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Editor's Note

Omar Yacoub
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As we begin the first issue of 2026, many writing centers are navigating a moment of rapid change. Generative AI tools continue to reshape conversations about writing, teaching, and authorship, while writing centers simultaneously deepen their commitments to accessibility, reflective pedagogy, and community engagement. In many ways, this moment invites us to revisit familiar questions about writing center work: how we support writers' development, how we collaborate across campus, and how we respond thoughtfully to emerging technologies and evolving student needs.

The contributions in this issue reflect the adaptability and creativity that characterize writing center practice. Across a range of contexts, from tutor education and campus programming to workshop assessment and accessible tutoring practices, the authors explore ways writing centers can respond to new challenges while continuing to center collaboration, inquiry, and writer agency.

In "Improving Grammar: Pushing Back Against AI-Assisted Grammar Technologies by Going Back to Basics," Kristi Girdharry challenges writing centers to rethink the long-standing claim that "we don't do grammar." By framing grammar instruction as improvisational and rhetorical, the article offers practical strategies for tutor education that help consultants question AI-generated corrections and support writers in making informed language choices.

In "Writing Centers as a Bridge Between Silos: Interdisciplinary Conversations on AI and Writing," Salena Anderson, Jonathan Bull, Ameena Madani, and Zainab Albujasim describe a writing center–led campus panel designed to foster interdisciplinary dialogue about generative AI. Reflecting on the planning and outcomes of the event, the authors present a model for how writing centers can bring together students, faculty, and staff to promote critical AI literacy and facilitate collaborative conversations about the evolving relationship between AI and writing.

In "Workshop Assessments as Tools for Learning: Integrating Prior Knowledge and Reflection Surveys into an APA Citation Workshop," Katie Garahan and April Markowski explore how writing center workshop assessments can function not only as evaluation tools but also as opportunities for learning. Drawing on survey data from multiple APA citation workshops, the authors demonstrate how prior-knowledge and reflection surveys can help participants connect new information to existing knowledge while enabling writing center staff to refine workshop design and instruction.

In this issue's Tutors' Column, "Supporting Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf Writers," Meara Haggerty reflects on her experiences as a writing tutor and speech-language pathology student to highlight the importance of adaptive tutoring practices. Drawing on both scholarship and personal

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experience, Meara offers practical strategies, from thoughtful positioning and pacing to the use of gestures, notes, and assistive technologies, to help tutors create more accessible and responsive consultations for deaf and hard-of-hearing writers.

The contributions in this issue highlight the many ways writing center practitioners continue to adapt their work in response to evolving institutional, technological, and pedagogical landscapes. Whether reconsidering the role of grammar instruction in the age of AI, fostering interdisciplinary campus conversations about emerging technologies, refining workshop assessment practices, or developing more accessible tutoring strategies, the authors in this issue remind us that writing centers remain dynamic spaces of experimentation and reflection. We hope these pieces invite readers to continue such conversations in their own centers and institutions.

Improv-ing Grammar: Pushing Back Against AI-Assisted Grammar Technologies by Going Back to Basics

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KRISTI GIRDHARRY

I spent years learning a foreign language in school. My first Spanish class in seventh grade was full immersion: Señor Arsenault spoke no English, so we relied on mimicry, repetition, and trial-and-error. It often felt like an improv class where mistakes kept the scene alive, often with laughter. In high school, I aced quizzes and tests through the highest classes offered, but I was never anywhere close to fluency. It was much later, living with a host family in Costa Rica and teaching English to children, that I truly learned to use the language. My conversations were full of stumbles and mistakes. Some were embarrassing, like telling my host mother I felt *embarazada* (pregnant) after a long night out, and some confusing, like informing a colleague I had bought *fábrica* (a factory) so my students could make things. These errors were met with laughter, correction, and, eventually, clarity.

Looking back, I recognize something fundamental about learning languages: mistakes aren't just inevitable; they're essential. Fluency emerges from engaging in a messy, improvisational process. For writing center directors and tutors, this same principle—mistakes as generative—offers a frame for how we can approach grammar training and genAI feedback in our centers. Yet, in writing center work, we still often avoid explicit discussions of grammar, even though students—all language learners in some form or another—can benefit from direct engagement with the mechanics of language in the contexts of their own assignments. The stakes, however, are not the same for every writer. Multilingual students often encounter genAI tools that flag or erase legitimate language practices, while bidialectal students may see their home dialects coded as "incorrect." For monolingual students, the risk is different: they may over-rely on these tools without recognizing how rhetorical context shapes grammar choices.

This piece offers guidance for both a writing center practicum course and continued staff education. It explores what it means to approach grammar in a way that resists both passive genAI acceptance and prescriptive rigidity and argues for an improvisational approach that mirrors the way language is actually learned and used. Just as language learners gain fluency by making and analyzing mistakes, writing consultants can develop confidence in grammar by actively working through examples, questioning AI-generated corrections, and recognizing when a rule should be applied or ignored. By embracing grammar as a dynamic tool rather than a fixed standard, writing centers can empower students to make informed, intentional choices.

THE "WE DON'T DO GRAMMAR" LEGACY

For years, writing centers have distanced themselves from grammar instruction. Many of us were trained with the mantra that writing centers "don't do grammar," a stance meant to push back against outdated, reductive perceptions of writing centers as fix-it shops (North). Yet recent

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scholarship has complicated—and, in many cases, dismantled—that mantra, showing how the refusal to engage sentence-level work can reinscribe deficit discourses and racialized hierarchies within the writing center itself (Cirillo-McCarthy et al.; Sales; Lockett). As Nancy Grimm reminds us, writing centers' "good intentions" often mask underlying power dynamics: avoiding grammar entirely can, paradoxically, reproduce the same exclusions it seeks to resist. Scholars have urged a reframing of grammar as rhetorical practice, not mechanical correction, arguing that our avoidance risks abandoning precisely the students most marginalized by linguistic gatekeeping. Others avoid explicit grammar instruction due to concerns about reinforcing a standardized form of English as the default, fearing that to teach grammar is to uphold linguistic hierarchies that marginalize non-dominant varieties of languaging. Bruce Horner et al. similarly argue for resisting monolingualist ideologies in writing pedagogy at large. These concerns are valid. But in our hesitancy to "not do grammar" or to default to its position as a "later-order concern," have we ceded too much ground and left students without critical engagement on grammatical choices?

In the absence of that engagement, a new authority has quietly stepped in: AI-powered grammar tools. Many conversations with my undergraduate writing consultants often focus on Grammarly, since the tool is built into students' documents, though Word's grammar checker and generative platforms like ChatGPT also play a role. These technologies differ—and change so rapidly that it can be hard to keep up—but each risks applying rules indiscriminately and promoting a narrow vision of correctness with limited regard for rhetorical context.

In my writing center, this shift is visible in how students interact with Grammarly. Some open it during consultations, while others arrive with drafts already "cleaned" by the software. Tutors rarely recommend it, yet students often request to check their papers against it. In these moments, consultants observe a recurring pattern: genAI suggestions are accepted quickly with little reflection on why a change was recommended. Of course, not every student uses the tool uncritically. Some find it genuinely helpful, such as multilingual writers who appreciate clear explanations of language patterns. That said, and as Abigail Patchen notes, genAI can help students meet initial goals like improving transitions or grammar, but it cannot replace the reflective, relational, and confidence-building dimensions of tutoring.

The risk is that genAI teaches writers to outsource judgment. These programs enforce a version of correctness that can erase voice and reduce writerly confidence. Students should have the option to engage in a space where grammar can be approached rhetorically, collaboratively, and contextually. Without that option, writing centers risk leaving grammar instruction—and the teaching of judgment itself—to algorithms. To resist this passivity, tutors need a way of talking about grammar that avoids prescriptive rigidity while still engaging the mechanics of language. Rhetorical grammar (Kolln and Gray) offers such a framework, emphasizing that grammatical choices shape meaning and audience response rather than simply conforming to correctness, which fits naturally with the improvisational stance tutors often adopt when they help writers talk through a sentence and test alternatives.

Now could be a time for writing centers to actively reclaim grammar instruction as a rhetorical practice. This doesn't mean returning to grammar drills or rigid correctness but rather developing consultants' confidence in explaining why a grammatical choice works or doesn't in context. Of course, some tutors have a natural intuition about grammar and can articulate it easily; others may be less comfortable naming rules or conventions. Training does not need to turn every consultant into a grammarian, nor could it; instead, it can focus on building rhetorical awareness to recognize how rules shift across genres and disciplines and offer strategies for facilitating conversations. If writing centers are spaces of inquiry, then grammar—one of the most fraught,

consequential aspects of writing—should not be excluded from that inquiry. Given that rhetorical grammar values flexibility and experimentation, it complements the improv-like responsiveness that characterizes much of tutoring.

