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SOUTHERN DISCOURSE *in the* CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

From the 2022 SWCA Conference

- From Crisis to Habit: Re-Shaping Academic Conferences for Remote Communities
  —Nikki Chasteen, Kevin Dvorak, Kelly Concannon, Eric Mason, and Janine Morris

- Lessons from Early-Career Writing Center Administrators: An SWCA Conference Keynote Retrospective
  —Marguerite Armistead, LaKela Atkinson, Candis Bond, and Beth A. Towle

Consultant Insight

- On Returning to One's Center for the First Time
  —Julia Kelley, Eric Mason, and Aidan Rivas

Back to the Center

- Deep Run High School
  —Melissa Daniels and Mia Tambellini

Book Review

- *Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace*
  —Reviewed by Duane Theobald

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Volume 26 | Number 2 | Fall 2022

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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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Southern Discourse in the Center invites articles that engage in scholarship about writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers. The journal welcomes a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to theoretical perspectives in the center, administration, center training, consulting and initiatives. An essay prepared for publication in *SDC* will address a noteworthy issue related to work in the center and will join an important dialogue that focuses on improving or celebrating center work. Please submit manuscripts to southerndiscoursejournal@gmail.com.

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?

"Consultant Insight" Submission Guidelines

Consistent with the consultant-writer model of the mutual exchange of ideas, we invite consultants to provide insight into center experiences. This article of roughly 2,000 words can be research driven or can take a more narrative and personal approach that illuminates consultant experiences. *SDC* is interested in both struggles and achievements. The article may focus specifically on one aspect of consulting or it may provide a broader sense of center work.

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.

Contents

8 From the Editors

From the 2022 SWCA Conference

10 **From Crisis to Habit: Re-Shaping Academic Conferences for Remote Communities**
Nikki Chasteen, Kevin Dvorak, Kelly Concannon, Eric Mason, and Janine Morris

25 **Lessons from Early-Career Writing Center Administrators: An SWCA Conference Keynote Retrospective**
Marguerite Armistead, LaKela Atkinson, Candis Bond, and Beth A. Towle

Features

59 **Consultant Insight**
On Returning to One's Center for the First Time
Julia Kelley, Eric Mason, and Aidan Rivas

68 **Back to the Center**
Deep Run High School
Melissa Daniels and Mia Tambellini

76 **Book Review**
Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace
Reviewed by Duane Theobald

Call for Submissions

From the Editors

Scott Pleasant

Devon Ralston

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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From Crisis to Habit: Re-Shaping Academic Conferences for Remote Communities

—Nikki Chasteen, Kevin Dvorak, Kelly Concannon, Eric Mason, and Janine Morris

By late summer 2021, SWCA board members, like many across the world, were hoping for a return to "normal." People were fatigued from being online for work and school and socializing, and they desired the kinds of interactions and connections that took place before the pandemic. As a board, SWCA was eager to go to Memphis that following winter for the long-awaited conference hosted by Christian Brothers University. However, by early September 2021, with new COVID-19 variants and cases spiking across the U.S., it was clear that we weren't there yet. The board decided that hosting the 2022 conference in person would put its members at unnecessary risk and announced on October 21, 2021, that the next SWCA would be online once again.

Once this decision had been made, the Writing and Communication Center (WCC) at Nova Southeastern University (NSU), in conjunction with NSU's Department of Communication, Media, and the Arts (DCMA), volunteered to host the online SWCA conference to be held in 2022. The 2021 conference had been hosted collectively by the SWCA board, but we felt that NSU hosting the online conference in 2022 would both play to the strengths of our center, M.A. program, and faculty, and would allow the SWCA board to focus its energies on other organizational needs. Once our offer was approved, we consulted with our center leadership team and began to make plans. The NSU WCC has a leadership team made up of Executive Director Kevin Dvorak, Ph.D.,

Assistant Director Nikki Chasteen, and three Faculty Coordinators who also teach in DCMA: Kelly Concannon, Ph.D.; Eric Mason, Ph.D.; and Janine Morris, Ph.D. Our connection to the SWCA board remained strong, however. During the time we planned and ran the conference, two of us also held key SWCA board positions: Janine was SWCA President, and Eric was the SWCA Digital Content Developer.

In some ways, producing the conference was easy. After all, our university had hosted SWCA conferences before, and, having served in SWCA leadership positions the previous year, members of the conference committee had been involved in doing much of the same work in producing the previous year's online conference, so we knew we could make use of some of the same tools and approaches we had used then. But we also knew that expectations might have changed over the course of the year. Empathetic understanding once offered by SWCA members to the SWCA board as they figured out how to run an online conference for the first time might no longer be present; patience for technological glitches or shifting deadlines might have worn thin; eagerness to attend another online event may have been reduced by "Zoom fatigue." Although changes instituted as schools and professional organizations shifted into crisis mode had become routine, many still wondered if they had actually addressed the critical needs of students and faculty.

Almost two years into the pandemic, and with all of this uncertainty in mind, we wondered what we could do to engage conference participants in needed conversations, how we could understand this period as an opportunity to maximize our most productive habits, and what lessons we had learned in the process. The conference theme—"Present Tense, Future Perfect: Shaping Purposeful Writing Center Practices"—acknowledged this period of uncertainty from which future writing center practices would ultimately emerge and encouraged participants to reflect on them. In addition to acknowledging the present moment, we also wanted to avoid replicating exactly what was done the previous year. Composition, in our view, is often a balance between convention and invention—between doing enough of what has been done before for an endeavor to remain recognizable and introducing innovative practices to provide new experiences that meet the needs of the present moment.

Basically, we asked ourselves: was the online SWCA conference experience (though only a year old) in need of an update?
The idea of installing updates is pretty much hardwired into our experiences with digital technologies, which often remind us to download them while offering nebulous warnings and performance improvements as reasons to act promptly. In *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*, Wendy Chun provides insight into such processes by considering the ways new media technologies have led us into a cycle of habitual crises leading to constant changes to how we live and work. She notes how the digital networks that structure our lives contribute to this cycle by being built around imagined and embodied contradictions that make us feel simultaneously empowered and vulnerable. For instance, we simultaneously imagine and experience the internet as both an "anonymous and empowering space of freedom" and as a "space of total surveillance" (Chun *ix*). These contradictory visions are reinforced by the way in which new media and digital networks and the habits surrounding them blur the distinctions between what is public and what is private, between work and home, and between self and other.

Neither remote work nor a remote conference is immune to these contradictory visions. Remote workers revel in avoiding long commutes and having more freedom in how and when they work, even as they often find themselves monitored by "tattleware" installed on their digital devices that tracks what they type, view, and accomplish. Having the last two SWCA conferences online meant that a broader group of consultants and faculty could potentially attend the conference, but it also meant that the types of interactions these individuals could have were narrowed by technological and temporal constraints. While we may have wanted to encourage casual interactions (by having a virtual Zoom lobby, for instance, where anyone could drop in at any time to talk), we were also aware of potential repercussions of putting participants' unguarded actions on public display. This concern is one of the reasons that conference sessions at both of SWCA's online conferences required passwords and were never recorded—we thought that more privacy would contribute to safety and enhance the quality and openness of the discussions in each presentation.

Chun focuses on our digital interactions, interrogating the habits passed back and forth among users and devices, and argues that changes to these

habits are often initiated through "crisis." Based on the shift to remote learning and to online academic conferences over the last two years in response to the pandemic, it makes sense, then, to ask what sorts of habits emerged or persisted during this time. What did we learn and unlearn? And now that official restrictions have begun to subside, what do we want to purposefully sustain even as the status quo reasserts itself? In this essay, we use Chun's work to help us reflect on our experiences as hosts of the 2022 SWCA Conference—the SWCA's second (and, perhaps, last) online conference—to better understand how we moved from crisis to habit in delivering a virtual experience, and where we go from here.

Writing Out of Habit

Writers are sometimes known for their eccentric habits; some insist on writing while standing, or writing with purple ink, or writing at the same time every day. But just because we might not see ourselves as developing such specific habits does not mean that we all don't fall into some habitual mode of doing things. Chun argues that the "accrual of habit is central" to the experience of subjectivity and to the reproduction of ideology (6). We are, as Gilles Deleuze claims "nothing but habits—the habit of saying 'I'" (qtd. in Chun 6). But the centrality of habit to our sense of self makes it that much harder to notice, and Chun warns us that it is exactly by "disappearing from consciousness" that habits become most influential (*x*). This does not mean that habits are beyond scrutiny, however. In writing instruction, we routinely draw students' attention to habits as either techniques to attempt or pitfalls to avoid, calling them, respectively, "commonplaces" or "clichés." Reflective writing can be practiced with the goal of identifying and initiating changes in our habits. And the habits we target can be closely connected to identity and ideology as well when we, for instance, encourage students to question habits built around privilege or difference.

We also often urge students to make writing itself a habit—to schedule specific times during the week to work on writing projects, to find the best location to get writing done, or to consciously decide to visit the writing center on a routine basis. And while increasing individual productivity or accomplishment is a common theme of many self-help genres focused on changing habits, Chun's interest in habits is less about individual choices than about patterns of habit embraced by

communities. In a networked world, it becomes less important that a single user makes a choice than that users in general make that choice. And these habits "link not only humans to other humans, but also humans to non-humans and the environment" (Chun 7). For example, one person leaving food out at a campground is not a significant event, but the habit of people not storing food correctly at campgrounds is an important factor in the habit of bears in the southeastern U.S. entering campgrounds in search of food, a habit that directly influences the design of dumpsters, the rules at campgrounds, the sale of targeted products (i.e., "bear bags"), and the actions of other campers. While we may exhort students to focus on their individual habits, communities have habits as well embodied in their shared practices and events.

Due to the pandemic, some of the habits developed over years of in-person conferences were no longer able to be practiced at the 2021 or 2022 conferences. Practices as simple as sharing a meal with colleagues, visiting local landmarks, or distributing swag or free coffee simply disappeared. By mid-2021, things that were novel during the first online SWCA conference had become habitual and commonplace. Having group sessions on Zoom, participating in virtual workshops, and even zoning-out and multitasking with one's camera and microphone off during a meeting became part of our daily practices. Experiences that may have once generated some excitement or anxiety when first adopted may have become dull after many instances. During the first online conference in 2021, for instance, there were 22 digital posters presented by 35 people, up from only 3 posters presented at the previous year's face-to-face (f2f) conference by only 4 people. In 2022, however, the number of digital posters dropped to only 6 posters, with 17 people involved. Perhaps this supports Chun's claim that "New media exist at the bleeding edge of obsolescence. . . . exciting when they are demonstrated, boring by the time they arrive" (1).

While some practices may rise and fall in popularity quickly, other habits may be harder to unlearn or to convince people to change post-pandemic. Writing centers, for instance, may have difficulty convincing clients that f2f meetings are preferable, and students may expect even f2f instructors to make course materials or office hours available online. While we might hope that some habits remain in place, Chun reminds us that "Change, of course, is central to the very notion of habits" as well (8).

And we do not want habits to stay in place once they've outlived their usefulness. While habits may start as the result of purposeful goals, they eventually become "autonomous programs" that favor inflexible stability (Chun 6). While crises certainly have (sometimes severe) downsides, one benefit is the opportunity to revise habits, to "transform a change provoked by the outside into a change generated from the inside" (Chun 9).

Innovation (YO)University

For academics, the pandemic was a time of many types of changes. Course designs and schedules and teaching methods were quickly adapted to online or hybrid formats, rules were adopted to make campuses safer for students and staff, and we all became more aware of the diverse situations and needs of others. Writing center operations were adjusted at many schools as well, with some centers moving to fully virtual formats and others putting policies in place to protect consultants and clients meeting f2f. At NSU, our center went fully virtual starting in March of 2020, and almost all courses were converted to a "hyflex" format, allowing students and faculty to flexibly move from being in person or virtual from day to day as needed to accommodate social distancing and quarantining requirements. Chun observes that such systemic change has become closely tied to the experience of "crisis," and develops the formula "Habit + Crisis = Update" to describe the typical way in which communities (are forced to) embrace significant change. The pandemic thus represented an opportunity to embrace change at all levels of our institutions and professional organizations.

