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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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Editor's Note

Julia Bleakney

Elon University

Welcome to Volume 50 of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship.* On behalf of the current and all former co-editors, as well as our editor-in-chief Muriel (Mickey) Harris, we are delighted to celebrate 50 years of *WLN* and share issue 50.1 with you.

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In this issue of *WLN*, each author focuses on an important aspect of intentionality in writing center practice. Megan Connor calls for integrating growth mindset theory into tutor education. Destiny Brugman and Cameron Cavaliere propose a sustainable and mission-driven approach to social media postings. Liliana Naydan's review of Genie Giaimo's *Unwell Writing Centers* underscores the need for systemic wellness initiatives. And, finally, Brady Hall invites us to consider linguistic equity for English learners when utilizing generativeAI in the writing center. In each article, the authors offer strategies and frameworks for intentional approaches that enhance the experiences of tutors and writers.

In "Benefits of Discussing Growth Mindset as Part of Writing Center Consultant Education," Megan Connor explores the value of incorporating growth mindset theory into tutor education to encourage tutors to reflect on their beliefs and assumptions about writers and writing. Growth mindset theory, Connor suggests, helps tutors challenge their own and writers' implicit biases. Connor also provides examples of how tutor education might encourage growth mindset through reflection and discussion activities.

In "Creating Functional Social Media Practices in the Writing Center," Destiny Brugman and Cameron Cavaliere offer tools to help writer centers assess their social media presence based on a center's principles and goals. Their article discusses how they conducted an audit of their social media practices, leading to the creation of a checklist that other centers can use to streamline their social media posting.

Liliana M. Naydan reviews Genie Giaimo's *Unwell Writing Centers: Searching for Wellness in Neoliberal Educational Institutions and Beyond,* highlighting Giaimo's critique of superficial, neoliberal approaches to wellness. Giaimo instead frames wellness as a labor justice issue. Their longitudinal study pinpoints tutors' stressors and the need for meaningful and practical interventions and approaches to wellness. *Unwell Writing Centers*, Naydan suggests, "brilliantly challenges the largely empty wellness initiatives that institutions have foisted upon workers who are struggling with everything from everyday stressors to major burnout."

In "Generative AI and Linguistic Equity for EL Writers Across Disciplines," Brady Hall's Tutor Column urges writing centers to consider linguistic equity arguments for integrating genAI to support English learners (EL). Hall walks us through a challenging writing center appointment with a Biology student, who was learning English language conventions. Hall and the student used AI

in a limited capacity during the appointment; after the session, Hall reflects on whether denying EL students use of a tool that can make writing in a new language easier might reinforce racist practices that writing centers have tried to challenge.

The authors in this first issue of our 50th volume offer useful frameworks and interventions for the future of writing center work. To mark 50 years of contributions to our writing center community, we encourage readers to return for a special celebratory issue in the spring.

Benefits of Discussing Growth Mindset as Part of Writing Center Consultant Education

Megan Connor

John Carroll University

As I was designing my first tutor education course, I decided, almost as an afterthought, to spend a day early in the semester talking about growth mindset. A growing body of educational psychology scholarship explores the mindsets students hold about abilities and intelligences. Students with more of a growth mindset "believe that they can develop their abilities through hard work, good strategies, and instruction from others," while students with more of a fixed mindset "believe that they have a certain amount of ability and they cannot do much to change it" (Haimovitz and Dweck 1849). While these mindsets are often talked about as binaries, they actually fall along a spectrum from fixed to growth (Dweck, *Mindset*).

MEGAN CONNOR

These mindsets have implications for students' relationship to writing. On the one hand, students with more of a fixed mindset about writing often think about it as a talent or natural ability; they are either born as a gifted writer or not (Truax). Students with more of a growth mindset about writing, on the other hand, are open to ongoing improvement, regardless of their innate talent or current ability. After reading about mindsets for our class, one of my students shared her revelation that she had a fixed mindset about writing. She had always been praised for her writing ability. She had internalized that messaging and could think of examples where she ignored or rejected feedback that challenged her view of herself as a good writer, causing her to lose out on opportunities for growth.

Her story resonated with me. When I began writing center work as an undergraduate tutor, I'd also been told that I was a good writer. I didn't really understand what made me a good writer and often felt like an imposter. As a result, I was often unwilling to take risks in my writing for fear of having my status as a good writer challenged. I realize now that I had a fixed mindset about writing. I also realize that working in the writing center helped me develop a growth mindset about writing. The revelations the student shared and the connection I felt to them made me wonder: how many writing center consultants enter into writing center work with a fixed mindset about writing? And, how does engaging with writing center work impact their mindset about writing?

I was surprised to find that both writing center studies and composition studies have largely ignored mindset theory. In my initial search of the literature, Laura Miller's article, "Can We Change Their Minds?: Investigating an Embedded Tutor's Influence on Students' Mindsets and Writing," was the only writing center article that directly addressed mindset theory. In this article, Miller shows the connection between mindset research and the research on dispositions in composition studies and writing center studies. She explains, "While dispositions refer to attributes and behaviors, mindsets are about beliefs. Research suggests that people's behaviors and attitudes stem from their mindsets (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). That is, a

person's mindset influences their disposition" (107). Miller argues, and I agree, that the field of writing centers would benefit from more directly engaging with mindset theory in their research and practices. Currently, many writing centers are using growth mindset principles (e.g. encouraging and praising process and effort) to help writers grow and build confidence, but often without naming them or explicitly using the lens of mindset theory. In other words, writing center practitioners are thinking about mindsets and growth but, for the most part, haven't theorized it, named it, or thought about how to integrate it into their practices more holistically.

Given the impact beliefs have on behaviors, it would behoove writing center practitioners to engage in more research that helps us better understand how mindsets about writing, for both consultants and writers, might impact writing center sessions. For example, research in educational psychology suggests that teachers' mindsets about learning and teaching ability impact students' mindsets about learning (Dweck, "Teachers' Mindsets"; Yeager et al.). While there are differences between a writing center consultant's role and a teacher's role, I would argue that there are enough parallels to suggest that a consultant's mindset about writing and tutoring ability could impact a student's mindset about writing. Based on existing scholarship on mindset theory and my experiences incorporating mindset theory into my tutor education course, I argue that writing center directors (WCDs) should incorporate explicit growth mindset instruction into their consultant education courses and ongoing professional development.

