wln

A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

Table of Contents

From the Guest Editors

Karen Johnson & Ted Roggenbuck

We enjoy working together, so we expected that co-editing this special issue, "What We Believe and Why: Educating Writing Tutors," would be rewarding. Now that we have an issue to present, we do so with a reaffirmed sense of how committed, talented, and just plain wonderful writing center people are to work with. It has been a joy and honor to be involved in the process of developing this special issue.

In what follows, Russell Carpenter, Scott Whiddon, and Courtnie Morin present their exciting work in developing a long-discussed certification model specific to writing center work. Their emerging regional certification program, created by writing center practitioners, offers a promising model that validates our collective work. Lisa Cahill, Molly Rentscher, Kelly Chase, Jessica Jones, and Darby Simpson describe their project across several campuses of Arizona State to improve tutors' reflective and critical thinking by infusing common principles into their centers' tutor education programs. Their story highlights the value of developing a center's core principles for both administrators and tutors. Cynthia Lin and Katie DeLuca share their innovative program designed to educate and recruit nonnative English speaking graduate tutors through a workshop series, the Writing Consultant Workshop. In the Tutors' Column, Jessa Wood reflects upon the value of experienced, tutor-led discussions within tutor education programs. Jessa rightfully argues that such peer-led discussions can lead to greater tutor engagement and peer-to-peer interactions.

Finally, we are excited to announce a forthcoming publication devoted to tutor education. Receiving more than fifty proposals in response to our CFP has allowed us to begin working on an open-access digital monograph, to be hosted on the *WLN* website. We believe this monograph will offer new and experienced writing center professionals a valuable resource that can be used to reflect on and also to generate discussion within tutor education programs.
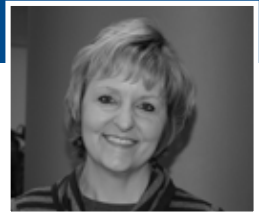
"For Writing Centers, By Writing Centers": A New Model for Certification via Regional Organizations

Russell Carpenter
Eastern Kentucky University | Richmond, Kentucky
Scott Whiddon
Transylvania University | Lexington, Kentucky
Courtnie Morin
Eastern Kentucky University | Richmond, Kentucky

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Certification is an important way to develop academic capital, lend more credibility to writing center scholarship, and help solidify foundational beliefs and approaches to learning as writing center professionals. In this article, we present our ongoing process of developing a certification model rooted in established, writing center-specific educational practices and reaching beyond what is currently available. Using a survey of certification needs, desires, and challenges, we argue for the value of regional organizations—inclusive of colleagues who know this work well and have the potential advantage of proximity and institutional collaboration—as excellent sites for such work. Pursuing certification models specifically tailored to and replicable by writing centers provides the opportunity to reexamine fundamental concepts inherent in professional development that are valuable to both individual academic institutions and the larger writing center community.

Conversations concerning writing center certification pathways began gaining traction in 1992 when Bonnie Devet and Kristen Gaetke offered an informative review of certification organizations. They presented a strong argument for criteria offered by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), noting its history and focus on individual tutor certification. In contrast, Joe Law posited a need for large-scale, writing center-specific processes, citing the then fairly new National Writing Centers Association (1995). Law as well as Devet and Gaetke recognized the challenges therein—including costs, paperwork, and buy-in—yet both arguments framed such affiliations as ways to bolster the institutional perception of writing center labor: "Unfortunately,

many writing centers are still perceived as ancillary to 'real' instruction and the writing center staff regarded as second-or-third-class members of the academy" (Law 155). Jeanne Simpson and Barry Maid viewed certification (although, like Law, they used the term "accreditation") as a form of "academic capital" (124), which can "lend credibility to writing center scholarship" (125) and potentially help demystify writing center work to those outside of our ranks. "Accreditation," Simpson and Maid argued, "... remains the currency of the academic realm" (128). Throughout this conversation, certification functions as a rhetorical act.[1]

Although accreditation is a national concern within academia, Julie Simon values local landscapes when considering national certification possibilities. After attempting to develop a model for her own program, Simon collaborated with her staff:

> to augment the CRLA list of requirements with a set of tasks that would invite those working on certification to take the initiative in creating and conducting activities designed to support campus literacy in any way they wished to define that literacy. As a result, I ended up with a definition that characterized certification as a process through which tutors would insert themselves into the system not as a mere cog, but as something akin to a wrench. (1)

Such a process directly mirrors writing center practices, offering "an approach to certification that would allow tutors to move from the margins of academic life to the center of our center" (3).

With these thoughts in mind, we began exploring certification models with both hope and skepticism. Our questions echo Simon's: "How will a certification program further our center's practical and theoretical goals? What should certification offer tutors beyond a line in their credentials file? How might it benefit our individual program and our discipline?" (3). Like Law, we value field-driven expertise, with criteria developed by writing center professionals. On the other hand, like Devet, as well as Simpson and Maid, we held reasonable doubts about the labor in preparing the type of large scale, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)-level work (involving site visits and other well-intended but time-consuming practices) that Law proposes. Along the way, like Simpson and Maid (drawing on a WCenter listserv comment by Lisa Ede), we worried that an accreditation model could "be misused" (131) and easily reinforce a problematic misunderstanding of the university as a corporation.

As directors at radically different centers—a historic, small liberal arts college and a large, regional comprehensive university—we es-

pecially appreciated Simon's sense of local flexibility. For example, Transylvania uses a required practicum course and bi-weekly staff meetings to support undergraduate tutor development, as classes are the coin of the realm in a small college setting. In contrast, EKU implemented the Developing Excellence in Consultant Knowledge (DECK) system, a hybrid, systematic, and scalable education program that promotes collaboration between consultants with a mixture of online, metacognitive activities, and discussion-based, in-person seminars (Morin and Ralston). Such differences in training reflect local landscapes.

We question the value of certification not directly anchored in writing center experience that goes beyond individual sites. Organizations such as CRLA, National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), and Association for the Tutoring Profession (ATP) are long-standing and well-designed. As administrators, we applaud how these groups use scaffolded learning, formal outcome planning, and documentation/reflection, and we admire how these organizations value institutional stability, ethical behavior, and diversity training. Those organizations should continue to be seen as worthy sites of support. However, they are not explicitly designed to review writing center and institution-driven practices (which might include teaching composition processes or foundational understandings of writing center ethos to peer tutors). One could argue that there is little mention of "writing" at all.

As we developed our shared understanding of accreditation challenges (via readings, survey work, and ongoing conversations with colleagues), we considered how regional organizations like the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) might offer the ideal audience, able to draw upon the rigor of peer review with important localized knowledge of writing center training practices, trends, and needs without the potentially cumbersome logistics of a national or international site for certification. In recent years, regional writing center organizations have grown in both size and status. SWCA, for example, now features its own peer-reviewed journal, *Southern Discourse in the Center*, and hosts an annual conference with over 250 attendees per year. These organizations maintain rigorous criteria for events, yet are small and familiar enough for both experienced and new writing center professionals. Regional organizations allow program leaders the chance to validate their efforts or learn emerging approaches employed in one center that might be beneficial for another. Regional accreditation agencies such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and others value third-party assessments; MSCHE explicitly includes its rubric focused on assessment by third-party

providers. With these considerations in mind, we turned to our good neighbors in the Southeast.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: ESTABLISHING A NEED

Our process began with several informal conversations at the 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Tampa, FL, when SWCA board members reviewed existing frameworks and shared their perspectives on potential certification approaches. This early input shaped ongoing considerations, including:

- needs of writing centers in the Southeast;
- opportunities to show the value of writing center practices on the institution's campus and regionally;
- ways to link localized writing center work with best practices;
- implications of certification processes to demonstrate value; and
- values placed on certification processes by potential participants.