Embracing change has always been something that NSU takes pride in, with "innovation" being one of our 8 "core values" intended to encourage new applications of our teaching, research, and service to address needs in the community. And the digital means to connect with others and deliver services has long been built into NSU programs, ranging from fully online coursework to tele-surgery to the personalized welcome videos accepted students receive. Even before the pandemic, graduate students in NSU's M.A. in Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media (CRDM) program (which includes courses such as "Teaching Writing Online" and "Social Media Writing and Strategy") had been helping run SWCA's social media accounts. And Eric Mason, beyond his role as

SWCA's DCD, had been teaching courses such as "Web, Mobile, and Interactive Design," and collaborating with campus groups to build innovative virtual interfaces and exhibits (some of which are visible at https://scmaker.site).

Even the physical space the WCC inhabits is a reminder of our focus on innovation. The NSU WCC sits on the fourth floor of our university library (both a private and public library), just one floor below the Alan B. Levan | NSU Broward Center of Innovation, a public-private partnership between NSU and Broward County focused on supporting economic and educational innovation in South Florida. If, as Chun argues, modern communication ecosystems are marked by the blurring of the private and the public in the name of innovation and (digital) connectivity, then the very space in which our center exists serves as testament to this habit. All of this is just to say that NSU, a private not-for-profit university, and the WCC itself, were well-positioned to respond to the crisis initiated by the pandemic, and our willingness to host an online SWCA conference was just part of a long commitment to innovation and working with digital media.

Both years of SWCA online conferences produced specific innovations designed to enhance the virtual experience and respond to the current moment. The move toward keynote addresses given by groups made up of faculty and students was one such change that made the experiences and concerns of a diverse group of consultants more prominent at the conference. The display and discussion of digital poster presentations (delivered as pre-recorded video, audio, and interactive Thinglink visuals) was an innovation that brought new genres to the forefront. The 2021 conference was the site of SWCA's first online game night, hosted in Discord by students in NSU's M.A. in CRDM program. The Discord game night provided an innovative opportunity for remote conference attendees to socialize and have some fun together in a less formal setting than a Zoom meeting. But the Discord game night was a synchronous event that only lasted for a short while on one night of the conference. For the 2022 online conference, we decided to create an event lasting throughout the conference using an app called Goose Chase which allowed participants to compete in an interactive multimodal game by uploading text, images, and video to complete over 50 "missions" that encouraged them to share media and information that allowed us to learn

about the people, the centers, and the locations that comprise the SWCA. These missions presented a mixture of fun, creative, and earnest tasks ranging from asking participants to share a picture of their centers' entrances, to looking up historical information about the SWCA, to recording their favorite dance moves, to reflecting on their center's accomplishments and challenges in the preceding year.

Goose Chase satisfied our desire to provide a way for conference attendees to experience the kind of informal sharing that would naturally happen at an in-person conference, while also encouraging them to reflect on the conference experience itself, and the present and future of their centers. The sharing of various media emphasized the contributions of individuals, but some centers chose to participate collectively instead. As Chun writes, "New media are N(YOU) media," that create individual profiles by tracking our actions through networked spaces (3). But "YOU is both singular and plural" (4), encouraging us to simultaneously reveal ourselves as individuals and as fellow members of "particular expressive communities and systems of meaning" (123). The Goose Chase game collected hundreds of voluntary submissions from SWCA members that created a shared sense of a community made up of individuals with personal interests and histories, but individuals also engaged in a collective endeavor, representing both themselves and their centers in thoughtful and creative ways throughout the conference. In our view, this update didn't merely provide stability in the face of limited opportunities or means, as many changes had accomplished, but was an innovation that recaptured some of the community spirit that is spread via the informal interactions common to f2f conferences. Updating the conference game experience to enhance this sense of community felt to us like a natural progression toward re-shaping this community, as opposed to the first online conference, when innovations felt more focused on alleviating anxiety and identifying practical solutions to challenges being faced for the first time.

Updating to Remain the SWCA

The mission statement of the SWCA states that it hopes 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. . . . [including] North Carolina,

South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands" ("About SWCA"). Certainly, one of the primary ways it does this is by bringing individuals from across this region together at its annual conference to have conversations about the practice of writing and the delivery of writing center services. Hosting conferences online in 2021 and 2022 allowed the SWCA to continue to accomplish this mission amidst an unprecedented period of crisis. In Chun's formula, "Habit + Crisis = Update," but the resulting changes are not necessarily designed to alter the organization in substantive ways, but, rather, allow it to persist in something close to its earlier shape despite obstacles presented in the form of crises. As she writes, "We are forever trying to catch up, updating to remain (close to) the same; bored, overwhelmed, and anxious all at once" as we try to meet the demands of the present moment (1). So, what changes occurred that were not focused on innovation, but intended to help the SWCA remain the SWCA?

We believe identifying the habits of SWCA attendees that remained the same at the two online conferences is worth asking and requires looking at patterns of choices made by conference participants. One habit of SWCA attendees that we thought might be worth looking into is the habit of presenting collaboratively. We looked at programs from the last four SWCA conferences (2019-2022)—two f2f conferences and two online conferences—to see what our conference presentations revealed about our practices of collaboration (see this article's appendix for access to the data discussed below). Collaboration is a value embedded in the writing center experience in several ways, not the least of which is in the consultation itself. It was unsurprising, then, to learn that collaborative sessions (where a presentation was attributed to more than one person in the conference program) outnumbered individual sessions at all four conferences. In other words, collaboration is an SWCA habit that existed before the pandemic started, and which was sustained during our move to conducting conferences online.

So, did the pandemic impact this practice of collaboration? Across the last four SWCA conferences, there was a small increase in the percentage of presentations that were collaborative, even as the number of presentations declined each year. (We should note, however, that between 2020 and 2021, even as the total number of presentations

decreased, the total number of presenters involved increased, so the number of presentations is not necessarily a good measure of the degree to which people are embracing the habit of working together; more collaboration may equal fewer overall presentations, so averages or percentages may be more telling in some cases.)

A few key statistics did stand out during our review of the data when comparing the two f2f conferences to the two online ones:

- The percentage of collaborative sessions that were delivered by only two people (as opposed to being delivered by 3 or more people) dropped from 47.2% to 36.7%.
- The average number of individuals involved per collaborative session increased significantly from 3 to 3.7.
- While the total number of workshops dropped from 32 in the f2f conferences to 17 in the online ones, the total number of roundtables increased from 18 in the f2f conferences to 40 in the online ones.

These data points suggest to us that during the pandemic we continued to seek ways to collaborate and were involving more people in those collaborations. At the online SWCA conferences, the lower registration costs and the flexibility of online attendance may have also made it easier to secure potential collaborators at the proposal stage leading to these larger presentation groups. The preference for roundtables over workshops also seems noteworthy. This suggests that having experienced the complexities and limitations of Zoom meetings as teachers and colleagues, we collectively decided that they were not the ideal tool for interactive workshops, and that Zoom lent itself more to conversation. (It may also be true that one of the effects of the ongoing pandemic was simply a desire for the space and time to talk with others about the work we do.) The pandemic was a shared experience of crisis that initiated a collective update of our habits, expressed in what Chun calls our "productive nonconscious" that reveals itself through acts in "seemingly spontaneous harmony" with like-minded colleagues (7). Our individual choices to invest more heavily in collaboration speak to who the SWCA was and continues to be.

Conclusion: Re-Shaping the SWCA Community

As we plan for future f2f SWCA conferences, it will be instructive to see how we begin to re-shape our community/communities yet again, perhaps by bringing back previously abandoned habits, or by creating new in-person conference habits. One expectation of an f2f SWCA conference has long been that it will draw heavily from the immediate surrounding area—when participants can drive to the conference in only a few hours and save money on flights, a center can often bring more peer consultants or staff. Just prior to the pandemic, the SWCA achieved a goal set in the early 2010s to host a conference in each of the nine affiliated states without a single repeat, which meant hosting a full conference in Mississippi for the first time in the organization's 35+ year history and a full conference in Virginia for the first time in 25 years. Intentionally hosting the conference in different locations can be a valuable organizational habit as it may encourage different people to experience the event in person (due to the lower cost and less time away from work and family associated with geographic proximity). Shifting conference locations also allows regular attendees to see each other in new places, and more importantly, to meet and collaborate with new colleagues from around the region. Purposeful practices designed to enable a wider variety of SWCA members from different states to attend the conference thus help the organization to constantly re-shape its community by getting new people involved.

At the 2023 SWCA conference, we look forward to being in person and striking up unplanned conversations with colleagues in hallways between sessions, at podiums after presentations or conference tables after workshops, in hotel lobbies throughout the day, and at local restaurants and cafes. This is an enjoyable experience for many participants and a major reason why many participants want to attend in person. Attending presentations, roundtables, and workshops in person also requires people being present in the moment, which may lead us to participating more fully (or at least make us feel like we are). These informal conversations, even if they are semi-planned (e.g., intentionally attending a presentation in order to speak with the presenter for a few moments after it is finished), have been much less common during the last two online conferences, primarily because there has been less time

for carrying on conversations as a session ends and less common "space" in which participants could interact.

While a smaller group of people may have the opportunity to get to know one another better at an in-person conference, the online conference affords the opportunity to attend the event to a potentially larger group. Between the elimination of travel time, the savings from not needing to pay travel costs such as gas, car rental, or hotel, and the ease with which remote participants can log in and out of sessions while sitting at a computer at work, a local coffee shop, or at home, professional organizations may need to justify the value that in-person conferences offer to attendees, and perhaps rethink how these experiences can be made more engaging, inviting, and productive. Thus, the crisis begins to take shape: do we want conferences where fewer people have a deeper or more spontaneous experience, or conferences where more people have a simpler or more direct experience? Can we design online conferences and spaces that serve the diverse needs of writing center practitioners while providing the informal and formal experiences necessary for community to thrive? Or should we focus our energies on making it easier for more people to attend physical locations to have these experiences? No matter how we answer these questions, it will certainly be time for an update**.**

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Appendix: 2019-2022 SWCA Conference Presentation Data

The following data were drawn from the pdf conference programs published by the SWCA on its conference archives page: https://southeasternwritingcenter.org/conference-archives. These programs should be relatively accurate records of presentations delivered, but there may be some cases where presentations changed between the printing of these programs and the actual conference. Regardless, we believe they are a good source of information about participants' intentions to collaborate.

	Conference Year			
	2019	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Conference Modality	face-to-face	face-to-face	online	online
Total # of Presenters	300	245	268	225
Total # of Presentations	136	117	101	88
Average # of Presenters across All Sessions	2.21	2.09	2.65	2.57
Average # of Presenters across All Collaborative Sessions	3.14	2.93	3.59	3.86
# of Solo Presentations	60	51	44	35
# of Collaborative Presentations	76	66	57	53
% of Collaborative Sessions	55.88	56.41	56.44	60.23
% of Collaborative Sessions with More Than 2 Presenters	56.58	48.48	66.66	59.62
# of Poster Sessions	7	3	22	6
# of Panel Presentations*	100	95	54	51
# of Workshops	20	12	8	9
# of Roundtables	10	8	18	22

* Panels assembled by conference organizers out of multiple unique presentations were counted as separate presentations, not as a single collaborative presentation.

Contributor Bios

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Lessons from Early-Career Writing Center Administrators: An SWCA Conference Keynote Retrospective

—Marguerite Armistead, LaKela Atkinson, Candis Bond, and Beth A. Towle

In February 2022, we came together at the Southeastern Writing Center Association's annual conference to discuss our experiences as early-career writing center administrators (WCAs), most of whom are also first-generation academics. We are excited to come together once more in this conference keynote retrospective to reflect on our experiences and ideas, as well as our challenges. Since every WCA's career will unfold differently based on their own intersectional identities, ambitions, and institutional contexts, we hope this retrospective inspires other WCAs to share their stories. We begin with self-introductions followed by a brief literature review of scholarship on WCA career trajectories. We then provide our responses to questions developed for our keynote address as well as reflections on the keynote's impact on our professional lives.

About Us

We represent a diverse set of administrators – some of us have tenure or tenure-track positions, while some are staff or non-tenure track faculty or have hybrid positions. We come from a range of institutions, including an HBCU, a ministry leadership college, and research comprehensives. Our centers vary in size, and we come from different backgrounds and positionalities. But what unites us is a love for writing centers and a desire for writing centers and writing center studies to be spaces of advocacy for our students, as well as spaces that are accessible, diverse, and socially just. Before we share more about our experiences as early-career WCAs, we would like to provide background about our identities and local contexts.

