SOUTHERN

DISCOURSE

in the CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation (SDC) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published twice per year by the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA). As a forum for practitioners in writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers, SDC publishes articles from administrators, consultants, and other scholars concerned with issues related to training, consulting, labor, administration, theory, and innovative practices.

Our editorial board welcomes scholarly essays on consulting, research, administration, training, technology, and theory relevant to writing centers, speaking centers, and digital/multiliteracy centers. Article submissions may be based in theoretical and critical approaches, applied practices, or empirical research (qualitative or quantitative). Submissions are evaluated by the editors, and promising articles are sent to our national editorial board for doubleblind review. To honor the journal's historical context, future issues will include special sections that profile the work of regional associations, emerging undergraduate research, and centers across the country, providing a sustained look at regional and national concerns that centers face in the 21st century.

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If you would like more information about SDC or would like to be a reviewer, please email the editors at sdc@southeasternwritingcenter.org or visit our web site (http://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org).

Our Mission

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing, speaking, and digital centers and others interested in center work from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

The Journal

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation is the journal of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. Published twice annually, this peer-reviewed journal promotes a community of writing center scholarship within the southeast and nationally while serving as a forum for innovative work across the field. Subscribe to SDC by becoming a member of SWCA at http://www.iwca-swca.org

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

Article Submission Guidelines

Most articles in SDC will be between 3,000 and 5,000 words. We ask that all articles be documented in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual*, 8th Edition. Consistent with traditional writing center practice, SDC promotes a feedback model. Articles will be sent out to our national board for blind review and reviewed by our editorial team. SDC is excited to work with you. For longer articles, please send an email inquiry.

"Back to the Center" Submission Guidelines

Alongside scholarly articles, each issue of SDC will include an article of roughly 1,500 words that focuses on a specific writing center, speaking center, digital center or multiliteracy center. "Back to the Center" will share a center's successes, goals, and hopes for improvement. By incorporating visual images, each "Back to the Center" piece should give readers an authentic sense of the ethos of the center and of the work done there. Each "Back to the Center" submission should also include a section titled "Center Insight." In this section, we'd like to know the numbers: How many sessions are held in the center per semester? How many consultants are working in the center? How many hours a week is the center open? How does consultant recruitment occur? How long is the training process for consultants before they work in the center?

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

Book Review Guidelines

Each issue will usually include at least one review of a book relevant to the focus of SDC. Book reviews should be approximately 750-1,500 words in length. Please contact the editors if you are interested in submitting a book review.

Contents

From the Editors

Scott Pleasant

Devon Ralston

This issue of *SDC* features a timely collection of two peer-reviewed articles and three other pieces, all of which focus on issues and questions that are critical not only in writing centers but in the larger educational institutions we work in and indeed in the world at large.

As digital, online, and audio-visual media become increasingly vital in academic settings and in the global workplace, students are often asked to write for non-traditional/multimodal formats. Joseph Cheatle investigates wrting centers professionals' experiences in assisting students with these types of projects and finds that "they are occurring at writing centers in significant enough numbers to warrant our attention as a field." His results provide support increased emphasis on training in this area for tutors who may be asked to work with students on multimodal assignments such as slide presentations or websites.

One of the most talked-about book in writing center studies over the last ten years has been Greenfield and Rowan's collection, *Writing Centers and the New Racism* (Utah State UP, 2011). Michael Dimmick and Dagmar Scharold contribute to the ongoing dialogue in that book about the role writing centers can and should play in responding to and combatting systemic racism and negative language-based stereotypes. Dimmick and Scharold argue that community writing centers are in a better position than academic writing centers in terms of working toward progress in this area because "a community writing center has more latitude by its very nature of working with members of the community on non-academic projects."

In this issue's *Consultant Insight* piece, tutors from Transylvania University's writing center present results from a survey of former tutors who have graduated and moved on to their careers or graduate school.

Overall, their surveys demonstrate the positive effects writing center experiences can have on the lives not only of the students we work with but the student tutors we employ. One of the former tutors in the survey remarks, for example, that "no one teaches you how to give feedback on writing in graduate school. I ... had a distinct edge on my cohort since I had some instruction in writing feedback as a writing tutor." This kind of survey can provide valuable talking points for those of us who hire and train tutors as we make our case for resources and support in an era of widespread budget crises.

James Hamby's *Back to the Center* profile of the Middle Tennessee State University Writing Center provides yet another example of a busy writing center that is essential to a number of missions on the campus it supports. Echoing the same concerns Joseph Cheatle addresses in the article that opens this issue, Hamby reports that the writing center at MTSU is working toward offering more services and support for multimodal composition.

Nicole K. Turner's enthusiastic review of *Writing Centers and Disability* (Babcock and Daniels, Fountainhead Press, 2017) shows that the book is an important resource for writing center professionals who are looking for ways to make their centers more accessible and beneficial for students with disabilities. As universities are increasing their efforts to connect with and serve diverse populations, including students with various kinds of disabilities, this kind of book can play an important role in keeping writing centers at the forefront.

Taken together, the five pieces in this issue represent an important contribution to some of the most significant issues and debates of 2020 and beyond. The ongoing coronavirus crisis has forced many of us to work remotely and look for multimodal methods to connect with students. The Black Lives Matter movement and recent protests against police brutality are strong evidence that systemic racism and other race issues are never far from the surface. And as we move into a future with fewer available resources and smaller budgets across most campuses, we will all likely be asked to demonstrate that our services represent a "value-added" benefit to the institutions where we work.

We hope this issue provides some valuable insights into these and other ongoing issues. We also feel that this issue shows once again that writing centers are key sites for understanding and playing a vital role in campus-wide and society-wide debates and dialogues.

The *SDC* journal exists precisely for the purpose of giving writing center professionals an opportunity to enter these conversations, and we are proud to play our role in facilitating that process. We would strongly encourage interested readers to become involved in the journal by joining the list of reviewers or submitting a manuscript for publication. On the final page of this issue, you will find a call for submissions for the next two issues, and we hope to receive submissions from many of you.

If you have any questions about the journal, please feel free to contact either of us at any time. As always, we would like to thank you for supporting the work of the SWCA organization in general and this journal specifically.

--Scott and Devon

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Multimodal Composition in Writing Centers:
The Practical, the Problems, and the Potential

Joseph Cheatle

Writing centers have long struggled with their relationship to multimodal, particularly digital, composition. As the "writing" in the name implies, writing centers most frequently focus on written alphabetic texts; historically, consultants not only work with traditional mediums, but are trained to work primarily on research papers, essays, shorts writings, cover letters, etc. However, when it comes to multimodal composition, writing centers are divided on how to approach it. Those who have fully made the move to multimodal composition are often named, or view themselves, as something other than strictly writing centers. This is the case of the Eastern Kentucky University Noel Studio for Academic Creativity and the Michigan Technological University Multiliteracies Center (to name two of many), both of which view themselves as explicitly moving beyond the bounds of writing while rebranding themselves. However, many centers adhere to a more traditional mission or might experience a sense of anxiety when confronted with these new forms of composition.

This work focuses on multimodal composition, a form of composing that does not rely only on writing but spans aural, visual and verbal modes (Sheridan 1). According to David Sheridan, in his introduction to *Multiliteracy Centers*, composition increasingly includes, "written words, spoken words, music, still images, moving images, charts, graphs, illustrations, animations, layout schemes, navigation schemes, colors, ambient noises, and so on" (Sheridan 1-2). The combination of different activities and literacies makes multimodal composition different from the alphabetic textual composing process. John Trimbur, in his work "Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers," writes that we should view "literacy as a multimodal activity in which oral, written, and visual communication intertwine and interact" (66). For

Trimbur, literacy is not just referencing written texts; rather, literacy includes a variety of different forms of communication that intersect and function in concert with each other. Multimodal composition, according to Claire Lutkewitte, "can be defined as communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning" (2). And for Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe, multimodal compositions are "texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music, and sound" (1). Drawing on the work of Sheridan, Trimbur, and Lutkewitte, my work focuses on multimodal composition, but pays particular attention to digital composition – the most common form of multimodal composition.

While scholars have published works on whether or not writing centers should focus, or not or to what extent, on multimodal and digital composition, not as much work has been done exploring the practical matter of completing consultations for multimodal compositions. There is an assumption that students are either already prepared to work on multimodal consultations because of their previous experience with it or that consultants need extensive training; however, there is not as much understanding about current consultant knowledge and the type of training they might actually need. Using a multi-institutional survey, my work seeks to explore how writing centers are confronting the issue of multimodal – particularly digital – composition in their own centers and provide a snapshot of where writing centers are currently at in regards to multimodal composition. I purposefully try to include multiple institutions because, like Sohui Lee and Russell Carpenter, I recognize that tutoring on multimodal compositions is context specific and depends on a writing center's size, staffing, and resources (xviii). By collecting responses from multiple institutions, I am able to more broadly consider what type of knowledge consultants have about multimodal and digital composition, training for individual centers, issues of space, and what kind of training consultants may need in the future; the results of the survey provide a picture of current writing centers in relation to multimodal consultations. By focusing on these issues, I hope to provide an understanding of the practical issues confronting writing centers when considering multimodal composition as well as add to the theoretical conversations surrounding multimodal composition.

Current State of Writing Centers and Multimodal Composition

There are many reasons why writing centers may not focus on multimodal – often digital – composition, including lack of institutional need, burdensome training requirements, or the concern that digital composition (a primary form of multimodal composition), in particular, moves the center too far away from its mission. Michael Pemberton's work, "Planning for Hypertexts in the Writing Center…Or Not," highlights many of the issues confronting centers and multimodal composition. As he notes, writing centers historically focused on alphabetic texts; he goes on to argue that writing centers may have avoided multimodal texts because they do not usually see many of them, it might be too hard to conduct training, or they are perceived as a threat to the core mission of the center (Pemberton 112-113). He also questions whether writing centers should even engage in broader forms of composition beyond the written alphabetic text:

> Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves whether it is really the writing center's responsibility to be all things to all people. There will always be more to learn. There will always be new groups making demands on our time and our resources in ways we haven't yet planned for. […] if we diversify too widely and spread ourselves too thinly in an attempt to encompass too many different literacies, we may not be able to address any set of literate practices particularly well. (Pemberton 114)

The concern he raises is that writing centers, by embracing new forms of composition, may move too far away from their original mission; in effect, he worries that even though writing centers may be able to do many things, they may not be able to do any one thing well.

Multimodal composition may provoke anxiety for centers, and could constitute a challenge to their core mission. But multimodal compositions also presents opportunities to expand our understanding of what writing centers do and why they do it. Numerous scholars like Jackie Grutsch McKinney, Russell Carpenter, David Sheridan, and Sohui Lee, continue to shed light on the intersection of writing centers and multimodal composition, exploring the history of this relationship, what centers currently do, and the future of multimodal composition in writing centers. They believe multimodal composition represents an

opportunity for writing centers moving forward into the future; furthermore, as they note, there may be much at stake for writing centers in relation to multimodal and digital composition. For Grutsch McKinney, it is important for writing centers to claim new media (like digital composition) before other departments, units, or services lays claim to it (246); furthermore, she believes it is the job of writing centers to work with new media (243). Grutsch McKinney worries that if others lays claim to new media, then writing centers may be relegated to only working with alphabetic texts. This could limit the scope of the center while providing less flexibility for future writing centers to address new forms of composing.

Multimodal and digital composition has taken on increased importance, both inside and outside of the academy. Inside of the academy, students are being asked to create more digital compositions in first year writing and composition courses: first year writing courses increasingly have a multimodal "remixing project" or digital component (like eportfolios) to them while there is increased attention to digital composing in upper level classes that expect digital literacy. Composition as a field has been quicker than writing centers to embrace digital composition. Kathleen Blake Yancey, in her chair's address at the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, argued for the importance of composition to change with the times (298). She writes that composition must move beyond first-year writing and gatekeeping (306). Yancey points out that "we *already* inhabit a model of communication practices incorporating multiple genres related to each other, those multiple genres remediated across contexts of time and space, linked one to the next, circulating across and around rhetorical situations both inside and outside of school" (307). Because composition is already print and digital, Yancey argues, this should be reflected more in the pedagogical practices and the focus of the field. Since Yancey's address, composition has made a concerted effort to include digital composition within curriculum, pedagogies, and training; writing centers must follow the field of composition's lead.