While the conversations proved productive, they also suggested complexity. Participants involved at that stage realized the need for input from disciplinary leaders to shed light on the benefits and drawbacks of a certification program, in addition to the design, requirements, or language used to describe the process. Discussions also revealed the need to consider the variety of institutional sizes and missions represented. With these considerations in mind, we designed an IRB-approved survey with 26 questions, which was distributed to SWCA members during the spring 2017 semester with a response rate of 21.7% (40 responses).[2] The survey questions allowed us to demarcate the priorities of writing centers in the region. Although we recognize that writing centers might pursue certification for many reasons, the survey offered leaders the opportunity to share both motivations and concerns.

Of the respondents, 87.2% of centers were not certified through existing organizations. However, 52.5% had explored certification but not pursued it, offering a range of reasons. For example, some reported difficulty in contacting organizations, as noted by one respondent's comment that there is "[n]o . . . easy way to make contact with [the] certifying entity." Others saw the required fees (in light of their own strained budgets) as an impediment. One respondent claimed the fees were prohibitive and the organizations were "not integrated into existing structures of tutor training and professional rewards system[s]." Other respondents found the certification to be "too labor intensive," while the current options "didn't seem to be appropriate." Although time and other resources were noted as significant challenges, participants said that such allocations might be seen as more worthwhile if certification were

more explicitly grounded in the daily work of writing centers: "CRLA didn't seem to know enough about WCs to offer a viable/respectable process."

Importantly, 50% of respondents valued explicit connections to writing center or writing studies organizations in a potential certification process. One respondent reported that "[t]he time and expense required did not offset the net gain of being certified especially outside of writing." Respondents noted that existing certification options "would create a lot of extra work for our tutors without adding a lot of value." In addition, "The certification was too labor intensive and didn't seem to be appropriate." Perhaps most importantly, one respondent noted that existing organizations did not understand writing center work.

The fact that such a large percentage of our respondents had chosen not to follow through on certification implies that if such effort were to be taken on, it would need to directly support intellectual development and day-to-day operations. The potential value that a certification program might add to tutor education was a priority among respondents; specifically, 97.5% listed tutor education as their top priority for certification and 75% responded with evidence of campus impact. In short: to be effective and valuable, certification programs must address and integrate the beliefs and nuances of writing centers.

SWCA representatives have ensured that resources are available to support the growth and development of writing centers, students, and future leaders. It seems only fitting that the organization leverage its collective and growing knowledge to advance the field through a certification opportunity. Given our survey results as well as information gained from conversations with colleagues, it seems that writing centers are best served by those involved in the work at a day-to-day level. Processes—such as certification—developed outside of writing centers lack the direct connection and, ultimately, the ability to contribute to and develop writing center discourse.

FROM SURVEYS TO FIRST STEPS: MAKING NEED A REALITY
We offer a three-step certification program that aligns with priorities revealed in our survey. These steps have been recently integrated into SWCA's framework. The suggested model is not limited to this specific regional organization and can easily transfer to similar organizations. The process follows multiple stages to ensure appropriate consideration by SWCA's certification committee, which reviews and archives submissions.

Material Submission

First, applicants are asked to gather materials that speak to their writing center's work and the mission of their institution. Submission materials include an application letter, a suggested two-page memorandum explaining institutional and writing center contexts, and a brief preview of supporting materials that include writing center tutor education documents: sample modules, syllabi, lists of readings, and other supplemental materials. Applicants are encouraged to show how they make use of their regions' writing center resources (such as attending or presenting at conferences or statewide events, taking part in sponsored activities, and/or using regional support). Furthermore, applicants offer a one-page description of the center's approach to tutoring and supporting writing. Finally, the director or program leader provides a current CV. These materials are received by the chair of the Certification Review Committee and distributed to committee members for review in light of current regional and national practices as provided by SWCA and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). Other regional writing center organizations might consider establishing similar committees.

Committee Review with Rubric

Second, the Certification Review Committee uses a rubric (available on the SWCA website) that supports consistent consideration of applications while cultivating a transparent process of peer review that reflects the academic nature of the writing center field. The rubric establishes common goals for certification review while allowing the committee and applicants to consider ways in which their centers promote collaboration among tutors, intentional planning of training (including currency of material, readings, and resources), and evidence of ongoing reflection to better serve the institution and its students.

Committee Response

Third, the committee drafts a response and recommendation to the applicants, which includes a narrative of strengths and weaknesses of the application, along with important feedback for implementation at that center. Importantly, the review process follows academic peer review procedures by providing feedback, guidance, and resources in response to programs that are not successful in their certification application.

Certified centers receive an official, dated letter from the SWCA president and Certification Review Committee chair congratulating the centers on their accomplishment. Following precedents established by the National Association of Communication Centers (NACC), certi-

fied programs are not required to update their status unless prompted by their academic institutions. The organization also issues an official, dated certificate for the institution. Certified centers receive recognition in the SWCA conference program and at the award ceremony each year. Finally, certified centers are issued an electronic SWCA-certified center badge that, as Tammy Conard-Salvo and John Bomkamp explain, allows for display of achievements (5), for their website and a listing on the SWCA website.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Writing centers have traditionally leaned toward already pre-existing certification programs from related yet distanced fields of study because none currently exist in our own discipline. Our survey reflects an interest in a peer support and review system, but one that would be worth the effort and that would reflect familiar, field-specific values. Along with conferences, collaboratives, regional gatherings, and other events, certification allows program leaders to validate such efforts as learning best practices or emerging and employing them to benefit their own centers. Scholars of rhetoric and writing have argued for the importance of organization-specific frameworks. For example, Randall McClure and James P. Purdy's recent collection employs the Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* and Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) *Frameworks for Success in Postsecondary Writing* while providing theoretical and practical ways to justify important program decisions and staff development. Certifications are stronger when driven by community participants—in this case, writing center scholars who know the day-to-day challenges of our work.

A certification process is a major undertaking, even for long-standing organizations. While we do not claim that any certification would solve all challenges facing writing centers, the steps that might best represent the significance and complexity of this work would be built out of current writing center practices. Ideally, a writing center certification program should acknowledge evidence that programs offer writing-based, scalable design built upon highly nuanced rhetorical and disciplinary complexities familiar to those in charge of writing support.

Our ongoing study and process focuses on gathering more evidence and input through interviews with selected writing center professionals at a variety of colleges and in various levels of experience via future conferences such as SWCA. We also plan to invite additional insight via a more widespread survey beyond our own regional organization and through SWCA and IWCA focus groups. Such feedback

will further refine the certification process examined in this article. Writing centers will benefit from a field-driven, peer-reviewed certification process supported by colleagues who are both grounded in our discipline's history and practices and, at the same time, sympathetic to local concerns and realities (a consideration that situates our emphasis on writing center professional networks). The rigor and rhetorical focus of certification must fit the culture of individual programs, which, in turn, best serves the larger writing center community. Such a program offers an intentional and beneficial design that is for writing centers, by writing centers.