Candis: I am in my seventh year as the director of the Center for Writing Excellence at Augusta University in Georgia, where I am also an associate professor of English and affiliated faculty in the Women's and Gender Studies program. Augusta University is a mid-sized, public R2 research comprehensive university within the University System of Georgia. AU is home to the Medical College of Georgia, Dental College of Georgia, and several other Health Science programs. Due to this specialization, AU is called Georgia's Health Sciences University. The university serves approximately 10,000 students, just under half of whom are graduate and professional students. Between 15 and 20% of our enrollment identify as first-generation college students. My own background as a first-generation academic has shaped my experiences of the academy and how I approach my role on campus.

Beth: I am in my fourth year as the associate director of the University Writing Center at Salisbury University on the eastern shore of Maryland, as well as an assistant professor in English. Salisbury is a regional comprehensive with about 7,500 undergraduate and graduate students, most of whom are local to the area. Many of SU's students are first-generation and/or transfer students.

Marguerite: I am in my third year as the director of the Highlands College Writing Center and in my fifth year as a professor of English Composition at Highlands College in Birmingham, AL. Our college is a biblical higher education institution focused on academic instruction, ministry training, character formation, and spiritual development. We currently serve 322 undergraduate students from all over the USA and from other countries. Our plan is to grow to serve 1,000 students over the next few years in our gorgeous, state-of-the-art building.

LaKela: I worked for ten years as a graduate and professional writing consultant in North Carolina Central University's (NCCU) Writing and Speaking Studio in Durham, NC. NCCU is a historically Black college/university (HBCU) and teaching institution within the University of North Carolina System. The institution serves over 8,000 students, more than half of whom are undergraduate. In addition, I was the graduate assistant director in East Carolina University's University Writing Center for a year during my graduate studies. ECU is a

predominantly white teaching institution that serves nearly 29,000 students, over half of whom are undergraduate students. I am currently a visiting assistant professor in the professional and technical communication program at Virginia Tech, which serves over 38,000 students. More than half of these students are undergraduates.

WCA Career Trajectories: A Review of the Scholarship

Writing center administrators come from a myriad of experiences in terms of educational background, positioning and status, and institutional contexts. According to the Writing Centers Research Project, 61% of writing center directors and 45% of assistant or associate directors have doctorates across all disciplines, not just English. Meanwhile, according to data from the National Census on Writing, only 28% of WCAs have tenured or tenure-track positions, while 31% have staff positions, and the rest are made of non-tenure track faculty or hybrid positions. The lack of tenure-track positions in writing center jobs in general leads to many other issues, including the lack of diverse research in the field (Perdue and Driscoll). This wide range of institutional status and positions demonstrates the need for writing center studies to pay attention to the variety of experiences and diversity of knowledge held by administrators. Additionally, contextualization matters because it shapes how administrators, particularly early-career administrators, navigate their jobs and their places in the larger field.

The diversity of experiences alone does not account for how difficult it is for early-career administrators to find their place both in their institutions and in writing studies. As Geller and Denny make clear in their 2013 study on early-career WC professionals, writing center studies has long been positioned as the "lesser" branch of writing program administration (WPA) studies, itself an often overlooked area of writing and rhetoric studies. Due to their liminality, many WCAs lack mentorship as they enter their careers. In *The Everyday Writing Center*, Geller et al. point out that "Few graduate programs offer explicit instruction in writing program administration; even fewer address the writing center director's need to both manage and lead" (113). Further, in their chapter on HBCU writing center professionals, Keaton Jackson

et al. address the need for more "culturally sensitive" (120) mentoring for graduate students of color and minority groups to navigate the primarily white space of academia. In their literature review of writing center mentoring, Rentscher and McBride also note the field's lack of structured guidance for new WCAs and how this lack of mentorship can negatively impact careers. Even WCAs who are mentored in their roles may struggle, as their perceptions of writing center work may differ from reality and they often do "not anticipate how challenging the start of their professional lives w[ill] be" (Denny and Geller 101). Caswell et al. echo this sentiment in their book, *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*, which presented a case study of nine new WCAsacross a wide variety of institutional contexts. They also found that new directors felt overwhelmed in their work and were often quite unhappy in their positions. Caswell et al. and Geller and Denny both mention that this can lead to high rates of turnover among WCAs.

While WCAs are often left in the position of seeking out their own mentors in order to successfully manage their institutions' writing centers, they are also simultaneously serving as mentors for their staff and the students that they have consultations with, which adds significantly to the dimensions of the WCA's labor. Lucretia Yaghjian explores how writing center consultants are involved in the bettering of the students, not just in the students' actual writing product –in the "care of the soul" and in "holy listening," which are similar to the interactions that students have with spiritual directors in a theological educational institution; she then underscores the benefits that could be obtained by recognizing the intentional roles that writing center consultants (and spiritual directors) fulfill in the students' academic journey (224, 229). Just as there is an opportunity for new WCAs to be mentored, it is also important to realize the potential impact and responsibility that WCAs already possess as they mentor students in their work in the writing center.

WCAs who are also first-generation academics face additional challenges when identifying mentors, serving as mentors themselves, and navigating their careers overall. According to research by Redford et al., only 3% of graduate degrees are awarded to first-generation

students (cited in Van Galen and Sablan 1). First-gen students who become academics "often struggle against social class barriers in silence and alone. Few campuses offer workshops for administrators, faculty and staff on identifying classist policies and practice" (Van Galen and Sablan 5). While writing center research has begun to consider the experiences of first-gen college students (Bond; Denny; Denny et al.; Salem), very little scholarship examines the experiences of first-gen WCAs. Geller et al. aptly state that WCAs "need each other to figure out how to do this particular job" (111). We hope our retrospective can help WCAs, especially those who identify as first-generation academics, as they think about their labor and career development.

Keynote Q and A

Q1: How have your own backgrounds, identities, or experiences impacted your work in writing centers?

Candis: It was, in part, my first-generation status and unfamiliarity with higher education that brought me to writing centers. When I applied to my M.A. program in English, I did everything wrong. As a first-gen undergraduate, I did not get to know my professors; I didn't go to office hours; I didn't form relationships. So when it came time to apply for graduate programs, it was hard to get good letters of recommendation. I also struggled on my GRE subject test because, since I had done my undergraduate degree in three years to save money, I took the subject test in my second year after having taken only a few literature courses. All this to say, my application to graduate programs wasn't very strong. This meant I was accepted, but I didn't get any funding. The chair of the English department emailed me and told me I could inquire with the writing center to see if they had any tuition remission options available. The implicit message was that this was a second-class role within the program. Her pretension led me to hold off on contacting the center for a semester, but eventually, out of desperation, I contacted the WC director and ended up working in the writing center throughout my M.A. and Ph.D. at that institution.

Although my Ph.D. is in literature, I felt a much stronger affinity for writing center work than I did for literary studies. Similar to Beth's

reflections in "Other People's Houses: Identity and Service in Writing Center Work," I always wonder if writing center work appealed to me because of its emphasis on practicality and service. Service is familiar—I have worked in pretty much every service industry there is: food, retail, and hospitality. My first full-time position as a writing center administrator—the job I'm still in today—was a tenure-track position within an English department. I often felt tension between my roles as a WCA and a tenure-track faculty member. Like English and humanities programs nationally, my department aims to uphold its disciplinary identity while I was inclined to embrace a service identity for the writing center and myself. I wondered if the appeal of service was a form of imposter phenomenon or my true calling. I found myself repeatedly focusing on words like "impact" and "efficacy" when I spoke with people about work because tangible, concrete outcomes somehow gave me comfort and a sense of place within the university. It meant I could justify my center's and my value.

Overall, I think my perception of writing center work as meaningful, powerful, and transformative is influenced heavily by my class background, as well as by my privilege as a white woman in academia. For me, literacy and education were key to social and economic mobility, but higher education is a historically raced, gendered, and classed institution. I often question the ways my class background paired with the privileges I hold as a white woman in the academy may lead me to view writing center work through rose-colored glasses. I've tried to become more conscious of the ways this labor can reinforce systemic inequities and impede progress—how it can uphold the status quo. I also realize my emphasis on efficacy and deliverables feeds into the neoliberal machine that is eroding much there is to value within higher education.

Beth: My background as a first-generation college student from a rural, low-income family has definitely impacted my work in writing centers, particularly my orientation toward the concept of "work." I'm from a union family, so I come to writing centers as someone who sees the material in everything. I'm thinking constantly of budgets and costs, of fair and ethical labor, and of how social justice is tied to the material

aspects of our centers. Additionally, I recognize I come to the field as someone with a lot of privilege, as a white woman with a tenure-track faculty position. I have to be aware of that privilege in order to be part of writing center studies, and I also recognize that gives me power to actually change things. That being said, power is not the same as centering one's own voice. So that is something I'm perpetually trying to work on and one of the reasons I'm excited for a keynote like this where you can hear about lots of different experiences.

I also think it's important that my first love was creative writing and that I did an M.F.A.in poetry before my Ph.D. in Rhet/Comp. I lived and breathed the workshop model of writing for many years, and I think that's largely what appeals to me about writing centers. They are places where those kinds of in-depth conversations about writing and ideas can happen. And so writing centers really enliven me in that way – they make me love and think about writing and how hard writing can be for everyone. There's a sense of building community in the workshop model that grounds my philosophy and approach to writing centers.

Marguerite: This question has prompted some reflection. Thank you all for sharing how your experiences and backgrounds have impacted your work in your writing centers! I am in a non-tenured position at a ministry leadership college with approximately 322 students, and we launched our writing center in April of 2020 online. We began offering in-person consultations as well in the fall semester of 2020. I have the pleasure of teaching Rhetoric & Composition I and Rhetoric & Composition II as well as directing the Highlands College Writing Center. I think that my past experiences have helped me recognize the vulnerability of the students as a writing center consultant. Whether they are from Seattle, Washington, or Amsterdam, Holland, or even Iran, each of them has a unique story. I try to give them the encouragement and the practical skills that others have given to me.

Let me back-up a little bit. My mother was a "missionary kid" born in Dutch New Guinea in 1947 and, consequently, she grew up as a "third culture kid" (TCK). As a result, I also had some gaps in my socialization while I grew up in the multicultural environment of Miami, Florida.

When my parents divorced, I was eight years old, and my world became further fragmented. Writing became my outlet, especially poetry! This does not mean that I was proficient in writing. On occasion, between fourth grade and eighth grade, my father would sit down next to me in the evenings after work and help me on my assignments with paraphrasing, with summarizing, with paragraphing, and with vocabulary. Those small investments ignited my love of writing and inspired me to help others who might not know how to even begin to learn these skills in our "self-service world." Over the years, other teachers also demonstrated a more effective way of teaching by, for example, noting the difference between "wether" and "whether" in the margin of my essay –with annoyance infused in every letter. These learning experiences have helped me realize what some students might need from a consultant in order to understand a concept and implement it in their own writing scenarios. Giving a kind word and modeling an example can do wonders during the writing center consultation!

LaKela: I identify as an African-American second-generation academic, and I would say that my experience with writing has been positive from early elementary through college. Writing was (and still is) a means of self-expression, but I also viewed it as an avenue to prepare me for a greater goal—I wanted to be a lawyer. However, early interaction with students in my writing center helped me learn that relationships with writing vary and that some are even traumatic based on students' experiences. It was difficult to witness some students come to the writing center and immediately confess to being a bad writer before the session began. How could I help them meet assignment guidelines if they were already defeated? When I began as a graduate consultant at my HBCU over ten years ago, I wasn't aware that the literacy experiences and practices between me and my minority peers could be vastly different. Of course, I knew that a similar cultural background does not equate experiences, but I did not always consider larger issues that can create inequities, especially for communities of color (access, invested teachers, etc.). Yet, when I had various experiences with students, I learned that my role was much greater than sitting with students and guiding them through writing assignments.

I had to face the fact that I had brought certain assumptions and biases to my consulting experience because I was taught a particular way. I spoke African American Vernacular English (AAVE), but I also spoke Standard English and knew how and when to use both. This realization actually inspired my dissertation, where I recall an experience working with an African-American client. That client shared that the bulk of her major writing experience in high school consisted of completing vocabulary sheets. I had judged the client's practices by the ones I had learned to be acceptable. Denny argues "that people of color often face pressure to accommodate to naturalized white codes of rhetorical expression, to perform them as stable, ahistorical standards" (38). I was performing these codes and internally expecting the student to do the same. When she didn't, I considered this to be problematic. To borrow from my dissertation, "I assumed that because her practices were different from mine, which are considered standard (in terms of a focus on correctness in word choice and grammar), she was limited in her abilities to succeed in a higher education space" (Atkinson 1). The opposite was true. She was successful in navigating her early college career, and taking initiative to seek out resources was one way that she showed an awareness of the support she needed. Her consistency and ambition contributed toward her success. Although I did not keep in touch with her, I know that her story is more common than not. Students use their experiences to help them gain access into the spaces that may not be welcoming to their many identities and practices.