WRITING CENTER WORK AS IMPROV

Tutoring is inherently improvisational: no two sessions are alike, and consultants must adjust dynamically to each student's needs. As Jill Stukenberg suggests, effective tutoring works on the principle of "Yes, and…," building on what writers bring rather than shutting it down. Steve Sherwood extends this idea by framing tutoring as an art that requires kairos in terms of knowing when to ask, when to push, and when to let a choice stand. This is especially true for grammar, where no single rulebook can account for every situation. A consultant might pause over a passive construction and ask whether revising strengthens clarity or whether leaving it better fits disciplinary norms. In these moments, artistry lies not in supplying a "right" answer but in keeping the conversation open. Allowing a writer to test a nonstandard construction, then weighing its effect, can turn uncertainty into discovery.

In practice, tutor preparation should focus less on memorizing rules and more on rehearsing responsiveness in the moment. Brief training activities—such as debating an AI-suggested revision or rewriting a sentence multiple ways to test rhythm and emphasis—help consultants experience grammar as improvisation rather than prescription. In an article addressed to tutors working with student writers, Adar Cohen describes improv techniques like Word Ball (rapidly generating words without overthinking) and One-Word Story (building sentences collaboratively) that are meant to energize work with student writers. Both can adapt easily to grammar discussions: Word Ball emphasizes rhythm and modifier placement, while One-Word Story draws attention to how structures accumulate meaning across a sentence. These games reinforce that tutors need not have every answer; what matters is sustaining inquiry and play.

Just as tutors learn to say "Yes, and…" in response to writers' ideas, they can apply the same stance when working with AI-generated grammar suggestions by slowing down, testing alternatives, and weighing rhetorical effect. In my center, we build this flexibility into training through activities like a Grammar Presentation assignment, which offers structured, low-stakes practice with grammar as rhetorical choice. This foundation enables consultants to respond to writers' uncertainties and the prescriptive tendencies of genAI tools.

TEACHING GRAMMAR AND RESISTING PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE OF GENAI SUGGESTIONS

While writing center consultants can learn to navigate ambiguity and respond dynamically to each writer's needs, genAI tools tend to operate differently. When used without much guidance, they often default to narrow senses of language expression and a standardized style of English prose. To be fair to the technology, it is important to acknowledge that genAI can be prompted to provide different kinds of grammar feedback and explanations, and that it sometimes does a better job with certain registers, dialects, or varieties of English than others. In that sense, genAI can be flexible but only when users know how to frame the request effectively and provide context. A writing consultant, by contrast, can recognize the broader context of a student's writing in real time and respond with thoughtful, flexible guidance rather than fixed prescriptions. While even genAI can be supplied with an audience, purpose, or sample text to tailor its output, the consultant has the advantage of responding collaboratively and improvisationally, making grammar discussions feel like discovery over rule enforcement.

One way I actively work with grammar in my writing center practicum course is through a Grammar Presentation (GP) assignment. Students are required to teach a grammar or punctuation concept using at least two different sources. In addition to designing an interactive in-class activity to reinforce their lesson, they craft a separate handout for asynchronous learning. Because we center grammar—and thus concepts like voice and style as well—throughout the course, it allows us to unpack language politics and policies over several months instead of treating grammar as a one-off unit.

For example, in one GP on pronouns and inclusive language, a student explored the challenges genAI tools face when navigating the singular "they." After prompting several platforms to work with sentences like *Taylor brought their laptop*, the student noticed that many suggestions either rewrote the sentence to avoid the pronoun entirely or erroneously flagged it as grammatically incorrect. This led to a class-wide discussion about evolving usage norms as well as about how automated feedback can reinforce outdated linguistic rules and, in this case, subtly marginalize nonbinary identities.

Other GPs have focused on passive voice and commas, revealing how even the smallest grammatical choices carry rhetorical weight. In one session, for example, students saw how passive constructions in lab reports or history essays served disciplinary purposes, even as Grammarly flagged them as "weak." In another, they debated the Oxford comma and tried to discern when the genAI would or would not use it. In an act of improv myself, I was inspired to show my class a common grammar construction I see on LinkedIn, where the posters are clearly using ChatGPT: "The real danger of genAI in writing isn't automation, but imagination reduced to prediction." After a presentation on independent clauses and coordinating conjunctions, we stopped to think about what the comma was accomplishing in this context. What would happen if we took it out? What if we tried parallelism instead? What other ways could we revise this sentence to make it sound less like ChatGPT? These moments remind us that the grammatical structure genAI produces comes from somewhere, and what genAI calls an error might instead be a choice.

On my end, I find this approach works better as continual reinforcement that language is not neutral (Horner et al.). However, doing this work and actually knowing the rules helps consultants to feel more confident in their work. As one tutor-in-training mentioned in a course reflection, "I used to avoid grammar questions because I wasn't sure I had the answers, but now I feel like I can slow down with a writer and figure it out together." Another noted, "Learning the rules makes me more comfortable questioning AI suggestions instead of just trusting them." Grammar knowledge, when framed rhetorically, can build agency and the confidence to pause, question, and decide rather than defer.

Once they move from the practicum into regular tutoring, this kind of training has led to writing consultants countering passive acceptance by explicitly discussing genAI feedback with writers. In some sessions, this might mean opening Grammarly or ChatGPT together and reviewing its recommendations line by line; in others, it may involve asking what changes the tool has already made. By slowing down to ask "Why might it have suggested this?" or "Does this revision help your audience understand your point?," consultants shift the focus from correction to choice. For example, one consultant and student examined Grammarly's suggestion to combine a series of short sentences into a compound one. The student chose to keep the short sentences because they created urgency in a persuasive piece. In another session, a consultant and writer used ChatGPT to rephrase a technical sentence three different ways, comparing which version best suited the writer's disciplinary audience. In both cases, the consultant helped the student see

grammar as something to be weighed against purpose and context, not merely "fixed." As Abigail Patchen and Dani Lester observe in recent *WLN* Tutors' Columns, students often accept AI-generated feedback uncritically, assuming correctness without understanding its logic. This is particularly concerning when tools like Grammarly reinforce Standardized Academic English (SEAE) norms without considering audience, genre, or the value of linguistic diversity (see, especially, Inoue's *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*).

Rhetorical grammar offers a productive way to reframe these conversations. It treats grammar as a repertoire of choices that shape meaning and audience response (Kolln and Gray). Introducing this idea early in tutor training helps consultants view grammar as flexible, situational, and expressive—precisely the stance that allows them to question the narrow standards built into genAI tools.

Still, even confident tutors sometimes worry about "not knowing enough." This is where improvisation becomes crucial. Just as group presentations help tutors see grammar as rhetorical, ongoing staff training can give them concrete ways to navigate uncertainty when genAI feedback—or a writer's question—complicates a rule. In our center, we frame these as *improv strategies for grammar*: quick, repeatable questions and tactics that shift the focus from correctness to inquiry.

IMPROV MOVES FOR TUTORS: SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Improvising with grammar doesn't mean having all the answers—it means knowing how to keep the conversation going. We could frame this as a simple decision tree:

1. Identify what type of issue the genAI has flagged (clarity, correctness, or style).
2. Ask whether the suggestion supports the writer's purpose.
3. If the answer is uncertain, research it together.

To make this practical, we encourage tutors to practice a handful of "moves":

- **Slow it down:** "What do you notice about this sentence? How might the change the AI suggests affect clarity, rhythm, or emphasis?"
- **Name the purpose:** "Who's your audience here? Would this version sound more natural to them?"
- **Offer alternatives:** "Let's look at two or three ways to phrase this—what effect does each have?"
- **Model inquiry:** "I'm not sure either. Let's look it up together and see what the guides say. Then we can decide whether that fits your goal."
- **Push back on AI defaults:** "Grammarly flagged this passive voice—do you think making the subject more visible helps your point, or is it better to highlight the process?"
- **Reframe correctness as choice:** "Both versions are technically fine. Which one better matches your style and intention?"

Though these examples look scripted, their purpose is to serve as cues—like prompts in an improv scene—rather than fixed lines to memorize. The goal is to give tutors flexible entry points for spontaneous, rhetorical conversations about grammar. These sample questions could easily become a quick-reference handout that tutors keep at their desks during sessions or serve as

prompts for staff-meeting role plays. If anything like our practicum discussions, the follow-up conversation often highlights how genAI feedback tends to flatten nuance, while consultants can help writers see grammar as a series of informed choices that truly represent their own thinking.

CONCLUSION

At its core, writing center work has never been just about correctness: it has been about inquiry, agency, process, and rhetorical awareness. But the rise of AI-assisted grammar tools challenges this work in new ways, tempting students—and even instructors—into passive acceptance of machine-generated feedback. In this moment, we have a choice: we can allow genAI to dictate grammar instruction, or we can step in to ensure that students engage with language critically. The latter requires embracing grammar as an improvisational act that values mistakes and collaboration as the path to fluency and confidence.