Mindset theory can also be used in consultant education courses to teach students how to engage with social justice issues that may challenge their beliefs and worldviews. In *The Person You Mean To Be: How Good People Fight Bias*, Dolly Chugh uses mindset theory to explore social justice by looking at how growth mindset can be used to fight implicit bias. Chugh argues that most of us see ourselves as good people, which is a fixed mindset. When we see ourselves as good people and someone calls us out for saying or doing something discriminatory or problematic, we tend to react defensively because our identity as a good person has been threatened. In those moments, we're not listening or learning; we're protecting our identity and the way we want to be perceived. She urges us to let go of our "good person" identity and instead embrace being "good-ish." She explains, "Good-ish people are always growing, which is why being good-ish is better than being good. Being good-ish sets a higher ethical standard for ourselves, because when we are good-ish, we are learning" (Chugh 8). Engaging with growth mindset in this way aligns with writing center scholarship that encourages students to sit with their discomfort (Dixon) and engage with transformative listening (Garcia; Ratcliffe), skills that are essential for inclusive, equitable, and antiracist practices. By introducing growth mindset early in a tutor education program, WCDs can provide students with a framework they can use to engage with moments when their beliefs are being challenged.

In the remainder of this article, I will share examples that show how WCDs might integrate mindset theory into their consultant education and ongoing professional development curriculum and the potential benefits of doing so. I will end the article by naming some of the benefits of connecting mindset theory to writing center work.

INCORPORATING GROWTH MINDSET INTO OUR CENTER'S CONSULTANT EDUCATION

I would encourage WCDs to incorporate mindset theory early on in their consultant education curriculum. For example, I introduce mindset theory on the third day of the 3-credit hour course prospective consultants take. To prepare for class, students watch Carol Dweck's talk, "The Power of Believing That You Can Improve," which introduces mindset theory and the concept of growth vs. fixed mindset. They also read the introduction and chapter one of Chugh's *The Person You*

Mean To Be: How Good People Fight Bias. I like pairing these two texts together for several reasons. First, they both provide a clear explanation of what it means to have a growth mindset about something but approach the conversation from different perspectives. Dweck talks about how having a growth mindset applies to learning in general, while Chugh talks about how fighting bias requires a growth mindset. Seeing growth mindset applied in different contexts lays the groundwork for helping students understand the nuances of mindset theory. As Miller notes, "psychologists are careful to clarify that mindsets operate along a continuum and that people can be more or less growth- or fixed-minded in different contexts (Mercer & Ryan, 2010)" (106). People can have a growth mindset about some things and a fixed mindset about others. They can also be somewhere in between. The power in mindset theory is that it encourages a focus on learning as a process rather than a specific destination. I also like pairing these two texts together because they encourage students to make connections between writing and social justice.

To help complicate their thinking about mindset theory, I lead my students through a series of reflections that help them make connections to writing center work. In small groups, I ask them to first define growth and fixed mindsets. I then ask them to describe how these mindsets manifest in attitudes toward writing. The students are usually quick to identify negative fixed mindset statements, such as "I'm not very good at writing" or "I've always been bad at writing," but it often takes them longer to realize that fixed mindsets about writing can manifest as both negative and positive beliefs about writing ability. Students with positive fixed mindsets about writing may say things like, "I don't need to use the Writing Center. I'm already a good writer" or "I'm a good writer. The only reason I don't get better grades on my papers is because I procrastinate." Students with both negative and positive fixed mindsets about writing are likely to be resistant to feedback and critique, which has significant implications for writing center work.

Once the students are able to identify what it sounds like when someone has a fixed or growth mindset about writing, I take them through an activity that asks them to identify their own mindsets about writing and other areas of learning. I typically label the sides of the room as either fixed or growth mindset. I then ask them a series of questions related to mindsets and have them move to where they feel they fall on the fixed to growth mindset spectrum. I usually start by asking them: what is your mindset about math? Starting with a question about math serves as a quick check to see how well they understand mindset theory because students often have strong feelings about their math ability. It also subtly reinforces the idea that people can have different mindsets about different subjects; just because they have a growth mindset in one area doesn't mean that they have a growth mindset about all things. I then ask students: what is your current mindset about writing? I've now done this exercise with several different consultant education classes. Each time, the majority of the students position themselves towards the fixed mindset part of the room with a few being closer to the middle and only one or two positioning themselves closer to the growth mindset side of the room. At this point, I'll often share with them that research in educational psychology suggests that a teacher's mindset about learning and teaching ability impacts their students' mindsets about learning (Dweck, "Teachers' Mindsets"; Yeager et al.) and ask them to consider how their own mindset about writing might impact the way they interact with writers during sessions.

I then ask them: what mindset about writing do you think students who use the writing center have? There's usually a little more hesitation with this question, but most students end up on the fixed mindset side of the room. Before I let them go back to their seats, I usually ask someone from each side why they think students who use the writing center have that mindset. The responses often reveal assumptions and implicit biases the students have about users of the

writing center. One big assumption that often comes up in these conversations is that students who use the writing center struggle with writing and therefore have a fixed mindset about writing. Others who chose the fixed mindset side often cite required visits as the reason they think writing center users have a fixed mindset about writing. These assumptions get challenged when the students who chose the growth mindset side begin to share their reasons. Often they cite that people who use the writing center want to improve their writing and that seeking to improve is a feature of growth mindset.

These observations usually lead to larger discussions on our beliefs and assumptions about writing center users. Students often speculate that non-users and one-time users are more likely to have a fixed mindset about writing and that frequent users are likely to have a growth mindset about writing. Unfortunately, there is little research to back these speculations. Writing centers have historically neglected to publish research about non-users. In 2016, Lori Salem highlighted this gap and called for more research that investigates students' decisions to use and not use writing center services. Since then, there has been a slowly growing body of research that explores various factors that may influence students' decisions to use/not use the writing center (Arbee; Colton; Freeman and Getty). To date, only one of those studies has drawn on mindset theory in their quest to better understand students' choices about using the writing center, and that study looked at students' general mindset about learning, not their specific mindset about writing (Freeman and Getty). More research is needed to better understand the impact a person's mindset about writing has on their decisions to use writing center services.

This exercise also leads us to question how a consultant's assumptions (e.g., beliefs about remediation, ability, intelligence, and work ethic) about a writer and their mindset about writing might impact a session. Questioning assumptions is a key component of our center's consultant education course. We don't land on a neat solution or conclusion, but this line of questioning becomes an integral part of our writing center work. One of the main goals of our consultant education course and ongoing professional development is to get our consultants to think critically about what it means to create a welcoming space for all students, and we cannot do that work effectively if we are not questioning our individual and collective assumptions about who we are welcoming and what we see as welcoming (McKinney).

Chugh's argument that we need to stop seeing ourselves as good people and instead embrace being good-ish people furthers this line of thinking and questioning. It gives students space to be human; they don't have to be perfect. They can (and will) have bias. The power of a growth mindset approach is that it does not seek perfection; it provides a pathway for learning and growth. Anecdotally, since I began using Chugh's work early in the semester to frame the writing center work we will do together, I have found that students are more willing to take risks. In the past, conversations about race, identity, discrimination, and other social justice issues were often stilted at the predominantly white institution where I teach. Students were afraid to say the wrong thing and so often opted to say nothing. Approaching social justice work as a good-ish person allows students space to explore and try-on ideas. This approach helps them realize that social justice work is a journey, not a destination; it requires constant reflection and questioning.