NOTES

1. The terms "accreditation" and "certification" are often used interchangeably. We use the term "certification" in this article to reflect the nature of regional organizations we discuss and how such organizations differ from SACS or other official "accrediting" bodies. Furthermore, we recognize the potential political problems in having "unaccredited" writing centers.

2. For access to the full survey, please visit the Research & Development area of the SWCA website.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

WORKS CITED

Conard-Salvo, Tammy S., and John P. Bomkamp. "Public Documentation of Tutors' Work: Digital Badges in the Writing Center." *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, vol. 40, no. 1-2, 2015, pp. 4-11.

Devet, Bonnie. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Certifying a Tutoring Program through CRLA." *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book*, edited by Christina Murphy and Byron Stay, Laurence Erlbaum, 2006, pp. 331-38.

Devet, Bonnie, and Kristen Gaetke. "Three Organizations for Certifying a Writing Lab." *Writing Lab Newsletter,* vol. 31 no. 7, 2007, pp. 7-12.

Fitzgerald, Lauren, and Melissa Ianetta. *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research*. Oxford UP, 2016.

Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*. 2nd ed., Pearson Longman, 2008.

Law, Joe. "Accreditation and the Writing Center: A Proposal for Action." *Writing Center Perspectives*, edited by Byron L. Stay, Christina Murphy, and Eric H. Hobson, NWCA, 1995, pp. 155-161.

McClure, Randall, and James P. Purdy, editors. *The Future Scholar: Researching & Teaching the Frameworks for Writing & Information Literacy*. Information Today Inc., 2016.

Morin, Courtnie, and Jessica Ralston. "Developing Excellence in Consultant Knowledge: A Multimodal Training Plan." Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference,16 February 2017, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS. Session E-5.

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

Simon, Julie. "'Tutorizing' Certification Programs." *Writing Lab Newsletter*, vol. 33, no. 5, 2009, pp. 1-5.

Simpson, Jeanne, and Barry Maid. "Lining Up Ducks or Herding Cats? The Politics of Writing Center Accreditation." *The Politics of Writing Centers*, edited by Jane Nelson and Kathy Evertz, Heinemann Boynton/Cook, 2001, pp.121-32.

Developing Core Principles for Tutor Education

Lisa Cahill, Molly Rentscher, Jessica Jones, Darby Simpson, and Kelly Chase
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

In 2015, our team of writing center administrators from five campuses at Arizona State University realized that some of our ongoing tutor education practices needed to be revised to prompt our peer writing tutors to think more critically and personally about writing center principles and practices. Thus, we resolved to make significant and lasting improvements to the ways we educate our tutors. Specifically, we wanted our tutors to think more reflectively and critically about their daily practices and to be able to identify the strategies and mindsets they used to engage students in conversations about writing.

Our team undertook the process of revising our ongoing tutor education practices, including initial training sessions, bi-weekly education meetings, and tutor observations and evaluations. In doing so, we discovered that grounding our practices in principles derived from carefully selected scholarship was a successful approach, both for meeting our goals and for professionally developing our peer writing tutors. Based on our positive experience, we argue for the value of engaging in a process to develop a set of core principles and embedding these principles into tutor evaluation and ongoing education. This article provides an account of the process we used to develop our materials in addition to descriptions that illustrate our core principles.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

Our core principles consist of a set of habits of mind and a corresponding set of beliefs about the philosophy and practice of writing center work. Our team developed the habits of mind from those described in *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,* a document written by representatives from The Council

of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project. We slightly revised the habits to enable us to describe for our tutors the qualities, mindsets, and behaviors we expect them to demonstrate in their work. Complementing our habits of mind are our beliefs, adapted from Muriel Harris's "The Concept of a Writing Center." Our beliefs refer to the foundational pedagogical guidelines that inform our writing center practices. In other words, the habits of mind refer to the qualities and behaviors we desire of our tutors, whereas beliefs refer to the philosophical concepts central to Writing Center Studies. Together, our habits of mind and beliefs guide our programmatic decisions and engage tutors in ongoing education. Descriptions of how we developed our habits of mind and integrated them into tutor education as well as examples of how tutors engaged with our beliefs are detailed below.

OUR HABITS OF MIND

Our first step in improving our tutor education was finding a way to make more visible, quantifiable, and transparent the qualities and behaviors we expect tutors to demonstrate in their work. We chose the *Framework* because it identifies eight habits of mind expected of successful writers. We were drawn to the *Framework's* descriptions of "ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical and that will support students' success in a variety of fields and disciplines" (1) because our writing tutors' primary responsibility is engaging students in conversations about writing projects and processes. We believed that drawing from the *Framework's* habits of mind could help our tutors better understand the nuances of the demands faced by college-level writers. Furthermore, we wanted these habits to provide our tutors with language for thinking more critically about their work performance in terms of the questions they use to engage writers, the types of resources they share, and the suggestions they offer.

As a result, we reviewed the habits of mind and made revisions appropriate for the context of peer writing tutoring. Our revisions included changing the names of some habits while keeping others and rewriting the descriptions to better fit our context. For example, the *Framework* describes flexibility as "the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands" (1); however, we rewrote that description to reflect the importance of tutors adapting to changes in procedures and policies. We re-named the *Framework's* habit "curiosity" as "inquisitiveness" to encourage tutors to be more intentional about contributing to their

campus writing center community. Recasting the *Framework's* habit "engagement" as "leadership" allowed us to highlight the contributions that tutors can make through the writing center. These descriptions included multiple bullet points for each habit that outlined the behaviors we wanted to see our tutors demonstrate.

Below we provide an abridged description for each habit that includes only one behavior per habit to illustrate the expectations that guide our tutors' work. For instance, we offer the leadership behavior of helping, which is the key to the leadership habit; however, we share many other leadership behaviors with our tutors: building rapport with colleagues and students, understanding the center's mission and articulating its application to their tutoring, taking a lead role in group projects within the center, and suggesting new projects for the benefit of the center. Thus, the behaviors shown below do not include all the behaviors we outline for our tutors but instead illustrate those we feel best represents each habit.