Another area where digital composition has taken on increased importance is in classes that are discipline specific or that offer professional development. Engineers, entrepreneurs, and computer scientists are asked to present their findings to a variety of audiences (other students, researchers, employers, investors) and in a variety of

ways (online, slide presentation, reports); students about to graduate are encouraged to think about their composition courses and the rhetorical implications of their social media on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and websites. Outside of the classroom, many students consistently utilize social media and messaging via phones, tablets, and computers; social media has become ubiquitous for students and one of their primary methods of communication. Because of the increasing importance of digital composition for students inside and outside the classroom, if writing centers want to keep up with changing trends, then writing centers should position themselves to work with the type of composition students are utilizing now and will be composing with in the future.

In "Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers," originally published in 2000, John Trimbur argues that digital literacies represent the future of writing centers:

> To my mind, the new digital literacies will increasingly be incorporated into writing centers not just as sources of information or delivery systems for tutoring but as productive arts in their own right, and writing center work will, if anything, become more rhetorical in paying attention to the practices and effects of design in written and visual communication – more product oriented and perhaps less like the composing conferences of the process movement. (67)

Though Trimbur wrote this nearly twenty years ago, his ideas continues to resonate today because the tensions he raises are still unresolved. The writing centers where I have worked encouraged multimodal and digital literacies as sources of information and delivery systems through the use of computers and tablets during consultations. Consultants worked with students who brought in presentations and works of digital composition, viewing digital literacy as a product in its own right. But, there was not any extensive training in digital composition or significant advertising services for digital compositions. Writing centers are not any closer to a definitive understanding of the place of multimodal or digital texts, nor do they have any additional clarity in the move from the process movement to the product-oriented movement because we still focus primarily on print texts during our consultations, training, and workshops.

Methods

The primary method of collection for this project was a survey which was sent directly to writing center administrators of institutions to take as well as to distribute to consultants. Collection of responses took place during the Spring 2017 semester. The IRB-approved survey consisted of 29 questions about multimodal consultations and training. These questions are grouped into three broad sets of questions, in addition to demographic questions. Respondents were first asked about their history with multimodal composition (including training and previous consultations), technology and software expertise, and the physical space of their center. They were then asked about their confidence in commenting on works of multimodal and digital composition, visuals, and slide presentations that utilize technology, as well as their understanding of the intersections of technology with race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, and national identity. Issues of identity were a focus of this study because they are often overlooked in multimodal composition and they affect how people interact with technology. Lastly, respondents were asked about their multimodal consultation needs in the future, including space, technology training, and rhetorical training.

A total of 134 respondents from 18 institutions completed some or all of the survey. Institutions included large and medium sized public institutions as well as private institutions representing Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and California. Among those who responded were 18 administrators, 10 professional consultants, 46 graduate student consultants/peer tutors, and 60 undergraduate student consultants/peer tutors. Among those respondents, 132 indicated they were actively working in their writing center when they took the survey while two were not currently working in the center but had done so previously. Respondents came from a wide variety of disciplines, including English, education, philosophy, economics, and biology, among others.

Results

This section provides results from the survey as well as an analysis of those results. Rather than to go through all of the survey results, my focus in this section are the results that help explain the history of writing center staff, administrators, and consultants with multimodal and digital

composition, their confidence in working with multimodal and digital composition, questions of space, and training needs. Respondents were initially asked how many multimodal consultations they had conducted. The categories included 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more. If a respondent had not conducted any multimodal consultations, they could skip the question.

Count of 1	Count of 2	Count of 3	Count of 4	Count of 5 or more
25	18	13	12	44

Fig.1. Number of consultations

Among the 112 respondents, 44 (39.29%) indicated that they had conducted 5 or more multimodal consultations (Figure 1). Over half, 69 (or 62.62%), indicated they had 3 or more multimodal consultations. The high number of multimodal consultations indicate that they are occurring at writing centers in significant enough numbers to warrant our attention as a field. While these types of consultations are much lower in number than more traditional forms of alphabetical texts, they do occur in writing centers. These results point to the idea that writing centers and multiliteracy centers are not doing completely separate and distinct work (wherein one works on writing and one works on multimodal communication), but that there is a lot of overlap between the two.

The types of multimodal consultations conducted were similar across institutions. When provided types of multimodal consultations, respondents were able to check as many as applied (Figure 2). The list included slide presentations, movies, websites, blogs, podcasts, oral presentations, posters, infographic, flyers, emails, social media, other digital based projects, other non-digital based project, or other. The top six are included in the figure on the next page.
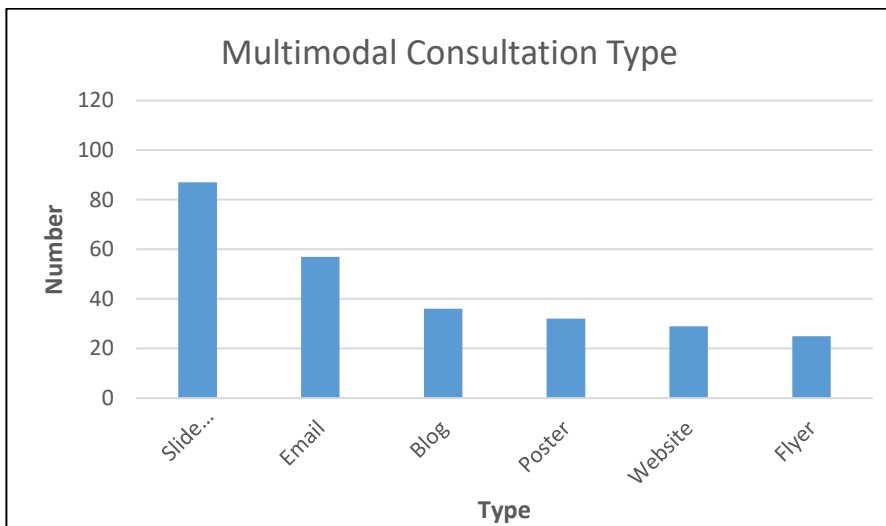
Fig. 2. Consultation Type

While slide presentations are the most prevalent, at least five other types of multimodal consultations are frequent, including emails, blogs, posters, websites, and flyers. While there are numerous ways to view these results, I provide two. The first is that the types of consultations are representative of the works of composition students might complete in classes (like slide presentations and websites) as well as the types of composition that students may complete outside of the classroom (including emails, blogs, posters, and flyers). A second is that, viewed a different way, these are also types of composition that could occur across a wide spectrum of majors and disciplines. Both views point out that students are composing a wide variety of multimodal texts, and are bringing those texts to writing centers for consultations.

Respondents were then asked a series of questions about their confidence commenting on works of multimodal composition. Answers included *Very Confident* – with a value of 3, *Somewhat Confident* – with a value of 2, and *Not Confident* – with a value of 1. Below is the confidence of each group of respondents and the overall confidence of the survey-takers in consulting with works of multimodal composition (Figure 3).
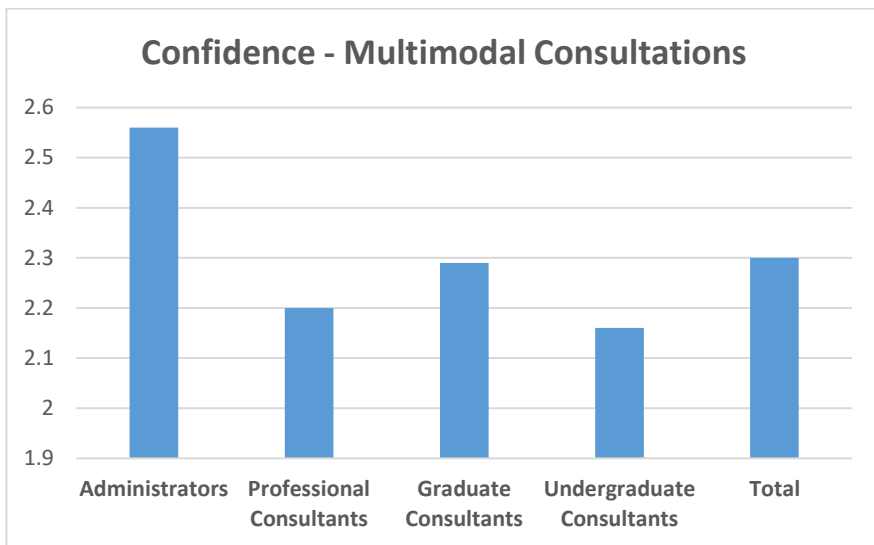
Fig. 3. Confidence in Multmodal Consultations

Administrators, those who are likely to have the most experience, were the most confident (2.56) in commenting on works of multimodal composition. Graduate students were also confident (2.29) in their multimodal composition skills while professional consultants (2.20) and undergraduate consultants (2.16) were the least confident. Overall, the average for all respondents was about 2.30, placing it above "somewhat confident" but well below "very confident."

Respondents were then asked about their history with multimodal composition as well as any type of writing center training they may have had. They were able to check as many boxes as applicable (Table 1). Undergraduates and graduate students were viewed separately. 39 graduate students responded to questions about previous multimodal composition training (writing center training is asked in a different question). The overall confidence of graduate students commenting on multimodal composition is 2.29 (writing center-specific training for multimodal composition was asked as a separate question).

Table 1. Graduate Student Consultant Confidence 1

Previous Communication Class	Previous English Class	Previous Class	Workshop
2.556	2.409	2.333	2.370

Among graduate student consultants, those who had multimodal composition training in a previous communication class, previous English class, or workshop had higher confidence than average. The most effective way of improving confidence in multimodal composition, however, was writing center training (Table 2).

Table 2. Graduate Student Consultant Confidence 2

No Writing Center Training	Writing Center Training
2.136	2.588

Those who had no writing center training – 24 students – had a confidence in multimodal composition of 2.136, well below average for graduate students, while those who had writing center training – 19 students – had a confidence of 2.588, well above average for graduate students.

There were fifty undergraduate consultants who responded to questions about previous training (Table 3). The overall average confidence of undergraduate consultants with multimodal composition was 2.16.

Table 3. Undergraduate Student Consultant Confidence

Previous Communication Class	Previous English Class	Previous Class	Workshop
2.191	2.187	2.175	2.368

Among the undergraduate consultants who had previous training, all indicated that they had a higher confidence in multimodal composition than the average. The most beneficial training was a workshop while other forms of training were less beneficial. Of the 50 undergraduates who responded to the question about writing center training in multimodal consultations, 20 had writing center training while 30 did not have writing center training (Table 4).

Table 4. Undergraduate Student Consultant Confidence

No Writing Center Training	Writing Center Training
2.000	2.368

Undergraduate tutors who had writing center training had a confidence of 2.368, above average for undergraduate students; meanwhile, those

who did not have writing center training had an average confidence of 2.000, below the overall average of confidence for undergraduate students. As with graduate consultants, undergraduate consultants highly benefitted from writing center training.

Overall, of the 45 respondents (37.82%) who indicated that they had writing center training for multimodal composition, 21 said they received it from a training workshop, 15 from a peer tutor training course, and nine from a writing center orientation. A majority of respondents – 70 – indicated that they were not trained to respond differently to multimodal composition while most – 105 – were not trained to use specific equipment or software. These responses highlight a few key insights into the background of writing center administrators, staff, and consultants. The first is that many students have at least some training in multimodal composition, while the second is that this training often does not occur in writing centers. The lack of training in writing centers may point to a diminished importance for multimodal composition, an assumption that students are already proficient in these forms of composition, or a lack of funding to support training.

The survey also included a series of questions about confidence on the intersection of technology with different rhetorical considerations, including gender, race, sexual orientation, class, national identity, visuals, and presentations that use digital technology (Table 5). These categories were chosen because of their importance to the field of composition as well as their importance in mediating the use of technology. The results are presented in two different ways: by overall averages and by training.

Table 5. Overall Average – Rhetorical Considerations

Category	Average
Gender	1.965
Race	1.687
Sexual Orientation	1.722
Class	2.061
National Identity	1.687
Visuals	2.304
Presentation Technology	2.579

The highest confidence, above "somewhat confident," are visuals and presentations that use digital technology; however, the lowest amount of confidence are the intersections of technology with gender, race, sexual orientation, class, and national identity – which are all at "somewhat confident" or below. Results indicate that, overall, there are many areas where administrators, staff, and consultants lack confidence and could use additional training.