This requires practice. Whether through structured training courses or informal staff meetings, writing centers can integrate exercises that help tutors sharpen their understanding of rhetorical grammar and develop strategies for engaging genAI critically. Directors might, for example, set up short workshops where tutors compare Grammarly's corrections of the same passage with feedback they generate themselves and then discuss the rhetorical consequences of each choice. Another training activity could involve fact-checking AI-produced grammar handouts, identifying what is useful and where the advice oversimplifies or erases nuance. Consultants might also practice "AI role-play," where one acts as the tool and the other pushes back with questions about audience, genre, or purpose, modeling how to guide writers in real sessions. Assignments that require consultants to analyze student writing alongside genAI suggestions provide opportunities to move beyond surface correction and toward critical engagement.

Like actors learning to improvise only after internalizing the rhythm of a scene, tutors need a working grasp of foundational grammar before they can respond flexibly and critically to the choices writers make and the corrections genAI tools propose. It is true that not every consultant comes in with the same level of confidence in this area, but experience shows that all consultants can grow through repeated practice and structured opportunities to test their knowledge. For those who already have strong grammatical intuition, training provides a way to make that tacit knowledge explicit. For others, even modest gains are sufficient to support meaningful conversations, since the goal is not encyclopedic mastery but the ability to ask questions, notice patterns, and help writers reflect. These kinds of activities create space for consultants and writers to grapple with the complexities of language and to consider how grammatical choices interact with style, identity, and rhetorical purpose. For directors, the task is not to produce grammar experts but to build a culture of curiosity where tutors feel confident improvising with writers in the face of genAI's prescriptive tendencies, building more nuanced understandings of genAI output that I imagine will only help when tackling issues that go beyond the sentence level.

Note

This manuscript began as notes from my teaching journal that gradually became a more theoretical piece. At one revision stage, I used ChatGPT to explore how the work might be reframed for a practitioner-scholar audience. I asked prompts such as "How could this argument be clearer for tutors rather than faculty?" and "What sequencing would strengthen the practical takeaway?" The responses offered modest suggestions about organization and emphasis, and they helped me step back from my initial arrangement. They did not determine the direction or substance of the manuscript. The development of examples, refinement of claims, and shaping of the argument took place through my own revision work and, most importantly, through engagement with the editorial team.

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Writing Centers as a Bridge Between Silos: Interdisciplinary Conversations on AI and Writing

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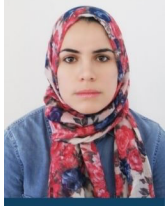
ZAINAB ALBUJASIM

Even on small campuses, faculty, staff, and students may experience academic silos that compartmentalize our work and discourage interdisciplinary collaboration. Such was the case in Fall 2022 with the launch of the free version of ChatGPT. At our institution, we each experienced the sudden prevalence of generative AI (GenAI) a bit differently. Some of us were already researching artificial intelligence; others were startled by that first AI-generated draft in our grading queue. Some of us joined larger conversations through the Wcenter Listserv, while others exchanged emails with peers across campus. We quickly realized some faculty and students were largely unaware of relevant conversations and resources on AI and writing, and even colleagues who were well-informed were interested in larger campus conversations. In the spirit of "From Silos to Synergies" (Holly-Wells et al.) and *Weaving Knowledge Together: Writing Centers and Collaboration* (Haviland, et al.), our team, which included faculty, staff, and a student tutor, decided to offer a collaborative panel discussion facilitated by the writing center to begin the larger campus conversation about GenAI. In this essay, we share the process and ideas that shaped this panel as an example of collaborative writing center programming aimed at breaking down silos and promoting deeper understanding of GenAI and writing.

Our professional societies have increasingly emphasized the importance of fostering critical AI literacy, which the MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force defines as understanding "not just how AI models work but also about the risk, rewards, capacities, and complications of AI tools" (Byrd et al. 11). The Task Force, in its first working paper, recommends that institutions prioritize critical AI literacy for faculty and administrators (11). In its second paper, the Task Force focuses on policies promoting AI literacy. The third paper emphasizes fostering a culture of AI literacy on campuses, especially for GenAI, which is defined by Kim Martineau as "deep-learning models that can generate high-quality text, images, and other content based on the data they were trained on." These position papers show the trajectory of one set of conversations in writing studies with increasing integration of AI literacy into various dimensions of writing programs, including writing centers.

With the growing emphasis on conversations between faculty, administrators, and students regarding AI literacy, the writing center's opportunity to facilitate related interdisciplinary

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conversations has only become more vital. The speed of AI innovation and time constraints in the classroom and in publication may limit how teaching and research can respond to writing-related AI developments in real time. Further, while teaching and learning centers frequently focus on faculty professional development, multisubject student tutoring centers may not have the same expertise in the writing process as writing centers. Each of these stakeholders has an important voice in the campus conversation about GenAI; however, writing centers, campus hubs for interactions between students, faculty, and staff with deep expertise in writing and writing processes, can foster truly interdisciplinary conversations on technological developments and how they impact campus writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing centers may serve as bridges on their campuses. Jennifer Albanese and Christine Fena invoke a bridge metaphor when considering collaborations between the library and the writing center, arguing that "breaking down barriers and providing easily traversable bridges between research and writing support is paramount in helping students engage in effective and meaningful research and writing processes" (18). The writing center boasts a history of engaging students and faculty across campus to conceptualize writing and the writing process within the larger campus culture. For instance, Mark Waldo argues for writing centers as "the compositional heart of the institution," highlighting the center's leadership roles in both supporting student writers across the writing process and consulting with writing instructors (78). More recently, Erica Cirillo-McCarthy et al. offer other types of writing insight and campus leadership, helping to highlight deficit discourse related to multilingual student writing. They argue, "Not only do writing centers have a responsibility to examine how institutional practices impact their local contexts, they must also remain reflective in their framing of these narratives as they engage with their campus" (70). The writing center's unique positioning in relationship to the whole student body and to instructors allows them to advocate for their students and for a commitment to writing process, and it likewise situates writing centers as effective leaders for facilitating interdisciplinary campus conversation on the relationship between AI and writing processes.

Writing centers have responded in a variety of ways to GenAI, with the 2024 IWCA conference highlighting "Technology-Enhanced Writing." Some writing centers provide campus guidance on GenAI. For instance, the University of Alabama's writing center emphasizes the value of the writing process in promoting student engagement even in the AI era; they also note that ChatGPT sometimes generates false citations (Dayton and Buck). To add further caution for those considering GenAI for idea generation and drafting, Hao-Ping Lee et al. show that "higher confidence in GenAI is associated with less critical thinking, while higher self-confidence is associated with more critical thinking" (1). Dani Lester, at Utah Valley University's writing center, thus encourages students to "ditch GenAI's analysis," prioritizing their own views.

While there are concerns around incorporating GenAI into the writing process, students must develop critical digital literacy to evaluate whether, when, and how to use (or not use) GenAI in their writing (Anderson). Best practices related to AI and the writing process, based on replicable, aggregable, data-supported (RAD) research, are actively being established. For instance, the MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force provides recommendations (Byrd et al.), like those previously mentioned.

Writing centers may foster and extend these same conversations on their campuses, drawing from and contributing to research on best practices. The conversation continues as writers explore new GenAI technologies and as insights on GenAI's human impacts emerge (Lee et al.). As strong collaborators (Albanese and Fena) and advocates for student writers (Cirillo-McCarthy

et al.), writing centers can facilitate responsive and proactive campus conversations about GenAI literacy and writing.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Valparaiso University is a comprehensive university of 3,000 students with a mostly domestic undergraduate population and a mostly international graduate population. At the center of campus is the library, which houses several academic support services, including the writing center.

The Judith L. Beumer Writing Center has a rich history of student-centered programming and cross-campus collaboration. Our center focuses on peer-to-peer tutoring; however, we also offer programs like our recent "What Does My Professor Want in this Paper?" that involve collaboration with faculty from across campus. In addition, the writing center uses WCOnline to communicate with students, faculty, and staff about opportunities; thus, the writing center is well-positioned to foster conversations across departments and to reach diverse student populations across campus.

Prior to the writing center's AI and writing panel, campus conversations around GenAI had been limited. The most notable discussion was a small faculty learning community on AI offered through our teaching and learning center, meeting biweekly for part of spring 2023. The small faculty group did not include students, further reinforcing academic silos in a time when the community needed to come together.

PROGRAM FORMAT: A WRITING CENTER PANEL DISCUSSION

In March 2023, our writing center offered a panel discussion with a question-and-answer session. The panel idea originated from a conversation between the then writing center director and the university's former writing center director, who is also English faculty. Both colleagues had attended a 2023 CCCC panel on GenAI together and decided to bring the conversation to campus. Our panel, moderated by the director, included two computer science professors, one English professor, one library science professor, one student writing center consultant from the physician assistant program, and the writing center director. We selected this group of colleagues to represent student, faculty, and staff voices and the interdisciplinary nature of AI literacy for writing.