Incorporating mindset theory into our consultant education course has changed the way our writing center staff–administrators and consultants alike–talk about writing center work. During the consultant education course, students regularly connect new theories and practices back to growth mindset. For example, I have them read Kara Taczak's article, "The Importance of Transfer in your First Year Writing Course," as an introduction to writing transfer. In their reflections and class discussions, students regularly connect mindset theory to "Misconception #3: There's

Nothing More to Learn" (308) and it's corresponding "Truth #3: There's Always Something More to Learn About Writing" (310). As part of the course, students engage in a service-learning experience where they go into the community and help high school students with various kinds of writing. In their reflections about the service-learning, they often talk about how the students' self-statements about writing reflect their mindset about writing. They talk about how many of these students have negative fixed mindsets about writing and the things that they have done with these students to try to give them more confidence and encourage a growth mindset.

The students continue to make these kinds of connections, typically unprompted, after the course when they become writing consultants. The assistant director and I often overhear discussions about growth mindset during staff meetings and in informal conversations between consultants during downtime on their shifts.

CONCLUSION

Using growth mindset to frame writing center work helps students more quickly internalize why writing consultants need to think about writing as a process rather than as just a final product, a value that writing centers have long held. I have found that this frame has led to richer conversations about what it means to give helpful, effective feedback that encourages growth. It also helps future and current consultants understand the connection between emotions and writing. They see how writers' beliefs about their writing ability impact their confidence and willingness to engage with the writing process. Given all of the connections between writing center work and mindset theory, the field of writing centers would benefit from theorizing about writing mindsets and more explicitly incorporating mindset theory into its research and practices.

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Creating Functional Social Media Practices in the Writing Center

Destiny Brugman and Cameron Cavaliere

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One challenge of running a writing center's social media account is aligning content with the center's mission, values, and goals, the latter of which can change frequently. The COVID-19 pandemic led many writing centers to reconsider the purpose of social media–whether it's to connect writing center employees to one another or help writing centers stay connected to their campus communities (Hull and Pettit; May, "Staying Networked"). At the East Central Writing Centers Association conference in 2022, our consultant, Zoe Kelley, presented on the ways our social media priorities changed during the pandemic to focus on providing visibility to consultant work, reminding writers of services, presenting consultants as dynamic people, and dispelling myths about the writing center. Once our consultants returned to in-person work, however, these social media goals shifted again. We began focusing on building and defining community and creating consistent Instagram post designs. We incorporated a variety of media, including videos, photos, and graphics to enhance our visibility, showcase consultant experiences, and demystify the writing process (Kelley). To look more closely at our social media practice, we conducted an audit of our Instagram account to track what kind of content was effective and how this content aligned with the center's needs and goals. In this article, we share our writing center's experience developing new strategies for maintaining and sustaining our social media accounts after conducting this social media audit. We hope our strategies can help other writing centers think strategically about their social media practices.

In our center, developing and implementing a social media checklist after our audit helped us gain a holistic understanding of our account as well as what kinds of posts led to the most engagement. We analyzed how we were communicating our content via text, images, and graphics. We also assessed our posts' engagement levels and accessibility practices. Ultimately, our audit aimed to address the following questions:

- What could we learn from our past social media histories so that we could adapt our practices to better fit our needs?

- How could we ensure that, in the future, our social media presence aligned with our center's values, regardless of who would be running our accounts?

In this article, we outline how we conducted our audit, share patterns we noticed, and provide a checklist we designed to streamline our principled practices for those posting on our Instagram. We conclude with recommendations for effective social media content creation.

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INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND RESEARCH METHODS

The Howe Writing Center (HWC) social media accounts, most notably our Instagram (@HWCMiami), are managed by three main groups: a communications coordinator (a full-time staff member who focuses on the center's communication needs), graduate assistant directors (working 10-20 hours a week on various tasks, including social media and communication), and consultants who are interested in contributing to our social media (approximately 3-4 hours a semester). The authors—PhD students with backgrounds in managing various social media accounts for businesses, nonprofits, professional organizations, and other writing centers—relied on their joint knowledge of social media best practices to investigate, run, and propose practices for our writing center. At different times, both of us–Cam and Destiny–ran social media in the absence of a communications coordinator and with varied interest from consultants. We wanted to create better resources for ourselves and others working on our Instagram account regardless of their background in social media management and content creation. As such, we conducted this audit to help identify and focus our content management to align with our goals based on what we learned about our social media engagement.

The HWC is housed inside the larger Howe Center for Writing Excellence (HCWE), which also houses a nationally renowned Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. At the time, the HWC and the Howe Writing Across the Curriculum (HWAC) program operated under the same social media accounts, though they have distinctly different audiences: the HWC has a primarily student-focused audience, while the HWAC's primary audience is faculty members at Miami. HWC content is managed by the three groups discussed above and posted primarily on Instagram, the platform our university's undergraduates report using most. HWAC content is managed by the communication coordinator and posted on Facebook and LinkedIn. At the time of our audit, we had 31 peer writing consultants (graduate and undergraduate) that served Miami University, a mid-sized, R2 institution in the Midwest.

To analyze our posts, we created a spreadsheet and coded Instagram posts from the summer of 2021 up until the end of the spring semester 2023, totaling 185 posts. We chose this timeframe because it encompassed our institutional knowledge of what staffing and center practices looked like, as Destiny started as a graduate assistant director in December 2020 and helped coordinate the social media team beginning in 2021. During this time, there were shifts in consultant interest in our social media as well as transitions to a new communication coordinator; Destiny or Cam assumed the primary responsibility for organizing, running, and implementing our Instagram.

Overall, we analyzed 185 posts using 12 categories. Most relevant to this article are the following six:

- type of media (text, photo, graphic, video, etc.),
- number of likes and comments,
- if the post met accessibility standards (e.g., captions, alt text),
- the primary audience,
- if the post followed Instagram genre conventions (see Christison; Adegbola et al.),
- the post's purpose.

FINDINGS

Several trends related to post engagement and effectiveness emerged when we conducted our audit. Three factors most impacted the reach and effect of our Instagram posts: 1) clarity of

audience and purpose for cross-center content; 2) adherence to Instagram platform and genre conventions, including accessibility of content; and 3) strategic selection of media type based on audience and purpose. Being mindful of these three factors can improve social media content and practices, boost engagement, and help achieve the goals of engaging with intended audiences.