Data was also analyzed by comparing those who reported a specific category of training (like a previous English class or writing center training) versus those who indicated they did not receive previous training in that category (see Table 4, above, for categories). Respondents who have taken a previous English class that featured multimodal composition were more confident in their abilities across all categories, but the increases were modest (less than a 0.2 point increase) except for gender (a 0.24 increase) and visuals (a 0.22 increase). Those who reported taking a previous workshop on multimodal composition reported higher confidence in all categories except for sexual orientation. But the most significant training is that which occurs in writing centers. Respondents who indicated that they received this form of training experienced across the board higher confidence in their ability to consult with a wide range of rhetorical considerations.

In every category, respondents were more confident if they had writing center training in multimodal composition compared to those who had no writing center training. Results show that writing center training is the best way to improve the confidence of administrators and students working with multimodal composition.
Respondents were also asked a series of questions about what they may need in order to complete multimodal consultations, including:

- What areas of technical training <u>do you need</u> to feel prepared for multimodal consultations?
- What types of multimodal rhetoric <u>do you need</u> to feel prepared for multimodal consultations?
- What kind of space do you need for multimodal consultations?
- What kind of technology do you need to complete multiliteracy/multimodal consultations?

Despite the high number of multimodal consultations that respondents participated in, they did indicate a number of areas of technical training that they need (Figure 4).

Fig. 4. Technical Training Needs

While most felt that they needed the least amount of training for posters and social media, they felt the most need for training in photo editing and web design software. These areas align with the types of composition that are most and least prevalent and used today.

Respondents were also asked what type of multimodal rhetoric they needed in order to feel prepared to conduct consultations (Figure 10). Possible categories included visual rhetoric; oral rhetoric; intended audience; strategies of persuasion; ethics of representation; space, typography, and color; visual style; cultural and historical context; gender, race, class, sexuality, and national identity evoked; and other.

Rhetorical Training Needs

Fig. 5. Rhetorical Training Needs

Respondents felt most comfortable in their ability to work with students on oral rhetoric, intended audience, and strategies of persuasion – all components of introductory composition classes and most prevalent in the humanities (from which many writing center administrators, staff, and students are from). However, the types of rhetoric students are least likely to know and need the most knowledge in – including visual rhetoric and space, typography, and color, as well as gender, race, class, sexuality, and national identity evoked – are areas that consultants are least likely to encounter in their studies.

Respondents were asked about their location, space, and technology needs in order to complete multimodal consultations. Among those responding about location, there were a few trends. One is that for a large portion of respondents, multimodal consulting can occur in their normal location. A second is that for some who indicated that their normal location (as in the physical location of the center) would function sufficiently, there was also a need for more private space within it to conduct multimodal consultations. A third is that many indicated a desire for a space (within the physical location of the center) specifically dedicated for multimodal consultations. Among 109 responses, the technology needs for this dedicated space were primarily a computer (99

respondents), software (62 respondents), projector (36 respondent), and a tablet (31 respondents). The minimum needs, as indicated here, are just a computer and software. Overall, it appears that multimodal consultations don't necessarily require a special location (it can be done in the regular location) because most writing center spaces are already equipped to handle multimodal consultations, that within the regular location consultants indicated a desire for a dedicated space for multimodal consultations, and that the needs are primarily technology and software related.

Discussion

While the sample size of the survey was not enough to conduct standard deviations, the results still offer an opportunity to provide insights into multimodal and digital consultations in writing centers. Because members from 18 writing centers participated, representing a diverse group of institutions, the survey results can be used to discuss larger implications to the field of writing center studies. Drawing on the results above, I provide a few conclusions that might help other writing center staff, administrators, and consultants as they consider multimodal and digital consultations:

- Writing centers are conducting more multimodal consultations than would be expected given the traditional focus of writing centers on essays and other written texts. The number, and breadth, of multimodal consultations challenges Pemberton's idea that writing centers can ignore non-traditional essay-based composition because they don't see much of it (111); in fact, it appears that writing centers do see varied forms of composition for which they should be prepared. As Melissa Ianetta and Lauren Fitzgerald contend, even institutions that don't have a multiliteracy center increasingly work with multimodal composition (177). Therefore, we should not ignore it but turn a critical lens on that work.
- Slide presentations that utilize digital technology are the most prevalent type of multimodal consultations; therefore, any sort of training should start there. However, it is unclear if slide presentations are the most common because that is what students need or if consultants are most proficient in that area and students, therefore, only come for help in that area.

- There is no substitute for writing center training for multimodal composition. While other forms of training are beneficial, including workshops and English classes, they are not as effective at preparing those who work in writing centers for working with multimodal composition. Writing centers should consider how they can incorporate multimodal training into orientations, continued training, writing center classes, and more.
- Location and space needs identified by respondents do not appear to be a major burden for writing centers. Most (105) indicated that the multimodal consultation they participated in occurred in their regular location. Only 4 indicated that it occurred in a special multimodal consultation location. At minimum, consultants would just need access to a computer and perhaps even a quiet space; at maximum, consultants want a quiet space dedicated to multimodal consultations that features a computer, projector, and updated software.
- The most significant area of training is in understanding the implications of technology on different rhetorical considerations. While respondents may feel comfortable commenting on things like visuals and presentation technology, they are much less confident in thinking about the intersections of technology with gender, race, sexual orientation, class, and national identity. Danielle DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey Grabill argue that composing does not occur in isolation but in a "matrix of local and more global policies, standards, and practices" (150). Additionally, they state we must attend to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and more. While this is the case for all forms of composition, it is especially important for multimodal and digital composition because of the traditional focus of writing centers on essay-based forms of composing. If writing centers embrace, or even befriend, multimodal and digital composition, then it is imperative that additional rhetorical training and understanding takes place for consultants, staff, and administrators. Jackie Grutsch McKinney, David Sheridan, and others argue that digital composition requires a deliberately critical approach. Grutsch McKinney highlights this more critical, and broader, scope that consultants must have when dealing with multimodal texts: "Tutors need to be able to talk about new media texts, which requires both a broader understanding of rhetoric (of how new media texts are rhetorical) and a new set of

terms about the interactivity between modes and the effects of that interactivity" (250). Sheridan also states that "Different materials require different literacies and different competencies" (276). Multimodal composition, as Grutsch McKinney and Sheridan point out, requires a different understanding than traditional mediums of composition and this survey demonstrates that we may not have the most holistic or clear understanding of multimodal and digital composition.

This project provides a starting point for future discussions about the practical applications and implications of multimodal and digital consultations in writing centers. It is obvious that traditional writing centers already provide a range of multimodal, particularly digital, composition consultations. And as Jennifer Grouling and Jackie Grutsch McKinney point out in their article "Taking Stock: Multimodality in Writing Center Users' Texts," there is work that must be done to prepare consultants and those working in writing centers for these types of consultations. In another work, Grutsch McKinney provides a challenge to writing centers: "Writing has evolved with new composing technologies and media, and we must evolve, too, because we are in the writing business. A radical shift in the way that writers communicate both academically and publicly necessitates a radical re-imagining and re-understanding of our practices, purposes, and goals" (255). Writing centers are confronting radical shifts in communication that should prompt reflection and a re-visioning of writing centers moving into the future. The decision for both individual writing centers, and for the entire field, is to determine what future stance we should take in regards to multimodal and digital composition.
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A Rhetoric of Straddling:
Community Writing Centers, Antiracism, and the University

Michael Dimmick and Dagmar Scharold

Introduction

> "Let us demand of ourselves and encourage one another to do more than mouth our commitments: to make our actions match our words; to transform our classrooms, our departments, and our institutions as well as our communities; and to learn from one another as allies who possess the courage to effect change"
>
> --Condon and Young "Epilogue" (230)

The field of composition and rhetoric has theorized a rich and nuanced understanding of language differences. In the effort to create a space in the field for students' language practices, discussions of Students' Right to their Own Language (SRTOL) (Committee on CCCC Language Statement), home languages, code-meshing (Young), multiliteracies (The New London Group), multimodalities (Selfe), and translingualism (Horner et al) have offered theories to change conceptions of writing by working from within the white racial habitus of the university. Asao Inoue argues that a white racial habitus is "a dominant set of durable and flexible dispositions to read and write in English." Notably, this disposition privileges one kind of dominant discursive practice - what we generically refer to as academic discourse - "even though it is not static nor unified, but varies by discipline, class, location, and instructor" (Inoue "Afterward"). The white racial habitus of the university offers a homogenized conception of writing that insists the social context of writing exists somewhere outside of the individual, rather than negotiated as a set of relationships informed by histories of race, gender, sex, and class. It asserts that the rational "knowing" self be valued over the emotional, "uncontrolled" self, despite the usefulness of attending to the affective position of the individual in relationship to the sponsors or subjects of literate acts (Inoue "Afterward"). Said more simply, the

emphasis on monologic standards of English persists in structuring our dispositions to writing. As long as these standards predominate, they also shape the constitutive practices of our pedagogies as we monitor, encourage, or constrain the way writers use and access marginalized language traditions. Despite four decades of work since the call in SRTOL to respect students' languaging traditions, we still find ourselves complicit in maintaining the values of a white racial habitus on a cool, rationally minded, coherent individual writing in a language still deemed "neutral" by the universities where we work.

Writing center studies are at a critical juncture for taking action about the complicity of our work in relation to our field's discussion of language rights and how to implement antiracist activism in our centers. We need to interrogate anew the spaces we are already working in to see what models for anti-racist practice and pedagogy are untapped. A turn to community writing centers and community literacy work gives us not only an opportunity to reassess the ways we privilege particular discourses but also provides examples of approaches that support the languaging traditions of all writers.

If writing centers want to become the nexus for antiracist activism, practice, and pedagogy in the university, we argue that we should be looking to community writing centers and community writing assistance programs. Given that an academic writing center is financially, administratively, and pedagogically beholden to the institution, a community writing center has more latitude by its very nature of working with members of the community on non-academic projects. Servicing the needs of a public population affords the opportunity for putting antiracism activism into practice and provides an opportunity for the community to teach the university the languaging practices of a diverse community. A community writing center MAY straddle this gap between the two spaces for literacy practices, and as we will discuss, Peck et al, Goldblatt, Rousculp, and others have provided models that those in writing center studies would do well to reconsider. Without over-romanticizing community literacy work, we contend that the field should be mindful that community literacy work may just as easily be troubled by institutional and faculty agendas and theorizing community work without consulting the community itself (Peck et al 219).

We are also mindful that students play a significant role in the day-to-day practice of community literacy work. Twenty-five years ago, Marilyn Cooper argued that writing center tutors' everyday work with student writers and ongoing education in tutor training provides the opportunity to transform, if not put in check, the homogenizing language practices and values of writing in the university. Her argument seems particularly prescient as more universities invest in community literacy center work and the field comes to terms with the experience of more students moving out of the university and into nonacademic and community spaces. We argue that writing center studies and writing studies more broadly should give more credence to students' work in community spaces serving diverse languaging traditions in face-to-face writing assistance. As students listen to, learn from, and write with (Deans) community members, they "also become agents of change in writing pedagogy" (Cooper 103). As students and community members negotiate language traditions, motives for writing, and genres, they are not only writing with community members, they are "creating useful knowledge about writing" that can offer new models for change in the university (103). While community literacy programs are widely staffed by both undergraduate and graduate students, Cooper's argument is especially important for considering how graduate students might leverage their experience in community literacy work to transform the dispositions of a white racial habitus as they move into professional roles.

To explore the possibility for graduate students' experience in community sites to be leveraged into developing new models of writing in the university, we turn to a model of community literacy work developed by graduate students and writing center sponsors in collaboration with community leaders: the University of Wisconsin - Madison's Community Writing Assistance (CWA) program . We discuss the CWA program to theorize a rhetoric of straddling. In CWA, community writing assistants mediated the dispositions of university writing practices while serving the compositional needs of a writing public. We call this a rhetoric of straddling. Rhetoric of straddling attends to the emergent practices assistants developed in face to face writing assistance by privileging community members own languaging traditions and motives for writing. Much of the literature on community literacy work reflects what we are calling a rhetoric of straddling by theorizing community members as experts and by considering the

problem of university practices being imported into nonacademic sites. Less often discussed is how community writing assistants' work can be employed in transforming writing pedagogy more broadly, particularly in the university. While we acknowledge that community writers, the site, and the writing assistant all engage in a rhetoric of straddling by negotiating community and university or institutional languaging traditions, we focus on the undertheorized experience of graduate students in their role as community writing assistants.