> **Inquisitiveness:** Demonstrating an interest in the underlying philosophy, pedagogy, and theory of writing center work by seeking out research and reflecting on experiences in the center
>
> **Persistent Engagement:** Investing time to develop current and new skills in order to better perform job duties
>
> **Leadership:** Helping other students and staff within the center achieve common goals, complete tasks, or understand content
>
> **Responsibility:** Adhering to all Writing Center policies and philosophies
>
> **Openness:** Contributing positively to the creation of a safe, positive learning environment for students and staff
>
> **Flexibility:** Troubleshooting situations with or without the aid of peers and supervisor
>
> **Creativity:** Attempting new strategies or ways of tutoring by adapting to the students with whom tutors work
>
> **Reflexivity:** Seeking opportunities to debrief with supervisor or colleagues with the purpose of improving self and services

After finalizing our habits of mind, we then integrated the information into tutor evaluation and education practices to provide tutors with multiple opportunities to assess their development. Our goal was to help tutors identify and apply these habits to their work, find examples from their tutoring sessions to discuss with their supervisors and peers, and articulate the

value of demonstrating these habits in their academic, personal, and professional lives. For example, during initial tutor education workshops, tutors are introduced to the habits through reflective writing and group activities that ask them to describe their own beliefs and philosophies about writing tutoring. Using that information, they brainstorm tutoring strategies to illustrate each habit of mind. Likewise, habits identified by tutors or by our team as needing attention serve as the basis for ongoing tutor education workshops. For instance, a workshop based on persistent engagement includes discussions and activities focused on helping tutors be more intentional about role modeling when and how to use resources in sessions as a way of fostering students' independence. Additionally, tutors use the habits in their self-evaluations and peer evaluations to reflect on their performance throughout the year. Our evaluation forms ask tutors to provide examples of the habits they identify as their strengths as well as areas in which they need to develop. During evaluation meetings, our team found that tutors were able to identify patterns in their work related to the habits and could then make action plans for continued growth. In particular, some tutors noted that the habit of openness helped them to identify the expectation that they should adapt their communication styles to be more responsive to individual students' needs.

We found that implementing the habits of mind into our tutor evaluation and education practices provided opportunities for more meaningful tutor reflections and conversations. Seeing our tutors engage with and personalize our habits of mind prompted us to find new ways to connect tutors' work to writing center philosophies. Taking this next step would ultimately help us more closely connect our tutors to the beliefs guiding our administrative and pedagogical decisions. Therefore, the following academic year, we created a set of writing center beliefs to complement our writing center habits of mind.

OUR BELIEFS

To form our beliefs, we reviewed scholarship about core principles in writing and writing center work and noticed that several of these texts (discussed below) were recently published. This told us that developing core principles for writing center programs was an innovative, timely pursuit and inspired us to distill beliefs from our readings and experiences. These texts included volumes used for tutor education, such as Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* and Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta's *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors,* which both acknowledge an increasingly diverse landscape of writing

centers in the United States and thus discuss a range of guiding principles for writing tutors. Further, Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's influential collection of essays about writing, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies,* uses the term threshold concepts to identify and describe concepts "critical for continued learning and participation in an area or within a community of practice" (2). Rebecca Nowacek and Bradley Hughes's article, published in the Adler-Kassner and Wardle collection, provides a rationale for how foundational concepts "cannot only help writing center coordinators articulate (and therefore clarify and sometimes revise) priorities for the structure of tutor education programs, [but they] can also help tutors themselves conceptualize their own work with writers and with faculty" (171). Nowacek and Hughes conclude by inviting readers to identify and define additional core principles related to writing centers. Our review of this scholarship inspired our team to establish a set of beliefs to guide our writing center work.

When developing our beliefs, we wanted to draw from principles considered central to the writing center field. Harris's principles in "The Concept of a Writing Center" are certainly foundational as evidenced by the International Writing Centers Association's recommendation that readers consult them when looking for information about starting a writing center. We also wanted our beliefs to engage tutors in conversations about the transferability of skills developed through peer tutoring. Harris's statement suited our purposes well, given her inclusive language and connections between writing centers and other contexts. However, to better reflect our cross-campus writing center program, we revised some of Harris's language and also incorporated our writing center mission statement. For example, our belief listed below that "peer-to-peer collaboration is an effective learning method" is inspired by Harris's principle that "tutorials are offered in a one-to-one setting." We slightly shifted the language from "one-to-one tutorial" to "peer-to-peer collaboration" to highlight that our tutors should study how to collaborate with peers. In developing our other beliefs, we used a similar process of shifting the language to reflect our program's complete set of writing center beliefs listed below:

- Peer-to-peer collaboration is an effective learning method.
- We help at any stage of the writing process.
- We collaborate with writers at all levels of writing proficiency.
- We are coaches and collaborators.
- We help writers identify and understand how writing varies by audience, context, and genre.

- Each writer's individual needs are the focus of the tutoring session.
- We experiment and practice.
- We engage in professional development and utilize resources.

We hoped that developing and then sharing our beliefs with tutors would encourage them to think more critically about their daily practice, and we have been impressed with tutors' engagement in ongoing education sessions and evaluation meetings. For example, in her observation of another tutor, one tutor wrote: "When her students are stuck on something . . . she offers a plethora of options a student might employ to get them thinking and often couples this with an explanation of which option might be the most effective given the particular rhetorical situation." This tutor has not only learned our belief that "we help writers identify and understand how writing varies by audience, context, and genre," but she was also able to identify this belief in action and provide evidence about how her fellow tutor's practices illustrated this belief.

Our beliefs had another desirable, albeit unexpected, outcome: they helped guide tutors through unfamiliar or challenging tutoring situations. Tutors have often told us that when they were unsure what to say in tutoring sessions, they thought of a belief, and this helped them decide how to proceed. In an evaluation meeting, for example, one tutor shared the story of a student who left the tutoring session several times to receive phone calls, which prevented them from addressing the multiple tasks on their agenda. The tutor reminded herself that "each writer's individual needs are the focus of the tutorial," so she decided to explicitly ask the student about his needs. The student shared that he needed to end the session early, so the tutor helped him revise the session agenda so they could focus on the most important task before the session ended. Thus, beliefs can provide boundaries within which tutors learn how to react to challenging tutoring situations.

Finally, we credit the creation and implementation of our beliefs with providing a shared language to talk about writing and writing tutoring and for engaging tutors in conversations about transferability. After integrating these beliefs into our daily work, we have observed some noticeable changes. Tutors in our centers now use phrases like "peer-to-peer learning" and "student-centered pedagogy" and words like "audience" and "coach" with ease. And when our tutors read writing center scholarship or attend conferences, they continue to see these words and phrases; thus, this language extends beyond our centers,

connecting our tutors to the larger writing center community. This language also helps our tutors better understand the value of their work beyond writing centers, since many of our beliefs are desired in other academic, professional, and personal contexts. For instance, our tutors have explained that in interviews with potential employers, they have discussed how writing varies across contexts and how this knowledge could help them in a new position. Equally important, tutors tell us that our beliefs have provided language to talk about writing processes when coaching family and friends on drafts. Overall, we found that our beliefs helped tutors conceptualize their work with writers and other collaborators.

CONCLUSIONS

There are many benefits to developing and integrating a set of program-specific core principles. We set out to better articulate our expectations to our peer writing tutors and ended up furthering our understanding of writing center pedagogy and tutor education practices. In this way, we discovered that the creation of core principles can be an exploratory exercise for a program, functioning "as an exigence, an opportunity to uncover and interrogate assumptions" (Yancey xix). From a supervisory standpoint, the use of core principles not only held our tutors accountable but also gave them opportunities to more deeply understand the theories behind their role. Thus, we observed that our tutors reflected upon their work meaningfully and otherwise showed clear indications that they were developing in ways that would last beyond their tenure as writing tutors.

