifth-year PhD candidate at Vanderbilt University. Her work explores the intersection of American history and religion, with a focus on women's history. She has also been a graduate writing tutor at Vanderbilt's Writing Studio for going on three years and serves on the board of IWCA's graduate organization. She lives in Nashville, TN, with her wife and their spoiled three-legged dog.

When WC's Collaborate with Athletics: The CAMSA Program at Francis Marion University

Lindsey Banister and Meredith Reynolds

In the past few years, the Francis Marion University Writing Center, an academic resource available to all FMU students, has seen a rise in its international student population. This increase is due in large part to the university's recruitment of student-athletes from other countries. The demands of their athletic and academic schedules and the added stress of negotiating academic English as a second language can put these students at a disadvantage. Furthermore, FMU currently lacks academic services that are specifically designed to support the needs of international students as well as student-athletes. Consequently, many professors send these students to the writing center for help. In an effort to support these students, we created the Communication Assistance for Multilingual Student-Athletes (CAMSA), which is designed to provide composition and ELL support for multilingual student-athletes. While piloting this program, we simultaneously assessed the program's design, methods, and enrollment practices as well as students' satisfaction with the program—in part because neither of us claim expertise in multilingual writing instruction—via the collection of data through pre-program and post-program writing samples, written surveys, and oral interviews.

Written *in medias res*, this article discusses and reflects on the implementation, design, methods, and students' perceptions of the CAMSA program. A goal of this article is to provide insight to the complex socio-geographical settings of small, rural, comprehensive universities, such as Francis Marion, that often do not have a large population of either multilingual writers or student-athletes and how writing centers can play a significant role in supporting these students'

educations. We first provide an overview of writing centers' complicated relationships both with multilingual composition instruction and university athletics. We then briefly contextualize FMU, our university's athletics, and our center's history. Next, we turn to account for and reflect on the politics that went into the creation and implementation of this study as to the program. Lastly, we offer avenues of inquiry for directors to interrogate so as to augment scholarship on and conversations about the relationship between writing centers and athletes, especially at rural comprehensive universities such as FMU.

Multilingual Students and Composition Practices

Scholarship in the past twenty years has advanced our knowledge and praxis of working with multilingual writers in the writing center. Seminal work by authors like Muriel Harris and Tony Silva (1993), Terese Thonus (1993), and Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth's edited essay collection (2004/2009) identify the particular needs of multilingual writers as well as how the writing center is uniquely positioned to help these students succeed. Additional theoretical examination and practical advice to administrators and tutors can be found in two more recent texts—Ben Rafoth's 2015 *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers* and Bruce and Rafoth's 2016 edited collection: *Tutoring Second Language Writers*. Multilingual writers are not a homogeneous group. As defined by Ilona Leki (2009), they include undergraduate international students coming from countries that prepared them to varying degrees to study in English, who are strong students usually well-versed in the rules of English grammar but struggle with western academic rhetorical expectations; graduate international students, already accomplished in their home countries, having earned at least one degree, who, while also well-versed in English grammar, may struggle with the rhetorical expectations of their chosen field of study; and Generation 1.5 students, who earned high school degrees in the United States and are often orally proficient in English but may struggle with English grammar rules and academic rhetorical expectations. As a result, there is no single strategy or method tutors can employ to help these students; therefore, many writing centers develop individualized tutoring strategies based upon the specific population of their school or university.

In response, researchers have examined how writing centers are often caught between expectations from professors and its own philosophies.

When professors (or universities) take a hardline assimilationist approach, they promote “linear, thesis-statement and topic-sentence-driven, error-free, and idiomatic academic English as soon as possible. The goal is to smoothly blend or melt into the desired discourse communities” (Severino 187). Writing centers can unwillingly become participants in this Othering or isolating of multilingual writers instead of welcoming them. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy, Celeste Del Russo, and Elizabeth Leahy (2016) examine how negative framing, both informal through tutor comments and formalized through writing center mission statements, essentially dissuades L2 writers from seeking help from the writing center. Tutors can also fall into this approach when they either open a session with a flat denial to work on grammar or, during a session, default to simply correcting an L2 writer's sentence-level errors whether or not the writer explicitly identifies LOCs as a concern. Professors or writing centers that follow the separatist approach as defined by Severino believe “cultures, languages, and dialects in contact should be able to exist almost independently—unaffected, untainted by mainstream cultures, languages, and dialects” (p. 185). This approach puts the power in the hands of multilingual writers, who decide how much they want to conform to western academic English standards. However, this stance may do a disservice to multilingual writers by not preparing them adequately for a less forgiving future instructor or employer.

The accommodationist approach is what Severino defines as the compromise between the former stances (188) and is the one most writing centers either formally or informally employ with multilingual writers. Using this approach, writing centers can continue practicing nondirective, collaborative writing help while utilizing more directive techniques when necessary, thus pushing back against “mainstreaming” expectations. As Jessica Williams notes in her 2004 study, “non-directive tutoring led to almost absurdly circuitous interactions”; therefore, “Perhaps the best alternative to either asking or telling is showing and explaining” (195). Lucie Moussu (2013) advises writing centers to “explain to [ELL writers] why they may receive more feedback on content than on form in the writing centre. Careful explanations can help students understand that their language skills must improve if they are to meet their professors' expectations and that feedback on form alone is not useful” (62). Bobbi Olson (2013) asserts writing centers should be “helping multilingual writers draw from their different discourses and make active decisions about utilizing various

features from them.” Therefore, tutorials should ideally move between both HOCs and LOCs, helping writers not only improve the organization of their papers but also their vocabulary through “a lexical grammar approach that combines instruction with grammar with vocabulary” because, “in order to discuss writing at the rhetorical level, the writer must have the language to be able to do so” (Min, 2016).

However, employing the accommodationist approach and meeting the actual needs of ELL students during writing center appointments requires a willingness of writing centers to perhaps go against their own established mission statements, pairing more directive lexical and grammatical discussion with more non-directive techniques for higher-order concerns. Lori Salem’s award-winning 2016 *Writing Center Journal* article examines which students were more likely to use Temple University’s Writing Center, and her findings startled her: “The choice to use the writing center is raced, classed, gendered and shaped by linguistic hierarchies” (161). In fact, “among students who have low SAT-V scores and who are non-native speakers of English, 60% came to the writing center. This is the group with the highest rate of writing center usage, and it is the only subgroup where a majority of students visited the center” (158). The help this group requires, however, is often labeled as “remedial”—more directive grammatical or later-order instruction. As a result, writing centers working with ELL students struggle with reconciling their philosophical identities with the actual needs of their students, and ELL and other non-privileged users may not be having those needs fully met.

Research has found, perhaps not surprisingly, that shifting between HOCs and LOCs is beneficial for both ELL students and native English-speaking (NES) students. As Grant Eckstein (2018) found in his study, while his NES respondents identified organization as their main concern, grammar tied with three other areas (formatting, style, idea expression) in second place; ELL learners placed grammar concerns in first place, with organization second (21). Joseph Cheattle’s study (2017) of 800 post-tutorial surveys from both native English speakers and ELL students showed “there are more similarities than differences between ELL students and NES students” in terms of what both sets of writers wanted to work on during their tutorials and what they actually worked on; while grammar was identified as ELL students’ number one concern, other higher-order concerns such as whether they met the requirements

of the assignment and whether their organization was logical were addressed, as well.

Furthermore, tutors already shift between directive and non-directive tutoring as needed during tutorials, both for NES and ELL students. In Eckstein's (2019) study, he expected his findings to match his expectations regarding directiveness in tutorials—that tutors would be more directive with Gen 1.5 and L2 writers than L1 writers—but found “that tutors may be providing directive tutorials to all three groups of learners without discriminating based on students’ needs and backgrounds” (71). This directiveness, furthermore, is now being accepted as necessary for marginalized groups, in which ELL learners are included. Ultimately, the researchers of this study agree that its university’s ELL learners have unique, specialized needs; therefore, in their development of the CAMSA program, they paired those needs and expectations with NCAA requirements to pilot a program tailored specifically for them.