We became an informal bridge across our departments and between faculty and students as colleagues in our respective circles inquired about our work, anticipating our event with questions about technology, assignments, and ethics. The associate provost, who was following our conversation, helped us to consider meeting spaces. Our deans and friends asked us about our plans, also highlighting the event's exigency.

Our team planned the logistics for the event and developed slides and a flyer (fig. 1). The writing center promoted the panel through WCOnline, the first-year writing program, a faculty and staff email, and the flyer. We decided on the title "'I Will Stand on. . . Your Brain': ChatGPT's Possible Impact on Writing and Thought," referencing media theorist Marshall McLuhan, whom we cited in the panel. McLuhan invokes Archimedes: "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world," and suggests that media "stand on your eyes, your ears, your nerves, and your brain," thus moving the world (68). Our goal was to provoke thought about the impact of GenAI on writers. We designed the event for a general audience and debated about its length, deciding on an hour so as not to dissuade audience members. We hosted the event in the student center with in-person and Zoom options; the writing center director offered a welcome, followed by brief presentations,

and then a question-and-answer session. The panel introduced ChatGPT, its impacts on writing, and then questions about AI literacy. Just as our disciplinary expertise varied, so did our experiences and views of GenAI.

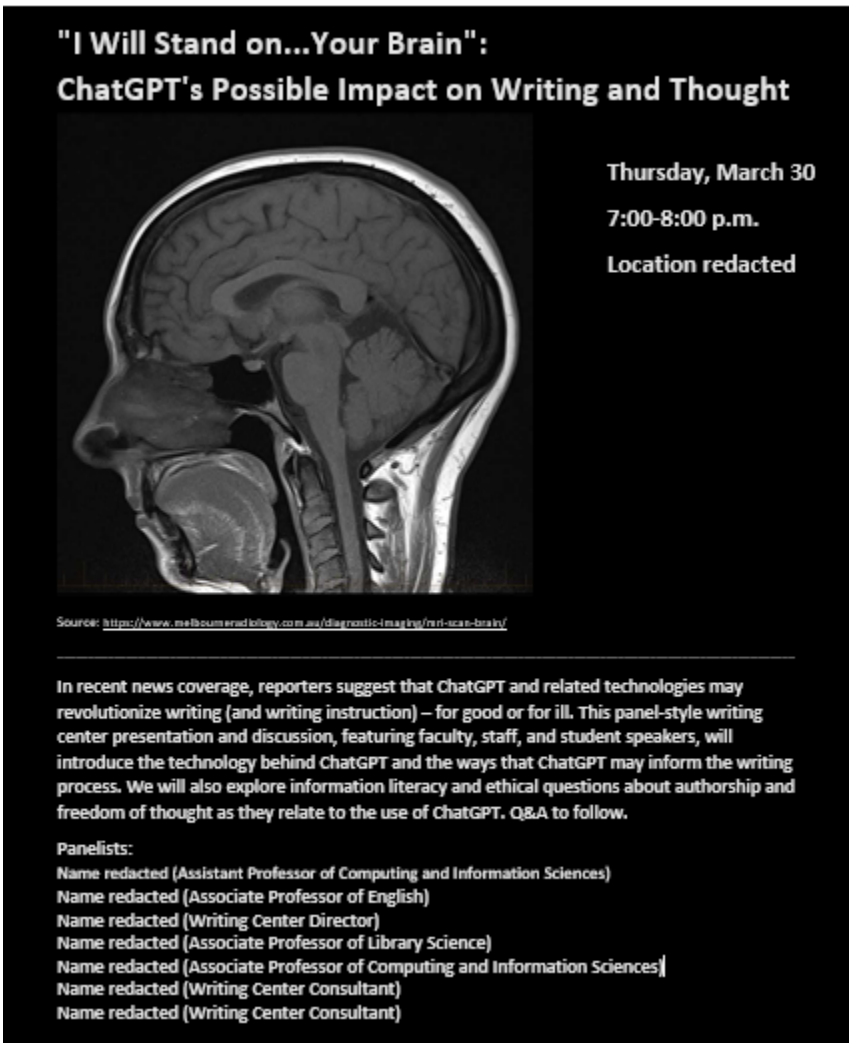

Fig. 1. Flyer for the writing panel

PANEL PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

First, computer science faculty provided an overview of ChatGPT's underlying technology. The panelists defined GenAI and GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer). Then they explored the transformer architecture, the primary components of ChatGPT, and other relevant technologies. Additionally, they explained the data sources used to train GPT3. This segment aimed to help the audience understand how ChatGPT works internally, as well as the limitations of these models and where they can be used effectively.

Then, the writing center's portion of the panel focused on the writing process. Center staff shared how the process of discussing, drafting, and brainstorming ideas contributes to the creativity and voice of a writer while facilitating collaboration in a writing center session. They also highlighted the writing center's mission of creating better writers, not just better writing (North). In the panel, the student consultant suggested that we must be careful so that ChatGPT does not take away the ability to become a better writer by diminishing student creativity and personal experience.

In research postdating the panel, Alan Knowles explores this risk, introducing human-in-the-loop writing, "a baseline ethical AI collaborative writing workflow" (1), where the writer relinquishes much of their agency to the machine. In contrast, he presents machine-in-the-loop writing, where the writer retains more control while integrating GenAI into their writing process. Introducing these concepts in future workshops could give students and consultants a framework for thinking about GenAI and writer agency. While acknowledging the risk of diminished agency, in this first panel, the writing center consultant offered one of the more favorable assessments of the technology, discussing their perception of the potential benefits of ChatGPT, such as using it as a starting place for ideas. This segment aimed to help the audience consider how GenAI may impact the writing process.

Next, an English faculty panelist discussed ethical questions related to authorship and technology, drawing from McLuhan's argument that technology is not neutral. To help the audience explore this claim, the panelist asked everyone to consider the impact of the Internet or smartphones in their lives, encouraging the audience to ponder how writing with AI might change their writing process, their written product, or their perspectives (when AI-generated responses do not reflect the writer's own original ideas). The goal of this discussion was to introduce the concept of critical AI literacy.

Finally, the library's portion of the panel focused on ChatGPT's implications in research writing. Prior to the panel, the librarian tested ChatGPT 3.5 with three prompts, and at the panel they shared results. For each prompt, the librarian had asked ChatGPT to generate a new response approximately twenty times. During the panel, the librarian shared the first and final responses, including prompts from our school's Literature, Media, and Theology introductory assignments and related ChatGPT prompts. The goal was to see if the output improved based on the librarian's feedback. The librarian shared outputs with text that appeared to be essays with citations, but with one of ChatGPT's most significant problems: source hallucination ("Artificial Intelligence"). Namely, all citations generated were problematic or nonexistent. While titles appeared plausible and names of journals or scholars might be correct for the scholarly field, at the time, ChatGPT returned citations for nonexistent articles with real author names in real journals.[1] Citations that did exist included significant mistakes. In addition, the librarian shared how repeated requests for in-text citations in the follow-up prompts failed to generate them. The librarian ended their portion of the panel by emphasizing that not all academic information was included in ChatGPT, adding to concerns about bias and exclusion. The goal was to help the audience evaluate GenAI in the context of research writing.

EVENT PARTICIPATION: A FIRST STEP TOWARD BREAKING DOWN SILOS

Around 50 in-person and 25 online participants joined this event: a combination of faculty, students, and administrators. Audience members included faculty from English, computer science, and other departments; some first-year students attended for optional lab credit, as did students interested in AI. A representative from the provost's office also joined the conversation.

Throughout the panel, questions were submitted anonymously through a QR code. Some questions addressed strategies for AI use, such as, "Is ChatGPT good for writing research papers?" Other questions related to ethics: "What do you think is the ethicality of using LLMs to help find evidence or refine discussion?" Obviously, we could not address all questions in detail in the hour, but these questions gave us ideas for future discussions.

The goal was to provide a first opportunity for faculty, students, and staff to have an interdisciplinary conversation together about GenAI and its implications. As important as it was

to provide a timely event for our campus community, this collaborative opportunity was also valuable to us as panelists. In planning this event and writing this paper, we had to wrestle with each other's different perspectives, training, and experiences. In other words, the process of assembling the panel and event planning was also an act of breaking down silos; and our efforts continue. Panelists from the writing center event subsequently helped to facilitate the full-campus spring faculty workshop and later workshops related to GenAI. Instead of campus bans, these conversations help promote best practices regarding GenAI assistance.