In sharing our process and reflecting on core principles, our goal is not to propose a one-size-fits-all process; rather, we argue that there is value in undertaking the development of a set of core principles which meets the unique needs and goals of a writing center. For centers that might want to begin or continue a similar process, we offer considerations for identifying and eventually integrating a set of program-specific core principles. To begin the process of creating these principles, administrators can connect a theory or key piece of scholarship that is compatible with the values that already exist within their writing center. Next, administrators can adapt the theory or scholarship by finding language or examples from their selected writing center literature to write a personalized set of core principles. The final step is to integrate their principles into their program. To do so we recommend administrators start by reviewing existing documents like mission statements, evaluation forms, tutor

education materials, and website text to identify places where language needs to stay the same or change in order to reflect their center's core principles. By embedding core principles into multiple materials, administrators will find new ways to inform their centers' education practices by uncovering implicitly held beliefs and values, putting those beliefs and values into explicit language, sharing that information with others, and creating or revising new items. Once core principles have been incorporated, administrators will be able to assess the effectiveness of their tutor education practices and share those results with stakeholders within and outside the institution. The process of developing and integrating a set of program-specific core principles is an investment that can help administrators make significant and lasting improvements to their tutor education programs. It will challenge administrators to be more explicit about their goals for tutor education and will provide them with a framework for program assessment while simultaneously challenging tutors to develop and demonstrate the skills, mindsets, and behaviors valuable in their writing center work and other contexts.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

WORKS CITED

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. Utah State UP, 2015.

Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English; and National Writing Project. *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing.* CWPA, NCTE, and NWP, 2011, wpacouncil.org/files/framework-for-success-postsecondary-writing.pdf.

Fitzgerald, Lauren, and Melissa Ianetta. *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research*, Oxford UP, 2016.

Harris, Muriel. "SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) Statement: The Concept of a Writing Center." *International Writing Centers Association,* writingcenters.org/writing-center-concept-by-muriel-harris/. Accessed 14 February 2017.

Nowacek, Rebecca S., and Bradley Hughes. "Threshold Concepts in the Writing Center: Scaffolding the Development of Tutor Expertise." Adler-Kassner and Wardle, pp. 171-185.

Ryan, Leigh, and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 6th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Introduction: Coming to Terms: Composition/Rhetoric, Threshold Concepts, and a Disciplinary Core." Adler-Kassner and Wardle, pp. xvii-xxxi.
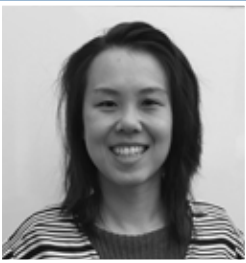
Educating and Recruiting Multilingual and Other Graduate Students for Writing Center Work

Hsing-Yin Cynthia Lin
The Ohio State University | Columbus, Ohio

Katherine DeLuca
University of Massachusetts | Dartmouth, Massachusetts

At the Ohio State University Writing Center, we have instituted an educational program, the Writing Consultant Workshop (WCW), for graduate students interested in becoming writing consultants and learning skills for working with non-native English speaking (NNES) writers. The WCW represented a new effort by our center to recruit potential graduate consultants from diverse disciplines and linguistic backgrounds to expand our staff's demographic profile.

Our first WCW was inspired by demographic shifts. We faced changes that are being experienced across the nation as many institutions of higher education encounter rising NNES student enrollments; although once only twenty percent of our clientele, currently at least fifty percent of writing center clients are NNES writers. According to the Institute of International Education's 2016 *Open Doors Report*, the number of international students in American colleges and universities reached more than "one million during the 2015-16 academic year—an increase of seven percent from the previous year," representing five percent of the total student population at U.S. institutions ("Open Doors: Fast Facts 2016"). Similarly increasing numbers of NNES students admitted to our university created an exigency for revising our writing center's tutor education and hiring priorities, prompting an expansion of our approaches to educating consultants to work with NNES writers. Although a semester-long tutoring course was offered to undergraduate students and extensive education in NNES writers' issues had been incorporated into that class, no specialized writing center tutoring course for graduate tutors existed on campus. Thus, we established the WCW as a seven-week workshop with a specialized focus on NNES writing issues for potential graduate student tutors interested in learning how to better support this growing population.

With shifting student populations, scholars in writing center studies and related fields have made recommendations for working with NNES writers. Tony Silva suggests the necessity of addressing differences between textual features of native and non-native English writing, which can range from differences in writing process, language usage, and idea development ("Toward an Understanding" 657). Similarly, Paul Matsuda, et al. argue NNES writers' "written accent" takes more than a semester English composition course to lose (21) and therefore advocate longitudinal support for NNES students' writing. This scholarly guidance provided the framework for our educational efforts, situating the workshop we developed within both the fields of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Writing Center Studies.

To recruit graduate students across disciplines and accommodate their busy academic schedules, we awarded participants a small stipend instead of course credit, and at the end of the WCW, we invited students to apply for tutor positions at our writing center. Each workshop was capped at 10 people because we, as facilitators, wanted to ensure we were able to mentor participants and respond to their work (e.g., discussion board, weekly journal, and final project). Although all graduate tutors receive preparation at our annual pre-term educational session as well as ongoing education throughout the school year during weekly staff meetings, consultants who completed the WCW reported that this educational program prepared them for working at our center and changed their perceptions of writing center praxes, which they previously understood as primarily proofreading and editing services. Additionally, they reported that the WCW changed their understandings of the dynamics of a tutorial, such as how Socratic questions, gestures, proximity, and power relationships are interrelated in conversations between tutors and tutees. The first WCW took place in autumn 2013. Since then, the WCWs have continued as part of our educational program and remain a preferred qualification for graduate students applying for positions at our center. We have consistently hired 3-5 of 10 participants after each workshop, and 2-3 of them are multilingual graduate students. Currently, 10 of our 21 graduate student staff went through the WCW, and 6 of these graduate consultants are multilingual tutors (graduate student tutors who did not participate in the WCW had previous writing center experience).

Over time, a few adjustments were made to the curriculum to address participants' suggestions. For example, we reduced workshop meetings from seven to six weeks. Participants also request-

ed adding more participation in tutoring sessions to illuminate what really happens in a tutorial. Finally, a major change to the curriculum was to add three-step tutorials. Participants brought their own writing to these tutorials and experienced brainstorming, higher-order concerns (HOCs), and lower-order concerns (LOCs) sessions. A follow-up assignment for this project was a reflection paper in which participants reported on the nuances of these tutorials and the changes to their papers. In what follows, we offer an overview of the curriculum and detailed discussion of the activities. Although our pedagogies and the WCW were situated locally and contextualized within the constraints of our institution, we offer our experiences to provide others with ideas for their own educational programs.

THE WRITING CONSULTANT WORKSHOP: CURRICULAR DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

To fully engage prospective consultants with the complexity and significance of the scholarship and pedagogical theories being learned, the WCW was run similar to a graduate seminar. As graduate students from different disciplines, most WCW participants knew little about writing center praxis and TESOL, and they had varied disciplinary knowledge. The WCW was our attempt to not only educate graduate students to be potential writing consultants but also to develop their reflective and empathetic abilities as educators. Participants started from the beginning by learning the basics of composition plus writing center and writing across the curriculum theories and practices. We especially emphasized that when working with NNES students, consultants needed to be aware that NNES students can be vulnerable because of the multi-layered obstacles they are likely coping with in a new academic discourse. We used various activities, in and outside of face-to-face meetings: participants attended a two-hour weekly meeting, observed twice weekly in the writing center, maintained weekly journal entries, participated in online discussions, and completed a three-step tutorial project and a final reflective project.

