



Southern Discourse in the Center

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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From the Editors

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As we approach our first in-person conference since we last gathered in Birmingham in 2020, this organization and the entire writing center community are emerging from the challenges of the pandemic only to face a new set of challenges that will both force and enable us to transform ourselves and the work we do. Thus, the theme for the upcoming 2023 conference in Memphis is “Navigating the Rivers of Change.” Appropriately, many of the submissions in this issue of *Southern Discourse in the Center* focus on the kinds of changes we must continue to make and embrace if we want to continue to offer vital services to our students and our institutions as a whole.

The article that opens this issue was written by the members of the 2022 SWCA Conference Committee, all of whom are from Nova Southeastern University, which served as the online host of the conference. This retrospective piece shows that the shift to online modality during the 2021 and 2022 SWCA conferences affected those meetings in a number of noteworthy ways: the types of sessions scheduled, the amount of collaboration in those sessions, and the total number of presenters at the conferences. The central message of the article is that change should not be seen as a threat to habits and structures that have worked for us in the past. Instead, the authors argue (with the help of a phrase coined by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun) that we must always embrace necessary changes in order to “remain the same.”

In the second article, members of one of the keynote panels at the 2022 conference reflect on their work on the panel and on their experiences as early-career writing center administrators. While this piece focuses on the professional lives of WCAs, it returns multiple times to the issue of change and our responses to change. Again and again, the panelists show how the writing center field and they personally have transformed in recent years, and the panel members’ stories frequently highlight the ways these changes should be seen as opportunities rather than threats.

Panelist Candis Bond perhaps captures the overall message and tone of this piece best when she writes, “While the pandemic led us to implement positive changes, there is still a lot of work for us to do.”

In this issue’s Consultant Insight feature, three members of Nova Southeastern University’s Writing and Communication Center examine what happens when we return to in-person work after working remotely for an extended period of time. They conclude that we benefit from these changes but have to continue to interrogate how the differences between online and in-person modalities affect the work we do because “while some of us are returning to a physical presence in our center, many more are learning what it means to deliver in-person consultation services for the first time.”

In this issue’s “Back to the Center” feature, Melissa Daniels and Mia Tambellini profile the writing center at Deep Run High School. They paint a clear picture of a center that plays a vital role at their school by helping students become more confident and skilled writers.

This issue’s book review focuses on Travis Webster’s *Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace*, a book that Theobald describes as an important “first step toward further excavating the labor and experiences of queer writing center administrators.”

Overall, this issue contains not only excellent scholarship and compelling reflections on the 2022 SWCA Conference but also evidence that this organization and the writing center field in general are strong enough to continue to make the kinds of positive changes we need to make to remain relevant for many years to come.

--Scott and Devon

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