It has proven difficult for writing studies and writing centers to transform writing in the university and to be steadfast in doing the long-term work of antiracism. While this paper focuses on the specific experience of one community writing assistant, our hope is that theorizing that experience will open a venue for further exploring how community literacy practices that the field already engages in could help us to transform the dispositions to writing in the university. Viewed through an antiracist lens, we suggest that a rhetoric of straddling helps understand the time a writing assistant spends in community spaces as a model for reshaping the strategic "dispositions" persisting in writing centers, pedagogies, and curricula (Inoue "Afterward"). A rhetoric of straddling foregrounds the work of reshaping our dispositions to writing with an eye to "future matters" by spending time in non-academic spaces, attending to community motives for composing, working to listen to the languaging traditions of the community, and asking uncomfortable questions about assistants' own expertise as they serve community members. Community writing assistants' experiences provide the time and emergent practices needed to integrate an antiracist perspective in writing center studies and in composition pedagogy.

We begin by examining the literature on writing centers and community literacy centers to highlight models of antiracist pedagogy. We turn to Mathieau's discussion of strategic and tactical literacy projects to theorize a rhetoric of straddling based on the experience of community writing assistants. In our case study, we focus on Michael's experience working in University of Wisconsin's Community Writing Assistance program to discuss how the space of literacy work matters, how motives for literacy work matter, and how we can attend to the strengths of home languaging traditions. In our discussion, we argue that the transformation of an assistant's own assumptions about literacy work provide the ethical pedagogical practices that can usefully be employed in doing the long

term work of antiracism in the university. We end by reiterating the importance of finding new models of antiracist pedagogy, like that of Madison's Community Writing Assistance program, that can be brought out of community literacy work and into the university.

A Consideration of Where We Stand

In the field of writing center studies, dominated by white scholars, directors, coordinators, and tutors with "good intentions," we are very much aware that our ideologies, pedagogies, and practices reinforce a dominant form of English, for both native and multilingual speakers. Though our professional organization, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), has been working consciously, albeit at glacial speed, to be more inclusive, this effort gained traction with Villanueva's keynote address at the 2005 IWCA conference, calling on writing centers to engage in anti-racism practices, including among other suggestions hiring a diverse staff and becoming a place on campus for anti-racism activism.

Greenfield and Rowan note that Villanueva's keynote met with a flurry of activity in the conference hallways and later in the WCenter listserv. A couple weeks later that flurry of activity disappeared "into a form of rhetorical silence that exposed the writing center community's (in)ability to sustain critical and difficult conversations about race" (Greenfield and Rowan 2). Neisha-Anne Green revitalized that call in 2017 in her own IWCA keynote:

I look at all my underrepresented brothas and sistas in the room today, and I say to you, let's add our cultural expressions and values systems to this 'safe space,' this 'brave space,' this white-as-hell-space. Let's add some color. Let's bring some real swag and paint the walls, the conferences, and the journals with our Englishes . . . Let's truly make these spaces inclusive of our experiences and learning. (Moving Beyond 28)

We return to Villanueva and Green to take up that activity and to consider the ways we might "sustain critical and difficult conversations about race."

Given the difficulty of writing centers to effect structural change from their often marginal position in the university and their role in servicing the academic discourse of the university, we find hope in the new lineage of writing center scholarship evidenced in work like Greenfield's and Rowan's collection, Writing Centers and the New Racism, as well as the work of the IWCA's Antiracism Activism SIG to develop an ongoing annotated bibliography tracing work useful for developing racial justice in our writing centers (see Godbee, et al). This work has provided the impetus for us to finally unpack our assumptions that ". . . writing centers are race neutral and benign spaces; and that the literacy education offered by the university and the writing center contributed to leveling the playing field . . ." (Grimm "Retheorizing" 76). While Grimm offers a critical vantage point for interrogating the whiteness of writing center spaces and writing center scholarship, Green's call six years later reminds us that writing centers remain problematically anchored to the white racial habitus of the university and that writing centers alone are not sufficient to change the university's dispositions of writing.

However, recent work on community writing centers has provided useful models for implementing antiracism in our practices, one that helps bring some of the work of community literacy more explicitly into our considerations of how to rethink and redesign the physical, discursive, and relational spaces of our writing centers. In A Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center, Tiffany Rousculp maps out the development of The Salt Lake City Community College Community Writing Center (SLCCCWA). The collaboration between the community members and SLCCCWA "created a hybrid space, one that sustainably merged community and academic discourses and generated new understandings of rhetoric, expertise, changes, and institution" (23). Rousculp's own theorization of doing community work from a rhetoric of respect and positioning ourselves in "A different type of relationship, one that is grounded in perception of worth, in esteem for another - as well as for their self" (24-25) reflects earlier work on community literacy. Rousculp's emphasis on the relational perception of the Other as central to respect synthesizes an ethical model for rethinking the relational space of writing centers and community writing centers seen in the community literacy work of Peck et al and Goldblatt. Their discussions of viewing the community member as an expert defines an ethical position for writing assistants in community literacy spaces.

Though understanding community members as experts has by now become commonplace, that position is anchored to developing a model of community work "that comes from neighborhoods and draws on the university without being controlled by its demands" (Goldblatt 284; emphasis added). By working from the community's needs and conceptions of literacy, "students encounter partners engaging in substantial work rather than clients receiving aid" (Goldblatt 294; emphasis added). In making this distinction, Goldblatt not only identifies the community as experts, but argues that writing assistants' recognition of this expertise is central to shaping the goals, values, and practices of community literacy projects. Peck et al similarly argue that from this position of viewing community members as "engaging in substantial work," community members come to see "[themselves] as an expert with a lot to say and a right to say it" (220).

In what follows, we suggest that University of Wisconsin's CWA program draws from both writing center and community literacy center practices, extending the reach of writing center praxis into the community. CWA's focus on individual community writing offers the possibility of being in community spaces and learning from community members as assistants "write with" individuals, drawing on university resources but not beholden to the institutional values shaping writing center work. In Peck et al's "Community Literacy," they envision a model of community literacy ". . . that works for social change and which arises from an intercultural conversation that creates bridges and allows for productive working relationships among people of difference" (201). However, Paula Mathieu takes a different approach to community literacy in Tactics of Hope that is useful for 1) focusing the field's attention on the sites where institutional practices and community desires meet, the spaces where face-to-face writing assistance occurs; and 2) compels the field to acknowledge and interrogate writing assistants' situated placement in community literacy spaces. Mathieu notes that "little scholarship raises critical questions about the value of creating institutionalized service projects" (97). "What," she asks "would happen to our theorizing and principles . . . if we listened to the community more?" (99). While we do not mean to elide the differences of community literacy work and service learning, both illustrate a shared concern about the tension between a "top down" institutionalization of university and community collaborations and the goal of "[listening] to the community more."

Mathieu troubles the assumption that institutionalizing community literacy work supports the goals of developing community relationships, noting that "When extending university work into the community, existing academic measures are often applied . . . even though the space of the interaction is no longer defined or controlled by the university" (16). To address this concern, Mathieu takes up de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics, contrasting the strategy driven goals of institutionalized community literacy work with the tactical goals of working with the community's literacy needs and desires. Strategies have their "place" in providing much needed resources and means of validating our work; Mathieau points out, while not "evil on its face," the strategic approach "is risky and not necessarily beneficial, especially when universities institutionalize well-intentioned but top down relationships" (98). By contrast, an attention to tactical use of these resources by community members helps those in writing center studies to understand the work in more complex and situated terms. Mathieu notes that tactical projects "view the community as a source of expertise, foreground specific community needs, involves students in work that has specific rhetorical exigencies, and acknowledges their own limitations" (110). Approaching community literacy instruction through the lens of strategies and tactics refigures the relationship between the top down approach of framing community literacy in the terms of institutionalized goals and recognizing the need to shape writing assistance to the goals of projects conceived by community members.

In theorizing a rhetoric of straddling, we build on Mathieu's argument by focusing on the community writing assistants' position in community spaces. We argue that a consideration of community writing assistants' position as both representatives of the university and in service to community members' writing practices provides a rich site for theorizing antiracist practices. We also acknowledge that community literacy work throws into stark relief the ways that community partnerships can troublingly conceptualize the work of writing assistants as bringing community members and literate practices into line with the hegemonic conceptions of writing taught in classrooms, structurally supported in disciplines, inculcated in writers, and reinforced in writing centers. By traveling into community spaces, community writing assistants run the risk that they carry their training in the dispositions of a university's white racial habitus into sites of writing assistance.

Each of these troubling dispositions reflect a racial determination about both an individual writing and the writing itself by imagining the community member "as being in need of a specific revision" and "[requiring] them to transgress their current identities rather than to pay attention to [the community writing assistant's] own" (Rousculp 90). If writing center studies considers what community literacy instruction has to teach about antiracist rhetoric and pedagogy, the field can build on its position in both the institution and the community. CWA, in straddling the strategic institutional dispositions of writing and the tactical position of community members' own desires, motives, and projects, offers a model of approaching writing assistance from an antiracist perspective by taking writing assistants out of university spaces and dwelling in non-academic and community spaces that compel us to both revisit and answer Mathieu's questions about "what values are we institutionalizing" and, as Diab et al argue in "A Multi-dimensional Pedagogy for Racial Justice in Writing Centers," to make this interrogation an ongoing, processual and reiterative, ethical approach to doing the long term work of antiracism and social justice. We argue that a rhetoric of straddling, in focusing our attention on the liminal space community writing assistants occupy within the community and the university, provides the lens for how writing assistants might develop "a specific revision" to the dispositions of a white racial habitus as they "transgress" and "learn to pay attention" to their identities and assumptions about writing and bring that experiential knowledge back to the university.

Space Matters

In the spring of 2009, Michael was invited to work in the Community Writing Assistance (CWA) program (now named Madison Writing Assistance), a branch of the university's writing center. As a community writing assistant, Michael staffed a table at Madison's Goodman South library for 2.5 hour shifts twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday evening, offering services modeled on the tutor-student relationships practiced in the writing center. Once he arrived, he collected the materials stored in the backroom and set up a satellite writing center, setting out signs announcing the session and a sign-up sheet. After every session, he would fill out a report on what he worked on with community members, what their goal and purpose was, how far they got, and what

the community member would work on for their next visit, if there would be one.

The site where the program was first implemented suggest race may have been a guiding premise in the need for the program. At the time, the program was hosted in a library space in a racially diverse section of the city, where a substantial number of Asian Americans and the majority of the city's African American and LatinX citizens lived. By and large the community had limited access to the university and were generally underserved by the resources available just down the road. Beyond serving a diverse population, the library was and is positioned strategically in relation to a number of community service organizations helping the community negotiate education, legal concerns, child development, and health support. The two-block radius around the library houses a Planned Parenthood office; a community college branch; a Neighborhood Law Clinic; a Women, Infants, & Children Program office, offering bilingual support for the community; and the Dane County Parent Council, offering Early Head Start, Head Start, childcare, and in-home childcare services. In short, the CWA program was one of a number of resources clustered in a central block in Southside Madison. However, we take the time to note the relationship of CWA with these other resources to illustrate CWA's ethos within a larger ecology of community services. In Mathieu's and de Certeau's terms, these are strategically positioned "proper places." Each of these other resources benefit from an ethos defined by the institutional aegis offered by the resource's "proper" name, the resources' reputation for providing services within the community, and having a fixed physical location, a place-ness. Like Goodman South library, these are all visible and familiar sites habituated into the everyday life of the community. By contrast, CWA's ethos stems from its liminal position borrowing the already established ethos of both the library and the university. CWA relies on the "place" of the library for the service to gain a presence within the community and the repute of the university to sanction its services.

The nature of the service relies on straddling and adapting the community service ethos and fixed location of the library and employing the publicly recognized reputation of the university and strategic practices of writing centers, like fixed hours, face-to-face assistance, handouts on specific writing practices, and assistants trained in being

responsive to the varied languaging traditions and compositional needs of the community. As the mission statement suggests, CWA benefits from a "top-light" institutional presence. Tasked only with "[providing] free, one–to–one writing support for community members" in "many kinds of writing" ranging from resumes to poetry (University of Wisconsin Writing Center), CWA assistants were positioned to be respectful of community members' needs, while adapting writing assistance to community members' own compositional goals.