First, participants were asked to complete a rigorous reading load and respond to those readings in various forums, including face-to-face discussions and online discussion threads. Participants' reflections revealed that the TESOL and writing center studies scholarship extended their knowledge about NNES writers and their learning styles. For instance, we asked participants to read "L2 Composing: Strategies and Perceptions" in Illona Leki's *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers* to introduce

them to linguistic characteristics of NNES writers. Dana Ferris' "Responding to Student Errors: Issues and Strategies" presented different types of NNES errors to participants, which included particular idiosyncratic linguistic elements such as articles and singular/plural forms. "Avoiding Appropriation" by Carol Severino suggested prioritizing and selecting passages to revise, and Severino and Elizabeth Deifell's "Empowering L2 Tutoring: A Case Study of a Second Language Writer's Vocabulary Learning" started discussions on the complexity of lexical issues for NNES writers, suggesting that talking about vocabulary in a tutorial mediates the dichotomized focuses between HOCs and LOCs (27). Building upon what they read, participants explored tutoring strategies for different error types in their observations and reviewed handouts at the center; these activities inspired some participants to discuss these approaches in their final projects, even developing new strategies for NNES sessions or materials for working with clients. With these scholarly perspectives, participants developed understandings of peer tutoring that focused on idea development before error correction even when working with NNES writers.

The WCW also enabled us to reconceive how we developed tutors' skills for working with NNES writers, challenging our initial ideas of what we mean when we say "all writers need a good reader" in our writing center, which had previously overlooked the specific needs of multilingual writers. Alongside the aforementioned readings, we also used activities to develop participants' understandings of grammar as rhetorical. We addressed the importance of rhetorical grammar, paired with discussions of scholarship by Martha Kolln and Dana Ferris, suggesting that "good reading" means helping clients address appropriate audiences for their writing at all levels—global and local, which NNES writers tend to neglect, focusing instead on language use (Silva 658).

We also advocated providing appropriate language help for NNES writers in an attempt to support clarity of their ideas. When lexical issues impede clarity, Muriel Harris and Tony Silva have defined them as global errors instead of local errors (526). Lexical issues, especially in NNES writing, often impede clarity of ideas and impact developing English proficiency by affecting NNES writers' fluency of written expression. For NNES writers, word choice affects not only sentence level meaning-making but also the flow of ideas. Therefore, we taught reverse outlining as a tutoring strategy for idea development for NNES writers, showing participants how NNES issues are more than lexical concerns.

To make connections between these scholarly principles and praxes, we introduced language resources such as Mark Davies' *Corpus of Contemporary American English*, a repository of American English texts maintained by Brigham Young University, which could be used to enhance NNES writers' vocabulary use in rhetorical contexts. We taught participants how to use resources like this one. Together with participants, we also developed approaches and strategies for integrating such resources into sessions with NNES writers, including explaining how to use resources and understand usage in context.

Although some participants were experienced graduate student teaching associates, many lacked extensive education on helping NNES writers, and fewer had received education in writing center pedagogies. Linking these fields of study for participants, Wayne Robertson's documentary, *Writing Across Borders,* provided fundamental understandings of why students with different cultural backgrounds show distinct rhetorical features and helped participants recognize that non-English rhetorical characteristics are not due to "educational deficiencies" (Silva 362). Watching and discussing the documentary enabled participants to make clear connections across the scholarship they had read and discussed, tying together the different concepts and lessons developed in readings. As most WCW participants were native English speakers and unfamiliar with TESOL research, the film enhanced their perception of students' perspectives as multilingual writers. The film initiated discussions about relevant feedback and support systems for NNES writers. NNES participants could speak to the film's resonances with their own experiences, such as receiving excessive errors marking on papers. Sharing their perspectives with fellow participants reaffirmed the film's lessons about NNES writers' experiences with firsthand accounts.

Additionally, we encouraged participants to learn by listening to NNES writers and prioritizing their needs and interests through activities that focused on NNES writers' perspectives and experiences. Participants paired their reading and learning with observing and being tutored in the center, foundational educational practices in Writing Center Studies, which enabled them to connect directly with NNES writers. Weekly journals and online discussions engaged participants in ongoing reflection, from personal experiences in observations to experiences getting tutored, and also acted as a space in which they learned from and responded to each other beyond our weekly scheduled meetings. The ongoing conversation and learning stimulated connections between

readings, in-class discussions, observations, and tutorials. Adding to these practices, we asked that participants use these activities as opportunities to listen to and connect with NNES writers, as well as practice the skills and lessons described in readings. Given the number of NNES clientele at our center, participants were often able to observe and co-tutor NNES writers. When concluding their sessions, participants were asked to debrief with tutors and clients, gaining insights on experiences and preferences from both sides of the session, especially learning from and listening to NNES clients and consultants. This meant creating opportunities and inviting our NNES participants to use other languages when connecting with consultants and clients in our writing center, approaching the tutorials as multilingual. For example, sessions may occur primarily in a language other than English while discussing English writing, and other sessions may switch back and forth between English and other languages to enable precision when addressing lexical issues.

Another focus of the WCW was to help participants develop skills for working with other issues that arise in tutorials with NNES clients. Participants spoke from their diverse experiences as individuals, including as NNES writers, and as members of different world cultures, to explore the power dynamics at play in tutorials. This entailed creating space for all participants to share their own literacy experiences and practices—which they did through both in-person discussions and online conversations—and making a special effort to listen to and learn from the experience of our NNES participants who were NNES writers themselves (usually 3-4 of 10 WCW participants). Their experiences, within the writing center and beyond, frequently complicated the scholarship, observations, and pedagogical practices we were engaging in, offering layers of perspective that enhanced participants' learning. For example, NNES participants discussed how their own experiences as teachers of English in other countries and cultures influenced their perspectives within the writing center; others reported how their personal struggles with academic writing in English made them feel uniquely—and sometimes uncomfortably—situated when acting as tutors.

Following readings, meetings, observations, and mock tutorial practices, participants concluded the WCW by writing a research proposal. Participants could choose a topic for the proposal, which could either call for an action in the writing center or discuss a topic that occurred in workshop conversations. Participants proposed to research the differences in the tutoring approaches

by generalist tutors versus tutors with specialized subject training; distinctions between graduate tutors working with graduate student writers versus undergraduate tutors working with the same population; different tutoring styles for native and NNES tutors; and tutoring resource development.

CONCLUSION: MAKING PEDAGOGICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES

The WCW created opportunities for us to take a more expansive approach to our writing center's hiring and education. By instituting the new educational practices, we were more able to recruit potential tutors from various disciplines, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds. The WCW, in short, enriched our tutoring pool with new specializations, skill sets, and world experiences.

We assessed the WCW's impact in a few key ways. First, we asked for direct feedback from participants. The WCW's participants reported they found the workshop a helpful means of preparing to enter the writing center as tutors. Additionally, we found that after going through the WCW, participants were more prepared to effectively interview for positions in the writing center. For example, participants who applied for a position were able to better articulate not only the writing center's mission but also how they could contribute as tutors following their workshop participation. Finally, through client feedback from end-of-tutorial surveys, we discovered that clients responded very favorably to graduate student tutors who had undergone the WCW educational program.