Once I recognized my biases and the harm of denying students' voices (particularly those of color), I became more intentional about affirming their identities and writing styles even as I helped them to satisfy assignment guidelines. Helping them to employ aspects of the rhetorical situation, like audience, was part of my pedagogy. For students who came in defeated about their writing or inability to write, I verbalized that writing is a process and that even consultants in our writing center aided one another with writing projects because improvements are continual. I also made it a practice to guide students through rules so that they had a foundation and were informed if they chose to follow or disrupt the rules. Although I had a positive experience with writing, I know that not all students had a similar experience. Acknowledging and

questioning my biases helped me approach my writing sessions with greater empathy, understanding, and openness.

Q2: How are things in your center right now? What are challenges your center is facing? What are current student needs you're identifying?

Candis: My center is in a state of transition. This transitional period has coincided with a global pandemic, which has kept me on my toes, for sure! Within the last year, we became our own independent academic unit, changed our name from the Writing Center to the Center for Writing Excellence, and made several full-time, professional staff hires. These changes will significantly impact our mission, purpose, staffing, and outreach on campus (we're in the midst of developing a five-year plan as well as revised mission and vision statements, learning outcomes, and assessments). While the center has historically served primarily undergraduates, we are now focusing on growing our engagement with faculty and postdoctoral, professional, and graduate students. We are conducting research and networking to figure out faculty and graduate student needs. There have been a lot of meetings with program directors and deans to learn more about curriculum, professional genres, and extramural grants so we can design relevant supports. It's a lot of information to take in, make sense of, and put into action. Challenges we face are negotiating university politics and relationships with departments, colleges, and upper administration to ensure we grow in a way that preserves our own goals and disciplinary foundation.

Another challenge is establishing training and programs for our new, full-time staff that will help them feel prepared. I also want them to feel challenged and to have opportunities to advance toward their career goals. As we've rethought our staff training model and expanded supports, I've turned to texts such as *Redefining Roles: The Professional, Faculty, and Graduate Consultant's Guide to Writing Centers, Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center,* and *Learning from the Lived Experiences of Graduate Student Writers.* In fact, the professional and graduate staff are doing a group read of *Learning from the Lived Experiences of*

Graduate Student Writers as part of our ongoing professional development. It will take time to know how the pieces will come together. We're still figuring out how the addition of professional staffing and our rebranding will affect our center's identity in the long term, since we have been an undergraduate peer-led writing center for nearly 40 years. I'm excited about the possibilities and future directions.

Although I'm excited and very optimistic about the future, I do like to have clear goals and detailed plans, so the past two years, which have been filled with uncertainty, have been very difficult for me. As a first-generation academic, I always feel like my colleagues have things figured out more than me, or like I'm going to miss something obvious or important. The last thing I want to do is let down the team by taking an uncalculated risk or making a preventable error. I have to remind myself that I'm doing okay and no one is perfect. I've also gotten more comfortable with uncertainty as a normal state of being and learned it doesn't have to be negative. Uncertainty can provide opportunities for re-imagining, re-visioning, and rethinking. In her book, *A Leadership Guide for Women in Higher Education,* Marjorie Hass argues times of transition can be generative. She states, "Often your most important initiatives will have their seeds in the dislocation you experienced as you stood between the worlds of your old [role] and your new one" (Hass 18). Uncertainty is not the antithesis of vision; the two can coexist, and the unknown can be fertile ground for creativity.

Times of change require emotional labor as well as cognitive processing. During our transition and especially due to the pandemic and all the changes it necessitated—we implemented an online training model and modified services to meet demand for synchronous and asynchronous online consultations, to name a few—I'm finding my staff need more emotional support. Students and faculty who use the center, too, need emotional support and spaces where they can be vulnerable without being stigmatized. As a center, we've been talking a lot about emotional labor and the emotional dimensions of writing center work, and I don't think these conversations will go away even after the pandemic eventually subsides. Some of our favorite texts we've added to training include Dana Driscoll and Roger Powell's "States, Traits, and

Dispositions: The Impact of Emotion on Writing Development and Writing Transfer Across College Courses and Beyond," Maureen McBride and colleagues' "Responding to the Whole Person: Using Empathic Listening and Responding in the Writing Center," and Dana Driscoll and and Jennifer Wells's "Tutoring the Whole Person: Supporting Emotional Development in Writers and Tutors." Making discussions of emotional labor and emotional well-being central to training and professional development has been powerful, and I've noticed a real shift in the ways consultants talk about writing as an embodied and emotional act in their sessions.

Beth: Because my institution is a public regional comprehensive, with a lot of local students who work or are caretakers, we have long had an accessibility statement saying we would meet the needs of students from all backgrounds and circumstances. This includes finding ways to tutor students who are currently deployed abroad, students with children, and of course, students with disabilities. But the pandemic and our move online for a year really pointed out to us how much better we could be at this. We actually discovered that the number of students working on out-of-class documents like scholarship essays, important professional documents, and application materials went up significantly when we moved online and became more accessible to students with busy work schedules. Trying to balance these needs with the students who really want to be in-person has been a particular challenge for us as we try to decide what is fair to our consultants, who also have lives outside their writing center work. I would say trying to find ways to serve many different needs at once is our biggest challenge right now, but is also really allowing us to see new possibilities for how we can meet those needs.

The other big challenge we've identified when we came back in person this last fall was staffing. Tutors wanted significantly less hours on the schedule than they have in the past, and they often all wanted to work the same hours. We want to be fair and supportive of them, so we developed our schedule based on their needs. However, it also meant our writing center had odd, sporadic hours that often did not work for the students I just described who work or have families. One of our primary

challenges in the next year is to figure out how we can be ethical in our staffing while still providing the help students need.

Marguerite: As Candis expressed, our writing center consultations have also had an emotional dimension due to the pandemic and the numerous uncertainties that students are facing. During the "lockdown," our fledgling writing center flourished because many students seemed to crave the social interaction of the synchronous online consultations. The students especially enjoyed "Walk-in Wednesdays!" where they could all pop in and out of the Zoom room, getting help with their papers together in a group setting. I found that it was more important than ever to be positive and supportive, to smile on the screen, to use the "applause" icon. We have continued "Walk-in Wednesdays!" but it is in person now in one of our new Learning Studios. We use WConline and are thus able to offer the students three types of appointments: an in-person consultation, an online synchronous consultation, or an asynchronous consultation.

Currently, the HC Writing Center is growing, and things are going well. When we compared the 2020-2021 academic year to the 2021-2022 academic year, we saw about a 20% increase in appointments/usage. Therefore, the needs we are facing include more consultants and more hours of operation to meet the increased demand. The way we have handled it this semester is by 1) hiring a part-time WC coordinator who is doing a marvelous job and 2) by creating a rotation of faculty volunteers. This increases the faculty's awareness of what the students are struggling with, and it gives them a first-hand glimpse of how many students are taking advantage of this Learning Resource. It also increases the sense of having a writing community here on campus. After meeting with Karen, I realize that we need to take some simple steps to help students with disabilities or learning challenges. Perhaps some of our intrinsic educational values need to be expressed in ways that the students can see and hear them. Now that our WC is off the ground, I believe that we can start improving in this area. Many of our students also seem to need help with content development, unclear sentences, thesis statements, and citations. They seem to struggle with retaining what they have learned as well. It is our responsibility to find a way to

get through all the "noise" in their minds and help them remember what they've learned and apply it to their writing assignments.

LaKela: I am not currently in a writing center position, but my colleague at one of my previous institutions, Ms. Amanda Chambers, provided me insight. She is a professional consultant at North Carolina Central University's (NCCU) Writing and Speaking Studio and shared that the university is evolving and is trying to catch up with the times. According to Chambers, NCCU was not prepared to go online. The university, like many HBCUs, doesn't have the resources that predominantly white institutions (PWIs) have. The writing center is developing online resources and beefing up social media. She shared that challenges include the writing center's own resources. Currently, the Writing and Speaking Studio refers students to Purdue OWL and UNC. The Studio has a demographic of students that they're trying to reach (electronic videos, handouts, etc.), which may be different from those at other institutions. Current student needs are resources, as the writing center is only open for limited hours and students need to be able to access things on their own time because of work. Having webinars, seminars, and recorded demonstrations available is a need.

I also asked my colleague, Dr. Nicole (Nikki) Caswell, the same question. She is the director of the University Writing Centers at East Carolina University. This was Caswell's response:

> The writing center is almost always in a constant state of change. We've had lots of turnover staff wise because of the pandemic and workloads. We returned to face to face last fall with a staff that had never worked face to face before, so in many ways what we are doing right now is teaching and modeling how we operate in a face to face context. While we are trying to rebuild our face to face work, students are primarily selecting online appointments. We are also trying to be more intentional with our linguistic justice work in individual sessions.

Q3: How has your writing center continued to be supportive and accessible to marginalized students during the pandemic?

Candis: The pandemic led us to make many positive changes. We have extended our hours late into the evening most weekdays, and we've added weekend hours. We also added video and audio to our online appointments (prior to the pandemic, we were only allowed by our university's IT department to use the text feature of WCOnline), and we made asynchronous consultations available to everyone; previously, only graduate students, faculty, and staff could use this form of support. In addition to expanding our support, we've used social media to form relationships with groups on campus who represent the interests of underrepresented students, and we've also been more intentional and strategic with our own social media presence in order to emphasize our commitment to inclusivity and equity within the university. While the pandemic led us to implement positive changes, there is still a lot of work for us to do. We realized a need for more online resources, for example. We hope to add interactive, self-paced online modules in the near future on a variety of topics students ask about most, such as how to write literature reviews or integrate quotations. We need to be sure the resources we develop are fully accessible to all writers by offering multiple ways to engage with the text. We also need to do an accessibility audit of all of our online materials, including social media posts and handouts.

Another goal is to develop an accessibility statement. Beginning in fall 2021, staff began reading Andrew Appleton Pine and Karen Moroski-Rigney's article, "'What About Access?': Writing an Accessibility Statement for Your Writing Center" as part of their required training. Staff have been inspired by this article's tips and arguments about restorative justice and are ready to begin the work of drafting. I'm looking forward to the development of the statement itself as well as the opportunity to reflect critically on our values and what we can accomplish within our institutional contexts. As Appleton Pine and Moroski-Rigney explain, "An Accessibility Statement reflects the mission of an individual center and is distinct from the field-wide call-to-arms suggested by the position statement from the IWCA because it makes clear an individual center's beliefs and goals surrounding disability (whether physical, emotional, or mental disability). It asks: not 'What can the field do?' but, "What can *we* do?'" (para. 5). Being

accessible and inclusive cannot be a one-off; it is something you work toward constantly. I'm hoping we can not only draft an Accessibility Statement, but also integrate ongoing data collection, perhaps through focus groups, that helps us understand writers' evolving needs so we can build a center that is responsive and inclusive.

Beth: I'll admit this is really hard, in part because being online last year really limited our ability to reach students for whom the technology might have been a barrier, which is often students who are already marginalized on our campus: students with disabilities, poor students, students with caretaking responsibilities or who do not have a quiet home environment. Being both in-person and online this semester has helped that somewhat in terms of who we are seeing using the writing center again. But for us, I think the thing we really have come back to is how we are building our support. In 2021, our administrative assistant and I began an assessment project where we compared writing center data with institutional data. We found that the percentage of non-white, transfer, and Pell Grant-eligible students who visit the writing center far exceeds the percentage these students represent on the campus as a whole. Which means the writing center is serving as an important resource to marginalized students. But why? Is it because of institutional racism that tells non-white and working-class students they need "help" with their writing? Is it because we are a visible resource? Is it because of something in our practices that is working for students? Do they see themselves represented in our staff? We need to get at the heart of that. Having this quantitative data is awesome, but it really just serves as a springboard for us to do better, more advocacy-minded assessment. What do students get out of the writing center? And what are we missing, what do we need to be doing that we aren't? That's what I really want to know and what I think is the duty of my writing center, as a space of advocacy, to be doing.