Cross-Center Content (Consider Audience and Purpose)

During our audit, we analyzed posts based on their intended primary audience. Because we are responsible for the HWC social media content, our goal was to increase engagement with our target population, so we wanted to know how many posts catered to that primary audience of Miami students and how they performed. We measured success by looking at the number of likes per post.

We focused on the audience of our Instagram because it is important to cater to our primary target audience (in this case, students). Being clear and strategic about our target audience can lead to better engagement. Our audit revealed that our 185 posts often had mixed audiences, audiences outside of our primary audience on Instagram, or unclear audiences. As seen in Figure 1, while most of our posts were aimed toward and focused on our primary student audience (59.5%) or a mix of students and faculty (14.6%), many posts were directed at unclear audiences and had unfocused content (11.9%).

Post Audience vs. Frequency

Mixed (Miami Community)
3.8%

Mixed (Students and Faculty)
14.6%

Unclear
11.9%

External Audiences
2.2%
Facutly/Staff (Secondary)
2.2%
HWC Alumni (Secondary)
2.7%
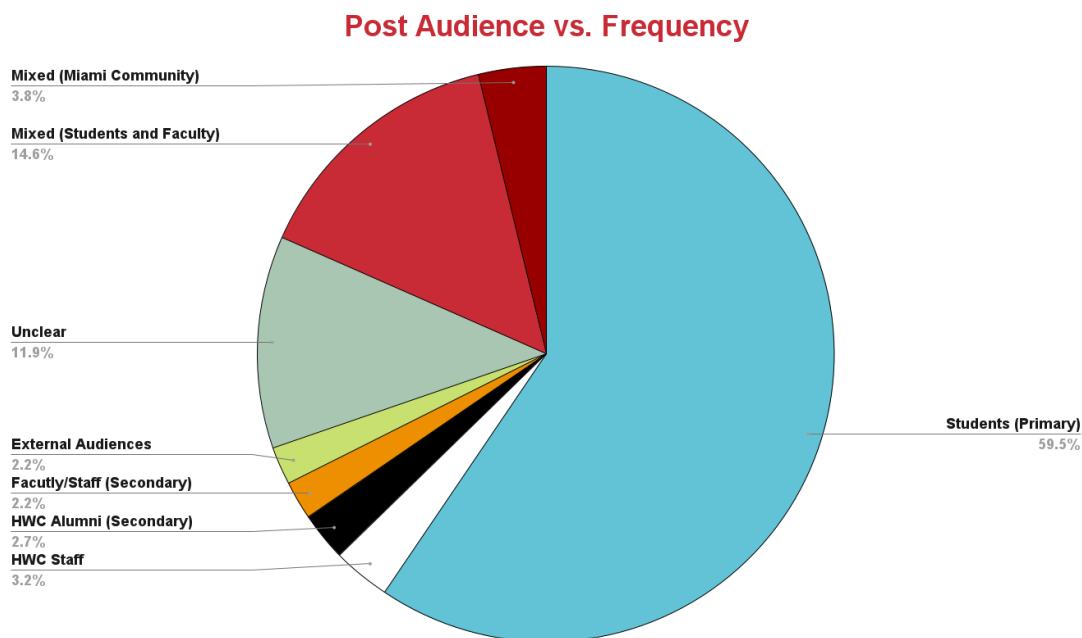HWC Staff
3.2%

Students (Primary)
59.5%

Figure 1: Audience engagement by post.

When conducting our analysis, we found that making audiences clear (e.g., marketing directly to students **or** faculty **or** both) is the best way to navigate the complex waters of cross-center content, as research indicates that brands who understand their audiences clearly and speak directly to those audiences have better success with engagement (Christison; Adegbola et al.). We realized we need to provide better training on developing content for target audiences to those involved in our social media. Our staff needs to understand which platforms target which populations and which strategies reach different populations. We collaborated with our communications coordinator to think through how the HWAC content could reach its audiences

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on the Howe Center for Writing Excellence's other social media outlets, like LinkedIn and Facebook, while ensuring Instagram focused on our student population. Centers that house a writing center and a WAC program might consider dividing platforms to best serve their particular audiences, and our center found that separating these made them easier to manage.

One of the most impactful findings from our audit was that posts aimed at other audiences performed better (more likes and comments) than content for our student audience (as seen in Figure 2). From this data, we came to understand that we needed to do a better job of creating content for our primary audience so that students engage with our page and continue to be shown our content.

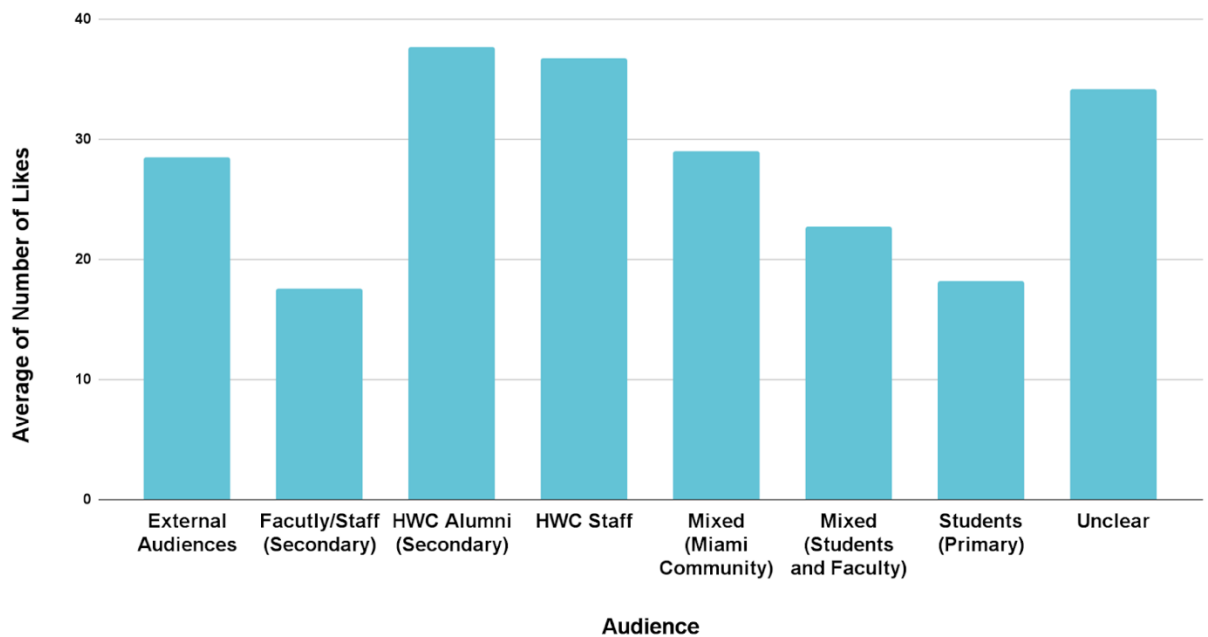## Target Audience vs. Average Number of Likes Per Post

Figure 2: Target audience vs. the average number of likes per post.