College Athletics, NCAA Policy, and Student-Athletes

Often, university athletic programs have their own academic services. NCAA policy separates support for financial and academic resources for student-athletes, and for Division I athletics, especially, a rhetoric of compliance grounds the policy (Rifenburg, “Supporting” 64+). Such a rhetoric can severely curtail tutorial practices and strategies, according to Michael Rifenburg in “Fleshing Out the Uniqueness of Student-Athlete Writing Centers.” In his response to Alanna Bitzel’s article “Supporting Student-Athletes,” he notes:

My staff and I...cater only to student-athletes and work from non-directive, non- evaluative writing center pedagogies while adhering to strict NCAA academic compliance mandates, which, for example disallow a tutor writing on a student-athlete’s paper or collaboratively brainstorming and requires all writing-tutoring sessions to occur in a pre-designated space with clear staff oversight.

As a result, student-athlete academic services have grown “alongside yet distinct from the general academic mission of American higher education” (Rifenburg, “Supporting,” 64). Thus, many Division I

athletic departments have their own Writing Centers, which are not necessarily logistically, academically, and pedagogically connected to the Writing Center(s) available for the larger campus community. For example, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Oklahoma, both NCAA Division I schools, have student-athlete-only writing centers. In their back-and-forth 2012-2013 columns in *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, Bitzel and Rifenburg discuss and debate the unique challenges directors, tutors, and student-athletes constantly negotiate in these student-athlete-only centers where NCAA compliance policy undergirds their practices. Bitzel's goal is to "disavow notions that...writing tutors are doing more than they should for our student athletes" ("Writing Centers"), while Rifenburg stresses that "tutoring methods cannot mimic what occurs in a traditional campus writing center" due to NCAA mandates ("Fleshing Out"). To that end, the directors and administrators of these centers often have different aims for their centers than those that serve the large campus community: "our goal at the Center [UT Austin] is not to attract a larger clientele or to address writing in the larger community; we exist to respond to the needs of a particular population" (Bitzel, "Supporting"). On the one hand, this segregation can lead to the balkanization of these students, which disconnects them from the academic environment/culture the larger student body experiences (Rifenburg, "Supporting," 64-65). On the other hand, student-athletes at these big name universities, whose names and faces appear frequently in the media, may view these centers as a space of refuge "to get away from the public's attention and focus on their studies" (Bitzel, "Supporting").

Rifenburg and Bitzel aptly stress the way NCAA policy impinges upon the academic services offered to Division I student-athletes. Both highlight the fact that student-athletes are a unique part of the student population on any campus (Bitzel, "Supporting"; Rifenburg, "Fleshing Out") but, despite their uniqueness, there is limited scholarship on the relationship between writing centers and student-athletes. Indeed, Rifenburg observes that "A thin slice of scholarship focuses on the nexus of athletics and rhetoric and literacy, but I have yet to come across a source devoted to writing centers and student-athletes" ("Fleshing Out"). Similarly, Bitzel demonstrates that writing center directors working with student-athletes are uniquely positioned to address this dearth of scholarship and "should look for ways to leverage this advantage in service to research" ("Writing Centers"). In creating the CAMSA

program and researching best practices, we more specifically found a gap in the literature on student-athletes at the Division II and III levels as well as on the juxtaposition between multilingualism, athletics, and writing centers. Thus, much like the scholars we have discussed here, we advocate for further scholarship on these relationships and practices even as we contribute to ongoing discussions about multilingual students, student-athletes, and writing centers.

Francis Marion University, the Athletic Department, and the Writing Center

Francis Marion University is a rural public comprehensive university located in Florence, SC, and was first established as a college in 1970. Its main mission is to serve the people of the region and the state, with 96% of its students being SC residents (“About FMU”), and more than 40% of the 2018-2019 freshman class being first generation college students (“First Generation Fund: Francis Marion University,” para. 1). Enrollment for the 2018-2019 school year was 3,984 students (“Francis Marion University Enrollment Up 5.2 Percent,” para. 2). Additionally, the university is ranked as an NCAA Division II school, with seven different sports offered for both men and women. FMU’s athletics operates with a small athletic staff; specifically, it has a single NCAA Compliance Officer rather than an entire office dedicated to monitoring such issues. While this means that the level of NCAA oversight is less than at large Division I universities, it also means less money funnels back into the university for student-athlete academic support or the university at large. Athletes who attend our university are not aiming to become professional athletes; rather, they are here to compete at the collegiate level while obtaining a strong education.

The international students who choose to attend FMU enter the university through one of two tracks: as transfer students through the study abroad program or via matriculation through the regular admissions process. As internal institutional data shows, between 2013 and 2018, the percentage of international undergraduate students has remained steady, accounting for 1.5-1.8% of total university undergraduates, roughly 50-65 students per year.⁵ Students who enter

⁵ International graduate students have fluctuated between 1-5 between 2013-2018, or .3-1.5% of total enrollment.

FMU through study abroad are students from international universities that FMU has partnered with as exchange hosts. Students from FMU travel abroad for a semester, and students from participating universities abroad come to FMU for a semester. These students automatically become members of the FMU Honors College, and their entrance into the university is facilitated by the Director of International Programs and Director of the Honors Program.

Degree-seeking international students enter FMU through the regular admissions process. These students must meet the university's admission requirements to be eligible for admission, and admission is not guaranteed. Many international athletes enter the FMU through this second pathway. Similar to the high school recruiting process where scouts observe athletes and recruit them to their university's sport program, international recruiting scouts partner with various international high schools and offer students opportunities to earn American college educations as well as opportunities to continue to play their sports. Given FMU's rural location, university size, and status as a Division II school, options to recruit top American athletes are limited. Thus, the university regularly recruits international athletes to play at Francis Marion. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, there has been a recent incline in the number of international student-athletes due to the university granting permission to the Athletic department to increase the sizes of their teams as well as create secondary teams. With the increase in team size, international recruiting has also increased and thus so has the population of international, multilingual student-athletes on campus. While the culture and relationship between athletics and academics at Francis Marion University is quite collaborative and supportive of student-athletes (Hartzler), the international student-athletes have struggled to meet the demands of rigorous athletic schedules and classes in another language. As a result, they voluntarily show up at the writing center for assistance or their coaches send them to us.

The FMU Writing Center and its operating budget became part of the newly established Center for Academic Success and Advisement during the 2016-2017 school year. The tutoring staff is composed of a yearly average of twenty-five undergraduate students from various majors and a yearly average of four English department faculty members. The Center as campus-wide resource is well attended, with over 25% of the

student body having at least one tutorial during the 2018-2019 school year. The Center has an overwhelmingly positive reputation from students, staff, and university administration. Because of the writing center's popularity as a student resource and our student-athletes' desire to maintain their academics and athletic scholarships, these students regularly use the center. Seeing a need to augment training so our tutors felt more prepared to assist our multilingual student population as well as provide ELL composition and communication support to these students, we created the CAMSA program with the support of the Athletic Department.