Marguerite: Our writing center has been supportive of and accessible to marginalized students through the online consultations that we offered during the pandemic. However, we need to work on getting closed captioning for those Zoom meetings because that will help those students with hearing difficulties, and it will also help those who are visual

learners. Technology has been a tremendous tool over the past two years. Zoom also enabled me to extend my hours of operation during that time. However, as Beth pointed out, it can also be an obstacle for lower-income students who have an old computer that does not work properly or for the students who live in a noisy house and are trying to have an online consultation. Fortunately, students are able to have an in-person consultation now, instead of only the online option. We made our WC easily accessible by placing it in the learning studio that is right next to the HC Library, so students can quickly get the books and sources that they need while they are conducting their research and creating the citations in their essays. In the past, we have collaborated with the Student Life department to send out weekly messages to promote "Walk-in Wednesdays!" and other events. We should get back into that routine because the repetition really helped the students remember to come to the WC. One of the things we are doing in our new Student Success program (for at-risk students) is telling the students (in their individual meetings with their Student Success Coordinator) to go to the WC, which has also been effective.

LaKela: This is also another question I defer to former colleagues. According to Amanda Chambers, the Writing Studio has utilized the online chat feature for initial online pre-pandemic. The writing center has extended online features to video and audio to have the feeling of in-person be as normal as possible. Face-to-face consultations are limited to one consultant, but students can come in for scheduling and paper resources.

I also asked Nikki Caswell, and this was her response:

> As we drafted the linguistic justice letter to faculty last year, we discussed ways to engage pro-Blackness actions in sessions such as making comments on oppressive language in each session – which requires constant professional development for consultants (especially with turn over). But all of our services are open to all. We don't have specific support for marginalized populations.

Q4: What do you see as the role of mentorship and community-building in your writing center or in writing center studies?

Candis: When I first started my job, I thought a lot about how I wanted staff to perceive me, and I landed on "mentor" as my administrative identity. As I've mentioned, I struggled to form relationships with professors when I was a first-gen undergraduate, so it is important to me to normalize those relationships with my undergraduate peer consultants. I also believe that writing centers function best when everyone is using their strengths. I hire not based on some standard criteria, but based on what our team is lacking that the candidate might bring. But we can't know one another's strengths unless we're talking with one another, and a lot of that talking can happen in mentor relationships. Within my writing center, I try to work collaboratively with all staff to give them what they need to achieve their personalized goals. I try to use mentorship as an opportunity to learn from my staff how we can make our writing center better through their gifts and interests. I also developed a mentor program as part of our staff training. Experienced consultants help to train incoming consultants throughout a semester. It's been rewarding to see how staff have mentored one another over the years, and I love seeing consultants develop as leaders through their experiences with mentoring.

Within the broader discipline, I think mentorship is also important. Being a writing center director can be an incredibly isolating experience. You are usually the only person like yourself on campus, so finding allies and people to ask advice of is challenging. Having mentors within the field can give you access to advice, affirmation, resources, and other things you need to do your job and maintain your mental health and well-being. I've regularly participated as both a mentor and mentee in the International Writing Centers Association's Mentor Match Program, and unfortunately, not all of my experiences with writing center mentors have been good. I think the field needs to identify models of mentorship that are healthy and productive for mentors and mentees, but I have found many people who have supported me. For me, having mentors who listen to my goals, respect my boundaries, and view the relationship as a mutual exchange has been transformative. I've gained a lot of

confidence about myself as a WCA and researcher through these relationships. I've also found I really enjoy mentoring. Being a mentor allows me to give back and serve as an advocate for others—more of that service work I'm drawn to—but it also, somewhat selfishly, alleviates my own feelings of inadequacy and imposter syndrome in the field.

Both sides of the mentoring relationship have helped me find myself. I've been able to identify my values, how I work and lead best, my aspirations, and the pathways I have available to me. I hope I've been able to help others I've mentored in the same ways; I love watching staff and mentees in the field find themselves and make progress on their personal, professional, and academic journeys. Being both a mentee and a mentor within the discipline has been foundational to my development as a WCA and leader. In their article, "The Importance of Intention: A Review of Mentoring for Writing Center Professionals," Maureen McBride and Molly Rentscher note that current writing center mentorship models operate hierarchically and do not have clear guidelines for setting healthy boundaries. I hope our field takes up their call for more structured, egalitarian programs in the future, ones that offer WCAs multiple models, options, and resources as they navigate their careers.

Beth: I would not be in this field if it weren't for the mentorship I've received. And I believe I need to pay it back by mentoring others. However, I do think the concept of mentorship and the "niceness" of writing center studies and our professional spaces has become somewhat problematic. It doesn't say great things that we are a field that cares a lot about mentorship but is made up almost primarily of white women. What does that say about who we think is worthy of mentorship? So I think mentorship is the bedrock of writing centers, but that we always have to be questioning the role of mentorship, too.

In some ways, that's why I like the idea of community-building more. I like the way it makes me think of actual physical space, for one, and how spaces are shaped by people. I think that's a helpful analogy for me in terms of how I want to see writing center studies. I want to see it as a space that is welcoming but also one of real engagement, where having

a community sometimes means being uncomfortable or having to advocate for change. I want that in my center, too. I think community-building has been really hard during the pandemic. And our consultants really wanted it, but we had to think about their health and safety. So I know that's something we're invested in again in a way that felt "natural" before Covid. We have to think about it some more. For me, a lot of it is including tutors in all the parts of writing center work. Not just tutoring, but giving them opportunities to do research, to help with programming, to develop content for us. We have started building "professional development" hours into the schedule and in our staff budgets, and for us so much of that is about making opportunities for community development – for having chances for tutors to just talk to each other and mentor each other and problem-solve together. And I wish we had more of that kind of space in writing center studies as a whole. I want writing center professional gatherings to feel like staff meetings where we aren't there to listen to an expert or to impress each other with what we know, but to really work together to solve problems and share experiences.

Marguerite: I agree that mentorship is an essential part of running a WC. When I was asked to launch the WC in February of 2020, I met with Dr. Jaci Wells in order to learn how a successful WC operates. She has been a mentor to me, and I hope to pass that blessing along and help mentor all those who will serve in the WC. I wonder if the SWCA has ever considered starting a program for mentoring new WC Directors. I would also like to see some of our students serve as peer tutors and/or as Embedded Course Consultants in the future so that they can mentor the younger students. I believe that mentoring is actually the heart of the WC, because ever since we launched our writing center in 2020 I have noticed that students will return again and again if they know that we are invested in their ideas and in helping them express their ideas through their own writing voice. As I mentioned earlier, there is often an emotional aspect when students come to the writing center and offer us a glimpse into their thought processes and allow themselves to become somewhat vulnerable. These meetings are points of connection for the college or university, which entail a certain amount of responsibility to support students academically, intellectually, emotionally, and even spiritually. They are opportunities for mentoring. Based on my

experience in 2020 and onward, I would agree with Yaghjian's assertion that writing center consultants are in some respects "car[ing] for the soul engendering the writing" (229). This mentoring, in turn, leads to community-building. The students feel a sense of belonging, a sense of safety, and then we are able to come alongside them and help them develop their writing skills.

I have felt a strong sense of community working with Jaci to create the writing center at Highlands College, and I have also felt a deep sense of community when working with the students, or with groups of students, in our new writing center. There is definitely a sense of community in working together to meet the students' needs in the WC. There is also a sense of community-building for the students when they come to events (workshops) like "Papers & Pancakes: Night Against Procrastination" and get help from their instructors on their major papers for the term– and in "Walk-in Wednesdays!".

In the area of writing center studies, I would love to see more research on how students really seem to enjoy working on their essays together in an environment of creative energy. Ultimately, with each consultation, I see my goal as finding myself eventually out of a job in the sense that the students improve and do not need me anymore. Then they go on to help other students with the skills that they have acquired in the WC. It is fulfilling to see this happen from time to time!

LaKela: I use two definitions of mentoring--Brown et al.'s definition as "the process by which a novitiate person is positively socialized by a sagacious person" (106) into the traditions and practices of a particular environment and Griffin and Toldson's definition "as one who observes, calls out, and cultivates unrealized potential in others" (103). Both of these definitions describe the mentoring relationship with my former writing center director, Dr. Karen Keaton Jackson, an African-American woman. This was an informal relationship because it just organically blossomed when I was a graduate consultant. She took the consultants under her wing and ensured we had experience with preparing proposals, presenting at conferences, and engaging in professional development (sometimes at her own expense). This was particularly important for a

predominantly Black/African-American staff because we represented a marginalized background in general and specifically in the writing center field. What makes our mentoring relationship so successful is her time in academia, experience with racial minority learners, and similar cultural background and interests. She shared effective strategies to support all learners, instead of encouraging us to steer them away from their identities. It was clear that she cared about students, especially students of color, and I learned how to better support students from her example.

Engaging in a mentoring relationship allows a person to be both vulnerable and accountable. I recognized the impact of my own biases as an educator of color regarding other racial minority learners. It was through mentoring with my African-American writing center director that I better understood how to appreciate students' varied identities. I believe she set a tone for our entire space because of her strong mentorship. While my mentoring relationship was with another female of color, successful mentoring relationships can be cross-cultural (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa and Angel 99), as various attributes help writing center professionals resist one way of knowing and acting in mentoring relationships.

In a sense, community-building was a result of the mentorship that my director provided. She modeled the family environment we needed to help us view the space as more than an assistantship. Veteran consultants modeled her example for newer consultants. Everyone's role was key from scheduling to conducting sessions. Once the tone was set from the inside, it became easier for us to establish community with our clients, where students came to visit to simply say hello or thank us for supporting them with an assignment. So, without both mentorship and community-building, I am not sure that our writing center would have had the unity, stability, and solid reputation that it has had for so long.

Q5: What do you see as the challenges and opportunities in writing centers in the next ten years?

Candis: I think one challenge facing writing centers will be how to form an identity that is independent of English departments and English as a discipline. This is true even for writing centers who are not and perhaps

never have been part of English departments. Even these centers, I think, gain some credibility and identity from a loose association with what students, faculty, and administrators see as "English." English and the humanities more broadly are facing incredible challenges in the increasingly neoliberal academy; they must constantly defend their worth and rebrand themselves to remain relevant within a market-driven economy. As an English faculty member, this breaks my heart. As these departments adapt and transform, writing centers may find they have to work harder to justify their existence and form identities that don't have that underlying disciplinary foundation. I am not at all saying that writing centers should not be grounded in a discipline, or that this discipline should not be what has historically been known as English (at least for the last century or so). But I am saying centers may need to come to terms with the fact that other disciplines may cease to recognize English as a valid field, and so they may need to get creative with how they form disciplinary identity and pedagogy while staying relevant within their institutions. The field will need to find ways to become increasingly diverse while still having some kind of unifying connection—something that provides a sense of cohesion and solidarity.

Another challenge writing centers face is interrogating best practices and what Jackie Grutsch McKinney calls the writing center's grand narrative (3); this entails deciding what the field will value as research, especially as the discipline becomes more and more diverse and globalized. So many writing center studies that are used to justify practices are grounded in very small samples or very isolated contexts, and they are conducted and written by people with immense privilege and limited points of view; there are not enough cross-institutional and cross-context studies and definitely not enough voices at the table. If we want to have some sense of cohesion about what our discipline values and how we practice, while also keeping room for flexibility and creative play, we need to find ways to do more large-scale research and to collaborate effectively across institutional contexts. This means our practitioners need more training in research methods and they need academic structures that give them support and time to do this work. We also need to decide what research can look like. For several years, the field found itself in a backlash against story, narrative, and lore—often rightfully so.

RAD research became the mantra, and while RAD research is important, this emphasis has shut down a lot of valuable scholarship, in my opinion. I think we're seeing the tides turn again in the past few years, with more emphasis on narrative and alternative rhetorics, as well as on methods like auto-ethnography and counter-story, but this means we're in a critical moment where we can choose to be more open-minded about what writing center scholarship can be or we can shut doors and lose momentum. I hope we can come to a place where we have innovative research within our field and we can recognize that "systematic" does not always mean "empirical."

Beth: I can be a bit of a pessimist, so hopefully my answer here isn't too pessimistic. We already know we're at an enrollment cliff at most institutions, with enrollments going down and likely not going back up anytime soon. And institutions have done a terrible job preparing for that. I see my institution panicking about this, and it frustrates me that the writing has been on the wall for so long without any real action taken until it got bad. So I see austerity measures coming, which will absolutely impact budgets across all writing centers. It also means universities are going to start to recruit more international students or students who might not be as prepared for college as some faculty wish they were. And this means writing centers need to do better at how we serve diverse student populations. I'm glad that writing center studies has really begun to take social justice seriously, as we need to be more inclusive in our pedagogies, our practices, and in our theory and research. And it shouldn't only be what we think is socially just – we need to listen to the actual voices of the writers we work with.