Accessibility and Genre Conventions

While analyzing our results and aiming for best social media practices, we also noted through the audit that we sometimes failed to meet accessibility requirements or platform-specific genre conventions. To assess our accessibility, we looked to see if our hashtags were accessible, as capitalizing hashtags makes them more screen-reader-friendly (e.g., #miamiuniversity vs. #MiamiUniversity). We also checked to see if we included alt text on images. As for genre conventions, we analyzed whether posts used links in Instagram captions, as this goes against genre conventions because Instagram doesn't integrate usable hyperlinks in their captions.

Our audit showed that a little less than half of our posts (46.5%) were accessible and met the criteria listed above. It was important that we abide by genre conventions and create accessible content, as we want our posts to reach as many students as possible, and this inspired us to find new ways we might be able to address accessibility in our online presence. Knowing that not everyone will have context for creating accessible digital content, this finding motivated us to

provide resources to everyone on our team to help create better digital writing center content. To do this, we relied on in-platform resources like Instagram's Accessibility Help Center and other resources like Colorado State University's "Tutorials and Best Practices: Steps to Inclusive Content."

Relationship Between Media Type and Audience Engagement

Finally, as seen in Figure 3, we found posts that contained images of people, whether they be consultants, staff, or faculty, had more engagement (likes and comments) than those that had no images or contained more than just images (graphics, videos, etc.).
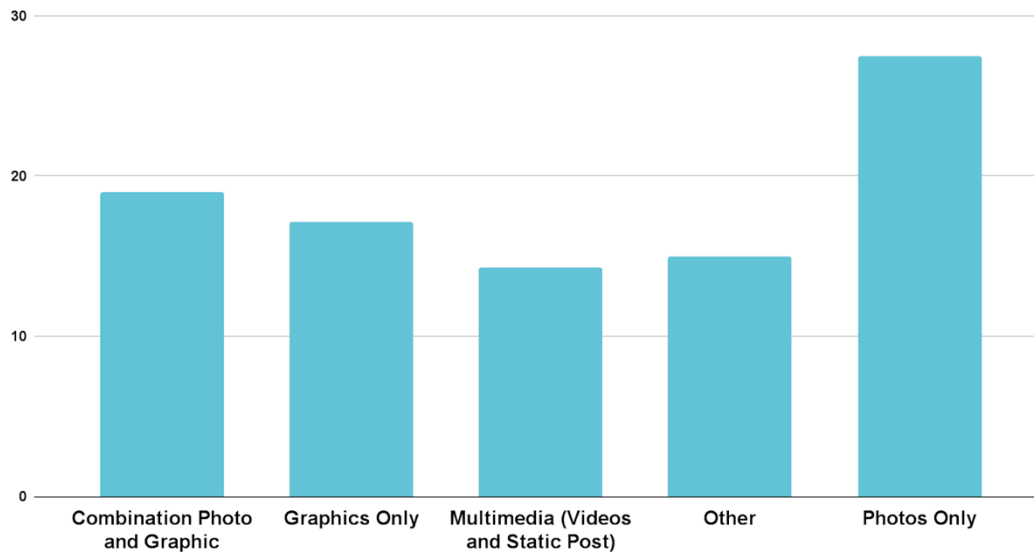

Figure 3: Social media engagement on posts with photos and graphics.

This finding complicates how we might plan posts that provide information for events. Figure 4 provides an example of how we have advertised events in the past. These posts tend to be very text-heavy, which may not be effective. We realized we might benefit from using features like Instagram Stories to advertise recurring events that are more text-heavy, but this also indicates that Instagram might not be the platform to advertise for events that require lots of text.
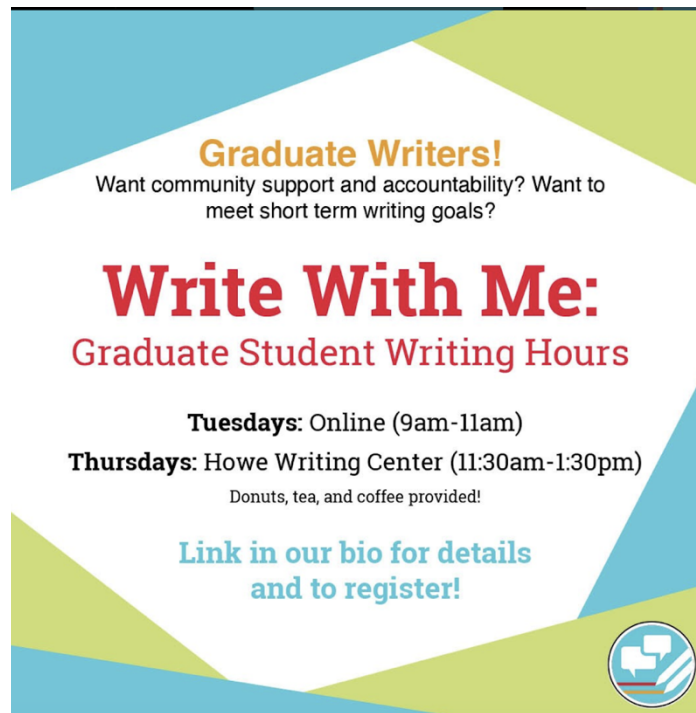
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Figure 4: Example of a post that is text-heavy.

While we recognize the importance of communicating using text, our social media audit showed that we generally receive less engagement when posting text-heavy or graphic-based posts. Previously, we had posted text-heavy template-style graphics that we reused and posted multiple times by simply swapping out the text. As a result of comparing the findings of our audit with social media best practices, we want to diversify the types of posts we create to include both posts that have text and posts that are more image-based. However, as visible in Figure 3, posts with a combination of graphics and photos have the second-highest rate of engagement, although engagement is still not as high as posts that are only photos.

While we believe in creating and posting a wide variety of content, we know that the simplest posts featuring consultants typically receive more engagement (e.g., photos of consultants at a writing center conference or a writing center event). Our goal is to try to make creating content easier for those responsible for social media while also acknowledging that the more engagement we get from posts that are primarily photos with people, the more likely it is that our other posts will reach their intended audience.