The Creation of CAMSA

Communication Assistance for Multilingual Student-Athletes (CAMSA) is modeled after our center's Write on Target program. The FMU Writing Center established Write on Target (WOT) to support students in entry-level English composition courses. In this program, experienced student tutors are paired with students in these English courses for weekly 45-minute appointments to work primarily on their composition assignments. Similarly, in CAMSA, international student-athletes are paired with experienced tutors, and they meet once a week for 45 minutes to work on writing assignments, reading and vocabulary, and conversational English. To ensure that the program complied with NCAA mandates before we piloted it, we met with FMU's Athletic Director, Compliance Officer, and coaches to seek institutional support as well as reviewed the 2018-2019 NCAA manual for Division II athletics, which presents a single principle for academics:

Intercollegiate athletics programs shall be maintained as a vital component of the educational program, and student-athletes shall be an integral part of the student body. The admission, academic standing and academic progress of student-athletes shall be consistent with the policies and standards adopted by the institution for the student body in general. ("2.5 Principle of Sound Academic Standards," 4)

NCAA's compliance rhetoric, as observed by Rifenburg in his 2016 study, "places responsibility of academic policy creation, implementation, and enforcement on individual institutions through the vague construction of this principle," which does not change across

Division I, II, or III manuals nor has its wording changed across time (“Supporting,” 63). Thus, as we created the CAMSA program, the compliance officer determined that this program and FMU’s Writing Center tutorial practices complied with NCAA policies. Unlike the experiences of Rifenburg and Bitzel, our procedures and goals were not curtailed by NCAA mandates due both to its vague policy and, we suspect, to the school’s Division II status and rural geographic location. Additionally, in our interview with Murray Hartzler, FMU’s Athletic Director, he commended various department chairs and coaches for working together to “create an environment of academic success” for student-athletes. Hartzler observed that he, coaches, and the departments on campus work together to ensure that student-athletes stay on course to graduate in four years. Separate student-athlete-only academic services do not exist due to the university’s Division II status and its small percentage of athletes in comparison to the total student body (Hartzler). Instead, each coach, Hartzler explains, is in charge of helping their student-athletes balance academic and athletic responsibilities. As a result, some coaches have team-designated study halls that rotate locations based on classroom availability on campus while others have regular individual meetings with their athletes to check in on the state of their academics (Hartzler).

Given the collaborative relationship between our athletic and academic departments, garnering support for CAMSA was a relatively simple process. Hartzler and coaches endorsed the program by requiring—an important difference to the voluntary WOT program—new, incoming international student athletes and returning international student athletes with GPAs lower than 3.0 and English course grades lower than a C to be enrolled in the program. Additionally, given our lack of expertise with ELL instruction and the importance of evaluating best practices, we assessed CAMSA’s effectiveness during its first pilot year; we collected data from students through writing samples, written surveys, and oral interviews at multiple intervals throughout the fall and spring semester.

The Initial Implementation Plan

Much of the preliminary work behind developing the CAMSA program occurred during FMU’s second summer session. The Director stayed in regular contact with the Athletic Director and a member of the Enrollment office to develop a spreadsheet of international athletes and

winnowed our list to eligible individuals. Notably, these students come to us via uneven and inconsistent pathways. That is, some of these students are freshmen newly arrived from their home countries; others have lived in different English-speaking countries and/or the United States for 2-4 years to attend high school and some college; other students are bilingual and working on their Master's degrees. Given these different paths, we received different types and levels of information about each student from admissions: some have TOEFL scores, some are exempt from TOEFL, some have SAT scores, some only have high school transcripts, some have high school and college transcripts, and some have a combination.

Using this information, or lack thereof, along with a written assessment that we had planned to administer – FMU does not require international students to submit a writing sample for admission, so we developed a timed writing prompt – we then assessed who we would place into the program and who we would not. To be clear, as writing center administrators and composition scholars, we believe that all students, no matter their English language proficiency and fluency, benefit from writing tutorial assistance, as this is a significant and invaluable component of the writing process. But the FMU Writing Center, while an administratively well-supported and popular student resource on campus, is limited in budget, tutor numbers, physical space, and time. Unfortunately, then, we cannot provide tutorial assistance to all student-athletes. CAMSA, therefore, is solely designed to offer writing assistance to international ELL student-athletes who struggle with writing at the American collegiate level to the extent that they would struggle to pass their lower-division composition courses.

Exempting some students from the program is necessary due to our limited resources. We exempted students using a triangulation of the following data: students whose first language is English, students with TOEFL scores above 90, students with SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) section scores above 480/500 (“Benchmarks”), students exempt from TOEFL (because of the amount of time spent living and attending school in an English-speaking country), and students whose writing samples demonstrated understanding of American collegiate level academic writing codes. From CAMSA’s inception, we acknowledge that 1) we are not experts in ELL writing instruction; 2) standardized tests, such as TOEFL and SATs, are

problematic and often do not accurately reflect students' academic abilities; 3) our initial methodology for placing the students into the program was flawed; and 4) this program is imperfect and in continual development so as to best support and adapt to our students' needs. When internationality met intersectionality, we failed to consider the intersections of these ELL students' subject positions, which can both positively and negatively affect their English language acquisition practices and experiences. Thus, our initial decision to exempt a student from the program because they were from an English-speaking country was misguided. Accounting for this, and working with our Athletic Director to help him understand the tension between internationality and intersectionality, we have restructured the program and how students select into it, which we will address in the final sections of this article.

After a working list of potential student-athletes was developed, we collaborated with the Athletic Department to meet with these students (who moved onto campus a week before the regular student population). Our plan was to introduce the CAMSA program to them and obtain a writing sample, which we intended to use in conjunction with the data collected above to establish our final roster of CAMSA students. Then, using the student-athletes' academic and athletic schedules, we would pair the CAMSA enrollees with senior tutors in our writing center for weekly 45-minute appointments. The week before the Writing Center opened for the fall semester, we would explain the CAMSA program to the selected tutors, review ELL tutoring strategies they had been trained to use when they were initially hired, and provide them with resources that they could use during tutorials. CAMSA tutorials would then begin the same week as WOT tutorials, during the writing center's third week of operations.

The Actual Implementation

Due to communication lag time with coaches and the Athletic Director at the start of the semester, we were unable to meet with the athletes before school started to introduce them to the Writing Center and the academic services it offers or to explain the purpose of CAMSA and the reasons for their enrollment in the program. As a result, the Athletic Director, who follows a top-down approach when communicating with athletes, provided them with this information, couching it in NCAA compliance mandates, which we later learned was framed solely in terms

of ‘required attendance’ and being ‘benched’ if they did not attend their appointments. Understandably, the CAMSA students communicated their resentment toward the forced nature of the program and were confused as to why they were placed in the program in the first place. Additionally, many of them did not understand what a writing center was and what services it offered. In response to this confusion, and amidst the hectic schedules that accompany the start of any academic year, we scrambled to collect writing samples, assuage anxieties, meet with students to offer clarity, and ascertain who should be enrolled in the program. Unsurprisingly and understandably, the resulting fourteen CAMSA enrollees, who we scheduled and paired with our writing center senior tutors during the second week of classes, reluctantly participated at minimal levels in their appointments, initially. However, despite their preliminary dislike of the program, many of them began to actively participate in their sessions in part because of the success they saw in their classes and in part due to the support of their tutor.⁶

Halfway through the academic year, we asked our CAMSA students to fill out a brief, anonymous online survey evaluating their experiences in the program. Using the Likert Scale, we asked students to rate their experiences based on statements such as “I feel more confident about my academic writing skills because of the CAMSA program”; “My tutor was effective”; “I’d recommend CAMSA to other students”; and “I will use the writing center again for other assignments.” That said, only seven of the fourteen students filled out the survey, so these responses are not comprehensive. Furthermore, based on the chaotic start of the program and the students’ rough (and somewhat misrepresented) introduction to it, we did not expect positive results. Much to our surprise six of the seven students rated their experience as neutral or strongly positive for each question, which was a significant change from their attitudes at the

⁶ As the pilot semester progressed, students started becoming more proactive in their weekly appointments, working with their tutors through the brainstorming, drafting, and revising processes of their projects. Therefore, by the end of the semester, more had taken advantage of what Severino and Prim (2016) define as a writing center’s “vital role”: “tak[ing] full advantage of a complete writing process of multiple drafts and multiple revisions, including editing, in multiple sittings” (p. 176). This proactive involvement carried into the spring semester.

start of the program. At the end of the semester, we also met with our CAMSA tutors as a group to reflect on their experiences. Similar to their tutees, they communicated a sense of stress at the start of the semester but ultimately felt that both the students and they benefited from these sessions.⁷