Going along with this, I think we need to start thinking more explicitly about labor in the field. And I mean that pretty broadly. We need to think about who become writing center directors and why it's such a white field. We also need to think about material aspects of labor, like pay and the positioning of admins, and how much work we do. We also need to think about how we pay our tutors, and who we hire and how we train tutors. I've been feeling really inspired by the "great resignation" happening and the way we're seeing unions coming back and starting to gain real momentum. I'm not necessarily saying writing center directors

should start a union, but what would it look like if we did? What does just thinking about our work as unified labor provide us with in terms of thinking about fair labor practices for directors, tutors, and all the other staff we work with?

Marguerite: The challenges and the opportunities that I perceive in WCs over the next ten years are actually interconnected. Our goal is to help the students develop their writing skills and their individual writing voice. Yet, many students seem to be "wired" differently than their predecessors, which is not a bad thing. The challenge is trying to help them truly understand the concepts and then implement them in their writing, so that their writing voice is not all jumbled up and garbled on the page, so that their message can be heard on the page. Perhaps texting, editing software like Grammarly, and environmental distractions on social media are making their ability to focus, retain the information, and grow more challenging. However, we can also use more technology in our WCs to help students overcome these challenges. For example, in our WC, we have "learning pods" with monitors. Each pod is a table with four to six chairs around it and a monitor on the wall at one end of it. We can sit at the pod and project the material we are teaching (or use an i-Pad to project our notes) onto the large monitor, which captures our students' attention. They can also connect and do the same with their work, which is extremely engaging for them. I believe that we will need to use cutting-edge technology in our WCs in order to teach students in a way that they are able to receive the information and make it their own. The technology that is changing how our students think and how they receive information can also be an opportunity –as a way to connect with them during their WC consultations. I also agree that WCs need to be viewed as an essential Learning Resource that benefits the students (and the professors) in all their courses (even if it is writing lab reports for biology), not just English.

Additionally, plagiarism is a challenge that writing centers can help alleviate through citation workshops and individual consultations. The sources are not difficult to locate and the copy and paste function makes it easy to forget the in-text citation. Around the world, approximately 20% of college students have plagiarized according to the owners of

Unicheck (Zakharov and Klymenko). This problem is growing. Yet, it is an opportunity to teach the students about academic integrity and to show them that they are standing on the shoulders of the scholars who provided that information for them. They need to give credit where credit is due, instead of stealing intellectual property.

LaKela: I know of and have learned about funding being cut for writing centers. While we know the importance and vital role this supplemental resource plays for our institutions, particularly for our students, many writing center professionals are waiting semester- to-semester or year-to-year to learn about budget approvals. Since the absence of a budget is a reality for many writing center professionals, I imagine that many writing centers will still be advocating for consistent financial support to continue to operate these spaces.

Having worked in two different institution types–an HBCU and a PWI–I see gaps in resources between the institution types. These resources range from staffing to an ability to adapt when it comes to inevitable situations like a pandemic. While I don't mean to generalize these institutions, research does point to the differences in support when it comes to many public HBCUs vs. public PWIs. I think for institutions that struggled prior to the pandemic, they will struggle even more so because of additional layers that we don't have consistent answers to address. As a result, they may fall further behind in providing relevant support that students need.

For this reason, I see many more opportunities for collaborations with PWIs and minority-serving institutions to help mitigate some of these struggles. Writing center collaborations/networks are helpful because an institution may have a creative idea for resources that supports a general population but is also considerate of marginalized students. Also, I suggest technological ideas that are inclusive of those who are not engaging in technology regularly because of the face-to-face sessions that occurred prior to the pandemic.

Conclusion: The Importance of Sharing Our Stories

Final Question: As we reflect on the panel, we respond to the following questions: How was the panel experience beneficial? And how do you think this will help other early WPA professionals?

Candis: I hope writing center organizations continue to prioritize discussions about writing center administrative labor and career trajectories. I think these conversations are needed to give WCAs more insight into pathways they might pursue and how to theorize, articulate, and get credit for the important work they do. Being given the opportunity to think about my career, and to do so in collaboration with directors from a variety of institutions, was eye-opening for me. So often we go about our day-to-day work without thinking reflexively about the values and goals driving our labor. Or perhaps we begin with these values and goals in mind but get distracted by the many hats we wear and the constant demands for our attention. Thinking deeply about the questions posed by my co-authors gave me the opportunity to think about my work with more intention. I also got new ideas and gained perspective by reading my colleagues' responses. I hope other WCAs, especially those early in their careers or those just starting writing centers, will find our responses useful. Even if readers do not share our goals or experiences, they may find it affirming to see that there are many valid approaches to writing center work–there's not just one pathway or one way of doing things. More importantly, I hope reading this collection of perspectives will encourage other WCAs to share their own early career experiences and insights. Keep the conversation going.

Beth: Moderating and participating in this panel reminded me why I love writing centers so much -- because learning from each other is necessary. We come from a wide range of institutional contexts, with different sized writing centers, serving different student populations. It is very important for WCAs, particularly new administrators, to hear about contexts different from the ones they've personally experienced. Not only does it give you an appreciation for the multiple ways in which writing center work can be done, it also provides you with insight on how institutions operate, how writing centers fit into institutional power structures, and how WCAs can be better positioned as change agents. We often tell our tutors how important it is to listen, that engaged listening is a key part of

being a good tutor. A panel like this one gives opportunities for engaged listening - not just for audience members but for us participants, too. I learned so much from my fellow WCAs on this panel. My hope is that this type of presentation inspires more discussions like this - whether in the formal space of conference panels or in more informal gatherings and special interest groups at other writing center events. I also hope it inspires us as a field to think more deeply about labor and how labor operates across different contexts and for different types of writing center administrative positions.

Marguerite: Serving on this 2022 keynote panel discussion with fellow WCAs and scholars was an honor. The experience was invaluable in that I was able to appreciate those who have gone before me and paved the way for launching a new writing center (even in the midst of a pandemic) and in that I was able to learn from my colleagues about crucial areas for future growth and improvements to our writing center. More importantly, participating in this panel renewed my passion for helping students find their unique writing voices and share their ideas with clarity and professionalism. At a CCCC conference, Nancy Sommers reflected on her discovery that "College writing is a matter of being personal *and* academic by questioning and testing sources against one's own rich and abundant life lessons. Being personal requires students to bring judgment and interpretation to bear on what they read and write, learning that they needn't leave themselves behind when writing an academic essay – imagining that they, too, will become sources from which readers will draw inspiration" (Anson et al. 127). It is my deep desire that this panel discussion was able to reignite the passion that other WCAs feel for the crucial work that they do in their various writing centers across the country.

LaKela: The panel provided me an opportunity to hear from and present with other panelists whose experiences are similar and different. Hearing the different paths, challenges, and successes of fellow early WCAs provided me assurance that there was no one way that I was expected to begin my career. I think it was important to also provide representation for people of color beginning in a field that is primarily white. As a person of color, I was able to share my experience navigating the writing center field at an HBCU and PWI, where my experiences were

drastically different in a field where there is also much overlap in expectations and service. I hope that our collective presentation provided insight into varying experiences that impact our approach to our work. I also hope that it helps us engage in more dialogue with other WCAs, as the work and situations we encounter are not always intuitive. Helping others to learn about the supports that worked well for us may also encourage others to seek out similar supports to develop their professional growth.

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Contributor Bios

Marguerite Armistead is a professor of English Composition at Highlands College and the director of the Highlands College Writing Center (HCWC). She has had the honor to teach rhetoric and composition, as well as ESL, since 1992. During that time, she has given numerous presentations to instructors in Japan and the USA. She has also contributed some editorial pieces to various publications such as *Stars and Stripes*, *The Birmingham News*, *The Baltimore Post-Examiner*, and *The Trussville Tribune*. As a wordsmith, she enjoys poetry, and some of her latest work will appear in an upcoming edition of Duquesne University's international journal, *The Listening Journal*.

LaKela Atkinson is a visiting assistant professor of professional and technical writing at Virginia Tech. Her research focuses on writing centers, mentoring, and racial minority learners. In addition to *SDC*, Atkinson's scholarship has appeared in *Learning from the Lived Experiences of Graduate Student Writers*.

Candis Bond is an associate professor of English and director of the Center for Writing Excellence at Augusta University. Her research focuses on domains of writing center professional labor, writing in the disciplines, and writing program administration. Bond's work has appeared in journals such as *The Writing Center Journal*, *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, *The Peer Review*, and *SDC.*

Beth A. Towle is an assistant professor of English and associate director of the writing center at Salisbury University. Her research focuses on writing center support of first-generation and working-class students, as well as writing center labor and institutional relationships. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *The Writing Center Journal*, *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, *The Peer Review*, and several edited collections.

Consultant Insight

On Returning to One's Center for the First Time

—Julia Kelley, Eric Mason, and Aidan Rivas

Introduction

When COVID-19 restrictions hit schools in spring of 2020, the Writing and Communication Center (WCC) at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) went completely remote, offering only online consultations via Zoom to its 20,000+ students. Although we had always had some online consultations and felt well-prepared to deliver our services effectively online, we worked hard, especially over the summer of 2020, to revise our training materials and policies to prepare consultants for this mode of working with clients. This mode stayed with us for some time, as it did for many centers that wanted to continue serving students and yet remain flexible and responsive to the ongoing pandemic. While we had some staff return to work out of the physical center in fall of 2021, all consultations continued to be conducted online. As of fall 2022, we are once again conducting sessions in person, and realized that much of what we had developed over the last two years would need to be reconsidered. After all, the majority of our active graduate coordinators and undergraduate consultants had only ever worked for the WCC in a remote capacity. We had to reacquaint ourselves with the flows and constraints of face-to-face (f2f) work.

The reflection below began as an episode of our center's podcast, The Writer's Edge (anchor.fm/nsuwcc), in which two of our Graduate Assistant Coordinators (GACs)—Julia Kelley and Aidan Rivas—sat down with one of our Faculty Coordinators—Dr. Eric Mason—to try to better understand what this change in modality meant for the work of graduate assistants charged with making sure that appointments ran smoothly and effectively. We thought continuing this conversation here in *SDC* would provide some further insight into what it meant to be a

consultant transitioning (back, for some, and for others, for the first time) to f2f work. We started by listening to our conversation recorded as the "The Writers' Edge Team Re-Centers" podcast episode, and then went back and expanded on the ideas that had emerged in our discussion. This essay is the result of that process.

Understanding the Affordances of Interfaces

In modern communication ecologies saturated with digital media, Collin Gifford Brooke argues that our "basic unit of analysis" should shift "from textual objects to medial interfaces" (6). We often use the term "interface" to describe the screen-based layouts of digital applications. However, we "interface" with the world and those in it in many ways, from digital devices to physical space to language itself. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary interface of our center changed, leading us to make use of Zoom, webcams, and screen sharing to view and discuss student work. Overall, we received positive feedback from clients during this time. However, for each student that happily used our services online, we seemed to have another who wished we could return to f2f consultations. Our consultants had varying levels of technological literacy, which meant that we needed to create and facilitate remote training modules for operating Zoom and messaging platforms such as Slack and GoToMeeting (which we used for internal communication among consultants, GACs, and WCC leadership) if we wanted to ensure that each appointment was conducted successfully and WCC operations flowed smoothly. In other words, we created interfaces for learning other interfaces.

Even after designing and delivering the new training, we discovered much about how best to use these platforms to conduct consultations by making use of their "affordances." Affordances have been defined as "characteristics of an ecological environment, or object, which allow for certain uses" (Kreniske 4). They are the functions made available through the interfaces we use—the things we often identify a specific interface as being "good for." The affordances of Zoom are partly a factor of the features and tools available in that system. For example, in Zoom our consultants and clients can use the "annotate" feature to type or use their mouse to draw onto a shared screen. Annotations made this way are visible to all, which can be quite useful for drawing attention to short sections of writing. Participants also have simultaneous access to

the affordances of the devices used to access Zoom. Consultants, for instance, could easily (and, even, privately) research answers to client questions in real-time in separate browser windows. Additionally, the online interface made it easy to share resources, or to take notes while a client talked without drawing attention away from the client. In other words, the online interface made it easier to control what was and was not visible/audible to clients during the consultation, a luxury that the f2f consultation does not afford.