CONCLUSION

As a bridge between silos, writing centers may help students, faculty, and staff in their own institutions and beyond to explore both the potential and limitations of GenAI in writing. This article provides one example of a cross-campus collaboration led by a writing center with the library and other academic departments, illustrating the importance of interweaving insights on writing process, information literacy, critical AI literacy, computer science, and other fields. Collaboration is essential as insights from all these fields are vital to foster a culture of GenAI literacy. Computer scientists help us understand GenAI and its evolution. Library scientists situate the conversation in larger discussions of information literacy. Rhetoric and composition scholars also provide theoretical grounds for the discussion. As research on GenAI's impacts on human creativity is published, social scientists also contribute important insights. Writing centers support writers across campus, sharing the privilege and responsibility of engaging students in conversations about GenAI.

These conversations happen informally during consultations, and we can proactively provide consultants, writers, and the campus community with opportunities to learn more about GenAI and writing with insights across disciplines. These groups are not always in conversation with one another; however, writing centers, with their deep connections to students, faculty, and staff across campus, can facilitate these collaborations. For this program, we leveraged our student-centered approach, our collaborative ethos, and knowledge of the writing process. We look forward to future interdisciplinary writing center conversations, helping to foster critical AI literacy for writing – even and perhaps especially as technologies of writing continue to evolve and change.

NOTE

1. ChatGPT now more reliably provides accurate citations when prompted, highlighting the speed with which the technology evolves.

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Workshop Assessments as Tools for Learning: Integrating Prior Knowledge and Reflection Surveys into an APA Citation Workshop

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Building meaningful assessments for writing center activities beyond tutoring remains under-researched in writing center studies. While writing center scholars have written about their experiences with workshops for several decades (Adkins; Bedore and O'Sullivan; Garahan and Crews; Wolcott; Welch; Towle), only recently have they begun publishing empirical studies of workshop effectiveness (Hopkins; Tillotson et. al; Wood et al.). This recent scholarship details the use of pre-workshop and/or post-workshop surveys to assess the effectiveness of certain types of workshops, like resume building (Tillotson et al.) and patchwriting (Wood et al.), or a center's entire workshop program (Hopkins). These foundational studies demonstrate the power of survey-based workshop assessments as tools for determining workshop effectiveness and improving workshop practices.

When Katie inherited a strong workshop program as the new director of University of North Carolina-Charlotte's Writing Resources Center (WRC) in 2022, she immediately sought to build equally strong assessments. A problem she found in her previous workshop assessment attempts was that surveys often distracted from the learning environment: facilitators felt awkward introducing surveys, and participants seemed to view them as an addition to, instead of an integral component of, the workshop. With this experience in mind, Katie and April—director of and graduate tutor in the WRC—aimed to create pre/post-workshop surveys with the explicit goal of enhancing student learning.

In this article, using results from an APA citation workshop assessment, we present a method of using survey instruments that prompts participants to access their prior knowledge of a topic (pre-workshop survey) and to reflect on their learning (post-workshop survey). We use pre/post-surveys (what we call prior knowledge and reflection surveys) for three distinct purposes: one, to scaffold participant learning; two, to assess the effectiveness of our workshop; and three, to analyze our results as a community of practice and improve our workshop instruction. Our goal here is to present our process of developing, implementing, and analyzing a learning-based workshop assessment as a schema that other writing center professionals can adapt to their own specific workshop contexts.

SURVEY DESIGN AND ANALYSIS METHODS

Katie developed prior knowledge and reflection surveys in spring 2023 for the entire WRC workshop program, which includes five workshops focused on MLA, APA, Chicago, peer review, and revision strategies. She aimed to create short (5 minutes or fewer) surveys that encouraged participants to assess their attitudes toward and knowledge of the workshop topic before the workshop instruction and then prompted participants to solidify their learning through a

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reflective survey following instruction. Both surveys included four Likert scale statements (Tables 2 and 3) and two open-ended questions.

With approval from UNC Charlotte's Institutional Review Board, we implemented prior knowledge and reflection surveys during the 2023-2024 academic year. In this article, we focus on survey results from nine in-person APA citation workshops. These workshops were facilitated in seven different courses from five departments including Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Studies; Sociology; Health Management and Policy; Special Education and Child Development; and Computer Science. All of these courses were undergraduate courses: four at the 1000-level, two at the 2000-level, one at the 3000-level, and two at the 4000-level.

Presenters, typically veteran undergraduate tutors or graduate teaching assistants, facilitated the workshops from a common slide deck with the following sections:

1. Prior knowledge survey
2. Description of plagiarism and rationale for source attribution
3. Explanation and examples of quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing
4. Broad information about APA
5. Details about APA title page, reference pages, and in-text citations
6. Information about citation generators
7. Description of campus resources (e.g. WRC and Library) and online resources (e.g. APA Style Blog, Purdue OWL)
8. Reflection survey

Our data set consists of the quantitative Likert scale questions (Tables 2 and 3) and the written responses to two open-ended questions: one from the prior knowledge survey (*What do you already know about APA formatting and citation style?*) and one from the reflection survey (*What new information have you learned about APA citation style that you did not know previously?*). To analyze our qualitative responses, we used Cheryl Geisler and Jason Swart's method outlined in *Coding Streams of Language,* which includes steps to develop coding schemes that allow researchers to "determine recurrent phenomena within and across streams of language" (7). Following these steps, Katie and April each read through the data, making notes about potential themes. We developed an initial coding scheme, coded separately, discussed, and revised. We then solidified our scheme and achieved an interrater reliability score of 0.957 (Cohen's Kappa) indicating strong interrater agreement (Geisler and Swarts 171). Table 1 below offers a brief description of our coding scheme.

Table 1: Qualitative Coding Scheme

CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
METACOGNITIVE	respondent provides commentary on their own knowledge of or attitudes toward APA	I know in-text citations like the back of my hand
RULES	respondent describes specific formatting and content of citations	author, title, and date; Size 12 font, times new Roman, double spacing, 1-inch margins all the way around [sic]
DESCRIPTION	respondent describes general information about APA or mentions their understanding of APA's purpose, popularity, or context	It stands for American Psychological Association
OTHER CITATION STYLES	respondent references a citation style that is not APA	MLA but not
PLAGIARISM	respondent refers to plagiarism, failing/passing, or crediting sources	important for no plagiarism
RESOURCES	respondent refers to outside resources	If I don't know I can check with perdue [sic]
OTHER	response does not fit into one of the above categories or is too general to code	I had a presentation from the writing center earlier in the semester

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

Quantitative Results

From the nine APA workshops, we received 181 responses for the quantitative portion of the prior knowledge survey. Our quantitative results demonstrated an exigence for our APA workshop: while our target audience had familiarity with citation styles in general and many participants had learned about APA style, most were not comfortable using it (Table 2). Seventy-two percent of participants reported having learned APA citations previously, but 58% felt some degree of comfort with the citation style. Moreover, only 17% strongly agreed to feeling comfortable using APA in their own writing.

Table 2: Prior Knowledge Survey Quantitative Responses (181 Responses)

Statement	Strongly/ somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly/ Somewhat disagree
I understand when to credit sources in my writing.	86%	8%	7%
I feel comfortable integrating sources and using in-text citations in my writing.	70%	12%	18%
I have learned how to use apa formatting and citation style in my writing.	72%	10%	18%
I feel comfortable using apa formatting and citation style in my writing.	58%	12%	30%

Qualitative Results

We received 120 responses for the qualitative portion of the prior knowledge survey, and we focus on responses to the question *What do you already know about APA formatting and citation style?* We found our qualitative results valuable to help us understand our target audience's knowledge of and attitude toward APA (fig. 1).

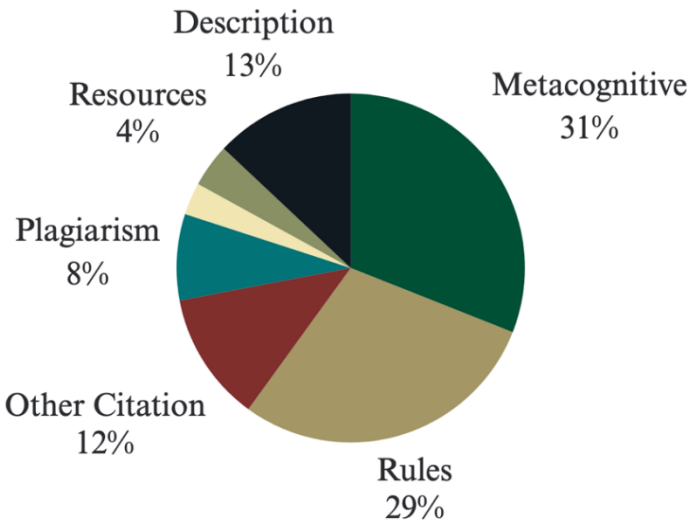

Fig. 1: Prior Knowledge Survey Qualitative Results (120 Responses)

Nearly all responses coded "metacognitive"–our most common code–demonstrated respondents' lack of confidence in their own knowledge or negative attitudes toward APA. Thirty respondents reported knowing nothing or not much about APA, with phrases like "not a thing" and "I knew it existed. That is all." One respondent in particular expressed trepidation about using APA: "it scares me." Two respondents called APA "tedious." Only five respondents expressed confidence in their knowledge of APA. Moreover, 8% of respondents connected their knowledge of APA to a concern about plagiarism. Respondents' concern, and sometimes fear, of APA aligns with our quantitative finding that only 17% of respondents felt very comfortable using APA prior to the workshop.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents included information they knew, or thought they knew, about APA citation rules. Importantly, most of these responses were general, not unique to APA, or even incorrect. Fifteen respondents generally mentioned the use of in-text citations, another fifteen mentioned bibliographic citations on reference pages, and five highlighted specific information about formatting, like font size, type, spacing, and margins. Responses coded "rules" indicate that participants could recall information about citation styles *in general* but were less apt to highlight what makes APA style unique. Additionally, 13% of responses–those we coded "description"–also provided general information related to the purpose of APA, its popularity, or its context.