The ambiguous ethos and fixed location of CWA reminds us that the way spaces of literacy work are constituted matters. We do not mean solely in defining the needs communities identify as exigencies, though this is of course critically important; we also mean how borrowing the ethos of the university and library provides the opportunity of being in and learning to dwell in nonacademic and community spaces without being constrained by the strategic goals of the university. Space matters because we need to be in that space, with the people living in that space to get busy, be there, and learn to do the work of antiracism to avoid running slipshod over community members' motives for writing with our own hopes for liberatory outcomes. Routinely doing literacy work in community spaces stipulates a way of being in the world - not to try on a rhetoric for the day, to tour in antiracism, or to reappropriate the space and the work. Rather, space matters because being there and learning to be responsive to the needs of community members is critical to doing more than "get excited, talk about it for a while," "use it," "cite it," as Octavio Pimentel implores of allies. Space matters because it is central to integrating this work in "all facets of life, including teaching, researching, and living" (Pimentel "Manifesto"). The ambiguous place-ness of CWA and the top light institutional sponsorship of CWA provides an inroad for graduate students serving as assistants to doing the difficult work of putting their own agendas and expertise in check by recognizing the person assistants work with is an expert, and, likely, more an expert than the writing assistant for understanding community members' motives, desires, skills, language use, and habits of communicating. At the very least, CWA provides a way to cultivate new habits of being in space, for assistants to experiment with their own assumptions, and to suspend these assumptions to listen to the community member who has come for assistance. In the process, assistants have the opportunity to learn from the emergent practices born of their work with a variety of languaging traditions, motives, and

compositional goals. Given that the field is still dominated by white members, writing center professionals could all benefit from being in non-academic and community spaces, experimenting with new roles and working on writing tasks often not dealt with in university spaces.

If the field looks at community literacy work as being in service to community members finding a place to stand in discourse, to illuminating where the field is and where the field wants to be, to developing new pedagogies from what is learned in community spaces as writing assistants straddle strategic and tactical positions, scholars' focus can be on bringing discussion and inquiry (Peck et al) into praxis, turning a place to stand into a resource for change in the university. This comes with the recognition that departing from familiar sites of literacy work, like writing centers and the classroom, will bring risks, ask much of literacy users, but also, may shift the field's understanding of the work done in literacy instruction - both in the community and the academy.

Motives Matter

In Michael's own training he had read extensively on the colonizing function of standard languages. He had come to look at language as importantly socially situated, and that valuing dialect and varieties of world Englishes were critical to learners' sense of agency (Street; Canagarajah; Smitherman). Michael's "expertise," he felt, called him to listen to students' language uses, for where the resources of their home languages might be silenced or written over, and he had come to understand this language negotiation as an identity negotiation: in assimilating to the discursive norms of one group (the university), the history of the student's own group risked being left behind (Grimm "Retheorizing"; Villanueva "Memoria"). As Michael began working as an assistant in CWA he had, perhaps naively, assumed that he would work with different kinds of literacy traditions. However, the more he thought about his work in community writing occasions, the more it became clear that his sponsorship seemed tied to community members' desire to participate in, not resist or question, dominant literacy practices. While not dealing with academic literacies, learners quite regularly brought in writing tied to institutional genres. Over and over again, Michael sat, listened to, and learned to write with community members as they came face to face over a troubling negotiation in straddling the tactical uses of individual language and literate practices and the strategic discourses of institutions.

One day, a recently immigrated elderly Brazilian man came to the library for assistance in filling out a credit card application, a process that affords little opportunity to discuss his motives for doing so. As Michael and the man navigated the application's institutional discourse, and realized the man's language traditions troubled his facility with the rhetoric of the form itself, Michael's role seemed relegated to finding ways to help the man understand what kinds of information the form asked of him. What, might be asked, is anti-racist in this pedagogical moment, where translating and silencing the man's language traditions seems the preeminent work of that session?

Taken from the standpoint of a rhetorical conception of literacy, though, this moment - where the form does not readily allow for the discussion of race and language, and in fact presumes a normative version of white discourse and privilege as race neutral - might suggest something different: a meeting place of the man's tactical motives for participating in normative forms of economic exchange and the institutional strategy wrangling that desire into, literally, an acceptable form. Here was a chance to participate in the socioeconomic life of the nation by developing an identification with dominant literacies, "whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class" (Burke 27-28). Duffy notes: "to see literacy as rhetorical is to consider the influence of a particular rhetoric on what writers choose to say, the genres they elect to write in, the words and phrases they use to communicate their messages, and the audience they imagine while writing" (227). To take seriously a rhetorical conception of literacy, as Duffy discusses it, the genres brought to community writing assistance need to be consider as not simply silencing users, but as a means to realize community members' motives. They may invoke a learner's choice to suspend home literacies in favor of adapting dominant literacy genres, not to become indentured to the system of late capitalist credit and debt, but to facilitate a way of participating in the modern economy, and in this instance, the country the man has chosen as a destination for his immigration.

As writing assistants work with these genres, they need then to consider not only the ways that the credit card application itself does not take away users' ability to, as Duffy notes, choose the genre, words and phrases, but also whether and how the genres they encounter recast their

assumptions. In this instance, a credit card application generates new ways of participating in and defining one's place within the socio-economic realities of the nation. To narrowly conceptualize writing assistants' work as helping a community member fill out a form misses the critical moment where both community member and assistant work together to negotiate language differences, not to silence the community member, but to tactically appropriate discursive forms to find a place to stand in the discourse of the nation.

Like many of the community members that came to CWA, this man disappeared from the scene after our session. We do not presume to know what came of this session, nor do we want to suggest that what came of this session is the lesson we should take away from considering this brief snapshot of a moment. Rather, the field needs to ask how working with the genres community members bring to community literacy programs provides the opportunity for demystifying the varied uses of official discourse and putting the control over the use of that discourse in the hands of the users, rather than relegating the use of the form to the bureaucratized world of institutions. Doing so provides the field with the impetus to consider, not only the various ways that individual language and literacy traditions butt up against institutions use of dominant discourse to maintain a strategic position, but also the ways motives shaping a writer's decisions to take up and work with a genre provides us with new understandings of how strategic discourses might be tactically taken up for unexpected ends.

Languaging Traditions Matter

As the previous example suggests, attending to the genres students are asked to work with in CWA situates them in a critical position straddling the institutional context where those genres might do work and individuals' desires to take up those genres. Working from an anti-racist pedagogy necessitates doing the work of coming to understand motive as a central fact of discourse. Though, it also raises another critical component of antiracist pedagogy that a rhetoric of straddling helps to illuminate, but which bears further consideration: whether community members' and assistants' negotiation of language traditions constrains or facilitates the possibility for community members to develop their own agency in deciding to draw on their experience, expertise, and language traditions as they write with/in/to discourse communities from which

they may have been historically marginalized. To address the question of how writing assistants value community members' languaging traditions, identifying writing assistants' position within a rhetoric of straddling illuminates the possibility for writing assistants to suspend their own expertise as they learn to write with community members by listening to how community members wish to be heard. In this section, we address another example from CWA where Michael works with a client looking for a way to speak back to medical institutions about her traumatic medical history. Central to her desires was to maintain her own languaging practices employing narrative and pathetic appeals in genres that traditionally silence personal testimony.

Christie (a pseudonym), an elderly white woman, whose languaging traditions reflect a familiarity with and use of Standard Edited American English, was struggling with writing a troubled and troubling, decades long medical history rife with physical pain and emotional violence suffered under the care of a number of doctors. As in the previous example, Christie's case raises the question of what is antiracist about a white woman steeped in a white middle-class languaging tradition trying to give shape to her felt experience. Quite a bit of scholarship about home languages justifiably tends to focus on the languaging traditions of second language learners, minority languages, and English dialects . However, Christie's struggle to write her narrative illustrates something that feminist scholarship has long made clear: that home language traditions oftentimes serve as both the means for developing a mode of argumentation and simultaneously the rationale for disregarding writers as subjective, unfocused, or too emotional. Greenfield argues that the presumption that home languages should be translated into the public language of standard English "[elides] recognition of (historically racialized) home languages as significant factors" (57) in developing writers' agency. Her argument can be usefully applied to the ways that a white racial habitus silences a host of home languaging traditions, whether they be stratified by race, class, gender, or region. In Christie's case, her struggle being heard hinged on the fact that her use of narrative pathetic appeals simply went unrecognized in the highly technical and scientific language traditions of medical institutions. At the same time, though, she had learned quite a bit about surgery, the body, and medical language, as well as the nuances of navigating systems of insurance, so by the time that Michael began working with her she easily displayed her expertise in both medical discourse and the affective experience of

medicine. She readily and frequently moved back and forth between discussions of stints, the vascular system, anatomy, and surgical technologies, and the frustration, pain, and humiliation that left her feeling like there was no room for a discussion of how she felt. Nonetheless, she clearly felt like "an expert with a lot to say and a right to say it" (Peck et al 220).

She had been coming to CWA for help with writing her medical narrative for some time when Michael began working closely with her every week for a little more than a year and a half. However, as she worked over her narrative and considered Michael's inquiry about her purpose in telling her history, she continued to struggle with finding a fitting approach to frame her narrative. Having been accustomed to talking about her experience for years, the oral digressions she used in her oft told narrative reflected, on the one hand, the rich accumulations of reasoned considerations about her surgical experiences and not being heard by medical institutions, but on the other hand, given the capaciousness of the narrative, also troubled choosing an obvious way to organize her thoughts on the page, identifying the salient pieces for different audiences, and finding a voice that could both encapsulate the pathos of her felt experience and speak to the logocentric discourse of the medical agencies that had, she felt, simply treated her as a thing to be fixed by subsequent surgeries.

As Michael and Christie labored over finding the fitting form for writing her narrative, they discussed who she wanted to hear her story and what she felt was her purpose. She had several audiences in mind, each of which she saw the narrative of her felt experiences as a central facet of her argumentation. For Christie, the often pathetic appeals served not simply as harrowing examples, but as logical, reasoned, deliberation about the experience. She found the narrative to be so powerful and alarming that she felt that others with similar experiences would benefit from her testimony, and that her narrative could give medical providers cause to reconsider how they treat patients. That is, faced with the difficulty, physical violence, and emotional violence of her experience, she felt that the medical institution would benefit from her "talking back" to them. Nonetheless, her habits of talking about her experience provided useful ways of reshaping her narrative to fit into several rhetorical occasions: an op-ed piece, a letter to the medical association and the hospitals, and finally, a public narrative that others might identify with

and find the encouragement to pursue ways to articulate their own experience. Guided by Christie's responses in their sessions, Michael alternated between directive and non-directive approaches. Michael listened closely to the narrative and the way she spoke about her experience; asked questions about what she hoped to accomplish; moved between transcribing her narrative and suggesting revisions for her approval when he felt confused as an audience member; and discussed the affordances of the primary genres she chose as they collaboratively shaped her writing to fit within those genres.

At the heart of this was learning to listen to the ways audiences were crossed through in Christie's narrative and to give credence to her own agency in identifying which pieces of the narrative could suitably mesh with the range of genre traditions they had considered. Regardless of which genre she chose to use, her concern was consistent: find the place to stand needed for her audience to recognize and listen to her experience, while not sacrificing the impact she felt her use of pathos and narrative could have on audiences. Without negotiating the textured/troubled relationship between the language practices and discursive forms of the home traditions and public genres, she would, as she said, remain unheard outside of the cadre of committed writing assistants she worked with at the library.

Michael and Christie's collaborative relationship straddling the strategic silencing of her discourse and her own tactical desire to be heard revealed the way that the dispositions of writing in a white racial habitus call writing center professionals to understand how interrogating the emphasis on a cool, rationally minded, coherent individual as the core of writing pedagogy requires writers to foreclose numerous aspects of their identities and embodied experience - whether this is racially construed or considered from a more intersectional position accounting for language traditions shaped by class, sex, and gender. An attention to antiracist pedagogy necessitates a consideration of instances where writers' languaging traditions are strategically marginalized in explicitly racial occasions as well as those occasions where race may play a less explicit role. Antiracist pedagogies acknowledge that the very habitus marginalizing racialized language and literacy dialects and traditions affects language traditions of all kinds. By partitioning off language varieties, we foreclose the possibility of writers finding a way into discourse that reflects their languaging traditions. Models of community

literacy work, like CWA, provide the opportunity for graduate students to not only learn with and from working face-to-face with community members but also to bring these lessons about the work of languaging into writing centers and writing studies more generally.

Conclusion

The rise of multiculturalism in the 90's offered a rich promise to effect a structural change in our ideas about writing. Writing studies discussion of contact zones, borderlands, and community offered theories to address the barriers students face in negotiating their racialized and gendered linguistic and cultural traditions with the languaging traditions of the university. This was all done without fundamentally changing the strategic dispositions of writing that structure and reinforce a white racial habitus of writing in the university. As Pimental suggests, we studied difference, we wrote about difference, we cited difference.