Based on our experiences with and assessment of the WCW's outcomes, we have identified some key benefits from the changes made to our writing center's practices. Our writing center developed strategies to attract, educate, and hire NNES writers and tutors. We have created a writing center culture that values multilingual writing as beneficial to all tutors and clients in our writing center. Although NNES writers may particularly benefit from having other multilingual writers working as tutors, we believe having multilingual writers in the writing center both as clients and consultants can benefit all writers in the center. Rafoth, for example, suggests that hiring experienced NNES writers could challenge a so-called *native speaker fallacy*, a retrieved term from Robert Phillipson representing the misconception that a native speaker is inherently better suited to teach than a non-native speaker, whether educated to do so or not (Phillipson 193). Developing such a writing center culture has created learning opportunities for clients, who can address lexical issues more precisely by en-

gaging in multilingual sessions, but also for graduate and under-graduate consultants—both native English writers and NNES writers—who have the opportunity to learn from each other about writing and language from multicultural perspectives.

Finally, writing center scholarship continues to refine approaches to collaborative learning in tutorials and to reexamine its effectiveness for NNES writers' needs (Rafoth 23). Our writing center has remained adaptive and responsive to local needs and to our institutional demographics, and we continue to develop tutor education programs that address these needs. Since we began the WCW, we have found it a useful opportunity for educating graduate students to work as tutors, and it has continued in our writing center with ongoing curricular adaptations that reflect the needs of tutors and clients alike.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

WORKS CITED

Davies, Mark. *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): 520 Million Words, 1990-present*. Available at <corpus.byu.edu/coca/>.

Ferris, Dana. *Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing* (Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers). 2nd ed., The University of Michigan P, 2002.

Harris, Muriel, and Tony Silva. "Tutoring ESL Students: Issues and Options." C*ollege Composition and Communication*, vol. 44, no. 4, 1993, pp. 525-537.

Kolln, Martha, and Loretta S. Gray. *Rhetorical Grammar*. 6th ed., Longman, 2009.

Leki, Ilona. *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers.* Boynton/Cook, 1992.

Matsuda, Paul Kei, Michelle Cox, Jay Jordan, and Christina Ortmeier-Hooper. *Second-language Writing in the Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook.* Bedford/St. Martins, 2011.

"Open Doors: 2016 Fast Facts." Institute of International Education, 16, May 2017, www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Announcements/2016-11-14-Open-Doors-Data

Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford UP, 1992.

Rafoth, Ben. *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers*. Utah State UP, 2015.

Robertson, Wayne, *Writing Across Borders*. Oregon State University, 2005.

Severino, Carol. "Avoid Appropriation." *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors,* edited by Shanti Bruce, and Bennett Rafoth, Boynton/Cook, 2004.

Severino, Carol, and Elizabeth Deifell. "Empowering L2 Tutoring: A Case Study of a Second Language Writer's Vocabulary Learning." *Writing Center Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1, March 2011, pp. 25-54.

Silva, Tony. "On the Ethical Treatment of ESL Writers." *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, Summer 1997, pp. 359-63.

- - - ."Toward an Understanding of the Distinct Nature of L2 Writing: The ESL Research and Its Implications." *TESOL Quarterl*y, vol. 27, no. 4, Winter 1993, pp. 657-77.

Tutors' Column: "Modeling Peerness: Undergraduate Peer Tutors Leading Education for New Tutors"

Jessa Wood

Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

In spring 2017, my writing center director and I implemented peer-led discussion in a one-credit tutor-education course. I am an undergraduate peer tutor with three years of experience in the Bloomsburg University Writing Center. In each weekly meeting of the course, I was responsible for about thirty minutes of peer-led discussions focused on instructor-assigned readings on peer tutoring concepts. Initially, my director, Ted Roggenbuck, involved me in the course for practical reasons: it saved him time otherwise spent preparing lessons and gave me a chance to explore my career interest in writing pedagogy. However, we found my peer-led discussions had pedagogical value we didn't fully anticipate. My post-course interviews with new tutors from the class revealed that integrating peer-led discussion into tutor education provided these new tutors an experience of the peerness that characterizes many writing centers, deepening new tutors' engagement and providing them a potential model of peer-to-peer interactions.

Much as it does in the writing center, peer involvement in the tutor education classroom inspired increased discussion and engagement. Because I am a peer, our new tutors opened up to me–informally around the writing center, before class, and even in class–in ways they may not have with a faculty member, allowing me to address their concerns about tutoring. One new consultant told me, "We [were] allowed to ask ... questions that ... we'd probably be discouraged [to ask a professor] because it'd probably be embarrassing or sound dumb. But because you've already been through it in our position, it['s] easier, or more comfortable." I also found that the new tutors' comfort enabled them to challenge my interpretations of the course readings, leading to deeply engaging discussions. My director agreed, saying that although he and I used similar techniques in the classroom–new tutors were more engaged in the course this semester than in the past. This class

engagement translated to greater engagement in the writing center more broadly; he reported that new tutors in this class took on greater responsibility in the writing center than others he'd worked with in the past.

Additionally, the model of peer co-learning in our course helped some of our new tutors understand how and why peer tutoring works. One new tutor, for example, developed confidence in the idea that she did not need to be an expert to be an effective peer tutor after discovering that I did not have all the answers to questions raised by tutors in her class. She learned that these difficult questions could be fruitfully explored through collaborative discussion: "You … understood what was going on," she told me, but "if you didn't, … we just share[d] ideas." Similarly, several tutors stated that experiencing peer-to-peer interactions with me gave them insight into the felt experiences of tutees, insight that influenced their tutoring praxis. For example, multiple tutors commented that they hoped to create the "comfortable, homey" atmosphere they'd enjoyed in the class in their own sessions.

However, the interviews also revealed that I did not always do enough to draw connections between my approach to the class and our discussions of peerness. When asked in post-course interviews if I'd modeled peerness in the classroom, some students were initially puzzled, not having conceived of their experience in that context. One, thinking I wanted to emulate faculty, initially reassured me that she wouldn't have realized I was a student unless I'd told her. Only after reflection did she conclude, "The class definitely was different from all my other courses. … [In those classes,] it's just like the professor teaches, … you do your homework, you take the exams, boom, boom, boom … but the class was more active. We discussed a lot of things." Her realization that she could learn about peerness in tutoring from our interactions in the course was unprompted; her own reflection in the span of a few minutes in the interview helped her reconceptualize her experience. But her shift in perspective was impactful. Later, when she described my approach to the class, she compared it to sessions: "As a tutor, you … teach the tutee the correct way of doing it, and then they pick out the mistakes themselves, and I feel like that's pretty much exactly what our class was. We learned … how to do something, and then … we acted those things out in the writing center…The class was more active. It was more like a peer editing class. We just share ideas." In future classes, new tutors might be better able to make connections if both the instructor and experienced peer tutor explicitly clarify the purpose

of involving an experienced peer tutor in the course and provide structured opportunities for reflection on the parallels between the peer interactions they detect in the course and their tutoring.