IMPLEMENTING OUR FINDINGS AND CREATING OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST

Given our social media management and the findings outlined above, we wanted to make sure that regardless of who was creating and posting content on our Instagram page, the content was standardized, accessible, and reflective of the goals of our center. Built from our audit, the checklist below helped us streamline posting content on Instagram:

- Post is void of URL or QR code in image
- Caption is void of URL (on Instagram)
- Interactive media (URL, etc.) is posted in Linktree
- Photo permissions are secured

- Photo and/or graphic is of good, professional quality (i.e., they are not blurry, there are no typos, and things are easy to read)
- Post is geared towards the university student community (primary target audience)
- Post tags relevant departments and programs
- Post includes accessible hashtags (each word is capitalized, such as #NationalPoetryMonth)
- Post provides alt text for any images or graphics (e.g. a brief description of the image in a way someone could understand the image if they could not see it)

Using this checklist has helped us create accessible content that our primary audience finds appealing. This content acknowledges genre conventions and limitations of the platform and features media that drives engagement. We suggest adapting the checklist to align with your writing center's goals, audiences, platforms, and principles. We hope this checklist can be a tool for other writing centers to ease the process of posting content in a rhetorically informed way, as it has for us.

The first three checklist items all deal with Instagram genre conventions. Because Instagram is typically used via mobile app, it is important that we consider user experience for links on the platform. Our center uses links to facilitate sign-ups for events or direct students to sign up for appointments, so it is important we integrate these links into our social media use in a way that is effective and usable. Because Instagram cannot currently hyperlink on a post or in a post caption, the most user-friendly way to link our audience to a website is to use the link-in-bio method (applications like Linktree), wherein we point our audience members to our profile bio to get them to go to the webpage we reference.

The fourth checklist item centers our personal and center-held beliefs in prioritizing privacy and the safety of our consultants. Our center's policy ensures we do not reveal the last names of our consultants to protect their privacy and to create boundaries between the consultant and the writer (so the writer doesn't try to contact them about consulting outside the center). Though we often like to celebrate our consultants and the work they do outside the center, we want to ensure we do not violate their privacy. We also try to communicate with consultants when we'd like to post photos of them on our accounts and ask permission when taking more candid photos of consultants and other Howe Center for Writing Excellence affiliates at events.

The fifth checklist item aims to help maintain our professional brand image and make sure that all content we create represents our work as a center. It is important that we create content that people find visually appealing and want to engage with.

The sixth and seventh checklist items are a reminder to focus our content on our primary target audience in terms of content and style as well as connecting with other departments who circulate our posts and help us better engage our primary audiences. Finally, the last two checklist items are geared toward creating accessible content so we can reach more of our campus and writing center communities.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing that social media can serve as an entry point for our larger campus community and that our digital presences are an extension of our centers, we aim to continue to discover ways to make maintaining social media more sustainable for already-over-extended writing center administrators. We acknowledge that labor constraints often heavily influence whether or not writing centers use social media (May, "Social Media and the Writing Center"; May, "On

Networking the Writing Center"), and we hope that this checklist might offer ways to streamline social media content creation and publication, and be used as a tool for creating accessible, genre-adherent content for their centers.

Our findings reflect what we know of best practices in social media content creation (Adegbola et al.; Christison); consequently, we aim to continue to prioritize creating content that our primary audience will engage with while navigating the ideas and interests of those who collaborate on our social media. As a community of people creating the content, we wanted to find ways to make our practices more consistent regardless of who was generating and implementing ideas.

The consultants, administrators, and staff shape our writing center to make it what it is. Our social media accounts operate similarly. For example, both authors deeply care about issues regarding privacy and surveillance, which prompted our checklist items about image consent. We felt the impacts of this checklist in our own work when we were the primary person in charge of creating and distributing social media content in our center. This work is hard labor, but we think it is important labor. Your center might find it pertinent to change aspects of the checklist to make it work for you, and we encourage you to do so, but we hope that it is a helpful tool in making posting on social media more streamlined and manageable for your writing center.

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Genie Nicole Giaimo. *Unwell Writing Centers: Searching for Wellness in Neoliberal Educational Institutions and Beyond*. **Utah State University Press, 2023.**

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How emotionally, psychologically, and physically well are writing center workers in any given writing center? How do or might writing center administrators support the wellness of peer and professional staff who report to them? Additionally, how might writing center staff support one another through conversation? These questions are at the heart of Genie Nicole Giaimo's timely and thought-provoking recent book, *Unwell Writing Centers: Searching for Wellness in Neoliberal Education Institutions and Beyond* (2023). Giaimo critiques shallow, neoliberal approaches to assuring that employees are well. And they explore radical and transformative approaches to supporting wellness that effectively equip writing center professionals to address everything from everyday stress to major campus-wide or national emergencies.

Published in the wake of Covid-19 and the murder of George Floyd, amid a seemingly endless stream of disturbing news reports of gun violence on college campuses and beyond, Giaimo's book conceptualizes wellness as a critical labor justice issue. They come into conversation with important works in writing and writing center studies such as Nicole I. Caswell et al.'s *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors* (2016) and Courtney Adams Wooten, Jacob Babb, Kristi Murray Costello, and Kate Navickas's edited volume, *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor in Writing Program Administration* (2020). And they give weighty and playful context to their argument about writing center work through references to works such as Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) and Kenny Rogers' "The Gambler."

But Giaimo is no hasty gambler themselves, as they tell us near the end of the book. Instead, they're a meticulous and markedly reflective researcher who is invested in paving the way for more work on wellness. In their book, Giaimo reports on results from a longitudinal study and wellness program. And they interweave their own personal experiences with these results, most notably by discussing their working-class roots on Staten Island, their navigation of higher education as a first-generation college student, and their survival of an active shooter emergency at Ohio State University in fall 2016. They argue that "[o]ur field has a wellness problem, perhaps because our society does too" (8). In Giaimo's words, their book "offers a deep analysis of occupationally specific phenomena that arise in writing center work" to support writing center professionals who may feel unprepared for the job of cultivating meaningful wellness initiatives (11).

Written in three parts, *Unwell Writing Centers* explores the history, efficacy, and future of wellness programs. Part I: Searching for Wellness, consists of three chapters. Chapter One: "Writing Centers and the History of Workplace Wellness Programs" reports on the results of surveys that measured tutors' attitudes toward wellness trainings, and it also provides a history of the wellness

work we see in our places of employment today. Giaimo traces contemporary wellness initiatives back to the positive psychology movement, which ignored systemic power imbalances that inhibit wellness and which was coopted by the business world and subsequently by neoliberal institutions of higher education. Wellness, as many of us know it today, involves, for instance, readily deletable emails about "Wellness Wednesday" and the image of the shrewd ad executive Don Draper doing yoga in the series finale of *Mad Men*. And it exists as it does because of this co-opting. But wellness is salvageable, as Giaimo indicates in the rest of their book, beginning with Chapter Two: "Uncovering and Addressing Workplace Stress in the Writing Center." In this chapter, Giaimo challenges the notion that we should focus on the stress levels of writing center clients by focusing instead on the range of different stressors that might affect tutors, among them workload, job insecurity, social challenges, and sexual harassment, to name just a few. A survey they distributed found that ordinary stressors as opposed to national or campus emergencies most inhibit peer tutors' experiences at work. In Chapter Three: "Conducting Wellness Research and Assessments in Writing Center Studies," the final chapter of the first part of *Unwell Writing Centers*, Giaimo humanizes writing center research by detailing approaches to understanding the feelings and anxieties that tutors bring with them to work. Dubbed the most useful chapter of the book by Elizabeth H. Boquet in her foreword, this chapter provides details about Giaimo's research process and designs that might serve as a model for similar work. These details address survey design, interview design, and approaches to conducting analysis.