CAMSA Restructured: Future Goals for the Program and FMU Students

Using the anecdotal information we gathered from our tutors and CAMSA students, initial data (via surveys, writing samples, and interviews) we collected, recommendations from the reviewers of this article, and solicited advice from colleagues specializing in ELL composition, we significantly revised the CAMSA program in terms of the enrollment process and in terms of the guidelines about how the program will be introduced to students, both of which the Athletic Department agreed to follow. The program is now entirely voluntary, and students can choose to participate and/or opt out of the program at any time; we are in the process of developing a survey modeled off of directed self-placements where students indicate their perceived level of need and interest in the program, and we will follow up with interested students to enroll them in CAMSA. As administrators of the writing center, we now control the framing of and discussions with student-athletes about the program to make clear that the program's goal is to demystify American university academic writing codes. We will continue to provide a larger assortment of resources for athletes/tutors to use in the semester; we will have regular meetings with the student-athletes in CAMSA throughout the semester in efforts to be proactive rather than reactive; and we will maintain our current tutor-training

⁷ Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg note that tutor anxiety about working with L2 students is very real and that "student-tutors may believe that working with L2 students is harder than working with L1 students because of handed-down practice (Thompson et al. 79) and assumptions of one-way learning. This anxiety may also add to tutors' fears about tutors' own limited knowledge about the English language; when engaging with students on a topic like grammar, tutors' anxieties may move to the foreground." Our tutors' anxiety levels at this program's implementation were much higher than when we debriefed at the end of our pilot semester, and most of our pilot CAMSA tutors enthusiastically volunteered to participate in CAMSA again.

regimen, which includes ELL training for tutors every semester to educate and reinforce knowledge. We saw more overall positive responses to our CAMSA program in its second year, both from the international student-athletes and tutors. In casual conversations with members of FMU's Athletic Department, they have communicated the desire and need to expand the program to include *all* freshman student-athletes. Such positive feedback suggests that collaboration and student-outreach have been successful. Due to the impact of Covid-19 on university athletics and international travel, the program is paused for the Fall 2020 semester; however, this delay has enabled us to seek advice from experts in ELL education to further restructure the program.

As we mentioned at the start of this article, we are writing, in the midst of this pilot, our evaluation of its design, methods, and our revisions to the program. Our goals and purpose in writing *in medias res* are three-fold: 1) we share our experience to offer practical guidance (on what to do and not to do) when creating writing center programs for underrepresented and under-supported students at universities with similar social-geographic contexts; 2) we strive to raise awareness about the unique academic situations both student-athletes and international student-athletes find themselves in and how writing centers can support these students; and 3) we stress the need for further research and scholarship on writing centers and student-athletes. Important questions to consider in this work are: As directors, how can we better prepare our tutors for the growing number of one-to-one conferences with multilingual-student-athletes and student-athletes who will come to our writing centers in the future? How can we help tutors demystify academic writing codes for multilingual students visiting the center? As our student population changes and we become aware of underrepresented students in need of writing support, how might tutoring practices and writing centers change and adapt, especially at rural, comprehensive universities? How can we work with faculty and coaches to help student-athletes and international student-athletes succeed? What can writing centers at the various NCAA Division I, II, and III levels learn from each other about tutoring practices and community goals so as to enhance students' writing experiences? Through the complicated creation and implementation of the CAMSA program, we have come to understand the immense need for additional scholarship on the relationships writing centers have with student-athletes and multilingual

student-athletes. We would advocate for further research on the best practices and effective programs to support these students.

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About the Author



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About the Author



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Consultant Insight

Course Embedded Tutoring, New Genres, and the Small College Environment: An Exploration and Reflection

Emma Masur

Course-embedded initiatives¹ based in writing centers have been considered by scholars in a variety of ways. For example, research conducted by Bromley and Regaignon shows that “writing fellows programs do make a difference in students’ writing. This approach to WAC makes both faculty and students across campus more conscious of the expectations of discipline-specific writing” (Bromely and Regaignon 58). Similarly, Whiddon and Carpenter argue that “such programming, at its best, helps to break down the complicated relationship and potential division between instructor and student” (Whiddon and Carpenter). Whether the discussion is of the CEC’s impact upon student writer growth, student writer confidence, promotion of collaborative learning, or simply creating better visualization for the Writing Center as a whole, CEC programming has begun to challenge the typical academic geographies that influence the divide seen between classrooms and their respective support spaces.

As a writing center staffer at a small liberal arts college in Lexington, Kentucky, I became interested in CEC work as a result of my deep involvement with the university’s Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication major. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to

¹ Often referred to as “Course Embedded Consultants,” “Writing Fellows” or “Writing Associates” programs by a variety of colleges.

show the positive and measurable impact of CEC work on student writing within a single course throughout one semester; this research also provides a close-up examination of a specific course from the perspective of an undergraduate staffer—a rare voice not generally heard throughout a much larger conversation as a whole.

As a course-embedded staffer and researcher, I worked with an Introduction to Classical Rhetoric course taught during the fall 2019 semester. Students were faced with a variety of written tasks, including a multimodal podcast assignment. This research gathers both qualitative and quantitative data from three anonymous surveys, as well as my own personal observations with students gained via session notes that were required of each TUWC student visit. Through my collected data, I was able to answer the following questions pertaining to this research:

1. How does a CEC program benefit the student writer as a whole?
2. What type of influence does a CEC program have on students with limited writing experience, and with especially limited backgrounds in digital composition?
3. In what ways does a CEC program, utilizing a multimodal component, differ from a program without?

Unlike other scholarship written about CEC programs, I was the only consultant involved in this research process. My experience allows for a ground-level viewpoint into the writing lives of a small group of writers. Having a tutor perspective enriches already-existing work by other scholars, given my ability to relate to other students' experiences and having already taken this particular course. My research offers a close-up look at a single CEC-course in real time, and in light of previous scholarship, considers the strengths and challenges of CEC programming in a university setting as a whole.

Student Participation and Satisfaction

Due to my role as a CEC, I developed a sustained relationship with each class participant, as well as a deeper understanding of this course's specific assignments. I was thus able to cater to the individual needs of each student not only throughout the brainstorming processes, but throughout their overall writing processes. All 12 students responded to a question on Survey 1 pertaining to any previous knowledge about

brainstorming strategies in particular: 90% indicated they were familiar with “talking with a peer” as a brainstorming/invention strategy, 90% chose bulleted lists, 81% chose pen and paper, 73% chose mapping/diagramming, and 73% chose freewriting (see *fig. 1*). This finding suggests that the writing process differs between each student. It also reiterates ideas offered by Dvorak et al. by showing how the learning environment helped them to articulate their needs as student writers. An inclusive learning environment must first be cultivated in order for students of all disciplines to feel comfortable at any step of the writing process. By allowing each student to work through their own process of discovering the best ways in which to formulate their argument, the student is simultaneously creating an identity for themselves as creators of prose (Dvorak et al.). Thus, CEC's have a unique opportunity, given the sustained and substantive relationships made, to support a wide range of learning needs.