For our more anxious clients, Zoom allowed a higher degree of control of these meetings as well. Clients anxious about sharing their work with a peer, who might be uncomfortable in close proximity to consultants, or who might prefer a location besides the WCC, could more easily manage such discomfort. In a typical f2f consultation at our center, clients and consultants are seated near each other in public view and within earshot of others in the center. Remote consultations allowed for increased privacy, but this higher level of confidentiality also meant that there was less direct oversight of individual sessions from WCC administration. We neither recorded each session nor dropped in unexpectedly into sessions. The online interface may have made it more difficult to communicate one's attention to the other using actions such as making eye contact, nodding, and other body language. Sometimes, clients even made these cues unavailable by choosing to disable their webcam. Muting the webcam, audio, or screen sharing, and even the decision as to when to close the meeting are affordances easily accessed via the Zoom interface, making it much simpler for consultants or clients to manage uncomfortable situations. It is certainly not common for our consultations to end with grief, but the affordances of online consultations allow for such unlikely events to be handled very differently compared to consultations in our physical center.

Developing In-Demand Skill Sets

Although there were challenges operating remotely in an ecology of digital applications, the interfaces we were exposed to did strengthen several key skill sets. This kind of skill development is unsurprising, because solving problems in an ecology of new tools and situations is the "ground for acquiring new knowledge" that leads to taking "full advantage of digital environments" (Kaplan 3). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged our technological literacies and demanded more

flexibility from us as writing center professionals, leading us to learn the functions and intricacies of platforms such as Zoom and GoToMeeting to conduct consultations, and to find new ways to use tools like Canvas and Slack to facilitate daily operations.

We also had to learn to innovate. While affordances are often looked at as "those actions that the system enables," it is also true, as Nancy Kaplan argues, that affordances are "what people can imagine using the system to accomplish" (3). In other words, the affordances one identifies within a system are dependent on what you, the user, can creatively imagine using them for. Thus, an important aspect of our technological literacy was our willingness to not just follow instructions for how to use a platform, but our use of them as tools for creative problem-solving. For example, our podcasting team identified tools to record remotely so that hosts and guests didn't need to be in the same room to record episodes. As we continue to move further into the digital age, being knowledgeable and innovative users of digital tools is crucial.

Our tutors also developed multimodal design skills. We saw enhanced design literacy not only in the additional work WCC staff did with digital applications and social media to stay in contact with remote workers and to maintain consultant well-being, but in our education and training materials and procedures that had to be updated to account for the virtual ecology in which we were operating. We had to think strategically about how consultants would navigate through the Canvas interface (where all of our training modules live), and develop more video resources to engage consultants more effectively online. We developed workshops as well related to professional development and diversity education, streamed through Zoom using presentations designed in Canva or Google Slides. Many faculty members took this time as an opportunity to redesign their courses in a more structured way that highlighted online multimodal resources and tools, giving students more freedom to develop projects not constrained by the classroom space. The willingness to experiment and explore a variety of perspectives and possibilities are further examples of skills consultants need as future leaders.

Even within these virtual settings, we also relearned the importance of body language. The proximity that in-person environments offer provides a clearer reading of social cues and understandings, such as those built on good posture, eye contact, and attentive listening. Body

language is not as easily detected in an online platform like Zoom, and thus requires consultants to be that much more cognizant of the signals they were sending. What online consulting has taught us—if not apparent before—is just how powerful our nonverbal cues are in our communication practices. Now that we have returned to in-person consultations, we can apply this knowledge to this new stage of our center.

Managing Time in the Writing Center

Being a productive writer often means learning to schedule time for the various stages of composing, and returning to our center re-focused our attention on how much administrative work in a writing center also focuses on managing the flow and demands of time. Clients come in and out of the space, sometimes early or late for their appointments, and consultants only have a limited amount of time with which to work with them on any given day, with those consultations themselves being strategically scheduled (hopefully) to give students enough time to plan or revise to meet upcoming deadlines. Hosting these consultations online via Zoom had affected the distribution of this work across time in a few ways. For some students, working online made it easier to schedule appointments or to show up on time, negating the need to commute to campus (the time for which, in South Florida, can be highly variable) and thus provided extra time to attend to personal or professional needs. For others, online consultations made it easier to have online resources such as citation references and library resource guides ready-at-hand, so no time was wasted searching for them.

Both clients and consultants may have benefited from more flexible scheduling during the pandemic, because individuals weren't limited as much by the days and times when they would already be physically on campus to schedule appointments. Commuting from home or across campus is a larger factor with in-person appointments, making the start time of appointments more fluid than the phrase "at the top of the hour" would suggest. Students sometimes arrive anywhere from 20 minutes early to 10 minutes late to in-person appointments, while online appointments would commonly begin with both parties logging in right at the start time. And "walk-in" consultations, where students had no appointment but were assigned to a free consultant soon after arriving at the center, were rare during the pandemic. Still, it seems that

consultations run more smoothly in-person. Some consultants have observed that their sessions tended to be shorter online compared to in-person consultations, perhaps because the social interactions associated with f2f work sometimes get reduced to a minimum, providing more time to work. Or perhaps it is just easier to end a session by clicking a button than by walking away from someone in person.

One of the biggest changes we noticed upon the return to in-person operation is that real-time interventions by center leadership became much easier to initiate than during the pandemic. Since it was difficult to be in multiple online spaces at once, it was not common when we were working remotely for coordinators to drop into online consultations unannounced in consultants' personal Zoom rooms, since doing so might make them unavailable in other online spaces. When online, we usually waited for consultants to reach out to us with questions or issues. Upon our return to in-person operation, however, coordinators reported that it was easier to get a general sense of what was going on in multiple sessions at once, and to provide "just-in-time" support to consultants. While we had previously supplied this type of mid-consultation support through Slack or GTM during the pandemic if consultants reached out to us, in-person operation allows coordinators to recognize these opportunities even when consultants do not. These observations serve as a reminder that kairos, or timeliness, is a key aspect of writing and writing consultation and that the management of the work flow in a center is a time-based aspect of center administration with which coordinators will need to become reacquainted now that our interface has shifted.

Conclusion

As consultants, GACs, and faculty committed to developing the skills and practices necessary to deliver high-quality consultations, we welcome this opportunity to reflect on what we learned during the pandemic, and what we need to re-learn as we return to having a physical presence at the NSU Writing and Communication Center. It is important to note that 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. Part of this learning process is recognizing the affordances available through these various modalities and how our relationships to the tools and technologies and spaces we

work in affect our ability to identify best practices and work productively with others.

The widespread shift to online consultations posed significant challenges to consultants and writing center daily operations, prompting the need for new training and increased familiarity with online interfaces. But it also provided opportunities for learning new skill sets connected to these digital tools and spaces, and renewed attention to labor conditions and management styles. By working in this remote consultation ecology over the last two years, we gained an increased awareness and appreciation of the situations of others, of the value of non-verbal cues in communication, of the opportunities to explore multimodal expressions of creativity as student and professor, and of the technological and social literacies that we develop through online platforms. These insights are necessary for cultivating meaningful relationships and connections in current and future digital communication ecologies, and will ensure that we are able to approach future challenges with the flexible and timely responses necessary to maintain client satisfaction and consultant well-being.

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Contributor Bios

Julia Kelley is a second-year master's student in the Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media program at NSU. She is a Graduate Assistant Coordinator at the Writing and Communication Center, the Social Media and Marketing Chair for PRSSA, the Student Government Association Representative for the NSU Department of Communication, Media, and the Arts and a member of NSU President's 64.

Eric Mason, Ph.D., is a Faculty Coordinator at the Nova Southeastern University Writing and Communication Center and associate professor with the NSU Department of Communication, Media, and the Arts. His scholarly work focuses on how the various modalities of composition intersect with cultural practices. He has served as the SWCA Digital Content Developer since 2020.

Aidan Rivas is a second-year master's student in the Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media program at NSU. He is also a Graduate Assistant Coordinator at the Writing and Communication Center. His background is in communications with a focus in digital media production, and work experience primarily in graphic design and corporate communications. His academic work tends to examine heuristics for pedagogy and learning in multimodal contexts.

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Back to the Center

Deep Run High School

—Melissa Daniels and Mia Tambellini

Ding. Ding. Ding. The bell rings. Teens swarm the hallways. Passing under a banner that reads: "Wildcat Writing Center Deep Run High School Where Wildcats Write Right," consultants scurry into the classroom. One rolls out the painted-blue table and opens her laptop to the list of appointment sign-ups. Others find seats at one of the eight sections of rectangular tables. Some are quickly eating a few French fries, sipping water, or opening a bag of pretzels. Soon, a small line of students forms behind the rolling table, as the greeter checks them in for their appointments. Chatter fills the room: friendly greetings, essay read-alouds, curious inquiries. Thirty minutes later, more students enter and wait patiently to check in as the first consultations end and new ones begin. It's a Tuesday or Wednesday during One Lunch – an hour-long lunch period when students can eat, connect with friends, attend club meetings, meet with teachers – and visit the Writing Center!

Our High School

Deep Run High School is in Henrico County, a suburb of Richmond, Virginia. It is home to more than 1,900 high school students and 111 teachers. Most students live in the district, but some who have been accepted into our high school's Center for Information Technology, a specialty center for students interested in learning the fundamentals of technology, commute from other parts of the county. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education named Deep Run High School an exemplary, high-performing National Blue Ribbon School. Current U.S. News & World Report Best High Schools Rankings lists Deep Run as 1st in Henrico County, 12th in Virginia, and 488th in the U.S.

We are the only Henrico County School with an hour-long lunch period each day when the whole school engages in social, extracurricular, co-curricular, and academic pursuits. Our Writing Center is open two days per week during this time.

Our Writing Center

The Deep Run Writing Center, in its current iteration, began in 2018. In fall 2021, Deep Run High School became an institutional member of the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA). Open one or two hours each week, our Writing Center has provided nearly 1,300 consultations since Fall 2018. Our primary method of consultation has been in-person, but due to the pandemic, our Writing Center did successfully provide about 220 virtual consultations during the 2020-2021 school year.

Our staff has included between 12 and 18 trained student consultants each school year. These students earn community service hours for their work. Our consultant selection process begins in the winter of the prior school year with an interest meeting for rising 11th and 12th grade students. Students then submit an application that requires them to document their knowledge of writing and peer tutoring, skills and attributes, and availability and willingness to commit. Applicants also provide a writing sample. We invite the top applicants to interview with our current consultants. Using the application, interview, and teacher feedback, we select our new consultants. This year's application process was the most competitive yet: we selected 12 of the 47 who applied.

After being selected, each new consultant is paired with a veteran consultant who serves as a mentor. New consultants shadow their mentor through the end of the school year. In the summer, we organize a training session where new consultants learn more about writing centers, hear from veterans, understand and practice our basic consultation process, and discuss Writing Center logistics. Training continues once school starts, leading to a "soft opening" with the sponsors' students coming for consultations before we officially open for all students. After our Writing Center opens, we have monthly staff meetings with a Professional Development (PD) component. Since 2018, we have also connected with college writing centers and participated in events like the SWCA Annual Conference and SWCA-VA Tutor Collaboration Day.

Currently, we serve as the teacher sponsors for our Writing Center. We are also the SWCA Secondary School Representatives, a role that involves connecting with other secondary school writing centers in the southeastern region of the United States to build a contact list, invite them to state and regional events, and share secondary school writing center needs with state representatives and board members.

Our Writing Center sponsors and staff participated in the SWCA's annual conference held virtually in February 2022. Two of our student consultants shared their experiences on the keynote panel, and our sponsors led a roundtable entitled "Responding to Logistical Challenges in the Writing Center." Our consultants particularly enjoyed participating in and winning the Goose Chase, the conference's application-based scavenger hunt that encouraged comradery with various team challenges. Building on our positive experience at this conference, five of our consultants led a roundtable entitled "Sustaining a Writing Center: Supporting Consultants and Consultees" at the virtual SWCA-Virginia Tutor Collaboration Day this fall.

Our Goals and Achievements

Our goals are three-fold: equip student consultants with writing knowledge and relational skills, support teachers' writing instruction by providing one-on-one consultations for their students, and develop confidence in student writers by affirming their strengths and facilitating their growth.