Twenty one years after the seminal "Community Literacy," Higgins, Long, and Flower wrote of the belief that community literacy work is "an affirmation of the social knowledge and rhetorical expertise of people in the urban community in which we worked, and as an assertion that literacy should be defined not merely as a receptive skill of reading but a public act of writing and taking social action" (9). This is a belief, an affirmation of the community members' knowledge base and rhetorical expertise, coupled with an assertion that the nature of the work we do with community writing plays a critical role in shaping writing as a public, social act and action. It may well be the point where community literacy work and the rhetoric of straddling undergirding a CWA program most clearly provide an ethical position for transforming the dispositions of writing that structure language work in the university. By spending time in non-academic and community spaces working with communities that do not have access to the resources of the universities, by learning to listen to what motivates writers' choices, and by learning to build on the resources of writers' languaging traditions, we have the experiences and "really useful knowledge" about writing needed to develop more inclusive conceptions of languaging in our universities. In taking an antiracist position, we call attention to those sites where we not only study and learn with community members, enriching our understanding of difference and responding to the call to put the presumptions of our expertise in check, but also where we do the work

needed to bring difference into the very concerns of our writing pedagogy.

During Inoue's address at the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication, he reminded white allies: "You can be a problem even when you try not to be. Sit and lament in your discomfort and its sources. Search. If our goal is a more socially just world, we don't need more good people. We need good changes, good structures, good work that makes good changes, structures, and people." We do not mean to oversell the work and hopes of programs like Madison's CWA where community writing assistants straddle the strategies of institutions and tactical desires and motivations of the community; nor do we mean to dismiss the lessons gleaned from Peck et al and Goldblatt's work developing new models for community partnerships in community literacy centers or the possibility of writing centers to play a role in critiquing institutionalized racism (Cooper; Condon; Diab, et al) and working from within writing centers' place in the institution to frame explicitly antiracist positions (Inoue). We are not proposing that a consideration of the spaces where we might already be doing the work of antiracism is an escape from the "iron cage" of "white language supremacy" (Inoue "How"). We are, however, suggesting that spending time in non-academic and community spaces, supported by but not beholden to university strategies; learning to listen to community members' tactical work with and in language; integrating explicitly antiracist practices in designing new literacy spaces, be they community or university spaces; and working from the position of a rhetoric of straddling to learn new approaches to understanding language differences that can be carried forward by graduate students as future stewards tasked with reshaping the discussions, research, and work in our discipline are all a start to developing "good changes, good structures, good work that makes good changes, structures, and people."

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Consultant Insight

The (Liberal) Art of Replication: The Transylvania University Writing Center Peer Alumni Research Project

Eileen Bunch, Hayle Hall, Karisma Keaton, Alex Miller, and Madison Perry

Introduction

In 2019, Transylvania University's Writing Center (TUWC) was interested in learning more about its alumni. As part of this process, we reviewed Bradley Hughes, Paula Gillespie and Harvey Kail's "What They Take with Them: Findings from the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project," or PWTARP. This project, which explored the impact of tutoring on tutors themselves, was insightful, especially as each of us was preparing to begin our time as on-campus tutors. We learned that tutoring would likely impact us in a variety of ways, including the development of personal and professional skills, a new relationship with writing, and a commitment to collaborative learning.

Still, in discussing PWTARP as a group of new staffers, we recognized that something was missing. Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail only focused on large universities, a category that did not include Transylvania University, an institution with roughly 1,000 students. This gap led us to consider if the benefits of peer writing support for staffers at a small, liberal arts university are somewhat different than those noted via Hughes et al. We decided to find out by replicating PWTARP in a small-scale pilot.

We corresponded with 56 alums of Transylvania University's Writing Center, sending each one a survey with questions from the original study

as well as new questions, which were intended to investigate the specific impact of Transylvania University on their experiences.[1] We then coded these responses to identify three common themes that aligned with the original study, as well as an additional theme that highlights the ways the peer-tutor experience might be influenced by the small, liberal arts college experience.

We discovered that TUWC alums were greatly impacted by their work as staffers, especially within their personal, professional, and civic lives. Our initial findings suggest that the benefits of writing center work identified by Hughes et al. might transcend institutional size; that said, the values connoted by the small college do seem to accentuate and sustain values of peer based learning. In this piece, we review and discuss the results from our survey.

Methodology and Quantitative Data

Our survey went out to 73 Transylvania writing center alumni; with 56 respondents, we had a 76% response rate. Of the 56 alumni respondents, 80.4% of respondents identify themselves as female, 17.9% identify themselves as male, and 1.8% identify themselves as non-binary. Our survey respondents come from 17 different graduating classes, spanning 26 years. We received responses from tutors in every graduating class for the last twelve years straight, from the class of 2007 to the class of 2019. 27 of the 56 responses, very nearly half, come from alumni who graduated within the last five years. This trend is likely a reflection of the fact that our Writing Center has become a much more professionalized and disciplinarily-engaged program over the past ten years or so. We also received responses reaching back as far as 1993, when the Transylvania Writing Center was in its first decade.

TU Writing Center staffers pursued a wide variety of majors and minors. Between 56 respondents, 30 fields of study are represented.

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[1] TUWC was founded in 1980 by Prof. Martha Gehringer. We drew upon social media and worked with various campus offices to get as many email addresses for TUWC alums as possible. We recognize the challenges that come with such a method; however, we were quite taken with the depth and breadth of responses.

Fig. 1. Word Cloud of Fields Represented in Survey

The most common field are WRC (Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication), Biology, English, and Spanish.

Many of these alumni also continued in formal academic pursuits after graduating from Transylvania. Of the 56 alumni who responded to our survey, 47 pursued further education, including Master's degrees, PhDs, juris doctorates, and medical degrees. Regardless of their post-graduate paths, Transylvania alums tell us how their time working in the Writing Center helped them along the way.

A New Relationship with Writing

To supplement our quantitative research, the PWTARP survey gives us the opportunity to hear back from our alums through open-ended questions. These responses provide a sort of narrative tangibility to supplement our aforementioned quantitative findings. Hughes et al. argue, "Becoming better writers involves something of a transformation

as they entered into a new relationship with the writing process itself" (25). Like the original PWTARP study, many of our respondents' written sentiments indicate a new or altered relationship with writing as a result of having worked so intimately with the writing of others.

For many of our respondents, a new relationship with writing begins with a new relationship to the feedback or criticism of others. As one puts it, "I have learned not to be too attached to my own writing and to welcome feedback." Another: "I've learned how to be patient, ask the right questions to see what writers intend to say, give constructive feedback, and walk through my suggested edits in a collaborative way."

The second main thread we can gather from our respondents' new relationship with writing is a gained perception of its limitlessness. Outside of the Writing Center, we often don't see the writing of others until its final draft—on a billboard, in a novel, or an email. The part of writing we often don't get to see are the processes outside of our own-- of which, our respondents' have found, there is a near infinite expanse. This respondent tells us, "Not only has [my experience] allowed me to be more compassionate toward the writings of others, but it has also allowed me to be more compassionate toward my own writing." Another, "Being exposed to a number of different writing styles and seeing those styles develop in my repeat clients gave me ideas for how my writing could change or grow as well."

This new perspective can provide a sort of ease, an earned confidence in this expanded   set of skills and options for writing: "When I was invited to be a writing center tutor, I thought that the center had lost [its] mind. I was sure I was totally unqualified. But I gained confidence in my own voice by helping other students to find theirs. I can't tell you how rewarding that was for me as a young person, and how much I still draw on that confidence every day."

Personal and Professional Skills, Values, and Abilities

Former tutors told Hughes et al. that "the correlation between peer tutoring and career relevance is 'eerie,'" demonstrating that alums' experiences in the Writing Center have a profound impact on their professional lives. Several respondents express that their familiarity with the foundational work of the Writing Center has gifted them with abilities

that have helped them transition easily into successful post-graduate careers. One alum tells us that "no one teaches you how to give feedback on writing in graduate school. I...had a distinct edge on my cohort since I had some instruction in writing feedback as a writing tutor. It helped me write effective assignments, anticipating the types of struggles students might encounter...I had a lot of ideas at the ready." Although many former tutors chose to continue their education through graduate programs relating to the humanities, the skills alums develop are not confined to a single discipline or career. They are practiced and adapted, in a fitting interdisciplinary fashion. As one alum notes, "...the writing center was a huge part of keeping me both grounded and well-rounded, and certainly made me a better doctor, as I practiced my empathy and ability to educate in that space."

These skills, values, and abilities former tutors developed are also illustrated in their personal relationships. Our respondents reveal how the quality of their relationships with their colleagues, friends, partners, and children is influenced by the skills they practiced as Writing Center tutors, such as interpersonal communication, patience, and compassion: "I think I'm a more effective partner, friend, and family member because I pay closer attention to how my writing/words will be understood, as opposed to just how I intended them. I value teamwork/collaboration more, I ask for help more easily, I use writing to express myself because I can more effectively convey a feeling, whether that's providing feedback on a friend's cover letter or writing an eloquent birthday card message."

Through the development of these skills, values, and abilities, we can derive that being a Writing Center tutor is a powerful experience that transforms alums' personal and professional lives. As one says, "all of these things have served me over and over in my career journey so far, and I have no doubt that they'll continue to do so in the future."

Collaboration

In the original PWTARP study, former tutors reported that they developed a "deeper understanding of and commitment to collaborative learning" as a result of their work in writing centers. In our survey, respondents reflect this same theme. Transylvania University past tutors claim that their work in the Writing Center, as opposed to their regular

time in the classroom, taught them to value collaboration, and that this shift has had a great effect on how they view learning overall.

Specifically, respondents insist that their perception of writing as a collaborative act has changed dramatically due to their work as tutors. One past tutor learned that "writing, while incredibly personal, is also a collaborative thing" and reports that they are now more open to receiving feedback on their work from others. Another respondent who admits not utilizing the Writing Center much before becoming a tutor reports they too came to value collaboration and thus began using Writing Center services as a way to collaborate with fellow staffers on their assignments. This tutor maintains that they "grew to value the creativity, and simply stronger work, that grew out of collaborative writing." Our study finds that peer tutoring work has a significant, personal effect on many previous tutors: not only do tutors report a fundamental shift in the way they view writing, this shift toward collaboration opened tutors up to utilizing a collaborative approach in their own lives, as evidenced by the fact that they began coming to the Writing Center more themselves. Ultimately, our respondents rejected the idea that writing is a solitary, private activity; instead, they insist that there are great benefits of creative collaboration in the writing process.

Whether it be in tutors' personal or professional lives, it is evident that writing center work fosters a commitment to collaborative learning that follows tutors even after graduation. One past tutor expresses this best when they say, "I am a stronger writer because I work more collaboratively, which in general has made me a stronger team player than I would've been without TUWC experience."

The "Transy Effect"

Aside from trends originally identified by PWTARP, our study discovered a pattern unique to Transylvania University and that might be extended to the small college landscape, all in all, which we have fondly termed "The Transy Effect." From the beginning, we've asked: what, if anything, about Transylvania specifically affects the experience of writing tutors, while on campus and beyond? We then developed new survey questions that specifically sought to investigate how both the small size and liberal arts curriculum of our university may have affected tutors' Writing Center experience. In regard to their specific TUWC

experiences, we asked alums to rate the impact of Transylvania's student population and size on a scale from 1 (no effect) to 5 (great effect):
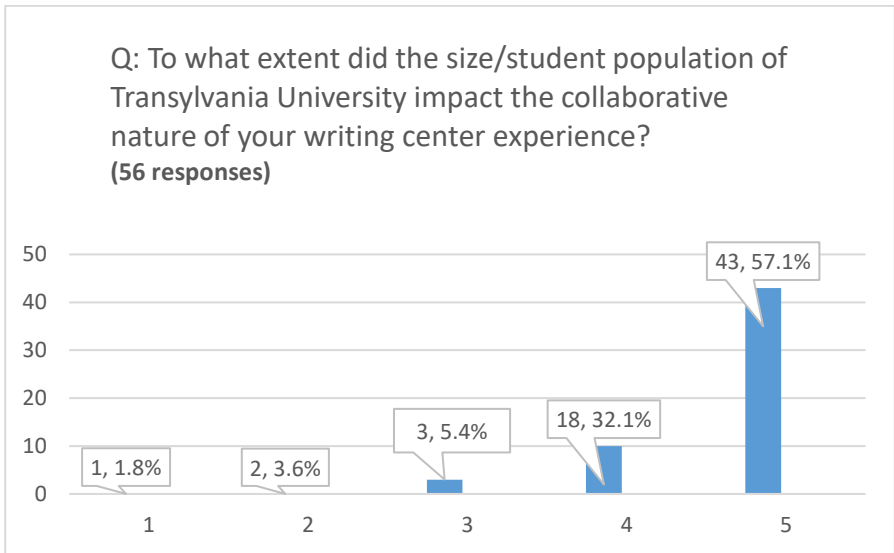
Q: To what extent did the size/student population of Transylvania University impact the collaborative nature of your writing center experience?
(56 responses)

1, 1.8%   2, 3.6%   3, 5.4%   18, 32.1%   43, 57.1%

Fig. 2. Perceived Impact of Size/Student Population

In open-ended responses, respondents describe the influence of our campus's size on the collaborative nature of one's Writing Center experience. As one alum writes, "Transy's size permitted the collaborative nature of the WC process to extend outside of WC hours. For example, if I had recurring appointments with colleagues who I knew well, we would often discuss things outside of hours." In general, alums write that the small size of the school led to building better, stronger, more productive relationships with peers in the Writing Center.