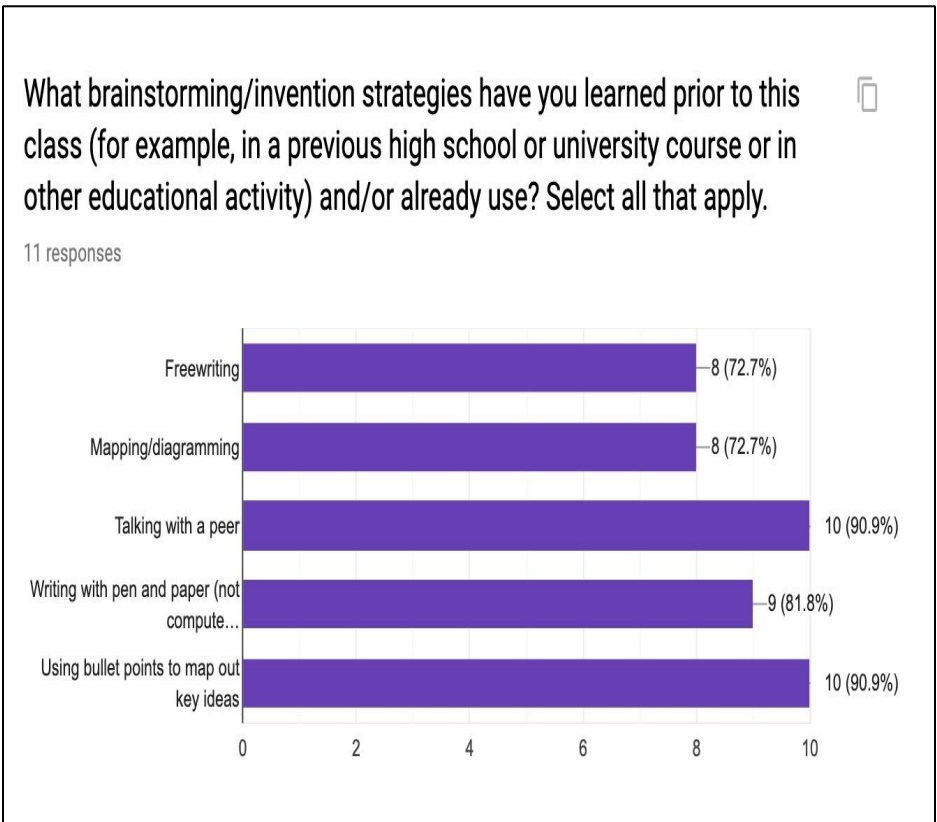


Figure 1: Student Familiarity with Various Brainstorming Invention Strategies

All class participants took advantage of this initiative, as seen through the surveys provided throughout the semester. As shown in *fig. 2* below, the majority of students were extremely satisfied with their experience. As expected, the students enrolled in the Classical Rhetoric course stem from a variety of disciplines. Because of this melting pot of disciplines all enrolled, it is fair to assume that all students see writing through a different lens, and many may have a difficult time adjusting to a more writing-intensive course. By taking the time to make note of each distinctive identity that participates within the CEC program, one can assert that “writing fellows programs do seem to make a positive and measurable difference in students’ writing” (Bromley and Regaignon).

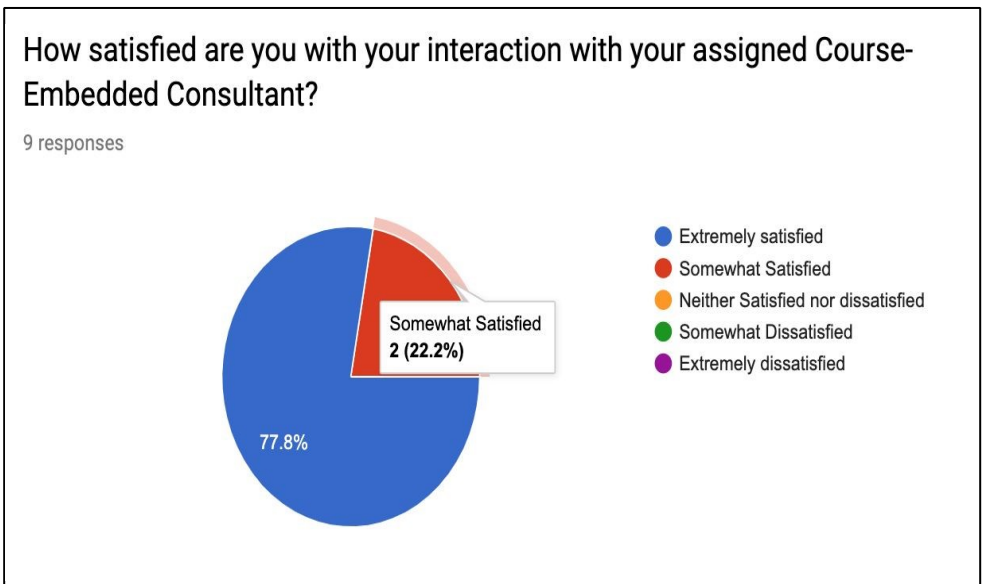


Figure 2: Results from Student-Satisfaction Survey

By implementing the CEC program within this course, I have been able to notice first-hand the implications of allowing students to utilize their own creative practices. Likewise, Webster and Hansen state that, “The vacuum between the individual-student-as-writer and individual-professor-as-reader becomes less pronounced as students experience the benefits of feedback without the associated risk they often perceive in the student-faculty transaction” (Webster and Hansen). As a result, it is

imperative to allow students to explore their own capabilities in an environment that is stripped of the pressures of a letter grade. This practice allows for more conversation to flow, and also provides an opportunity for learning within the Writing Center itself. When students willingly work with a CEC throughout a semester, collaboration between peers is emphasized as each student learns new strategies from the other regarding the fundamental writing process overall.

Observations of Tutoring Sessions

It is crucial to consider institutional context when exploring cross-campus collaborations. By situating this conversation within the context of a small, liberal arts school in Lexington, Kentucky, the audience is given a different perspective of CEC programming as a whole. Previous research involving CEC programs has typically been conducted at large institutions. Furthermore, small colleges tend to brand themselves about relationships and mentoring, meaning that the basic representatives of CEC work ground themselves in close-knit relationships. Since the class sizes at TU are small, I was able to know each student involved in the program on a personal level. I knew their names, their disciplines, their likes and dislike. I also learned of their academic goals, as well as personal and professional aspirations. Because of these intimate relationships, I was able to work closer with these students within the Writing Center than I would have if this program had been conducted at a larger institution. Situating this research within a small university environment helps to expand upon the unique approach to this specific CEC program.

Throughout my observations, I noticed that many students were unsure as to how to begin a rhetorical analysis, lowering their confidence levels as writers from the beginning of the process. Many of the initial sessions posed as brainstorming meetings in order to help ground the students in the start of the writing process. Although many of the students felt frustrated that we were not working on the bulk of the assignment, I was able to persuade each student that prompt work and outlining is just as critical as writing the paper itself. The goal was to help students feel as though they were still being efficient with their time spent working on this assignment, even if they were not writing the actual paper yet. This approach helped to solidify an appreciation for the Writing Center within the student from the start. Macauley helps to solidify this claim by

stating, “when writing processes, rhetorical choices, audiences, or reader experiences are emphasized, the WF can have a great deal more to offer because, along with her expertise, she is a unique audience and a specific reader” (Macauley 46). By developing the drive for students to attend sessions within the Writing Center, I was able to get the student to *want* to come back in the future to collaborate on writing tasks with peers consistently. In totality, the implementation of a CEC in any course helps to emphasize the importance of collaboration and simultaneously spurs students in the direction of the Writing Center as well.

Not all students have similar ways in which to approach the writing process. For example, one response from Survey 2 dictates, “I think [the CEC] and I have different approaches to brainstorming and creating a forecasting statement, so it was frustrating when her and I did not start on the same footing from the start.” This comment illustrates how the writing process varies for all individuals, whether the student studies a writing intensive discipline or not. The student cited above from Survey 2 did, however, take the time to work with another staffer, and later come back to work with myself, giving her a diverse set of comments to help formulate her thoughts. As a result, this student showed how a positive, collaborative learning atmosphere is effective, as the student clearly did not feel as though they were confined to working with one single Writing Center staffer (Macauley). The Writing Center itself produces an environment in which students are encouraged to create conversation with more than one peer, which helps to forge a transparent educational experience overall. Additionally, collaborative learning with multiple peers helps students employ the Writing Center throughout the entirety of their own writing process (Macauley and Mauriello). As a result, it is the hope that these students have a newfound drive to utilize the Writing Center as a center for academic learning and growth overall.