Part II of *Unwell Writing Centers*, titled Finding Wellness Interventions that Work, consists of two chapters. In the first of these, Chapter Four: "Incorporating Mindfulness into Intentional Tutoring Practice and Policy," Giaimo explores the Zen Buddhist origins of mindfulness and Jon Kabat-Zinn's role in popularizing the practice in the United States through the establishment of the Center for Mindfulness, Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts. Based on tutors' responses to a survey on their engagement with mindfulness trainings Giaimo conducted in the writing center, Giaimo proposes that writing center administrators should make mindfulness optional and allow for critique of it for tutors to benefit most from the practice. In turn, in Chapter Five: "Emergency Planning and Risk Assessment in the Writing Center," which is one of the most useful chapters in the book, in my opinion, Giaimo applies the premium that writing centers put on collaboration to emergency planning, which involves providing instructions for safety and survival in events like the 9/11 terrorist attack, Hurricane Katrina, and the Virginia Tech shooting. Giaimo points out problems with blanket instructions to call the police, who might pose a threat to Black tutors, as well as potentially confounding directives to *run, hide, fight*, a now standard directive. Giaimo argues that emergency planning for any campus and writing center should be a collaborative process akin to tutoring. It should involve a range of stakeholders to promote inclusion and understanding. Giaimo, too, argues that processing emergencies after they conclude is just as important as preparing for them.

The final part of the book, Part III: Looking to the Future of Wellness Work, includes two chapters that explore the relationship between minoritized and historically marginalized workers and wellness work. In Chapter Six: "Toward an Intersectional Praxis of Emotional Labor," Giaimo provides a brilliant interrogation of the history and meaning of emotional labor, tracing the term back to Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1979). Giaimo explains the three criteria for labor to count as emotional in Hochschild's view. According to Hochschild, the worker performing the emotional labor must 1) be public-facing, 2) have responsibility over employees' affective labor, and 3) have an expectation to produce an emotion in their audience. Giaimo explains astutely that tutors conduct emotional labor because they're expected "to produce good feeling" in writing center clients, and if they struggle to do so, they

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may experience feelings such as anxiety, guilt, or shame (110). Without "clear workplace expectations and protective policies," Giaimo posits, tutors—particularly those who are marginalized—run the risk of burning out (116). The final chapter of Part III, Chapter Seven: "Locating Wellness in Black Liberation Social Movements," is yet another gem in Giaimo's book. In it, they explore the relationship between wellness and systemic oppression, particularly oppression based on race and gender. They juxtapose neoliberal models for wellness with a radical Black feminist understanding of self-love and self-care that scholars such as Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks theorize. According to Giaimo, writing centers, which are historically white and middle-class spaces, should embrace radical Black feminist self-love and self-care, which promote "sustainable, politically engaged, and BIPOC-focused wellness" (120). In the contemporary world, these kinds of self-love and self-care are evident in initiatives such as GirlTrek and Body Politic. As Giaimo explains, echoing arguments that Jackie Grutsch McKinney makes in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* (2013), tutors with marginalized identities don't see writing centers as inherently safe or welcoming, and writing center administrators thus have a responsibility to engage in antiracist wellness interventions that pervade professional development and writing center policy-making.

Giaimo's brief conclusion reflects on the state of higher education in a late-stage capitalist context, arguing that engaging in radical as opposed to neoliberal wellness work is essential for writing center administrators and for tutors who would benefit from an increased focus on wellness. And Giaimo follows their conclusion with five appendices that provide readers with practical templates for assessment, emergency planning, and professional development activities.

Near the beginning of their book, Giaimo notes that this is a book they wish they had been handed "as a new writing center director or even a new graduate tutor," and as I finished the relatively slim yet rich and enriching volume, I realized that I agree with Giaimo wholeheartedly (11). I wish I had been handed this book sooner, and I imagine other readers of it will have similar sentiments, particularly if, like me, they want to better equip themselves to handle emergencies or if they know little about wellness and would appreciate an opportunity to get their bearings. Indeed, upon reflection, I realize that Giaimo's book names a concern that writing centers have danced around at conferences and in professional development for quite a while. And it provides readers with a foundation from which to build policies and practices that attend to the diverse intersectional identities of their writing centers' inhabitants. Like Caswell et al.'s *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors* (2016) and, more recently, Webster's *Queerly Centered* (2021), Giaimo's book effectively centers the workers who do the hard work that defines our discipline, and doing so allows Giaimo to give readers key tools they need to do our hard work well.

Through *Unwell Writing Centers*, Giaimo establishes themselves as a leading scholar of writing center labor. *Unwell Writing Centers* is a triumph that should be required reading for all writing center professionals who seek to mentor consultants responsibly. It's a text born out of our fraught historical moment that brilliantly challenges the largely empty wellness initiatives that institutions have foisted upon workers who are struggling with everything from everyday stressors to major burnout. And with great scholarly care, it offers a way forward for more research about wellness as well as more meaningful wellness initiatives in writing centers.

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Tutors' Column: Generative AI and Linguistic Equity for EL Writers Across Disciplines

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With the rise of AI tools, my university's Writing Center has heard a shared sentiment expressed among EL (English learning) students: "I know what I want to say. I just want ChatGPT to help me say it." Whether we are for or against this use, students are intrigued and experimenting with AI's capabilities to assist in their writing process. With informed and cultivated practice, I see potential for AI tools to promote linguistic equity in college writing for EL students. However, this same potential may tempt struggling students to disengage from their writing process or forego critical thinking altogether in favor of a chatbot response. Writing center tutors are now faced with helping students distinguish between uses of AI that promote academic development and those that do not.