We can also glean from open responses that our cross-discipline curriculum has a substantial impact on the way staffers learn and work at Transylvania and live and work beyond graduation, using their responses to the question in Figure 3 on the next page.
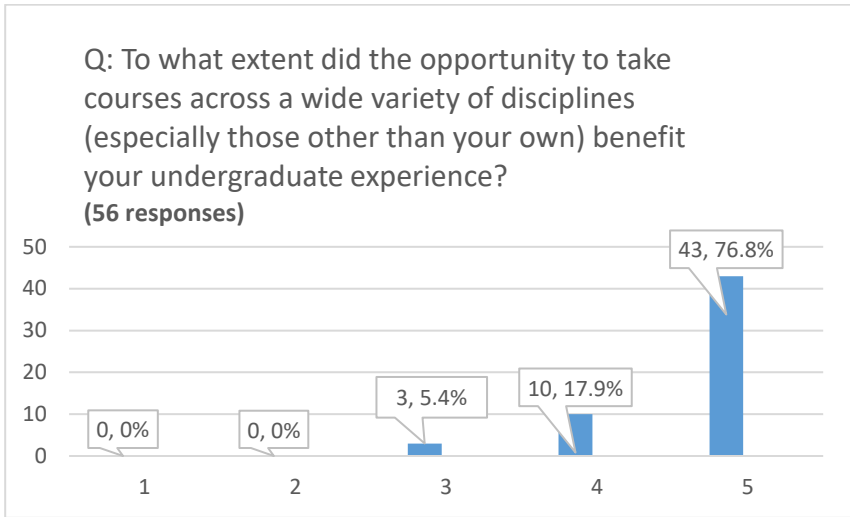
Q: To what extent did the opportunity to take courses across a wide variety of disciplines (especially those other than your own) benefit your undergraduate experience?
(56 responses)

[Bar chart showing responses on a scale of 1 to 5:
1: 0, 0%
2: 0, 0%
3: 3, 5.4%
4: 10, 17.9%
5: 43, 76.8%
Y-axis ranges from 0 to 50]

Fig. 3. Perceived Effect of Mutlidisciplinary Coursework

Elaborating on these numerical data, one respondent writes, "Because I had to take a wide variety of courses ... I typically had at least some background knowledge that could help me assist [any student]. Even if I didn't, working in a wide range of different disciplines allowed me to be flexible … enough to be comfortably able to approach basically anything." Another describes an instance in which they helped a student with a mathematics paper: "It made me realize more than ever just how ubiquitous and critical a skill writing can be in every field of study." The nature of Transylvania's curriculum allows alums to become more prepared, more well-rounded writing tutors, which ultimately allows them to develop the skills and traits outlined previously.

Interestingly, the curriculum doesn't just affect the way alums worked in the Writing Center—in some cases, the interdisciplinary nature of writing center work affects how students engage academically. As one of our respondents says, "I think the opportunity to tutor writing for a variety of disciplines had more of an effect on my educational experience than it did the other way around." Another alum notes: "The opportunity to engage with students in a variety of disciplines incentivized my own intellectual curiosity and encouraged me to take a greater breadth and depth of courses." In short, The Transy Effect impacts Writing Center experience, and vice versa, and both experiences carry their effects into tutors' post-graduate life.

Conclusion

As researchers, we look forward to digging further into our data in order to learn more about how service as a writing center staffer--particularly at a small, residential college with a traditional liberal arts emphasis--plays into life after graduation. Many of our findings so far align with much of what the original PWTARP study offers, suggesting the values of substantive, sustained writing center professional development transcend institutional type. Yet, on the other hand, we've found that the small college landscape--with its emphasis on close relationships, small groups, and mentoring--seems to align quite well with writing center best practices and values and influences the ways in which these practices and values impact their post-graduate lives.

It is our hope that our findings so far help provide proof for what has been, until now, mere anecdote and speculation. Studies like PWTARP allow campus stakeholders to see the real value of writing center labor, and how such labor continues to benefit former staffers long after graduation. Like Hughes et al., we argue that such work showcases how writing center culture goes beyond service and, in fact, might epitomize the liberal arts experience.[2]

Works Cited

Hughes, Bradley, et al. "What They Take with Them: Findings from the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project." *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2010, pp. 12–46. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43442343.

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Back to the Center

The Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center at Middle Tennessee State University

James Hamby

Services

At MTSU's Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center (UWC), we pride ourselves on being a dynamic, multifaceted writing center. Our university has a diverse population with varied needs, and we strive to help our students grow as writers not only with one-on-one tutoring but also with a number of different services that promote community and literacy.

Since our new director, Dr. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy took over in August of 2018, we have expanded in our training and technological capability to more readily accommodate multimodal needs in our tutoring. We have secured funds for some new, much-needed computers as well as for a smart screen. We have established a close working relationship with MTSU's Makerspace—a hands-on technology lab where students may use 3-D printers, vinyl cutters, laser etchers, virtual reality equipment, and many other types of equipment—just located one floor down from our location in the James Walker Library, and in Spring of 2019 we cohosted an "open house" event with them in which we discussed with students how to write multimodally, embed images in their writing, and enhance their ePortfolios. Our staff also spent a training session in the Makerspace to better understand the intersections between writing and other kinds of creativity. Many of our tutors have since registered for trainings in video production and other technologies.

The UWC has offered online tutoring for a number of years through our on-line scheduling software, but consultants and students have found the chatbox function to be outdated and clumsy. We now have audio/visual capabilities in our tutoring, and most of our tutors agree that it has substantially enhanced the quality of our online sessions. However, there was more pushback from our consultants than we (the administrators) had anticipated. Some consultants, while perfectly at ease in face-to-face sessions, were very apprehensive about appearing on screen. Admittedly, this was puzzling to us, but this was a good lesson about cultivating staff buy-in before making any major changes, especially in technology. Another issue that has occurred is that students themselves do not always have A/V technology available on their computers or devices, or they just prefer the chatbox function. Nevertheless, the A/V option has allowed us to offer on-line sessions that are more closely in line with face-to-face sessions that value open-ended questions and higher-order concerns rather than the focus on proofreading for grammar that all too often seems to mark online sessions confined to the chatbox.

The Writing Center also plays a crucial role in the university's QEP, "MT Engage," which encourages faculty to utilize ePortfolios in their classes in the hopes that students will reflect on what they have learned and find connections between their courses. MT Engage has funded a graduate assistantship in the writing center, currently held by Michael McDermott, who develops resources and training sessions for students and faculty.

In addition to traditional tutoring, the UWC offers several discussion and writing groups designed to enrich student experience in writing and literacy. Our most popular is our Culture and Conversation discussion group where English language learners can practice their conversational English in a relaxed atmosphere. MTSU in recent years has increased its number of international students, particularly from Southwestern Asia, East Asia, and Africa, and many of them frequent the writing center on a regular basis. The Culture and Conversation group helps support this population by giving them an opportunity outside of the classroom setting to work on their spoken English. We also offer a creative writing group and a graduate writing group.

One service we offer that is very popular amongst students working on long projects, English language learners, and other students who come to the UWC frequently is our Writing Partnership program. In a writing

partnership, students have standing appointments with consultants at the same time every week. This helps the writers to stay focused throughout the semester, and it helps the consultants to know the strengths, needs, and goals of the writers before the session even begins. Several students have found this program to be so beneficial that they have had writing partnerships for multiple semesters.

One of the initiatives of the past few years that we are most proud is the launching of our literary magazine, *Off Center* (https://www.mtsu.edu/offcenter/). Our founding editors, Hillary Yeager and Amy Harris-Aber, along with our current editors, Sidney Blaylock, Brielle Campos, and Jordan Russ have done an outstanding job in creating a publication that is visually stunning and that offers excellent poetry and prose. Production for the fourth edition of *Off Center* is now underway.

Staff

The UWC has three full time administrators: a director (tenure/tenure track), an associate director, and an assistant director (both non-tenure track). Our current director is Dr. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy and our assistant director is Keri Carter. Each year we have two to three graduate student Program Coordinators, and for the first time ever we have named an undergraduate, Kelsey Talbott, to this position. The graduate students are on ten- or twenty-hours per week assistantships, and undergraduates are employed on an hourly basis. The staff receives training through a week-long orientation in the fall, a two-day orientation in the spring, and weekly meetings throughout the fall and spring semesters.

In Fall 2017, we made a significant change to the structure of our staff meetings. Previously, we would have one topic per week and the staff would either sit through a presentation or be assigned a writing center article to read for discussion. While this approach has some benefits, we felt that it did not allow consultants an opportunity to think about a topic with a great amount of depth. We instead now have three-week blocks devoted to one topic. In the first week of a block, a particular topic is presented to the staff. This is sometimes done by the administration and program coordinators and sometimes by a guest speaker. After the presentation, the staff breaks into groups of three to five consultants who then begin brainstorming about a product they can produce. This product can be a PowerPoint presentation, an annotated bibliography, a handout or other resource to use during tutoring, or anything else that may help

them think more deeply about a topic and share their findings with others.

The second week of the block is reserved for workshopping and planning their presentations. On the meeting day of the third week the groups make their presentations to the rest of the staff, and we have a discussion about what they have learned about the topic to cap off the block. In Spring 2019, the topics for our blocks included: developing a tutoring philosophy, perceptions of writing centers, growth mindsets, and tutoring with technology. We feel that this structure for staff meetings encourages consultants to take ownership of their own training and to achieve a better understanding of important writing center topics that can only be gained with contemplation over time.

Space

We are very fortunate to have a wonderful space located on the third floor of MTSU's James Walker Library. Prior to 2011, our writing center was located in a classroom in the humanities building that was $562ft^2$ and had five tutoring tables. After moving to our current space, the writing center is now 2,283 ft^2 and has eight tutoring tables, two other larger tables, six computer stations, and three pairs of arm chairs with small tables. Also in contrast to our previous space, there is ample natural light. We feel that our space is warm and inviting and that it creates an ideal place for learning.

Future Plans

For the future, we would like to continue our growth in multimodal tutoring, form more partnerships with departments and campus groups for giving workshops, and offer more discussion and writing groups. We have recently increased our presence at various orientations and group meetings across campus, and have found that this is a good way of increasing traffic into our center. Our goal is to always be a dynamic center that offers something for everyone in our campus community.

Profile

Middle Tennessee State University has 19,523 undergraduates and 2,390 graduate students for a total of 21,913 students. The Writing Center sponsors *Off Center* (a journal of student writing), hosts writing groups, presents campus-wide workshops, supports groups for conversational English and graduate and creative writing, and helps to spearhead the university's QEP.