Working with Students on Multimodal Projects

Although there are many studies that examine various aspects of CEC work, none delve deeply in how CEC work can engage and support students working in multimodal genres—especially students who might not have significant experience in writing via digital, online or aural tools. Given my experience, CEC work can be a way to directly support student writing growth especially when dealing with new tools or

unfamiliar genres. The assignment for this specific course requires students to revisit a presentation given earlier in the term that explains and defines an assigned logical fallacy, and asks them to revitalize the content in the form of a podcast. The survey in *fig. 3* asked the students to rate their proficiency with composing using audio recording platforms on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). In their responses, 45.5% of students chose 2 as their personal level of competence with these types of platforms, 27.3% rated themselves as a 4, 18.2% rated themselves as a 1, and 9.1% rated themselves as a 3. From this data alone, it is clear that this group of students were *not* inherently familiar with audio recording tools and for this particular course, creating a podcast.

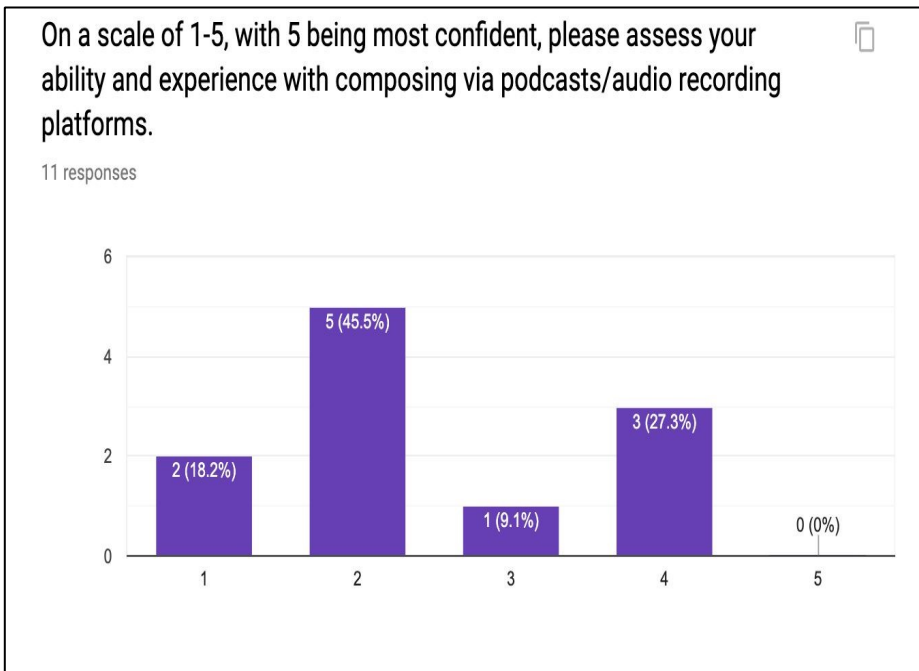


Figure 3. Student Familiarity with Audio Recording Platforms

Throughout my experience, I have found that working with an unfamiliar genre when attempting to write articulate prose has an immense impact on student writing. When students were asked to create a discourse labeled as a “podcast” rather than a “paper,” they were immediately intimidated by the assignment. However, this multimodal influence was by no means negative; it asked the students to think deeper on the

subject, and consider ways in which to translate the written word into an audio recording. The survey results above show that with greater confusion on an assignment, more students were likely to attend meetings at the Writing Center throughout the drafting and revision process. According to the survey in *fig. 4*, 90.9% of students visited the Writing Center at least once in preparation for the multimodal aspect of the project. As a result, this finding correlates well with the idea that the Writing Center is a space in which students feel drawn to work through each and every step of their writing process, regardless of the medium in which the assignment is expressed (Macauley). Based on my research, I have found that students feel less confident in their work because they are creating prose on a platform that is unfamiliar and out of their area of expertise. As a result, these students learn how to take the spoken word and turn it into functional rhetoric, which is a skill that is likely to be useful in later life, even if the students do not recognize it in the moment.

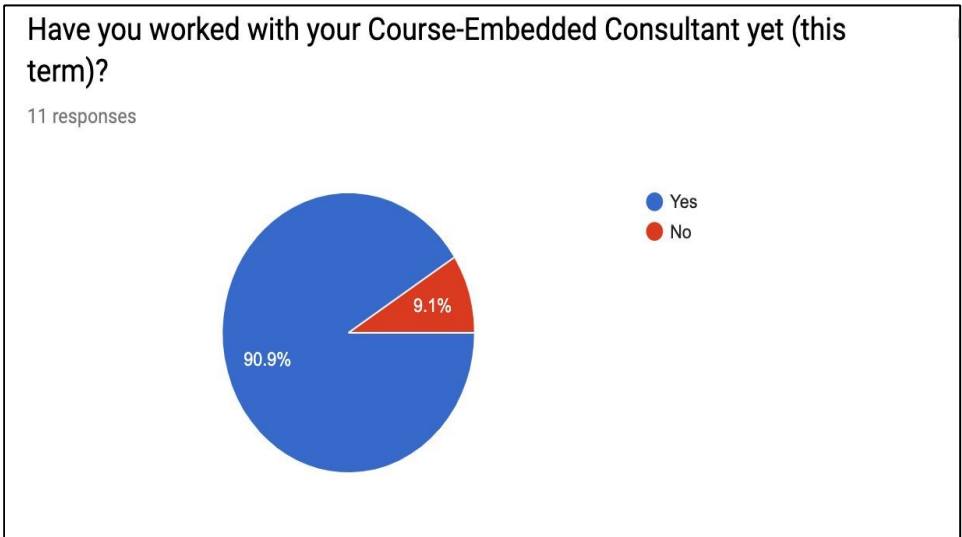


Figure 4. Percentage of Students Who Did/Did Not Work with CEC

Conclusion: Moving Forward

My research affirms much of the extant scholarly conversation about CEC work. Regardless of university size, or mission, when a CEC program is well-orchestrated, designed and supported, this type of program has been proven to be beneficial for any writer of any discipline. That said, CEC programs are not a cure-all. A writing program has to work in concert with other programs, and one cannot expect one

approach to work for everything program the same. When concerning the advantages seen through this program specifically at TU, the small class size (12 students total) gave way for a more intimate relationship between student and CEC, as well as faculty and student. By meeting with the same 12 students consistently throughout the course of a single semester, I was able to develop personal relationships with these students, and also get to know each and every individualized writing process.

With the success of any CEC program also comes its challenges, and the CEC program at my institution was not immune. With the small class sizes comes a small pool of survey results, which still yielded only a handful of responses to each survey. Unfortunately, some students also did not take the time to respond to the survey, which impacted the results significantly. However, other students showed that they truly valued the conversations taking place within the Writing Center, which solidified within me a sense of purpose and pride in the work of this program.

My experience as a CEC has reinforced my belief in the need for the Writing Center on campus and the improvements it can make on student writing. Not only has it been shown that the Writing Center is beneficial for students across any discipline, but it helps to shape the students as writers and people together. CEC work at a small college plays into other rhetorical frameworks that are seen as part of small college life: developing close relationships; mentoring opportunities, and one on one attention. Overall, the students enrolled in the course stated that they did not have a productive experience in the Writing Center until the CEC program was implemented within their classroom this past semester. Intentional partnerships between a classroom and a writing center not only help create better visualization for writing programs, but also-and perhaps most importantly-help students successfully grow as both print and multimodal writers. Overall, I believe the advantages to this type of work greatly outweigh any possible detriments. CEC work is highly rewarding, as I get to observe first-hand students grow not only as creators of prose, but as individuals.

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About the Author



Emma Masur completed her undergraduate degree at Transylvania University in Lexington, KY, where she studied Writing, Rhetoric and Communications/Digital Art and Media. She is currently pursuing her M.A. in Composition, Rhetoric and Digital Media at Nova Southeastern University. She would like to thank her undergraduate advisor, Dr. Scott Whiddon, for making this publication possible.