Notably, our results show that when prompted to access prior knowledge of APA, participants drew on their knowledge of other citation styles and citation resources. Twelve percent of respondents mentioned other citation styles, with every response except one mentioning MLA. Lastly, 4% mention resources, specifically Purdue OWL and citation generators. Every response about citation generators held a wholly positive view of them.

Prior Knowledge Discussion: Assessment and Instruction Revision

We used our prior knowledge survey results to facilitate a revision of our survey instrument and workshop instruction. Since we learned that participants often accessed knowledge of non-APA citation styles, we added the following questions to further encourage participants to connect their learning to prior knowledge: Which citation styles have you used before? Choose a citation style and identify at least two formatting rules associated with this style. With these questions, the participants who come into the workshop knowing very little about APA will still have an opportunity to access the prior citation knowledge they do have.

Additionally, we revised the structure of the prior knowledge section of our workshop to enhance interactivity. To do so, we first shared our results with the whole tutoring staff at a professional development meeting. We asked our tutors to use the results to brainstorm ideas for how we could improve our workshop. Tutors suggested we change the format of our survey to allow facilitators to anonymously share the results with the workshop participants to generate a prior knowledge discussion. To implement this suggestion, Katie and April switched survey formats from Qualtrics to Google forms because the latter provides a quick and viewer-friendly survey results summary (fig. 2). In our revised workshop, the workshop facilitators show the class their survey response summary. Then, the facilitator guides the class in a think/pair/share about their individual knowledge as well as what they found interesting about the class's survey response summary. With this interactive activity, facilitators foster a collegial environment, gain a bird's eye view of the class's prior knowledge, and prepare the class to link their learning to what they

already know about citing sources. Ultimately, our prior knowledge survey proved to be a useful tool for us to learn about our target audience and to improve our practices.

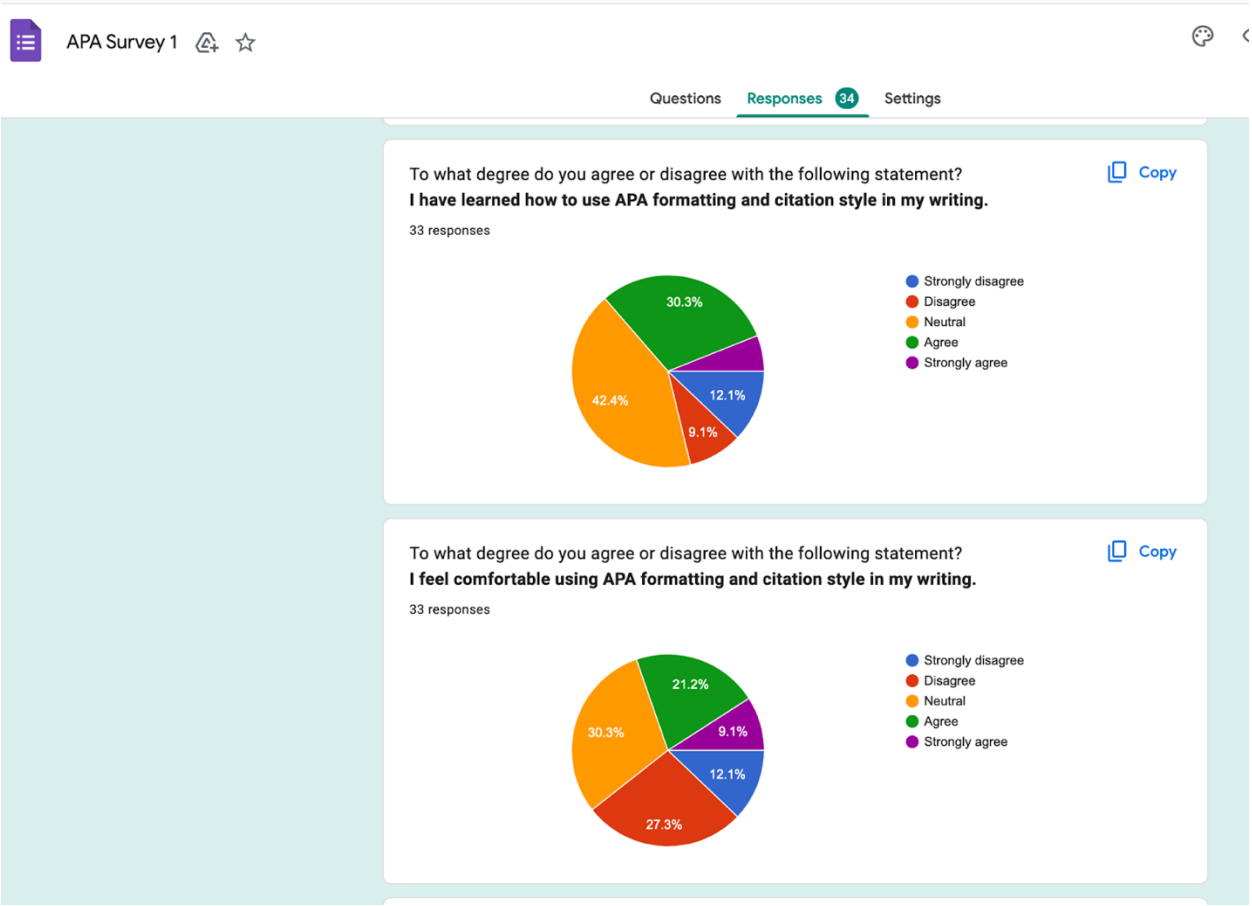

Fig. 2: Example of a Class's Summary Results on Google Forms

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: REFLECTION SURVEY

Quantitative Results

We received 135 responses for the quantitative questions on our reflection survey. Our quantitative survey results demonstrated the effectiveness of our APA citation workshop (Table 3). Participants reported satisfaction with the workshop and, when compared to our prior knowledge survey results, participants reported increased confidence in their ability to use APA.

Table 3: Reflection Survey Quantitative Responses

Statement	Strongly/ somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly/ Somewhat disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with this workshop.	95%	2%	3%
I found this workshop to be interactive and engaging.	88%	7%	5%
I feel prepared to use apa formatting and citations style in future writing.	92%	7%	2%
I know what citation resources are available to me on campus.	98%	1%	2%

Ninety-two percent of participants felt at least somewhat prepared to use APA formatting, with just over half reporting strong confidence in their preparedness. By comparison, only 58% of participants felt at least somewhat comfortable using APA prior to the workshop and only 17% felt very comfortable. A comparison of our prior knowledge and reflection surveys shown in Figure 3 demonstrates our participants' increased confidence and level of comfort with using APA in their writing.

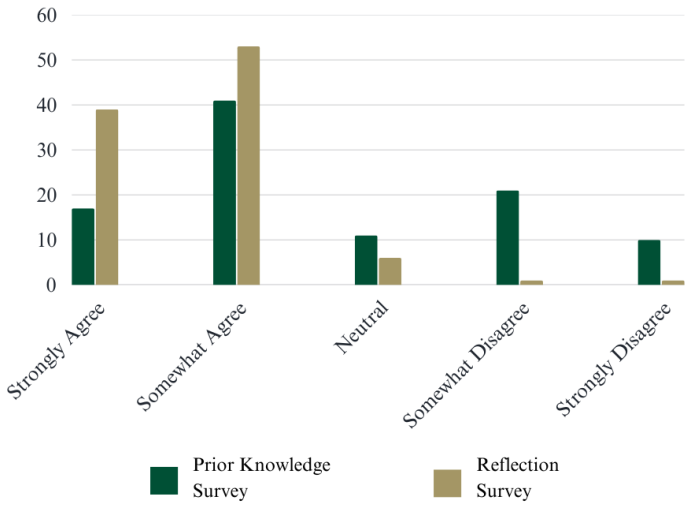

Fig. 3: Comparison of Prior Knowledge and Reflection Survey Results (Likert Statement: I feel comfortable using or prepared to use APA formatting and citation style in my writing.)