We are proud of the opportunities our Writing Center affords our consultants to undergo mentoring and shadowing, training, and ongoing PD. Last school year we created a "greeter" role that rotates among consultants. The greeter welcomes students to their appointments and assigns them to an available consultant.

Just this year, we have also offered leadership roles. These roles have encouraged investment in our Writing Center and helped distribute many of the tasks necessary to keep our Writing Center running. Our Webmasters work to revitalize our website. Our Writing Center Manager creates a greeter schedule and provides necessary signage and resources in our Writing Center. Advertising Coordinators produce a video for morning announcements, fliers with a sign-up QR code, t-shirts,

Instagram posts, and materials for our campus display case. School Relations Liaisons reach out to faculty to share our Writing Center's offerings and look for other ways we can support their instruction. Our Professional Development Coordinator plans monthly PD for our Writing Center staff and leads staff to present at other PD events like SWCA-VA's Tutor Collaboration Day 2022.

Our Writing Center also includes annual celebrations and traditions, such as a senior send-off where underclass consultants honor each graduating consultant with a reflection on their contributions to the Writing Center, and all consultants sign a student-designed ceiling tile that remains in our Writing Center permanently.

To support our teachers, we gather specifics on their writing and presentation assignments and expectations that we share with our consultants. We have enjoyed partnerships with science, Language Instruction Educational Program, exceptional education, journalism, history, English, Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone, and Center for Information Technology Capstone teachers. Our Writing Center has been a component of our high school's Literacy Plan and Instructional Planning Committee.

Making sure our consultants are equipped and teachers are supported, undergirds our third, and most important, goal to develop confident student writers. We have worked to make our Writing Center more accessible by advertising on our morning announcements, creating and sustaining an Instagram account, and posting fliers with sign-up QR codes for students to make appointments. Since we are available at lunchtime, most students, even those with work, family, and extracurricular commitments, can schedule an appointment. Our greeters and consultants make student writers feel welcome and comfortable. Student writers build trust with consultants and often ask to work with the same consultant again. We believe that our casual, but focused environment and consistent location and hours create a known space that students want to visit. Our survey results indicate that nearly all student writers feel more confident about their writing after a consultation than they did beforehand.

Our Hopes

While Deep Run is known for rigorous academic and a high number of Advanced Placement courses, we strive to be available for students at all levels. In addition to the pre-established teacher partnerships, we are working with the Exceptional Education Department to reach writers with Individualized Education Plans. Case managers, who support these students, are encouraging those who may be reluctant to share their writing or who may need assistance to make and keep their appointments. We are also working on new ways to support English Language Learners in our Writing Center. Our hope is that the Writing Center is accessible to all students and that they will feel internally motivated to keep returning.

In addition, we are focusing on consultant training and student writer consultations across all content areas, beyond the typical essay for English class. We have also consulted with students about small group research presentations and hope to continue this work.

Other continuing projects include updating our website and strengthening our Writing Center's social media presence. We have long-term hopes of more collaborations with local college writing centers, helping to develop and support new writing centers at the district level and in the southeastern region, and eventually, applying for SWCA Center Acknowledgement and Recognition of Excellence (C.A.R.E.) Certification.

Our Words of Thanks

We are indebted to Lindsey Leeth, a former teacher sponsor who helped start Deep Run's first Writing Center after visiting writing centers at another Virginia high school and The University of Richmond, and Beth Berry, a former college writing center consultant herself, who sponsored the early Deep Run Writing Center, helped restart and sponsor the current Writing Center Spring 2018-Spring 2022, and served as a SWCA Secondary School Representative Fall 2021-Spring 2022.

We are grateful for the support of our Deep Run administrators, department leader, teachers, students, and community, which makes our

Writing Center possible. We appreciate the work our Writing Center does and anticipate continued meaningful work ahead.

Figure 1. Members of the 2021-2022 Deep Run Writing Center staff and teacher sponsors pausing for a photo while participating in the 2022 SWCA Virtual Conference.

Figure 2. The Writing Center banner that hangs above the door into the classroom that houses our Writing Center.

Figure 3. Deep Run Writing Center consultants watching two veteran consultants model mock consultations during our summer training session. This is the same classroom space that functions as our Writing Center.

Figure 4. 2022-2023 Writing Center teacher sponsors and staff smiling after completing their summer training session.

Contributor Bios

Melissa Daniels has been teaching English at Deep Run High School since 2015, earning her National Board Certification in 2017. She grew up in Richmond, Virginia and graduated from The College of William and Mary with a B.A. in English in 2008. She earned her M.A. in English from the Middlebury College Bread Loaf School of English in 2014. Melissa served as a writing center consultant in both college and graduate school. This is her fifth year co-sponsoring the Deep Run Writing Center. She enjoys working with her co-sponsor, Mia, the consultants, and members of the SWCA board.

Mia Tambellini has been teaching English at Deep Run High School since 2019. She grew up in Washington state and graduated from Western Washington University with a journalism degree. Her husband is a retired Navy pilot, and she has taught in Corpus Christi, TX, New Orleans, LA, Jacksonville, FL, and Goochland, VA. This is her first year co-sponsoring the Writing Center. She is enjoying working with the amazing group of consultants and being a part of the SWCA board.

Book Review

Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace. By Travis Webster. Utah State University Press, 2021.

—Reviewed by Duane Theobald

Representation matters a great deal throughout the higher education landscape. In marginalized spaces of academia, such as writing centers, this notion matters all the more. Thanks to works like Caswell, Grutsch-McKinney, and Jackson's *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*, writing center administrators can point to texts that uphold long-told stories and experiences about the work done in our little pockets of space on our campuses. Travis Webster's book *Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace* extends and builds upon foundational writing center texts by providing not just another glimpse into the everyday lives of writing center administrators but highlighting perspectives and experiences that have not been featured as prominently as they should be in our field.

In 143 tightly-crafted pages, Webster carefully presents the reader with honest, thoughtful conversations featuring interviews with 20 writing center administrators (ten who are male identifying and gay, nine who are female identifying and lesbian or queer, and one who is transgender/female-to-male and opposite-sex oriented). Opening with an emotional recall to the tragedy at Orlando's gay club *Pulse* in 2016, Webster presents his own reactions and struggles after the horrific event and the call from one of his writing center staffers "to write the staff and the broader community, saying [he] was the person to do so, referring to [his] out gay director identity" (4). The notion of queer identity and what it means within writing center administrative roles serves as the

framework for this text, an area of writing center studies that Webster notes has not been addressed in depth. Labor in writing center spaces varies from administrator to administrator but, as this text notes, what labor looks like for a queer writing center administrator can prove quite different. As Webster notes throughout the book, the labor is unquestionably necessary and worthwhile; however, it is not always noticed and carefully considered. With the questioning of "higher education's long-term sustainability…[and] eventual collapse per our lack of critical, proactive, and progressive orientation to work and workers," the purpose behind this text proves necessary and worthwhile as well (Webster 17).

After a thoughtful introduction, Webster begins unpacking queer identity and writing center administrative roles in Chapter 2, "Queer Writing Center Labor and/as Capital." His breakdown of how he defines "origins" and "capital" are particularly significant, as they serve as a strong framework for what follows. For this book's purposes, Webster defines capital as "resources gained, lost, rendered, transacted, traded, and heralded in an institutional economy, whether embodied, material, or metaphorical, as related to one's social and economic standing" (29). As he discusses origins and capital, Webster remarks on the ever-ready nature of queer participants for writing center administrative labor, "the labor of meeting people where they are,[...]working to understand how to build sites that do things in the world,[...and] working to combat oppressors and oppression" (34). This connection is made all the clearer as the author presents the stories of participants Madeline, Brian, Mike, Matt, John, and Ryan throughout the chapter.

The discussion of what it means to be Black and queer in writing center administrative spaces proves particularly powerful, with Webster remarking that "all the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) anti-racist reading groups [...] and all the justice-based and radical writing center research [...] and brave space discussions[...] in the world can't quite make up for a recruitment and retention issue of raced bodies" (43). This disconnect could be, in part, because of the caution that Black, queer writing center administrators like Brian and James must espouse when having, for example, "hard conversations (about safe sex)" and doing so in a much more direct and honest way, as "queer directors tend to look out for, protect, stand up for, and even 'save' queer and nonqueer tutors" (Webster 45). This kind of labor comes about not just

because of their institutional and social capital but because of their origins. These experiences and nuances are not discussed within traditional lore about writing center labor and work; however, Webster's assertion seems to be that this work and labor, like that of Brian and James, is occurring and needs to be captured as tangible, necessary, and worthy of attention by the larger writing center and higher education communities.

Chapter 3, "Queer Writing Center Labor and/as Activism," focuses on how queer writing center directors "labor on behalf of their sites, their tutors, and their students"–in part via activism (Webster 53). There has been a good deal done in the writing center community to address social justice (see many CFPs from previous conferences and journals), and the emergence of position statements on certain topics, such as the singular they, have become much more prevalent. However, as Webster acutely points out, "it's glaringly noticeable when the efforts in the field do not account for the realities of how our work intersects with macro- and microactivisms" (55). Among the notable experiences from participants that speak to activism, Tim's decision to place condoms in the writing center because of the lack of a health center or sexual-health resources on his campus is both admirable and telling. While all directors and administrators labor on behalf of their students and campus community, some labor and work serve a more multifaceted purpose.

Queer writing center administrators, because of their social and institutional capital & origins, often see the need for and provide a space in which certain needs can be filled. Due to his identity and position, Tim fills a need that is negligently left unfilled by his campus' administration. Additionally, this chapter addresses how queer writing center administrators respond to challenging national events, such as the women's marches that followed the 2016 election of Donald Trump (as discussed by participant Katherine) and the Tyler Clementi suicide. What all of the administrators featured in this chapter speak to, in terms of their positions and the need to advocate for themselves and their students, is remarkable. As mentioned previously, much of the labor exerted by the study's participants does not quite align with "historical conventions of our labor" (Webster 57). This, to me, demonstrates the valued place that Webster's work will have in our field moving forward.

Webster's fourth chapter, "Queer Writing Center Labor and/as Tension," addresses some of the more insidious aspects to working as a queer writing center administrator. Focusing on moments of implicit and explicit tensions and bullying that occur for these administrators, Webster sheds light on the treatment this community endures and ask important questions, largely boiling down to how "a queer worker documents[s] administrative survival, at worst, and at best awkward or tense interactions" (112). Two such stories of strife and difficulty come from participants Tim and Mike. When speaking to tension and bullying for queer writing center administrators, however, Webster does something that is striking and important when addressing the nonqueer readers who encounter his text. He states,

> If you're reading this book, I don't think you're the quintessential oppressor [...]Most of us are good people, and that's not the point. Such claims are dangerous. In moving toward antiracism, these sentiments absolve white people of complicity in inherently racist systems[...]I feel certain you wouldn't call your colleagues a *fag*, and that you wouldn't assume queer men sleep with their students[...]However, there's danger in deeming yourself distant from queer damage. (Webster 93)

What Webster states here will likely hit hard yet true with many nonqueer readers, and it should. While the writing center profession is not where it needs to be yet as a discipline, regarding support and advocacy for our queer colleagues, the field should, as Webster states at the end of Chapter 3, work towards being "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recognizing and encouraging Nina West" (86).

Webster has produced a valuable piece of writing center scholarship that will serve as a first step toward further excavating the labor and experiences of queer writing center administrators. However, lest you see the title and think this book may be solely for those that are queer, Webster quickly dismisses this notion early in the text: "This book is about queer people and queer work, but stories like these speak to us all in the discipline, regardless of our orientations" (5). Given the ever-changing nature of not just writing centers but higher education as a whole, teach this text in your tutor training courses. Assign this in your writing center reading groups. Representation is evident and voices are amplified through texts like Webster's, but the conversation can only

continue if writing center administrators make it a point to engage with this text and have their staff do so as well.

Contributor Bio

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Call for Submissions

SDC Spring 2023

To encourage a wide variety of scholarly activity, the Spring 2023 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: 1 March 2023.

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 Fall 2023—SWCA Conference Retrospective

We are pleased to invite submissions from anyone who presented at or attended the 2023 SWCA Conference in Memphis In addition to transcripts of conference addresses, we hope to feature in this issue scholarly 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: If space allows, the Fall 2023 may also include a book review, a Back to the Center piece, and a Consultant Insight article. Submission for these types of manuscripts do not necessarily have to be connected to the 2023 SWCA Conference.

Deadline for submissions: 1 September 2023.

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

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