BRADY HALL

Recent studies have identified benefits and pitfalls of GenAI for student writers. For example, Santosh Mahapatra's mixed-methods study found that ChatGPT, when used as a feedback tool, significantly improves undergraduate EL students' academic writing skills, with participants reporting enhanced clarity, vocabulary, and structural organization (12). A systematic review of twenty one studies on GenAI integration in L2 writing classrooms affirmed these benefits, finding that GenAI improves grammar and lexicogrammar, boosts confidence, and promotes genre awareness (Wang). While GenAI can be helpful for EL students, Mahapatra found that these users worried about loss of originality if they were not provided with proper guidance about AI use (12). Further, Hui Wang's review found engagement with GenAI tools can promote overreliance, diminish critical thinking, and homogenize student voice. While it is important to recognize and mitigate dangers to academic integrity and development that arise with GenAI, I think it is similarly important to acknowledge its potential for equitable support.

My university serves a large cohort of international non-native English speakers. Many of these students face disproportionate challenges when attempting to understand and respond to professors' expectations. This makes AI assistance an attractive proposition. When deciding how they will handle these students' questions about AI, writing tutors often must contend with ambiguous ethical frameworks, lack of consistent policy, and unclear expectations for student use. These factors make it difficult for tutors to respond to questions such as: Is there an appropriate use of AI that serves linguistic equity? How might tutors engage in a useful and ethical way? Can training and non-directive tutoring invite critical engagement with AI tools? I found myself grappling with these questions during an appointment with an EL student.

The student, who was a biology major, arrived for an appointment with a handwritten draft of their essay. Though the sentences were difficult to read and the student struggled with grammar conventions and rhetorical effectiveness, they seemed to have a grasp on the course content and were able to express that understanding verbally. They asked for permission from me, a writing

center tutor, to input their draft in a generative AI chatbot and reconstruct the essay through a series of prompts. In response, I asked whether the professor's assignment, rubric, or syllabus provided any guidance or hint of an AI policy. They said no. I advised them to contact the professor and ask whether this use of GenAI would be appropriate. Lacking any institutional or professor policy, I relied on our center's principles to advise them: our center maintains that tutors should (1) not write for students, (2) respect the policies of the institution and professors, and (3) help students to develop academically. In previous consultations, GenAI for pre-writing activities had been encouraged, but not for revising drafts. Consequently, I counseled the student to limit AI use to idea development until they received explicit permission from their instructor.

Since we couldn't expect to hear from the professor immediately, I had to figure out how to approach the consultation in the moment. I decided to help the student navigate GenAI in a limited capacity. I suggested that we work on a separate document and refrain from submitting AI-enhanced work until their professor responded. We typed the draft into ChatGPT and engaged in dialogic prompting, exploring its ability to revise and reorganize the paper based on ideas outlined in the original draft. With this AI-enhanced draft, we spent the remaining time comparing the output against the rubric for the assignment. I asked the student to explain how expectations were or were not met and we ended the appointment with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the output and, broadly, writing with AI tools. In other words, I tried to engage the student in critical thinking that would support their development as a writer.

After the appointment, I reflected on the implicit assumptions I relied upon by engaging AI in this way. I realized I implicitly supported the idea that biology curriculum prioritizes content knowledge over writing ability by focusing more on refining the final product than on practicing writing skills, although I did try to mitigate this by encouraging the student to reflect on their own and AI's abilities. I also assumed that AI could function as a tool for synthesizing and refining ideas while still upholding the student's original contributions. The final text, even if it had not been wholly constructed by the student, was a derivation of the original contribution. The final work included appropriate citations to the generative AI model and provided a roadmap for their work from unedited contribution to final draft. I am unaware but curious as to whether the student submitted this work or discussed future use with the professor. As a writing center tutor, I'm cautious to deem a use of AI as appropriate or inappropriate without established guidelines or policies.

Some students turn to AI to avoid work in its entirety. But I don't think this was the goal of the student in my appointment. This student arrived with a draft that showed engagement with the material and an attempt to synthesize their understanding into an essay. The roadblock, here, seemed to be a struggle with formal English writing conventions, including grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorically-effective sentence structure. I worry that denying EL students use of a tool that can make writing in a foreign language easier may perpetuate racist practices that writing centers have tried to disband. This perspective reflects Ellen Cushman's push for EL students' agency in negotiating their linguistic and rhetorical choices (236). Cynthia L. Selfe and Richard J. Selfe, in "The Politics of the Interface," argue that technologies shape and are shaped by power dynamics, creating inequities in access and perceptions of legitimacy (481). Inequities can be reflected, and even encouraged by how professors and students engage GenAI, particularly for EL students who may rely on AI tools to overcome linguistic barriers. Nathan Lindberg's 2025 essay argues that embracing GenAI in writing centers can promote linguistic equity for EL students, advocating for structured training and policy frameworks to ensure ethical, effective use. Insight from instructors

and researchers in EL student writing will be invaluable to this discussion and the development of culturally informed, antiracist pedagogical practices in the age of AI.

AI's presence in the writing center isn't limited to EL students. And it certainly isn't limited to the disciplines of English or biology. In 2010, David Sheridan and James Inman argued that writing centers must adapt to support multiliteracies, including digital literacies, across diverse fields (23). Most every discipline relies on writing as a tool to synthesize, communicate, and internalize understanding of content, even if writing instruction isn't directly written into course objectives or curriculum. With this in mind, addressing and accounting for generative AI's role in the writing process for students, and EL students especially, requires an understanding of faculty objectives, evolving employer/professional writing practices, and culturally competent tutoring. As we move into a world of AI-enhanced writing, I urge writing tutors to consider linguistic equity arguments for EL students and how we might facilitate easier and effective integration of AI into teaching the writing process.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Harry Denny and Trixie Smith Awarded IWCA Outstanding Service Award

Professor Harry Denny of the Department of the Department of English and the Director of the Writing Center at Purdue University, and Professor Trixie Smith, of the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures and the Director of the Writing Center at Michigan State University, were recently honored at the International Writing Centers Association Conference (IWCA) in Cincinnati, Ohio, by being awarded the IWCA Muriel Harris Outstanding Service Award (MHOSA) for 2025. The award recognizes outstanding service that has benefited the writing center community in significant and broad-based ways. Candidates are appraised on their record of service and accomplishment. Particular attention is given to collegial support of the nominations. This award represents the pinnacle of achievement in the international writing center community, since service is integral to any writing center's mission and function, and writing center personnel strive to build collaborative and productive relationships both within and outside their institutions. The award has been given sixteen times since its inception in 1984.

Both Professor Smith's and Professor Denny's nominating materials persuaded the selection committee to give them this award. Nomination materials showed the career-long commitment they have made and demonstrated to the writing center community, through such work as taking leadership roles in writing center professional organizations, mentoring students and tutors, along with scholarship focusing on writing center theory and practice, queer studies, identity, and history.

February 26-28, 2026: Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference
Location: University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama
Theme: Leading from the Center
Contact: karichards@una.edu; kem.roper@athens.edu
Website: https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/conference

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