Qualitative Results

We found our reflection survey qualitative results valuable in providing specifics about student learning, particularly when compared to the qualitative results of the prior knowledge survey (fig. 4). We received 89 responses for the qualitative portion of the reflection survey, and we focus here on responses to the question: *What new information have you learned about APA citation style that you did not know previously?*

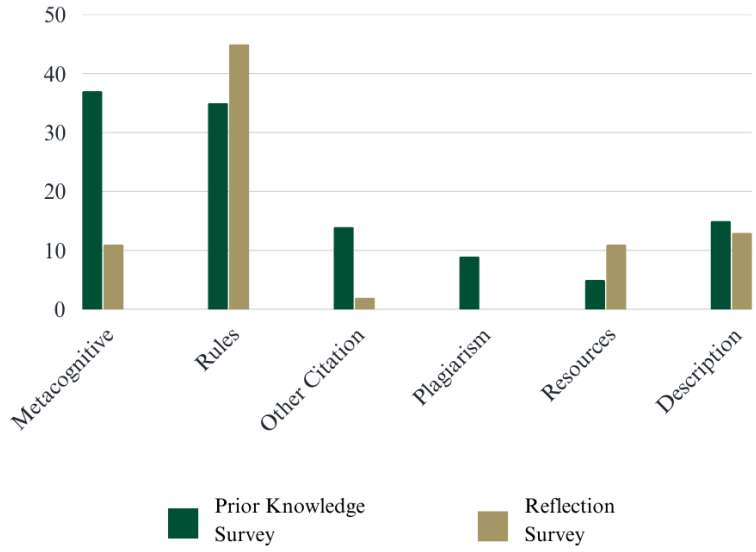

Fig. 4: Comparison of Prior Knowledge and Reflection Survey Qualitative Results

We coded significantly fewer responses as "metacognitive"—commentary about respondents' knowledge of or attitude toward APA— in the reflection survey (only 13%) as compared to our prior knowledge survey (31%). Additionally, we saw a shift in tone: Responses coded metacognitive were negative in the prior knowledge survey but were positive/neutral in the reflection survey. Only three respondents reported not learning much from the workshop because they already felt comfortable in their knowledge of APA. The remaining eight respondents reported learning a great deal from the workshop because of their lack of prior knowledge about APA. For example, one wrote: "Everything, I didn't have a basis before." Unlike the prior knowledge survey responses, no respondents mentioned negative attitudes of fear or annoyance.

We coded half of the reflection survey responses as "rules": descriptions of specific formatting and content of citations. Unlike the generic responses on the prior knowledge survey, rules-based responses for the reflection survey were more specific and unique to APA citation style. Twenty respondents mentioned citations or reference pages specifically. For example, one wrote: "Only proper nouns and first words in titles are capitalized in APA format." Eleven respondents mention citing specific sources, like journal articles and tweets. Six comments specifically mention integration of quotes; for instance, "I learned on what to write before a direct quote and what to write after a direct quote." The abundance and nuance of the rules-based comments indicates that participants are paying attention to the finer details of the workshop. Though the instruction about specific rules might seem tedious, our results suggest that our instruction is effective.

We also saw a rise in the percentage of responses that mentioned resources: 4% in the prior knowledge survey to 13% in the reflection survey. Five respondents referenced online resources. Four mentioned the pitfalls of citation generators, in comparison to the wholly positive associations from the prior knowledge survey. The final two comments refer to UNC Charlotte's WRC. Notably, from our quantitative results, 98% of participants agreed that they know what citation resources are available to them on campus. These results suggest that students leave the workshop with a more holistic understanding of how to find and use resources than they began with.

Only two responses mentioned other citation styles, an 11% decrease from the prior knowledge survey. The decrease in responses suggests that familiarity with other citation styles is more relevant to prior knowledge than student learning. Notably, we did not code any responses as "plagiarism." Despite beginning our presentation with information about plagiarism and the importance of crediting sources, this is not the information respondents recall when asked to reflect on their learning. Lastly, around the same percentage of responses were coded "description" in both the pre- and reflection surveys. These responses in both surveys tended to be general and did not teach us anything of note.

Reflection Discussion: Instruction Revision

Though we found our results to indicate the effectiveness of our workshop, we still slightly modified our instruction after discussing the results as a community. Our quantitative results revealed that only 59% of respondents strongly agreed that our presentation was interactive and engaging. To address this concern, tutors suggested that presenters demonstrate the rules of citing properly by using easily accessible online resources. After all, rarely do scholars memorize citation rules; they typically use some kind of resource as a guide. In our revised presentation, the presenter opens the WRC citation style guide page, which includes resources made in house as well as links to the APA style blog, Purdue OWL, and the UNC Charlotte Library. After the presenter

introduces this resource webpage to the audience, they demonstrate how to cite a scholarly source using examples from the webpage. With this change, the audience not only sees what a correct citation looks like, but they also have an opportunity to watch the process of constructing a citation using online resources.

CONCLUSION

We found the prior knowledge and reflection surveys to be an effective workshop assessment method. The prior knowledge survey provided a baseline of participant knowledge by which we could assess student learning using the reflection survey. The combination of these two surveys provided evidence that our APA workshop effectively raises participants' comfort-level with using APA in their writing as well as teaches them concrete details about APA formatting. We can use these results in administrative reports as well as promotional materials.

Perhaps more importantly, we created and refined assessment tools that integrate into the learning environment. We used our survey results to create a feedback loop among our participants and presenters. In professional development meetings, tutors were able not only to see our results, but to use these results to improve the scaffolding potential and interactivity of our prior knowledge and reflection surveys. We learned, then, that effective assessments must be continually refined within a writing center community of practice. We ultimately argue for the potential of this learning-based assessment process and encourage WCPs to adapt it, use it, and share their results with the wider writing center community. WCPs use survey assessments in many different areas of our work; yet directors are not always trained in survey best practices. As a community of practice, we must continue to share what works—and what doesn't—in survey research so we can improve our practices and assessments.

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Tutors' Column: "Supporting Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf Writers"

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Among my experiences as a writing tutor, undergraduate speech language pathology (SLP) major, and graduate student, I have seen a throughline that suggests consultations should be individualized to each writer. In her 2015 article, "Disabilities in the Writing Center," Rebecca Day Babcock argues that writing centers should develop adaptive learning approaches to support writers who have disabilities. Her work especially focuses on adapting tutoring for those with two of the most common disabilities disclosed in writing centers: deafness and being hard-of-hearing. While many of the writers Babcock worked with in her research had the support of an interpreter, she encourages greater use of embodied communication practices and careful negotiation of directive and nondirective approaches throughout a session.

Four years ago, I was able to test out the kind of embodied communication practices Babcock describes. I participated in a class assignment that allowed me to combine my job as a writing tutor with my SLP academic background to support deaf and hard-of-hearing writers. I have a particular investment in the topic as I have studied the basics of communication, language, and audiology. In one of my audiology courses, we were tasked with simulating hearing loss for a day by wearing earplugs, a common practice in speech-language pathology and audiology programs. I had to complete this task on one of the days I was tutoring, and this experience helped me better understand why and how to create adaptive learning approaches for those who do not have access to interpreters during their tutorials. During my exercise, I was initially hesitant to advocate for myself. I began each appointment by telling the writers about my assignment and that, at times, I might ask them to repeat or to adapt their communication style so I could better engage. I quickly realized I had to be cautious of my speaking level since I couldn't hear myself. I also couldn't hear well when writers were talking in different directions, such as toward their laptops. Furthermore, I had to adjust the rhythm of the conversations since I wasn't always aware if I was talking over the writer. Overall, though, the writers were helpful and understanding and just as focused on ensuring we had successful appointments. Although this was only a limited approximation of hearing loss, it was enough for me and my fellow tutors to think more critically about developing adaptive strategies. We discussed the space of a writing center, different communication modes, the position of writers and tutors during an appointment, the rate of speech, and the gestural role of our bodies (Knoblauch 58).

