



Southern Discourse in the Center

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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Feel free to send queries, ideas, and proposals to us at southerndiscoursejournal@gmail.com.

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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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