Sessions:
> Summer 2018—258 appointments, 106 students
> Fall 2019—2,665 appointments, 1,080 students
> Spring 2019—2,615 appointments, 950 students

Total: 5,538 appointments
- Staff (Spring 2019): 1 Faculty Director, 1 Associate Director, 1 Assistant Director, 3 graduate program coordinators, 1 undergraduate program coordinator, 1 web assistant, 3 *Off Center* staff members 19 graduate consultants, 9 undergraduate consultants, 2 undergraduate student-worker receptionists
- Open 47 hours, Sunday through Friday, for a total of ca. 360 potential tutoring hours per week. There are 4-11 consultants available at a time.
- Most consultants are graduate students on assistantships. Undergraduate consultants apply for hourly positions.
- Consultants attend 3-4 days of orientation before the Fall semester and 2-3 days of orientation before the spring semester. Weekly staff meetings and special projects constitute our continued training.
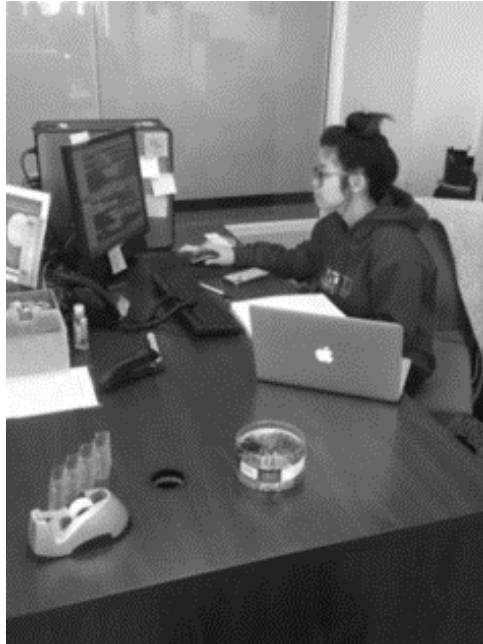- The Writing Center is 2,283 ft^2.

Pictures

1. The MTSU writing center has a large space with different types of tutoring stations.

2. Graduate student assistant Heather Listhartke tutoring a student with a writing partnership.

3. Undergraduate Sophia Luangrath working at the front desk.

4. Our space has lots of room, ample natural light, and a wonderful view of campus from the third floor of the James Walker Library.

Book Review

Babcock, Rebecca Day, and Daniels, Sharifa. *Writing Centers and Disability.* Fountainhead Press, 2017.

ISBN: 978-1-59871-591-0

Pages: 366
Price: $38.00

Nicole K. Turner

Writing centers continually revisit practices and approaches to tutoring work with aims to build safe, inclusive, and accommodating workspaces and tutoring sessions. Babcock and Daniels address this imperative in Writing Centers and Disability, attempting to magnify the field's understanding of where disability and writing centers intersect. In naming a disconnect between disability awareness and policy implementation, Writing Centers and Disability renews existing discussions and calls for actionable reconsideration of how universities and writing centers respond to disability, with aims to "introduce innovative and practical ideas to improve" writing centers (2). The collection is the groundwork for writing centers to make a philosophical shift away from well-intended, "often-generic mission statements," towards deliberate and thoughtful policy changes and reinvented approaches (3). Babcock and Daniels do not simply encourage this new discourse; rather, the collected essays map out these foundational reconfigurations of writing center practice that both insist upon and make practical the shift away from a disability/diversity agenda toward practice informed by "disability as insight" (3).

Babcock and Daniels intervene in Writing Center Studies long-held utilization of "student-centered pedagogies," an approach that

understands writing center consultations as "unique and idiosyncratic" (6). The collection emerges from this entrenched practice, questioning the limits of existing visions of what flexible tutoring looks like in practice. The chapters consider flexible tutoring alongside interrogations of what tools a flexible tutor employs: from what privilege those tools are formed; from what positionality are they employed; for whom are they targeted? Babcock and Daniels argue that a writing center informed by disability would understand that if tutoring practices overall were informed by a disability framework, then all students—of various backgrounds and abilities—could benefit from the flexibility model.

The professional work of Babcock and Daniels, respectively, represents their suitability as pioneers in this discussion. Rebecca Day Babcock's research emphasizes tutoring and deafness ("Tell Me How It Reads": Tutoring Deaf and Hearing Students); Sharifa Daniels, Head (Afrikaans) of the Writing Lab at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, has experience as an executive board member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), and has additionally served on the IWCA disability and diversity sub-committees. Her scholarly commitment to topics surrounding identity, disability, and writing centers is reflected in her numerous conference presentations and in her contributions to this collection (namely, "How Inclusive Is the Writing Lab to Students with Disabilities? Reflections from One South African University"). The editor's scholarly experiences are suggestive of their commitment towards impactful disability-inclusion; the text is a testament to the power of their commitment to altering the field's understanding of their own work and its impact upon the writing center space.

Writing Center and Disability is divided into three parts: "Narratives: Descriptions of Experience, Advice, and Suggestions," "Research on the Intersection of Disability and Tutoring Writing," and "Policies, Practices, and Programs for Students with Disability in the Writing Center." Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 variously demonstrate the weight and impact of growing discussions about disability and writing centers and personalize the collections argument overall. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, using case-specific studies, interrogate tutoring practices and the limited scope of existing writing center approaches through a disability studies lens and research alternative, disability informed practices. Despite their specificity, the chapters additionally offer methodological models for future research into topics concerning disability that the collection does

not address. Chapters 10, 11, 12, and 13 imagine writing center futures and effectively chart the process of enacting Babcock and Daniels's expressed aim to grow beyond platitudes into practice. Chapter 14 punctuates the text with a contribution from Rebecca Day Babcock, wherein the editor reviews existing research and asserts the potential for continued consideration (and reconsideration) of writing centers informed by disability in practice.

Among the collected 14 essays, *Writing Centers and Disability* showcases both research and policy guides along with narrative accounts of varied experiences involving disability in writing centers. These chapters are accompanied by prompts for the reader to interrogate and respond to each chapter's call for action as it pertains to their own writing centers. This chapter organization enables the chapter's authors to control how the text resonates; additionally, it grants the power of reception and message to the authors, many of whom are historically marginalized and/or ignored in policy-making discourses. The text impressively engages varied voices—staff, students, directors—that represent voices personally and/or professionally connected to the intersection of writing centers and disability. Collectively, the chapters attempt to meet and unpack many of the realized and unrealized challenges of imagining an inclusive writing center that embraces the multiplicity of tutoring.

Of the many potent, essential chapters in this collection, "Her Brain Works" by Carol Ellis, stands out as an essential read specifically for administrators unfamiliar with the dangers of institutional neglect of disability in an academic context. Ellis, a former writing center administrator who lost her job due to perceptions about her disability, details her experience with deep-seated academic exclusionary practices. Her candid, unapologetic testimony is harrowing but vital, and the sound of her call for action is loud and reverberates throughout the collection's chapters. When she concludes her essay at a loss—"I don't know what can be done"—readers are empowered to adopt a sense of duty towards the collection's mission. Its placement in the collection reassigns responsibility for organizing structural change; it is not just the duty of disabled people but instead of the writing center community overall.

Inasmuch as the narratives found in Chapters 2 through 5 embody the poignancy of disabled experiences in writing centers, the essays included

in Parts II and III follow through with accessible, workable insights and processes for the text's reader to absorb and put into practice. For example, the twin messages of Sarah A. Mucek's and Rebecca Day Babcock's respective chapters are essential, specifically for centers motivated to develop and implement new, reinvigorated, disability informed practices. The chapters, together, interrogate existing tutoring practices to reveal their ability to silence tutees with disabilities, and outline processes for redesigning practices to meet the specific needs of those seeking tutoring help. Mucek's chapter grows from ongoing conversations about authority dynamics in peer-tutoring contexts; however, she posits that through a disability lens, we might better understand the importance of identity formation for people with disabilities. She asks: how might a writing center be a place for a writer with a disability to redefine what it means to be disabled in an academic context? And, how can that process be encouraged within writing center tutorials? Babcock's chapter similarly revisits long-standing tutoring practices and pedagogies to unsettle their exclusionary dependence upon "hearing, seeing, speaking, and using the hands to write" (185). Through observing deaf writers working with hearing tutors, Babcock sketches a new tutor orientation that is better prepared to understand and work within student needs. The insights of chapters like these shine a light on practical gaps that administrators can feasibly begin to close.

The benefits of *Writing Centers and Disability* cannot be overstated, as the text unpacks wide-reaching topics that in their variety fundamentally concern all writing centers. For administrators, tutors, and even tutees, Babcock and Daniels continuously point readers towards acting on systemtic reconfiguration through beckoning readers to (re)consider their own relationship with and action regarding these topics, asking pointed questions about if/how/where individual centers are enacting practices that cogitate (rather than gesture towards and/or exclude) disability. Notably, the text prepares, rather than snubs or criticizes, its readers to enact the change required to better serve the diverse populations that enter writing centers.

Writing Centers and Disability is an essential resource for any writing center, as it addresses ever-present gaps in training materials historically employed in writing centers. The rhetorical and educational power of this text is unmatched and should undoubtedly become a companion to popular tutoring manuals. *Writing Centers and Disability* emerges from

Fountainhead Press X Series for Professional Development, which intends to focus on the continued professional growth of both new and experienced teachers, including writing program administrators and writing center personnel. Its ability to live up to the stated aims of the series cannot be understated and its publication, I argue, marks a turning point in writing center development.

Contributors

Joseph Cheatle is the Director of the Writing and Media Center at Iowa State University. He was previously the Associate Director of the Writing Center at Michigan State University and has worked as both a graduate consultant as well as a faculty consultant. His works have appeared in *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, and *The Journal of Writing Analytics*. He is interested in researching the digital future of writing centers and in developing innovative approaches to writing center work through collaboration with other disciplines and fields.

Michael Dimmick is an Assistant Professor in University of Houston-Downtown's English Department. His work focuses on the intersection of literacy, rhetoric, race, and space, with a focus on African American literacy and rhetoric and embodied practices of citizenship.

Dagmar Scharold is an associate professor at the University of Houston- Downtown (UHD). She is currently the director of First Year Composition and previously the Writing and Reading Center director at UHD for 16 years. Her areas of interest are writing center studies and composition and rhetoric. She has published articles in Writing Center Journal, Kairos, and Computers and Composition.

Eileen Bunch is a senior writing, rhetoric, and communication major at Transylvania University with minors in classics and religion. Aside from working as a writing center staffer and as the center's social media director, Eileen serves as the president of the Transylvania University Theatre Guild and writes about everything that strikes her fancy, from Vergil to vending machines.

Hayle Hall is a rising senior at Transylvania University. She is a Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication major and holds minors in Chinese and Educational Studies. Along with her work as a writing center staffer, she is also involved with the Department of Housing and Residence Life as an area coordinator and tutors Chinese at Transylvania's ACE Tutoring Center.

Karisma Keeton is an upcoming junior majoring in Political Science and minoring in French and International Affairs. Aside from her time in the writing center, she works as a tour guide, serves as an orientation leader, and is the founder of the female acapella group on campus.

Alex Miller is a Writing, Rhetoric, Communications major at Transylvania University. She is also the Director of Communications for the university's LGBTQ+ student alliance and plays viola in the university orchestra.

Madison Perry is a rising senior at Transylvania University, where she studies English and Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication Along with her work as a writing center staffer, she is also involved with the Office of Admissions and serves as president of Chi Chapter of Chi Omega.

James Hamby is the Associate Director of the Margaret H. Ordoubadian Writing Center at Middle Tennessee State University, where he also teaches courses in literature and composition. He is also currently serving as the Tennessee representative for SWCA, and he has co-chaired both Directors' Day and Tutor Collaboration Day for SWCA-TN.

Nicole K. Turner is a PhD student in Literary Studies and the Associate Director of Community and Professional Development of the Writing Studio at Georgia State University. Her work in Writing Center Studies and Literary Studies concentrates on entrenched colonial and patriarchal practices and ideals, specifically in discourses about trauma, mental health, and disability. Nicole has worked in writing centers since 2016.

Call for Submissions

SDC **Fall 2020—SWCA Conference Retrospective**

We are pleased to invite submissions from attendees to the 2020 SWCA Conference in Birmingham, AL. In addition to transcripts of conference addresses, this issue will feature scholarly articles that grow from sessions at the conference. If you give a presentation or sit on a panel— or even if you are just inspired by a session you attended at the conference—you are strongly encouraged to "write up" your work and send it in for editorial and peer review.

Please note: The Fall 2020 will also include book reviews, a Back to the Center piece, and a Consultant Insight article. Submission for these types of manuscripts do not have to be connected to the 2020 SWCA Conference.

   Deadline for submissions: 15 September 2020.

SDC **Spring 2021**

To encourage a wide variety of scholarly activity, the Spring 2021 issue will not have a specific thematic focus. **However, we encourage submissions that focus on writing centers' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.** Please consider submitting your work on the tutoring or teaching of academic writing, WC administration, WC assessment, tutor training, or any other topic related to the focus of the journal that you feel would be of interest to readers.

   Deadline for submissions: 15 March 2021.

Articles can be theoretical or practical in focus (or a combination thereof) and should incorporate outside sources in MLA format according to the guidelines available on the *SDC* website at the link below:

https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/SDC-Submission-Guidelines

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

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