Back to the Center

Extending a Helping Hand: Increasing Visibility for the University Writing Center at the University of West Georgia

Duane Theobald

Center Profile

- Number of Consultants: 35-40
- Hours Open Per Week: 35
- Number of Consultants Working Per Shift: 2-6
- Average Number of Sessions Per Semester: Fall semester—between 1,600-2,000 Spring semester—between 1,300-1,500

History of the University Writing Center (UWC)

The University of West Georgia (UWG) has had supplemental writing support of some kind since Dr. Martha Saunders created the “Writing Lab” in 1980. Over the years, as UWG has grown and evolved, so have the support services offered. In the fall of 1996, the “Writing Lab” transformed into the “University Writing Center” (UWC) and, in the fall of 2001, the UWC relocated to the first floor of the Technology-enhanced Learning Center. This location serves as a central hub for much of UWG’s campus community, making the UWC much more visible than it was previously. Though undergraduate writing tutors originally staffed the UWC, both first-year writing faculty and graduate writing consultants now meet with students. The Center also employs a Coordinator, two part-time employees, and student assistants.

UWG at a Glance

UWG is located west of Atlanta in the town of Carrollton, GA. Having evolved from a district agricultural and mechanical school to the thriving regional comprehensive university it is today, UWG is home to over 13,000 students and nearly 80 programs of study, ranging from undergraduate to doctoral. UWG enrolls students from 38 states and 73 countries. As the sixth largest public university in Georgia, UWG has become an institution where academic excellence is at the forefront and supporting student success is vital.

The UWC: Ripe for Growth & Reinvention

As the UWC's current Coordinator, I was hired on as a staff member in the fall of 2011 and quickly moved into an administrative role in the fall of 2012. Having never served in an academic administrative role, I took time to get my bearings. I came into the position with a degree in English with 6-12 grade teaching certification. I had never worked in a writing center, nor did I know much about the world of writing center studies. At first glance, the Center was doing pretty well: assisting a modest number of students every semester and partnering with a few faculty here and there with specific writing assignments in their classes. We were running pretty efficiently. However, after a few months in my new role, there was one nagging thought that I kept coming back to over and over: we were primarily serving students in English Composition classes. Being housed under the Department of English & Philosophy at the time, this made perfect sense. Most of our consultants are first-year writing faculty, so logically they would send their students through the Center. However, since UWG is such a large and academically-diverse institution, we could easily be drawing more students from other disciplines and backgrounds. There was certainly work to be done, and the best way to begin addressing this underutilization was to increase visibility and presence for the Center on our campus.

Connecting to Campus Community & Establishing Brand Identity

In "The Writing Center as a Site of Engagement," Linda S. Bergmann states that "one of the reasons that writing centers become sites of engagement is that people looking for various kinds of help, knowledge, and interaction with projects related to writing and literacy often contact

effective and visible writing centers” (160). While the UWC was effective, we were hardly visible. Yes—we had posters all over campus and faculty who worked in the Center talking to their students about our services. However, we were not regularly communicating with our students, faculty, and staff across campus. We were not going out into the campus community to speak to classes, and we didn’t often set up tables to advertise and engage with the community. Seeing an opportunity for growth, I set out to do this work and, at first, did much of it on my own. Was it exhausting? Yes. Was it worth it? Absolutely! Spending just a few minutes a couple of times each semester to email students, faculty, and staff about our services increased visibility. People knew that we were available to help, and it’s amazing how far that goes. Advertising hours, location, and other essential information is valuable, and I’ve also found just how effective class visits and workshops are. Each academic year, our Center tracks the amount of outreach we do and, based on post-session student surveys, class visits and workshops are the second highest way that students hear about our Center—second to professor recommendation. Furthermore, students recognize me and, now, other members of my staff from our in-class presentations. Being known as the “Writing Center Guy” on campus and throughout the Carrollton community isn’t a horrible thing; in fact, it serves as yet another reminder to students that the UWC is there for them, and there are faces attached to what used to be a mysterious entity.

The other piece to the visibility puzzle that Bergmann mentions is the need for clear branding. Now, I know that the word “branding” can make some academics’ eyes glaze over. However, it really does make a huge difference—especially if a center is lacking a clear brand and presence. I am by no means a marketing expert, so I am quite fortunate that UWG has a great Communications and Marketing department that is ready and available to assist. When I was first hired, we had nothing in the way of clear branding and marketing. The posters we had were interesting but supremely outdated. Through the help of talented marketing colleagues, I had a logo designed for the Center and, every semester, updated posters created that are physically posted all over campus and on digital screens in various buildings. We also have a banner that hangs over a balcony in our building and advertisements on our campus shuttles. In essence, our brand is everywhere.

I spearheaded all of the work above as the lead administrator of the Center, working closely with the rest of my administrative staff. The support they've offered throughout the years has been instrumental in carrying out all of these changes. Additionally, my consultants (both faculty and graduate students) have been huge supporters of the changes the Center has made.

Now, the question you're probably asking is: has any of this reinvention worked for the UWC? In short, yes. Our center just completed our last year of a university-wide Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that increased the amount of writing in the Core Curriculum. Given the work that the QEP has required, the UWC has been in the trenches since the beginning, helping faculty navigate how to best support their students in non-English Composition classes. We have seen increased consultation figures, with some waxing and waning in certain semesters, and increased engagement from faculty from across the disciplines. We also have departments regularly partnering with us for events and programming—such as the Office of Education Abroad, the Housing Academic Resource Center, the Office of First-Year Academic Programs, and New Student Programs. On average, our center takes part in roughly 200 outreach events, class visits, in-class workshops, and table set-ups per academic year. This has taken many years to accomplish, and there is still more work to do. However, our center has proven that investing in the campus community and establishing clear visibility can encourage that community to invest and engage with the work of a writing center.

Looking Ahead

As UWG continues to grow and evolve, so too must the UWC—and happily so. One area of our university landscape that we struggle to connect with is our online student population. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Center only offered asynchronous online tutoring during the summer months; however, as you can imagine, this situation has changed significantly due the current pandemic. Now we offer both face-to-face and online services, allowing us to better serve our entire student population. After the pandemic, we're planning to keep these various modes of operation intact. Additionally, we're offering to host online writing workshops. So far, we've done this successfully with a variety of undergraduate classes and one of our

Education doctoral programs—though this is certain to grow. Additionally, we're always looking for ways to increase our services—including providing assistance with presentations and speeches. This has been done in small doses over the years, but we see real room for growth here. Of course, limitations like budget, space, and personnel make the aforementioned ventures challenging. However, some steps in the right direction are better than none and, above that, the campus community at UWG is worth it. There is something truly invigorating about walking through our Center and hearing meaningful, productive conversations about writing and critical thinking that makes me and the other members of the UWC staff want to come into the Center and do the work we do every day. If retention, progression, and graduation are the key words in the larger administrative game, then we should do what we can as a center to both assist with those ventures and make the writing center experience meaningful and purposeful for the writers we serve.

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About the Author



Duane Theobald is the Coordinator of the University Writing Center (UWC) at the University of West Georgia. He holds a BA in English (along with a Georgia Teaching Certificate for English, Grades 7-12) and an MA in English (with a concentration in Film Studies)--both from the University of West Georgia. He currently serves as the Georgia state representative for the Southeastern Writing Center Association and is a Past President for the Georgia Tutoring Association. His scholarly interests include Writing Center studies, post-secondary pedagogy, film as literature, and American literature (primarily early and modern). He resides in Bremen, GA, with his wife, Kate, and daughter, Hailey.

Book Review

Mackiewicz, Jo and Rebecca Day Babcock. *Theories and Methods of Writing Center Studies: A Practical Guide*. Routledge, 2020.