Although class interactions differ from tutoring sessions and require different techniques, the process of navigating peerness is similar, meaning new tutors can learn from observing an experienced tutor lead discussion. Peerness in a classroom setting is often unfamiliar to students: As John Trimbur argues, typical academic interactions are bounded by an "academic hierarchy" in which learning is understood as unidirectional, with knowledge-endowed faculty above students, and collaborative learning is devalued (22). Because students are influenced by the assumptions of this hierarchy, it is difficult for them to see tutors as peers, and more often think of them as "little teachers" because tutors are institutionally endorsed, often have greater knowledge of writing than students, and sometimes perform pedagogical tasks (27). Similarly, in my role in the course, I had been endorsed by the instructor, so I brought some authority to the class, and my experience working in the writing center and conducting writing center research made me more knowledgeable about writing center best practices and the literature we read than the new tutors in the class. As a result, it was difficult for new tutors to see me as a peer, especially at first. One student, using language notably similar to Trimbur's, commented that she initially saw me more as a "teacher['s] helper" than a fellow peer tutor. Because of these parallels between my role in the course and peer tutoring, experiencing the dynamic of the class provided tutors a fruitful opportunity for reflection on how they can act as peers in sessions, whether they felt I navigated my role successfully or not. In the interviews, some of our tutors already showed signs of making these connections: One new tutor, comparing this class to others, said, "We see professors every day, we have that type of lecture every day, but … someone that is in the same age bracket as us can be like a mentor." In other words, at least some of our tutors have already reflected on peerness in the course, and all have experienced and responded to it in the classroom; the challenge in future iterations of the course is to make sure future students connect these experiences of peerness in their tutor education class to their tutoring in the writing center.

I do not mean to say I always provided a good example of peerness. Like many tutors, I sometimes got stuck in the academic hierarchy and approached my role from that mindset, leading me to act too expert for too long. For example, I frequently struggled

to avoid immediately correcting any misconceptions about our course readings. However, I think peer-led discussions can still be valuable for tutors, especially if explicit opportunities for reflection are built into the course. The model of peerness provided by experienced tutors need not be perfect; new tutors can still have a valuable experience reflecting on how they might function collaboratively in their own sessions.

Based on our interviews, class experiences, and the degree to which new tutors have stepped forward to take responsibility in our center, my director and I are confident our new tutors benefitted from the advice and examples I could provide based on my direct experience with students at our university. But beyond these benefits for new tutors, I found leading discussions in our tutor education class beneficial for me as an experienced tutor. I gained a more nuanced understanding of the seminal texts of the field I had read as a new tutor when I reread them after spending several years tutoring. Discussing my experiences with tutoring gave me an unparalleled opportunity for reflection on my practice, ultimately improving my own tutoring. And I found engaging with new tutors tremendously enjoyable. If they are not already doing so, directors who desire to provide a rich professional experience like this for experienced tutors while helping new tutors internalize theoretical concepts may want to consider integrating peer-led discussions into their tutor education courses.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

WORK CITED

Trimbur, John. "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" *The Writing Center Journal,* vol. 7, no. 2, 1987, pp. 21-28.

Announcements

Middle East and North Africa Writing Centers Alliance
Call for Proposals
22-23 February, 2018
United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, UAE
"Transfer and Transform"
Keynote: Chris Anson

Proposals on the themes of transfer or transformation, which are of clear relevance to the work of writing centres in the MENA region, are welcomed. The full CFP, with details of how to submit a proposal, are available on the website: <www.menawca.org>. For further information, contact the conference chair, Elizabeth Whitehouse: <Ewhitehouse@ uaeu.ac.ae>.

Midwest Writing Centers Association
February 28-March 3, 2018
Omaha, NE
"Social Justice in the Writing Center: Opening the Center for All"
Keynote: Shirin Vossoughi

Conference proposals are invited to "explore any aspect of writing center work. We encourage submissions that engage directly with the theme of social justice in the writing center, including, but not limited to, the roles of race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, nationality, religion, and their intersections in a writing center context."

Call for papers opened: August 1, 2017
Submission deadline: October 1, 2017
Hotel registration deadline: February 14, 2018

Please visit <www.midwestwritingcenters.org> for information on submitting proposals, conference registration, and hotel accommodations.

Nebraska Writing Center Consortium Meeting

September 29, 2017
Lincoln, NE
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
"Adapting, Responding, Innovating: Nebraska Writing Centers in 2017"

Contact Rachel Azima, U. of Nebraska-Lincoln, NE 68588-0333 (402-472-1726). <razima2@unl.edu>; conference website: <www.unl.edu/writing/nwcc2017>.

Online Workshops for Prospective *WLN* Authors:

Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Sohui Lee, and Julie Prebel, recently appointed as *WLN* associate editors, are developing a new *WLN* author-support program, consisting of online workshops, to help writers publish in *WLN* and contribute to the field of writing center studies. The workshop program aims to bring new voices into *WLN* by supporting authors in the early stages of their thinking and writing and will cover topics such as how to develop ideas for articles and how to contribute to ongoing writing center conversations. Stay tuned for details about the online workshop program.

Another new program Karen Johnson and Ted Roggenbuck plan to offer later this year is one-to-one mentoring for potential *WLN* authors.

GET INVOLVED WITH *WLN*

Interested in serving as a reviewer? Contact Kim Ballard <kim.ballard@wmich.edu> and Lee Ann Glowzenski <laglowzenski@gmail.com>.

Interested in contributing news, announcements, or accounts of work in your writing center to the Blog (photos welcomed)? Contact Brian Hotson <brian.hotson@smu.ca>.

Interested in guest editing a special issue on a topic of your choice? Contact Muriel Harris <harrism@purdue.edu>.

Interested in writing an article or Tutors' Column to submit to *WLN*? Check the guidelines on the *WLN* website: <wlnjournal.org/submit.php>.

Conference Calendar

September 29, 2017: Nebraska Writing Center Consortium, in Lincoln, NE
Contact: Rachel Azima: <razima2@unl.edu>: conference website: <www.unl.edu/writing/nwcc2017>.

October 13-14, 2017: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, in Tacoma, WA
Contact: Jake Fryer: <jfrye@greenriver.edu>; conference website: <www.pnwca.org/2017-CFP>.

October 15-17, 2017: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Hempstead, NY
Contact: <ncptw2017@hofstra.edu>; conference website: <www.hofstra.edu/ncptw2017>.

November 10-13, 2017: International Writing Centers Association, in Chicago, IL
Contact: Lauri Dietz: <ldietz@depaul.edu> or Andrew Jeter: <andjet@d219.org>; conference website: <writingcenters.org/annual-conference-2/>.

November 22-23, 2017: Middle East North Africa Writing Center Alliance, in Al Ain, UAE
Contact: Elizabeth Whitehouse: <Ewhitehouse@uaeu.ac.ae>; conference website: <www.menawca.org>.

February 22-24, 2018: Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in Richmond, VA
Contact: Brian McTague: <bjmctague@vcu.edu>; conference website: <www.iwca-swca.org>.

February 28-March 3, 2018: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Omaha, NE
Contact: Conference website: <www.midwestwritingcenters.org>.

March 23-25, 2018: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Columbus, OH
Contact: Genie Giaimo: <Giaimo.13@osu.edu>.

WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship

Editors:	**Kim Ballard** (kim.ballard@wmich.edu)
	Lee Ann Glowzenski (laglowzenski@gmail.com)
	Muriel Harris (harrism@purdue.edu)
Development Editor:	**Alan Benson** (alan.t.benson@gmail.com)
Blog Editor:	**Brian Hotson** (brian.hotson@smu.ca)