The truth is, no one strategy or practice will work for every tutor/writer pair, which Babcock notes in her book *Tell Me How It Reads*: "I realized the preferred communication model is whatever the deaf person favors" (172). Tutors and writers need to engage in open conversation to understand what works best. The person with the hearing difference and the tutor both may have ideas to

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help facilitate the tutorial. However, the suggestions below are a starting point and were designed for a tutor and writer model, with no interpreter in the session. These tips modify or affirm existing techniques and technological options likely already in use in many writing and tutoring centers:

1. **Space:** Work in a quiet environment. For example, my center has a small conference room available for appointments. Sitting in the conference room allows the writer to focus since the ambient noise and other conversations are less intrusive.
2. **Gestures:** Tutors can also use gestures. For example, they can point to specific lines in a paper or occasionally use hand motions to further illuminate a concept, such as describing how to focus the big idea of an essay into a more specific one. Nonlexical vocalizations, such as sighs and groans, can also contribute to an appointment. Most tutors use such vocalizations during their appointments to signal a change (Haen 182; 194). This may not be clear to hard-of-hearing writers, so they should not be made alongside accompanying negative gestures (such as hunching over) because this may convey an unintentional, negative connotation (Haen 190).
3. **Notes during appointments:** Writing down notes during the appointment can ensure the writer does not miss any major conversational points. If the writer is having particular difficulties tracking the conversation, the tutor can keep even more detailed notes while still being careful to look up during the conversations and pause to allow the writer time to process and respond to the spoken and written information. The notes can be non-linguistic as well: pictures or diagrams can be helpful. This approach can help the writer further visualize what is happening in the assignment. When referring to the notes, the tutor should use a pencil to help point out areas of the paper so the writer knows where the tutor is referencing (Babcock 2015).
4. **Hearing-Assistive Technology:** Some writers may rely on hearing-assistive technology during appointments ("Hearing Assistive Technology"). If there are multiple concurrent conversations in the center, the writer may benefit from using one-to-one communicators in the session, such as microphones that connect to a writer's hearing aids ("Education of the Deaf"). The writer provides the microphone for the tutor, and the sound is directly transmitted to the writer's hearing aid.
5. **Positioning:** The positioning of the writer and tutor is critical during a tutorial, as Miranda Zammarelli and John Beebe have noted. The tutor and writer should sit on the same side of the table or at the same corner. This setup allows the tutor and the writer to look at the same screen occasionally when working on the paper. When speaking, though, the tutor and writer should face each other in order to facilitate lip-reading. Babcock also suggests asking the writer what their preference is for the seating arrangement because they may have a setup that works best for them. If they have no preference, the tutor may suggest the side-by-side or corner options.
6. **Pacing:** The tutor should speak in a clear, slow but natural manner to facilitate lip-reading. Also, use an appropriate but not overloud volume. Excessively loud speech can be harder to understand because the vowel sounds can be overpowering. Speaking excessively slowly and at a very high volume can appear condescending or draw unwelcome attention to the appointment.

If the tutor knows in advance that they will be working with a writer who would benefit from these practices, they can be prepared to present these options in advance of or at the beginning

of the tutorial. For example, the tutor might learn of the writer's needs through their intake form or self-created profile, or at the beginning of the session. The tutor and writer can also revisit the practices at the end of the appointment to plan for the future. The goal is to show the writer that the center aims to create a thoughtful, accessible, individualized experience, one that is open to change as the writer continues to work with different tutors or on various assignments.

Writing centers should also work alongside other programs at their institution to support deaf and hard-of-hearing students. For instance, our center worked extensively with the Technology Resource Center, eventually collaborating on their Campus Accessibility Panel for our student and faculty symposium. The goal was to make the audience aware of how they can work with writers who disclose being deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to revising the strategies tutors use, working collaboratively with other academic support services by developing appropriate techniques and strategies for working with one population creates well-rounded support for writers of all populations, especially those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Note from the Blog Editors

Thanks to our blog and newsletter subscribers! For those who don't know, the blog has a monthly newsletter. Join the blog newsletter family to get a digest of the latest articles and other announcements from writing center directors and tutors around the world. To sign up for the monthly newsletter, please go to https://wlnconnect.org/subscribe-to-blog-newsletter/. See you on the blog!

Anna Habib, Consulting Editor

Inas Mahfouz Interim Lead Editor

NCPTW 2026: Call for Proposals

Boise, Idaho, October 15-18, 2026

Theme: "Keepin' Centered @ NCPTW 2026!"

Submission Deadline: April 24, 2026

Given the challenges that higher education and writing centers are currently facing—budget cuts, a growing reliance on AI, and political unrest unfolding on campuses—these conditions can feel insurmountably heavy. Persistent burnout threatens to consume writing center peer tutors and administrators as we attempt to reconcile a desire for normalcy with the pressing need to address the issues impacting our work. For writing center practitioners, then, the question becomes how can our communities achieve a feeling of centeredness in a world askew?

Fostering a shared sense of purpose and community from within—what Leahy (1992) described as "centeredness"—can offer a path for writing centers to build resilience against the instability outside. Centeredness can be a stabilizing force that grounds peer tutors in a shared vision of growth and community. Contemplative pedagogy, Sicari and Tunningley (2024) contend, "allows for practices of mindfulness, awareness, and reflection in organic ways, as writing center pedagogy focuses on the importance of the relational, flattening hierarchies, and a focus on the conversation between writer and tutor (or between writers)." These contemplative practices, of course, should also reflect the relationships between tutors and between tutors and administrators.

Crises, both from within—and outside of—our educational institutions, inevitably seep into writing center spaces. Centeredness, though, is not meant to escape the reality of this situation; rather, it can be an intentional pursuit of balance—a *choice* to share in the fun, hope, and weirdness of writing center work as a means of supporting the wellness of its tutors and administrators. Giaimo (2023) asserted that this focus on wellness does not need to originate from the remedial fixes of neoliberal wellness culture or the toxic positivity that denies hardship, but from restorative, co-created practices that address these sources of unwellness. Community, then, provides the ground where centeredness and hope can be shared and where wellness becomes collective rather than solitary. Writing center community bonds can deepen when we embrace the "productive weirdness" of writing centers: the unexpected encounters and "messy humanity" that resist conformity and reveal the whole person"—leaving room for flexibility, autonomy, and rejecting the impersonal and overly institutional (Garner, 2024, p. 203). Far from being separate, this weirdness connects purpose, wellness, and hope.

For NCPTW 2026, we seek proposals on all topics related to writing centers, with extra interest in sessions that reflect the conference's theme:

- How do writing center practitioners keep centered, hopeful, and persistent when the world feels deeply askew due to factors outside of our control?
- How can writing centers use play and fun as a pedagogical approach to inspire collaboration, community building, and restorative wellness practices?
- What constitutes the daily work of writing centers beyond their core functions (i.e., providing writing support to students), and how might this work contribute to feelings of "centeredness" among tutors and administrators?
- Mattison (2006) argues that every center has its own culture, and that "every center looks to grow, individually and collectively" (p.101). How might an individual center's culture contribute to the collective growth of all writing centers?
- How can writing centers balance their desire to be perceived as an alternative to overly institutional spaces (by being our weird, authentic selves!) while still embodying a "culture of academic seriousness" (Wingate, 2001)?
- How are the cultures of individual writing centers shaped by their specific institutional contexts (e.g. community colleges, HBCUs, HSIs, secondary schools, TCUs), and how do these contexts impact writers and peer tutors?
- What might we learn about the differences between enthusiasm, joy, and hope (Vogelaar, van Dijk, & van Dijk, 2025), and how might those differences guide our practice of fostering positive emotional associations with writing center work without falling prey to performative, toxic positivity?
- How can administrators reflect their writing center's achievements in community-building that "subvert institutional absurdities" when it comes to institutional reporting practices (Cirillo-McCarthy, Del Russo, Fields & Leahy, 2021)? What role can/should peer tutors play in shaping these institutional narratives to ensure their lived experiences are accounted for?

Additionally, we encourage poster presentations that utilize a range of anthropological research methods to capture the ways individual writing centers' microcultures impact their writers, peer tutors, and administrators. For example, what might an artifact analysis reveal about a writing center's values, practices, and production of positive emotional associations for peer tutors and writers alike?

We encourage all attendees to bring your hopeful weirdness to Boise State, where we plan to build from the authentic idiosyncrasies of each writing center, to re-center our missions and practices in the current climate, and to focus on restorative wellness for all writing center practitioners.

For Proposal Categories & Guidelines visit https://www.thencptw.org/boise2026/

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Spring & Summer 2026

Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association (MAWCA) Conference
Date: March 27, 2026
Location: Coppin State University (Baltimore, MD)
Website: https://mawca.org/

Online Writing Centers Association (OWCA) Annual Conference
Theme: Writing Centers as Sites of Solidarity
Dates: April 9–10, 2026
Location: Virtual
Website: https://www.onlinewritingcenters.org/conference-info/

GCA-EWCA 2026: Global Communications Association - European Writing Centers Association Joint Conference 2026
Theme: "Back to the Roots of Writing Centers"
Dates: June 1–5, 2026
Location: American University in Bulgaria (Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria)
Submission details: https://easychair.org/cfp/GCA_EWCA_2026

Fall 2026

The National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW)
Dates: October 15–18, 2026
Location: Boise, ID
Website: https://www.thencptw.org/

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Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders

Inas Mahfouz (imahfouz@auk.edu.kw)

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