ISBN 978-0-18849-8

Pages: 246

Price: \$39.96 (paperback)

James Hamby

Over the past decade, the field of writing center studies arrived at a critical juncture. Qualitative research may have served writing center scholarship well in its formative decades, but the time has come for the field to engage in rigorous quantitative research. In *Theories and Methods of Writing Center Studies: A Practical Guide*, Jo Mackiewicz and Rebecca Day Babcock make the argument that “[w]riting center research has grown up ... Researchers have—slowly but consistently—answered the field’s repeated calls for rigorous research—particularly empirical research” (1). Instead of relying on lore and anecdotal evidence, the editors contend that writing center studies should instead have a stronger focus on RAD (replicable, aggregable, data-supported) research methods. Though this sort of research has become more common over recent years, the editors contend that “a guide to the field’s theories and methods has been lacking” (1). The 20 essays comprising this volume fill that gap by exploring the theories and methodologies that have come to the fore in recent years. Two major themes emerge in this collection. The first is the need for writing center studies to borrow from other fields that have long engaged in similar types of quantitative research, such as composition, education, psychology, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and others. The second common thread that emerges is one that most writing center researchers have long lamented, that conducting replicable, longitudinal studies is a daunting task due to

the varying nature of writing centers, the populations they serve, and the complexity of tutoring writing. Nevertheless, most of the essays address these concerns and give helpful guidance for conducting data-driven research.

The study begins with a delightful foreword by Muriel Harris and an introduction by the editors. It is then divided into two roughly equal parts, “Theories” and “Methods.” The “Theories” section begins with “Vygotskian Learning Theory,” and many of the subsequent chapters return back to the Vygotskian principles outlined in this opening chapter. Most of the other chapters in this section focus on different theoretical approaches based on identity, including critical race theory, queer theory, feminist theory, and disability theory. Chapters on genre theory, transfer theory, second language acquisition, and activity theory round out the section. The “Methods” section begins with Babcock’s chapter on grounded theory. Babcock explains that grounded theory “is not itself a theory. Rather, theory is what results from its process” (109). This concept lays the groundwork for Babcock’s view of how quantitative writing center research should be undertaken: that theory should be constructed from observable data. All of the following chapters in this section demonstrate this process in the different methods they focus on, ranging from ethnology to meta-analysis to survey methods. The book ends with a concluding chapter by the editors that looks to the future of writing center studies.

As mentioned above, the chapter on Vygotskian learning theory by John Nordlof sets the tone for the rest of the section, but it also serves as an extension of the introduction for the entire volume in that it emphasizes the social nature of tutoring writing. Nordlof notes the limitations of “lore” and “dogma” prevalent in qualitative writing center research, but he also argues that the field’s focus on making better writers instead of better writing constitutes “an implicit understanding” that what writing centers “are engaged in is fundamentally about the student development process” and is therefore rooted in social relationships (11). This is where Vygotsky’s ideas about learning come in, as Vygotsky theorized that the human learning process happens best during social interaction. In a later chapter, “Activity Theory,” R. Mark Hall picks up on the same Vygotskian strain as Nordlof and states, “The notion that language is learned by participating with others strikes at the heart of what writing center work is all about” (83). Because learning takes place in social situations and because tutoring writing always involves an interaction

between at least two individuals of differing backgrounds and varying levels of social power and privilege, large societal forces should always be considered in writing center research. The chapter “Writing Center Research and Disability Theory,” by Noah Bukowski and Brenda Jo Brueggemann, reinforces this concept by asserting that disability is a social construction and that “[t]heorizing disability rarely involves looking at how a person’s differences affect him or her in isolation; rather, disability theory is most engaged in analyzing and unpacking how (and why) one’s constructed differences are coded and pathologized by larger systems of power (68). When looking at writing center studies through the lens of disability studies, or feminism, or critical race theory, data-driven research is needed in order to reveal the extent to which systems of power influence language, education, and social interaction. When tutors dominate sessions as Hall discovered in his coded transcripts, for instance, researchers can develop their own theories of tutoring instruction based on hard evidence.

The “Methods” section contains an eclectic selection of differing methods, but two of the essays that stand out the most due to their emphasis on studying the existing corpus of writing center studies are Steve Price’s “Extending Our Research: Meta-Analysis in the Writing Center” and Randall W. Monty’s “Corpus Approaches to Writing Center Research.” Price explains that meta-analysis consists of researchers gathering studies on a specific question and then analyzing the data through a statistical process, thus “leveraging individual studies to make new meaning from the body of data (151). This type of research allows strands of ideas and points of inquiry to emerge. It also, Price argues, “show[s] other disciplines that we *have* a body of scholarship, [and] that it contains research of such quality that it’s worth our efforts to explore” (158). In the same vein, Monty demonstrates how software designed to recognize keywords from large databases of scholarship may be used to recognize patterns of thought and issues of concern through the body of writing center scholarship. This method, Monty argues, allows writing center researchers to “develop better understandings of the work we do, and thus be better prepared to help student writers” (190). Monty also sees in this approach opportunities for documenting systemic oppression (195). The quantitative data researchers can glean from the corpus of writing center scholarship provides unique insights into the nature of the field as well as a rare opportunity to produce replicable data. The other chapters in this section detail other methods of quantitative research, and

they all address the difficulties writing center professionals may encounter in producing RAD research. Lori Salem's excellent chapter, "Survey Methods for Research and Assessment in Writing Centers," demonstrates how poorly-constructed surveys often stand in for hard data. These surveys are flawed, distributed to non-representative populations, and tend to produce overly positive results that are then given to administrators to show how well the writing center is doing (200). Salem's discussion of faulty survey data underscores the necessity for more rigorous quantitative data in writing center research.

Mackiewicz and Babcock succeed in providing a comprehensive guide to conducting data-based writing center research. It is an ideal volume for graduate students and early professionals because it provides so many possibilities for inquiry. Any writing center professional will find within these pages ways to investigate research questions they may have contemplated but were not sure how to approach. While some of the chapters may be too dismissive of the value of qualitative research and others make tenuous claims about the superior ability of quantitative data to achieve certain goals (for example, that quantitative research is better at producing anti-racist practices than qualitative methods), the volume nevertheless concludes with an insightful chapter by Cara Marta Messina and Neal Learner, "Mixed-Methods Research in Writing Centers" that argues for the importance of qualitative and quantitative research working together to provide a holistic picture of writing centers. More vigorous quantitative research is undoubtedly the future of writing center studies, and this volume will assist researchers to move in that direction.

About the Author



James Hamby is the Associate Director of the Margaret H. Ordoubadian Writing Center at Middle Tennessee State University, where he also teaches courses in literature and composition. He is currently serving as the Tennessee representative to the board of SWCA, and he has co-chaired both Directors' Day and Tutor Collaboration Day for SWCA-TN.

Call for Submissions

SDC Spring 2021

To encourage a wide variety of scholarly activity, the Spring 2021 issue will not have a specific thematic focus. Please consider submitting your work on the tutoring or teaching of academic writing, WC administration, WC assessment, tutor training, or any other topic related to the focus of the journal that you feel would be of interest to readers.

Deadline for submissions: 15 March 2021.

Articles can be theoretical or practical in focus (or a combination thereof) and should incorporate outside sources in MLA format according to the guidelines available on the *SDC* website at the link below:

https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/southerndiscourse#sdc_resources

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the editors at southerndiscoursejournal@gmail.com

SDC Fall 2021—SWCA Conference Retrospective

The Fall 2021 issue will feature articles that respond to the 2021 SWCA Conference theme, “Trauma and Transformation: Writing Center in an Era of Change.” While anyone is welcome to submit, we strongly encourage submissions from those who attend or present at the 2021 SWCA Conference, which will be held online. In addition to transcripts of conference addresses, this issue will feature articles that grow from sessions at the conference. If you give a presentation or sit on a panel—or even if you are just inspired by a session you attended at the conference—you are strongly encouraged to “write up” your work and send it in for editorial and peer review.

Please note: The Fall 2021 issue will also include book reviews, a Back to the Center piece, and a Consultant Insight article. Submissions for these types of manuscripts do not have to be connected to the 2021 SWCA Conference theme.

Deadline for submissions: 15 September 2021



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